

# **Online Transpersonal Meditation as a Method for Confronting the Pandemic: Traditional Knowledge in Dialogue with Psychology**

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## **Abstract**

This paper describes the experience of building a psychological technique based on a dialogue between Traditional Knowledge and psychology. The project, developed through a participatory research method, was carried out from April 2020 to September 2021 in an online environment during the first and second waves of the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil. The technique presented here emerged in an educational context as preparation for students who were part of a training program in Transpersonal Psychology from 2017 to 2019. In the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the process was adapted and expanded for an online approach and opened to the general public on Facebook and Spotify. One goal of this study was to provide the foundation for the refinement of the Transpersonal Meditation Technique (TMT) in ways that might provide for the development of an effective therapeutic tool for mental health professionals. This approach could prove to be most useful during times of widespread crisis where person-to-person contact is restricted.

Keywords: Meditation, Transpersonal Psychology, Transdisciplinary Active Mediation (TAM), pandemic, online interaction

## **La méditation transpersonnelle en ligne en tant que méthode pour faire face à la pandémie: la Connaissance Traditionnelle qui dialogue avec la psychologie**

**Luiz Eduardo Berni, PhD**

## **Résumé**

Cet article décrit l'expérience de construction d'une technique psychologique fondée sur un dialogue entre la Connaissance Traditionnelle et la psychologie. Le projet, développé par une méthode de recherche participative, a été réalisé au Brésil d'avril 2020 à septembre 2021 dans un environnement en ligne, au cours des première et deuxième vagues de la pandémie de Covid-19. La technique présentée ici a émergé dans un contexte éducatif, comme une préparation pour des étudiants d'un programme de formation en psychologie transpersonnelle de 2017 à 2019. Lors de la première vague de la pandémie de COVID-19, le processus a été adapté et élargi pour une approche en ligne et ouvert au grand public sur Facebook et Spotify.

L'un des objectifs de cette étude était de fournir les bases du raffinement de la technique de méditation transpersonnelle (TMT) de manière à permettre le développement d'un outil thérapeutique efficace pour les professionnels de la santé mentale. Cette approche pourrait s'avérer très utile en période de crise généralisée où les contacts de personne à personne sont

limités.

Mots-clés : Méditation, Psychologie transpersonnelle, Médiation active transdisciplinaire (TAM), pandémie, interaction en ligne

## **La Meditación Transpersonal en Línea como Método de Enfrentamiento a la Pandemia: Conocimientos Tradicionales en Diálogo con la Psicología**

**Luiz Eduardo Berni, PhD**

### **Resumen**

Este artículo describe la experiencia de construir una técnica psicológica basada en un diálogo entre el Conocimiento Tradicional y la psicología. El proyecto, desarrollado a través de un método de investigación participativo, se llevó a cabo de Abril del 2020 a Septiembre del 2021 en un ambiente en línea durante la primera y segunda ola de la pandemia de COVID-19 en Brasil. La técnica aquí presentada surgió en un contexto educativo como preparación para estudiantes que fueron parte de un programa de entrenamiento en Psicología Transpersonal del 2017 al 2019. En la primera ola de la pandemia del COVID-19, el proceso fue adaptado y ampliado para un abordaje en línea y abierto al público en general en Facebook y Spotify. Uno de los objetivos de este estudio fue proporcionar la base para el perfeccionamiento de la Técnica de Meditación Transpersonal (TMT) de manera que pudiese proporcionar el desarrollo de una herramienta terapéutica eficaz para los profesionales de la salud mental. Este enfoque podría resultar más útil en tiempos de crisis generalizada donde el contacto de persona a persona está restringido.

Palabras clave: Meditación, Psicología Transpersonal, Mediación Activa Transdisciplinar (TAM), pandemia, interacción online

## **Meditação Transpessoal *On-line* como Método para Enfrentar a Pandemia: Saberes Tradicionais em Diálogo com a Psicologia**

**Luiz Eduardo Berni, PhD**

### **Resumo**

Este artigo descreve a experiência de construir uma técnica psicológica baseada em um diálogo entre os Saberes Tradicionais e a psicologia. O projeto, desenvolvido por meio de um método de pesquisa participante, foi realizado de abril de 2020 a setembro de 2021, em um ambiente *on-line*, durante a primeira e segunda ondas da pandemia de COVID-19 no Brasil. A técnica aqui apresentada surgiu em um contexto educacional como preparação para estudantes que fizeram parte de um programa de treinamento em Psicologia Transpessoal de 2017 a 2019. Na primeira onda da pandemia de COVID-19, o processo foi adaptado e expandido para uma abordagem *on-line* e aberto ao público em geral no Facebook e Spotify. Um dos objetivos deste estudo foi fornecer as bases para o refinamento da Técnica de Meditação Transpessoal (TMT) de maneiras que pudessem proporcionar o desenvolvimento de uma ferramenta terapéutica eficaz para os

profissionais de saúde mental. Essa abordagem pode ser a mais útil em tempos de crise generalizada, quando o contato pessoal se torna restrito.

