

Body & Soul

ONLY HAVE

30

MINUTES?

CHEESY TURKEY SCHNITZEL

These breaded turkey steaks make a quick and easy supper and are tasty cold, too.

PREPARE THE SCHNITZELS

Place 4 quick cook turkey breast steaks between clingfilm on a work surface, bash lightly with a rolling pin to flatten.

MIX THE CRUMB COATING

Take a big chunk of bread, about 100g (3oz), discard the crusts and place in a food processor with 75g (2oz) roughly chopped Emmentaler cheese and a pinch of salt and black pepper. Whizz until smooth.

COAT THE TURKEY IN THE CRUMB

Tip the crumbs on to a plate. Crack one egg in a shallow dish and whisk with a fork. Dip the turkey steaks in the egg then in the breadcrumb mixture to coat evenly. Chill until ready to cook.

COOK THE TURKEY

Heat about 3tbsp sunflower oil in a large non-stick frying pan and fry the turkey steaks for 3-4 minutes on each side until golden and tender.

SERVE THE FINISHED DISH

with chips and a crisp green salad or coleslaw.

A mantra keeps the doctor

I first heard of Transcendental Meditation or TM in my twenties, when I was living in a Georgian house overlooking Dublin's Royal Canal. The house next door was a TM centre, and the girls I lived with often attributed our happiness to what they called 'the good vibes'. I never took this too seriously, but there were times I was sitting in the garden, when I became aware of a silence that was not my own. I would look up and feel the stillness coming from the other side of the fence, and wonder what exactly was going on.

I moved out of that house, and did not hear about TM again until almost ten years later, when I befriended an artist in her 60s. Her productivity was impressive and yet she always seemed to have time for family and friends. I asked her how she did it. She told me she practised TM. I asked her a little more about it but when I found out the cost – €600 for four sessions with a trained TM teacher – I put it to the back of my mind. A few months later I attended an exhibition of this artist's work, and TM came up again. One of her friends, also an artist, told me she had been practising it for some months, and that it had had a profound effect on her work. Another said it had improved her health. I was in therapy for years, she said, but I never found the peace that I have found in meditation.

I booked what the TM website calls 'a free introductory presentation' and a week later I met a TM teacher called Judy Kelly. Judy is a tall, slim, dark-haired woman whose warmth is so genuine, it is disarming. In her apartment in Monkstown, she explained that the technique was a simple form of meditation, practised twice daily for 20 minutes. Each beginner is given a mantra, and this word, which they repeat to themselves during the meditation, has a gentle assonance, that helps to bring them deeper within themselves, towards a place of peace. In order to show me what this place might be like Judy used an illustration of a cross section of water. If the ripples at the surface were our thoughts, she said, it was possible to go beneath these thoughts to a calmer, much stiller place, not unlike the bottom of an ocean. Then she outlined its benefits. People who do TM have peace, she told me. They don't worry as much, their minds are clearer, they are more creative. She spoke of ex-students of hers that she was still in touch with, who felt their lives had been transformed by TM. And she talked a little about her own life too.

I decided to give it a go. The next time we met Judy asked me to bring a flower to represent the life that can blossom through TM, a white handkerchief to represent the pure silence at the centre of life and a piece of fruit to represent the fullness of life. I arrived a week later on a morning in

It beats stress, aids healing and brings focus to life. So exactly why does the ancient practice of where many modern therapies fail? Nikki Walsh

spring, with a nectarine, a white hydrangea I'd snipped from my deck, and a handkerchief of my father's. Judy arranged them all on an altar of sorts beside some spices and a candle. As she lit the candle, she sang a song. As an ex-Catholic I associate rituals with incense, much kneeling and standing, and an ingrained sense of myself as unworthy; but in Judy's living room, the pink flesh of the nectarine, the whiteness of the petals, the terracotta depth of the spices and the flame of the candle, all combined to create something altogether more soothing. Judy then gave me my mantra and we began to meditate.

I thought about what I needed to do after I left Judy's, about something irritating someone had said to me the day before, and about a conversation I needed to have with someone I don't really like. I opened my eyes. Judy was sitting in front of me, her eyes closed, her face set in an expression of bliss. I closed them again. I thought about what I needed to get for dinner, and how I was going to get home. A breakthrough came when I told myself that it was okay to have such thoughts. They began to drift away. Then Judy spoke, and I realised the meditation was over. That night I meditated again.

I could not remember the mantra. The next morning the same thing happened. I went back to Judy, and told her, rather pink-faced, what had happened. She laughed and told me it happens all the time.

The sessions continued. I began to realise that something happens when you distance yourself from your thoughts. You gain a little mastery over them. I began to notice when I was thinking futile or negative thoughts – thoughts that wouldn't help me get where I wanted to be – and

I began to change them, or if they overwhelmed me, to meditate, so I could be free of them.

In the same way I was able to move away from my mind, I could also move away from what some meditators call 'the physical body'. Around the time I met

Judy I had just sold my wardrobe which contained a full length mirror. I never bothered to replace it.

Talk to people who practice TM and they will tell you that its effects are subtle and profound. Some feel calmer, others more efficient. The other day I met a 50-year-old woman who told me that TM is the only thing that has helped her stay away from alcohol. 'It did wonders for my self-esteem,' she told me. 'I realised there was a place inside me that was so peaceful and beautiful. I said to myself,

Did you know?

According to TM Ireland, around 40,000 Irish people have learned the technique in the last 50 years

Did you know?

Celebrity TM practitioners include Eva Mendes, Naomi Watts, Oprah and – a bit less Hollywood – British Deputy PM, Nick Clegg

WHAT MEDITATION CAN DO FOR YOU

- Provides a deep physiological state of rest
- Increases energy
- Lowers blood pressure and cholesterol levels
- Increases happiness and improves relationships
- Reduces stress and anxiety – decreases stress hormones
- Improves sleeping
- Reduces the symptoms of asthma
- Increases creativity and intelligence

- Gives broader comprehension and improved ability to focus
- Improves perception and memory
- Improves students' learning skills and intellectual performance
- Increases orderliness of brain functioning increases Self-Actualisation and Self-Concept
- Reduces the use of cigarettes, alcohol and non-prescription drugs
- Improves general psychological health and wellbeing