

POWER TOOLS FOR DREAM BUILDING

By Steve VeGodsky, D.C.

How am I going to do this? The deadline for this article on the beneficial health effects of prayer, meditation and affirmations is looming. Maybe it's just not going to happen this time....

Sleepy and mostly sleepless at 6 a.m., I survey the scene in my house. A dozen testosterone-tweaked teenage boys hang out in various stages of wakefulness downstairs. Deep voices which occasionally crack and squeak are still chattering about my son's sleep-over birthday party. "*Balls of Fury* was sick, man," one says. "Yeah, but our samurai ping pong fight at 3 a.m. was better," another replies. Six of the boys are squeezed onto a loveseat while another actually sleeps on the top edge, a human backrest for their heads. Nobody seems to mind; they're busily concentrating on their Guitar Hero video game, fingers flying on the plastic button controls of the faux guitar (which even includes a wah wah pedal -- fun!), straining to keep pace with the frenetic offerings of Wolf Mother. Pizza crusts, corn chips, gift boxes, wrapping paper, Ipods, video cables, ping pong balls and an occasional snoring body in a sleeping bag adorn the floor. As I contemplate sifting through five pages of notes, the internet and two books to finish this article tonight, I decide it's time for MY secret weapon...a meditation in the hot tub.

In meditation, a person learns to focus their attention and suspend the stream of thoughts that normally occupy the mind. This practice has been shown to produce a state of greater physical relaxation, mental calmness and psychological balance. One of the express purposes of transcendental meditation (TM) is to achieve "restful alertness". Studies published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychology* and *American Psychologist* show that TM is 2-3 times more effective in reducing the effects of chronic stress than simply resting quietly. Data showed that the TM-trained body operates at a lower baseline of physiological activity and has more adaptive reserves; hence the meditator may respond more powerfully and recover more rapidly when challenged by stressors.

If meditating doesn't calm me down and focus me enough to get this article done, perhaps I'll try praying. Larry Dossey, M.D., in his book *Healing Words*, writes about experiments showing that prayer positively affected high blood pressure, wound healing, heart attacks and anxiety. Besides humans, subjects in these studies included enzymes, bacteria, fungi, yeast, red blood and cancer cells, seeds, plants, moth larvae, mice and chicks. Processes which had been positively influenced by prayer included the activity of enzymes, mutation rates of bacteria, growth rates of leukemic cells, germination of various seeds, the size of various tumors, time required to awaken from anesthesia, and hemoglobin levels. Dr. Dossey cites research that shows positive, measurable effects of prayer, even at a distance. Nothing seemed capable of blocking prayer. Even when an object was placed in a lead-lined room or in a cage that shielded it from all known forms of electromagnetic energy, the effect still took place.

Many distractions, a couple of meditations, prayers and a nap later, I've