Palavras-chave: Meditação, Psicologia Transpessoal, Mediação Ativa Transdisciplinar (MAT), pandemia, interação on-line

## **Die Online Transpersonale Meditation: eine Methode um die Pandemie entgegen zu treten Ein traditionelles Wissen in Dialog mit der Psychologie**

**Luiz Eduardo Berni, PhD**

### **Zusammenfassung**

Diese Abhandlung beschreibt eine psychologische Technik basierend auf einen Dialog zwischen dem Traditionellen Wissen und der Psychologie. Dieses Projekt hat sich aus einer partizipativen Forschungsmethode entwickelt und wurde während der ersten und zweiten Welle von der COVID-19 Pandemie in Brasilien vom April 2020 bis September 2021 online ausgeführt. Die hier dargestellte Technik tauchte in einem didaktischen Kontext als Vorbereitung für Studenten auf, die an einen Trainingsprogramm in Transpersonaler Psychologie von 2017 bis 2019 teilnahmen. Diese Methode wurde während der ersten Welle der COVID-19 Pandemie als Online Version weiter entwickelt und verbreitet; sie war auch für das breite Publikum auf Facebook und Spotify zugänglich. Die Grundlage für eine verbesserte Transpersonelle Meditation Technik (TMT) wurde erstellt. Sie könnte ein effektives und sehr nützliches Instrument für den Gesundheitstherapeuten darstellen. Dieses Vorgehen konnte sich während den ausgedehnten Krisenzeiten, wobei zwischenpersönliche Kontakte eingeschränkt waren, als sehr nützlich zeigen.

Schlüsselworte: Meditation, Transpersonale Psychologie, Transdisziplinäre Aktive Mediation (TAM), Pandemie, Online Interaktion

### **Introduction**

Meditation is a traditional practice, the effectiveness of which is attested to by science. The benefits provided by meditation are achieved by modulating the state of consciousness from a waking state to a state of non-judgmental awareness. Such alterations are studied in Altered States of Consciousness (ASC) and are among the objects of study of Transpersonal Psychology (Tabone 2009). Since 2006, meditation has been added by the Brazilian Ministry of Health to the National Policy of Integrative and Complementary Practices (Brazil 2015).

In the first months of the pandemic in 2020, this researcher, who is also a psychotherapist, started receiving requests for help via the internet, and started to respond to these requests providing individual assistance. Given the impossibility of meeting the countless requests that came in and, based on meditation work carried out previously in an educational context, he improved and adapted the possible therapy with a more comprehensive approach, developed online from April 2020 to September 2021.

Thus, the objective of this experience report is to detail the Transpersonal Meditation Technique (TMT) and its foundations to be a health promotion technique, inserted into a transdisciplinary theoretical context, by evaluating its scope and possibilities.

The presentation of this report begins with a description of the adopted methodology; next, the theoretical-traditional foundations of the proposal and its stages are presented; and, finally, the results.

## **Methodology**

The methodology adopted is that of Participant Research, with the researcher being the driver and developer of the studied approach. Meditation as a traditional practice is distinct from that of the scientific process (Siegel and Barros 2016). Thus, in order to put this knowledge into dialogue, the technique called Transdisciplinary Active Mediation (TAM) was adopted, working from a Scientific-Theoretical basis in dialogue with Traditional Knowledge in an equitable way as described in the work steps that follow.

The process was developed from an initial idea of an educational nature already used by this researcher as a sensitization for graduate students. It was expanded and adapted in a participatory way over several months of the online intervention in dialogue with the regular participants. It was also changed by evaluating the metrics offered by the online platforms that housed the production (Facebook and Spotify).

The process of continuous assessment had the following sequence carried out in a cyclic manner and was repeated continuously: a) presentation of the technique; b) evaluation of reaction/dialogue with the participants; and c) adaptation of the approach.

In May 2020, one month after the start of the work, the first formal evaluation of the work was carried out using a Google Docs form. The disclosure was made exclusively on Facebook. One year after the first evaluation, in May 2021, a second evaluation was also carried out using Google Docs. The data will be presented in the results section.

Thus, methodologically, the dialogue with the participants was the focal point of the implementations, through the comments made during and after the work.

Roberto Cardoso's operational definition of meditation techniques (2011) provided the framework for this descriptive study. Thus, the Transpersonal Meditation Technique (TMT) falls under the umbrella of passive meditation techniques, in that it: incorporates a clear definition of stages; involves progressive muscle relaxation; depends upon focused relaxation of logic; promotes a self-induced state of consciousness; and utilizes a self-focusing device.

The first approach of TMT consisted of three stages: 1) Reception; 2) Body relaxation; 3) Concentration on breathing.

Over the course of the study, those three stages were re-envisioned and expanded into seven stages: 1) Waiting Period; 2) Awareness Raising; 3) Vowel Harmonization; 4) Body Relaxation; 5) Well-being Evocation; 6) Focusing on Breath; 7) Thematic Reflection.

### **Aesthetic, Ethical and Technical Fundamentals**

Use of the Transpersonal Meditation Technique (TMT) began in 2017 during the Specialization Course titled “Traditional Knowledge and Integrative Theories in Transpersonal Coaching,” held at the Rose-Croix University International (its Portuguese acronym is URCI), Advanced Campus, in the Metropolitan Region of Curitiba, PR, Brazil.

The course lasted two years. The modules, which consisted of total immersion, were held once a month: Friday afternoon, Saturday all day, and Sunday morning. The practice of meditation was performed on Saturday and Sunday mornings from 8:00 a.m. to 8:20 a.m. before breakfast. The URCI Advanced Campus is located in Serra da Graciosa in a place that houses an Inn maintained by the institution called Morada do Silêncio (Domain of Silence). The place where the students stayed was a retreat for the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC.

The initial idea was to conduct an “Open Meditation,” a practice of the Order aimed at non-members, with the aim of introducing Rosicrucianism. “Rosicrucian meditation ... corresponds to a dynamic process in the course of which a transfer between the mental and spiritual planes takes place” (Toussaint 2015, 34). For this purpose, an authorization was obtained from the jurisdictional leadership of the organization.

However, due to the secular nature of the course and because many of the participants were not members of the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC), and also, with the aim of avoiding proselytism, since there was an explicit disclosure of AMORC’s involvement, in addition to an “invocation to the Divine,” it was understood that such elements together could present susceptibilities. Thus, the researchers opted for a secular, non-temple-related meditation, inspired by the proposal of Western Esoterism practiced in the Findhorn Community in Scotland, as described by Bloom (1999, 13). He defines meditation as “a matter of staying relaxed and in a contemplative environment; however, instead of daydreaming, one is well awake, concentrated, and conscious.”

During the modules, every morning before the meditation period, there was live music, usually performed with an Andean flute (quena) around 7:30 a.m. to awaken and enhance the awareness of participants.

Before receiving the students, the meditation setting was prepared using the following arrangement: a transpersonal bias was adopted; an attempt was made to favor a circular formation (sitting in a circle); a center was established for the circle formed by people; and this point was adorned with flowers and fire (a candle) in order to create a catalyst for attention, for looking.

Five minutes before the work started, a bell was rung. In the meditation room (classroom), the facilitator performed live music using a kantele (a pentatonic harp of Finnish origin) to create a reception period and to establish continuity of awareness.

During the course, a meditation process was conducted basically in three stages: 1) Reception; 2) Body relaxation; and 3) Concentration on breathing.

As previously reported, when the pandemic started in 2020, requests for help were initially answered individually, but in order to contribute socially with an open and public utility proposal and to be more comprehensive, the researchers started offering online meditation along the lines described above. With online work, however, adaptations and additions were required.

The first live session on Facebook was carried out with a mobile device, with a Samsung handheld device. The camera filmed a scenario with a sail mounted on a wooden platform decorated with colored cloths, thus creating a focal point. From the second transmission on, a laptop was used, along with a microphone and mixer for improved sound.

The scenic montage aimed to offer participants a focal point (visual anchor) to fix their gaze. Thus, in the first meditations, two cameras were used, one focusing on an aesthetic center with a candle (focal point of attention) and the other focusing on the instrument being played. Initially only kantele music was played.

After the first live broadcasts, a scene for participants to focus on was created that contained a landscape in the background. Images were changed weekly. Most of the images were landscape scenes at sunrise or sunset. In the last meditations, there were night scenes of cities in the distance.

Throughout the work, the researcher started to use several musical instruments for participants, which increased the complexity of the activity. Keyboards, kantele, flutes, guitar, Tibetan gourds, and other instruments were used. The image of the instrument being played was integrated into the scenery for participants (with a green-screen background) so that the participants could follow the development of the work as if it were running in nature.

An online meeting usually started with a waiting period before the scheduled time in order to test the equipment and prepare. To liven up this period, pre-recorded music was added. To prevent problems with copyright, improvisational recordings were started with kantele and quena and later with the guitar, so that these songs became the soundtrack of the work. Instrumental tracks were recorded and made available as background music for the waiting period.

Thus, the work evolved to have four stages: (1) a waiting period with recorded music; (2) a reception period (enhancing awareness) with live music; (3) a period of corporeal relaxation (with the use of Tibetan bowls, which are copper bowls that are used to produce sound, either like a bell, or a continuous sound produced by rubbing a wooden stick on the sides of the bowls continuously) and (4) a period of attention focused on breathing.

The proposal was publicized on the researcher's Facebook page, which was transformed into a fan page (professional page) to facilitate the monitoring of metrics. No paid advertising was

carried out. A simple call was presented on the internet informing potential participants of the day and time of the work. Over time, small presentation videos were edited using the program's images. Throughout the work, a series of group messages were created with some of the regular participants to facilitate communication and request feedback.

The work was initially called Online Meditation. However, with the development of the proposal, it was concluded, in September 2020, after the consolidation of the first data and the presentation of the scientific foundations in two academic events, that the work had a clear focus on Transpersonal Psychology, so the title was changed to Transpersonal Meditation.

### **Theoretical-Traditional Basis of the Project**

Meditation is a traditional practice whose precise origin is lost in human history in different cultures (Johnson 1995). In Eastern cultures there is an abundance of training that is commonly classified as meditative.

Menezes and Dell'Aglio (2009) wrote that meditation produces measurable effects on health. Thus, such effects are now well known to the scientific community. In this way, science also brought its contribution to meditation. Therefore, these effects unfold both in improving the physical and mental health of practitioners. In this sense, meditation acts in a complementary way with direct effects in improving people's quality of life, as pointed out by Sampaio, Lima and Ladeira (2017).

Meditative practices can be classified into two broad categories: Active Practices, which involve some type of action, or body movement; and Passive Practices, which involve the inner perception, the perception of internal movements, such as breathing.

Meditative practices also vary in complexity. Some of them have several phases, while others are monophasic. Thus, there are practices that begin with movements and end with the inaction of the body, or passivity.

Goleman (1999), one of the pioneers in the study of meditation in the West, describes how this exercise works by reducing anxiety and stress; in addition to strengthening the immune system "regular meditation practice reduced the frequency of colds and headaches and reduced the severity of hypertension" (Goleman 1999, 36).

Cardoso (2011) defines operational parameters to classify a practice as being meditative. For him there must be the following elements: "Use some (1) specific technique (clearly defined), involving (2) muscle relaxation at some point in the process and (3) relaxation of logic. It must be necessarily (4) a self-induced state, using one (5) self-focusing artifice."

The full focus of attention is the central principle of altering the state of consciousness in meditative practices. It is a question, therefore, of placing all attention on a single, small point, emptying the mind of its logical articulation. This element provides the revitalization of the psychophysical system, with all the benefits mentioned above.

However, the mind can easily disperse and engage in thoughts that distance the meditator from a goal. Thus, it is necessary to establish what technically became known as anchors that divert the mind from this natural chain, promoting the relaxation of logic.

Anchors are sound formulations that remind meditators of their task. Thus, if they have embarked on a thought that has distanced them from meditation, upon hearing the anchor, they can return to meditative activity. This is a fundamental element of meditative techniques linked to self-induction. “The anchor with the relaxation of logic, composes what we can call the primordial meditation duet” (Cardoso 2011).

Cardoso (2011) details the classification of meditations. Thus, in addition to being passive and active, the reader will see subcategories for each of them in Table 1.

**Table 1 - Classification of Meditative Techniques**

Active cathartic meditations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical basis (eminently physical focus)</li> <li>• Emotional basis (focus on emotion)</li> <li>• Mental basis (mental focus)</li> </ul>
Active movement meditations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devotionals (mystical-religious)</li> <li>• Programmed (repetitive and sequential movements)</li> <li>• Spontaneous (unscheduled movements)</li> </ul>
Passive concentrative meditations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devotionals (mystical-religious)</li> <li>• Sounds (emission of sounds as an “anchor”)</li> <li>• Fixation (anchors at a physical point)</li> <li>• Visualization (anchor in imaginary focus)</li> </ul>
Passive perceptive meditations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post-catharsis</li> <li>• Post-concentration</li> <li>• Devotionals</li> <li>• Harmonization</li> <li>• Testimonial</li> </ul>
Mixed meditations (passive-active)	Combination of a variety of previous techniques

Meditation is a challenge for the agitated mind of urban contemporaneity. Mainly passive meditations stop the body and open channels for the mind, so there is a tendency for the mind to become more active. Thus, when the focus of attention is not controlled by the practitioner, closing the eyes can lead to discomfort, as it opens a channel for the unconscious to manifest



itself. Thus, the focus of attention in our study was concentrated on certain, simple objects, which is the great goal of meditation, to escape the flow of thoughts.

Wilber (1999) states that the meditative state is an Altered State of Consciousness and, in this sense, it is one of the objects of study of Transpersonal Psychology.

From the Transpersonal point of view, the practice of meditation makes the meditator well versed in this alteration of the state of consciousness and, therefore, prone to update the higher potentials of consciousness like the archetypal aspect of the collective unconscious. “Meditation is conceived as a means of banning repression, stopping filtering, de-automating automation ... a constant path of transcendence ... [and] is simply constant growth or development.... Meditation is evolution, it is transformation” (Wilber 1999, 115).

In this sense, meditation can also be an exercise for what Jung (2013) called a transcendent function, when the Outer Self (ego) turns to the Inner Self (Higher Self), which provides the potential for positive change.

Depth psychology privileges the dream or active imagination as channels of communication with the unconscious; however, people in general are not very attentive to psychic phenomena (like dreams) or to the practice of active imagination. So, as the unconscious cannot be heard, in moments of meditation it takes the opportunity to manifest itself, and this can be very uncomfortable. This situation can alienate the beginner from meditation, afraid of the discomfort felt. In this case, all attention must be given to the discomfort that manifests itself in anxiety, in anguish. The mediation of a qualified professional, a psychotherapist, should be considered in these situations.

## **Stages of the Transpersonal Meditation Technique**

Meditation is an exercise that, like any exercise, for it to have an effect, it needs to be practiced regularly. Thus, the sessions took place once a week, at night, and had an average duration of 30 minutes. In the following description of Transpersonal Meditation, the waiting and reception periods are excluded. The phases have about the same time span; however, facilitators can alternate the times between these, depending on the emphasis they want to give to the process.

### **1. Focusing Attention on Vowel Sounds**

Goldman (1994), in his studies on healing sounds, highlights that listening to harmonic sounds can be an excellent form of meditation. For Fregtman (1989, 23), “music is an experience inaccessible by erudite or literary means, as it is a non-verbal, non-linear, analytical, or discursive experience.” In turn, Andrews (1996) states that the use of sounds for therapeutic purposes is very old and exists in all traditions. Melodic and harmonic sounds, noises, and silence are used in different ways, seeking different effects on the body.

The arrhythmic noise of a maracá (rattle), for example, when irritating the psyche, is used to disrupt ingrained emotional patterns, while melodic and harmonic sounds induce specific states

of serenity. The silence between the sound emissions also plays an important role in the establishment of emotional states.

According to Bicudo (2005), sounds transmit important information and the emission and reception of the same activate emotional states affecting the whole body.

Vowels are among the simplest, most natural sounds made by human beings, whereas guttural sounds are learned culturally. The importance of vowel sounds in many cultures makes them be seen as sacred. The resonance of these sounds on the body (reception of sounds) brings relevant effects, as stated, as well as the production of sound (Andrews 1996).

One of the simplest sounds for intonation is the “OM” or “Um,” which can be babbled with the mouth closed as “hmmm.” One way to chant OM is to pronounce the vowel “O.” Breathing in and out by chanting the sound until the breath ends. At the end of the intonation, the OM is formed, because as the air runs out, the maintenance of the intonation leads the practitioner to obligatorily close the lips. It is quite common for mothers to hum lullabies from this pronunciation. In Hinduism, OM is considered the most powerful “mantra” (Berni 2021).

The sound of OM is also present in “Amen” (Andrews 1996). In some traditions, OM is emitted continuously, keeping the same note and/or notes that are linked to the harmonic field. Practitioners chant the sound separately and thus the sound is always present. In others, with coordination in intonation, everyone sings the sound in unison. The first mode is used in Transpersonal Meditation.

Scientific studies on the effects of chanting mantras on the human body can be found in different databases. Harne and Hilwale (2018) examined the power of relaxation caused by the modification of the brainwave pattern of beginner meditators, after the concentrated intonation of the mantra OM. Lolla (2018) conducted a pilot study to assess the effects of listening to mantras on students prone to high levels of stress. The study revealed that listening to mantras reduces anxiety and stress. Bicudo (2005) explained the effects of conscious breathing, that is, the alteration of the breathing pattern, and how this slowing down promotes relaxing behavioral effects.

The first stage of Transpersonal Meditation is a warm-up, a gentle harmonization of the body through sound. Practitioners are invited to emit a vowel sound, and if they cannot or do not want to emit the sound, simply listen to it.

Vowel Harmonization was introduced as the first stage of the Transpersonal Meditation process, as a kind of warm-up, as these sounds have a relaxing effect on the human body. The musical instrument used at this stage was an electronic piano keyboard. The adopted sound pattern was strings. The chosen harmonic field (musical notes) was the same used in the tuning of the major pentatonic scale for a kantele, that is, D (Re), E (Mi), A (La), G (So), B (Ti). The vowels used were o, e, a, and i. The “u” was suppressed because it is a variant sound of the “O” in the formulation, for example, of the mantra “AUM” or OM.

The assignment of the note to the vowel was based on a synthesis formed about the standard set of Rosicrucian vowel sounds, crossing them with the pattern proposed by Andrews (1996). Only vowels were considered without consonants. For example, the vowel sounds “RA” and “MA,” sung on A (AMORC, 1986), was considered only the vowel “A.”

The overall pattern is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 – Vocal Sounds**

Musical Note	D	E	G	A	B
Vowel	o	e	-	a	i

The most practiced sound in meditations was the OM sound. Other sounds combined in chants formed from the harmonic field presented in Table 3 were also practiced.

The technique was usually initiated with a vowel warm-up, only with the intonation of an extended hum in a low voice. As the sequence progresses, the intonation of the vowel “O” became the OM as the breath ended through the technique of continuous emission. In each meeting, the practice lasted an average of five minutes. According to the instructions, OM is sung about five to seven times.

## **2. Focusing Attention on Body Relaxation**

According to Cardoso (2011), body relaxation is fundamental to the meditation process. Auriol (1985, 19) stated that “relaxation is what is opposed to stress, which reinforces homeostasis, which reduces anguish and emotionality, which provides the unification of the elements of the organism.”

The human organism, as stated by Dychtwald (1984), is a holistic structure made up of five elements: 1) heredity; 2) physical activity and exposure; 3) emotional activity and exposure; 4) nutrition; and 5) environment. All of these aspects act on the meditation process.

Feldenkrais (1977, 55) asserts that every action, even the most subtle, originates in muscular activity: “In order to hear, there is a muscle that regulates the tension of the eardrum, according to the intensity of the perceived sound.” Muscles are always active. Psycho-physiologists call this muscle tone a kind of muscle-readiness for action.

This tonic function has the property of regulating the permanent activity of the muscle, which conditions our posture and makes the musculature ready to respond quickly to the multiple demands of life. That is why it is so important to acquire the greatest possible mastery of tone, on which all behavior depends. The tone is found in every living organism and has, under ideal conditions, a homogeneous level throughout the body [and] [i]ncreases with activity and decreases with rest (Alexander 2018, 12).

The practice of relaxation educates practitioners to control their own muscle tone. As can be seen, in general terms, body tension is fundamental for carrying out actions. Without muscle tension we are unable to perform the simplest tasks. The nervous system controls this entire process. Thus, when an effort is made, the brain sends a command to the muscles so that they take on certain degrees of tension to perform the task.

Emotional or psychic activity has a great influence on the body. Bioenergetic approaches explain this type of interference very clearly. According to Albertini (2015), Wilhelm Reich was able to read the emotional marks in each person's body postures.

Day-to-day concerns and psychological tension are reflected in bodily tensions that can settle at specific points in the body. The shoulders, for example, are great retainers of tension. But there can also be tension in several other parts of the body, such as the jaw, and so on. When people are unable to digest emotional tensions, they are registered in the body and are reflected in bodily tensions that can become chronic pain.

Studies on the effects of relaxation on health conditions prove the effectiveness of the technique. Klainin-Yobas, Oo Wn, and Yew Py (2015) demonstrated the positive impact of relaxation and the use of music in reducing depression and anxiety in the elderly. The meta-analysis by Seo and Kim (2019) showed encouraging results regarding autogenous training, both in reducing anxiety and reducing depression. Such effects are known as the relaxation response.

In passive meditations, immobilization can be complicated. Thus, immobilization training is a very important part of the process. Some techniques, as presented by Cardoso (2011), can focus exclusively on coping with the desire for mobility, controlled as an act of will by the meditator. The objective of this stage of the work is to be able to calm the body through relaxation. Thus, posture is fundamental. In Transpersonal Meditation, three positions are recommended: a) sitting in a straight-backed chair (Egyptian or coachman posture); b) sitting on the floor on the ischium, legs crossed (Buddha or lotus posture), or c) lying on the back, without crossing the legs.

Induced, or self-induced relaxation, as discussed in Transpersonal Meditation, brings direct connections to the practice of self-suggestion, as it is an autogenous process (Auriol 1985). The adopted form is direct suggestion (Ferreira 2008) formulated in an affirmative way with the objective of taking the practitioner to relaxation: "Relax your left foot, your left foot is relaxed...."

The body can be divided into four regions: 1) lower limbs (feet and legs); 2) trunk (belly, chest, spine and shoulders); 3) upper limbs (arms and hands); and 4) head.

Each of these parts can be subdivided: 1) lower limbs into feet, soles, toes, ankles, calves, knees, thighs, and buttocks; 2) trunk into lower abdomen, pubis, abdomen, chest, sides, vertebrae, and shoulders; 3) upper limbs into arms, forearms, elbows, wrists, hands, palms, and fingers; 4) head into chin, jaw, mouth, nose, ears, forehead, scalp, and eyes.

Perceiving the body is an art to be developed in the process. Initially acting with the tension of the body can be quite interesting. Thus, it was recommended that, before starting the process,

people stretched. This is very useful for promoting an initial release of bodily tension. Clapping hands and stamping feet on the floor helps a lot in body perception for beginners. As a tension-relaxation technique, it is particularly useful. So, instead of starting the work with a relaxation command, it starts by asking people to intensify the body that, after releasing the body, they could clearly perceive the difference.

### **3. Focusing Attention on Evoked Well-Being**

Dr. Herbert Benson has studied evoked well-being in addition to the relaxation response (Benson and Stark 1998). He points out that this element, fundamental to the recovery of health, is the same as what science pejoratively treats as the “placebo effect.” Thus, he sees the rescue of the perception of value for this inherent human capacity as fundamental.

Psychosomatics is another important branch to measure the power of the mind over the body. There are different approaches; one for example is Lachman (1974), who studied the issue from the perspective of behaviorism. Neuroscience (Cunha 2015), in turn, has brought recent contributions to the field, mapping the functioning of brain areas and the different chemical mediators associated with them.

Investigations such as these underpin the field of mind-body medicine, which studies the effects of the mind on physical health. Jacobs (2001) presented a review of studies in which he demonstrated the expressive presence of published works on mind-body medicine, or on the positive effects of the mind on physical health, distinguishing between this approach and alternative medicine.

Just as the mind is capable of evoking well-being, it is also capable of evoking unease, which is attributed to the term nocebo effect. “The effects of evoked well-being are measurable, but as it is activated by individuals’ particular set of beliefs, its effects are not easily predictable or reproducible” (Benson and Stark 1998, 15).

Thus, belief is a very important key in the process of maintaining health. Benson and Stark (1998) highlight the erosion of the placebo effect in the scientific community. The ability to recover health involves, in addition to the personal dimension, the human interactions that feed back into this process, involving, therefore, in addition to the patients’ beliefs, that of caregivers (lay people and specialists) and the interaction between these people’s beliefs.

In the field of religious sciences, coping with stress also supplies important information about the role of religious and spiritual beliefs on the quality of life. Coping can be positive, when religious belief favors health processes, or negative, when it favors illness processes. Panzini and Bandeira (2007) carried out a literature review in which they highlight the importance of these elements to be considered in the analysis of the health-disease process. Such perspectives can be summarized as follows:

There are four reasons for the association between religion and health: religious beliefs provide a worldview that gives positive or negative meaning to experiences; religious beliefs and practices can evoke positive emotions; religion provides rituals that

facilitate/sanctify major life transitions (adolescence/marriage/death); and religious beliefs, as agents of social control, provide direction/structure for types of socially acceptable behaviors. (Koenig quoted in Apud Panzini and Bandeira 2017, 127)

Depth psychology also has contributions that can be added to these perspectives.

Johnson (2009), when describing Jung's Active Imagination process, stated that this is, in fact, the great Inner Work, and meditation is a practice that provides the accomplishment of this work. The etymology of the term "imagination" is Latin; it comes from the word *imago* which means "image." It is the human capacity for the formation of images, for the generation of symbols that the unconscious uses to manifest itself. Active Imagination is a way of using the power of imagination to develop a relationship – a dialogue – between the conscious and unconscious mind. It is a reformulation that Jung made of old and traditional processes, linked to esoteric proposals, which led to the same result. It is, therefore, what Jung (2013) himself called a transcendent function. In Active Imagination, people allow images to emerge from the unconscious at the level of imagination, in a similar way as people see through dreams. However, in Active Imagination, people are conscious. There is an interaction with the images, a dialogue with points of view "independent of one's own." Through this technique it becomes clear that the images are symbols that represent deep, internal realities.

The effect of colors on the psyche has been known for a long time. Haushcka (2004) presents Goethe's Theory of Colors, which puts forth the idea that the world of colors was formed "by acts of light." This theory is complemented by the anthroposophical perspective of Rudolf Steiner (1996), who saw "the color of the world with a liberating movement of the soul." Steiner also emphasized how, in present times, people have distanced themselves from the effect of color on the psyche. In this way, it is essential to recover the color of life.

Syring (2020), in his chromotherapy approach, describes the therapeutic use of different chromatic hues in physical treatments. Blue light is used in premature babies with jaundice; ultraviolet light is used for skin problems; infrared is used for analgesia. In an interesting scientific investigation with more than two thousand subjects, Heller (2013) demonstrated that colors and feelings do not mix by chance. The psychological power of colors is not fixed, taking on both cultural and personal meanings. Colors, however, are classified as warm and cool, with warm colors usually promoting stimulation and cool relaxation. In addition, colors are divided into primaries (red, yellow, and blue), secondaries (green, orange, and violet), and mixed (pink, gray, brown, etc.). But colors also play situational roles, and are associated with experiences, so the meaning of colors can vary widely from person to person, and from moment to moment.

The elements presented above were brought together in this phase of the Transpersonal Meditation process. Thus, people were encouraged to imagine a light of the color involving their heart "that pulsates vigorously." The visualization of the light expanded to the lungs, "which perform gas exchanges with perfection." It was imagined, then, that the light went around all the internal organs (which were enumerated), and that they were functioning properly. This light, then, involved removing the physical pains and physiological discomfort and "that leaves the body, like dark light, dirty water, coming out of the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet, going into the land that receives and recycles them." The same procedure was also adopted for pain and extended to psychological unpleasantness.

In the adopted imagination process, it was emphasized that, as both physical and psychological pains left the body, the light that remained “became more crystalline,” thus inducing crystallinity as a symbol of purity. Following the process, the “crystalline” light enveloped the whole body, transmitting the qualities of health, peace, and bliss to the whole body.

It should be noted that, in this first phase, no specific chromatic perspective was ever directed, that is, participants were free to evoke the color that most appealed to them.

Finally, the active imagination process gained intensity and the facilitator directed the participant to visualize the whole house, and those who resided in it, the neighborhood, the city, and the planet surrounded by this light, involving people in the same visualization process.

At this stage of the work, however, light was directed toward white, the color that symbolized the fusion of all individual colors. This is the culmination of the work and, often, the vowel prepared for the work was sung again.

Finally, the visualization was concluded so that participants once again were aware of their bodies, ending the phase with the light being kept in the heart and being able to be evoked whenever necessary.

#### **4. Focusing Attention on the Breath**

As we have seen, Transpersonal Meditation alternates focusing attention on different goals and body actions, preventing the mind from wandering. This allows people to calm the mind by preventing thoughts (worries) from taking over, leading to what Jung termed “passive fantasies.” In this way, the transcendent function and the natural processes of health maintenance can be activated. This is a way to get out of the autopilot of unproductive habits.

Santi (2018) looked at studies with experienced meditators that show the lasting effects of the practice, such as, for example, acquiring a longer breathing mode and, thus, benefiting from positive effects on physical and mental health. All mental states that emphasize an imbalance, broadly speaking, involve issues of the past or the future in terms of problems that have been, or will be, experienced, becoming concerns. Meditation, on the contrary, focuses on the present, the here and now.

Focusing attention on breathing is among the simplest and most-used meditation practices in many traditions. Thus, after anchoring attention to sound, to the body, and evoking health, the Transpersonal Meditation process returns to focusing attention on one of the most simple and effective points: focusing attention on breathing while using sound anchors (such as a bell or command) 30 to 60 seconds between each other.

#### **5. Focusing Attention on Conducted Reflection**

After the previous four steps, the practitioner of Transpersonal Meditation is calmly open to a period of reflection. The principle involved here is in the storytelling technique, which is a very



old practice belonging to Traditional Knowledge. Fathers, mothers, grandparents, and teachers in different cultures are among the great storytellers.

The “bards” were masters of “storytelling.” The journalist Mirna Grzich in her program *Música da Nova Era* (1987-1996), held on Sundays from eleven to midnight by Rádio Eldorado in São Paulo, may have been a meditation bard, because her program, in addition to relaxing music at bedtime for most people, was filled with short texts written by Luiz Carlos Lisboa (1988). Thus, at the end of the first month of work, taking the methodology of the essay, and, putting into dialogue traditional, philosophical, artistic, and scientific knowledge, thirty-three reflections were produced on everyday themes experienced during the pandemic, with varied approaches to psychology, Traditional Knowledge, philosophy, human rights, poetry, etc. The themes arose daily in interactions carried out in the psychotherapeutic setting, in classes taught in postgraduate courses, and in social networks during interactions with people. The thematic list of titles is presented in Table 3. The full texts were revised, some titles were changed and published in the book *Transpersonal Meditation* (Berni 2021).

**Table 3 - Approaches and Titles of Thematic Essays**

No.	Date	Title	Main source of knowledge
01	05/12/2020	The grace of life, life as a state of grace	Theories about the origin of life, science, and tradition
02	05/20/2020	Dealing with anxiety	Psychology, psychological distress
03	05/27/2020	Facing the ghost in oneself	Analytical psychology, shadow concept
04	06/02/2020	Dealing with aggression and anger	Psychology, psychological distress
05	06/09/2020	Intolerance, prejudice, and the ethics of being	Human rights
06	06/17/2020	Dealing with losses	Psychology, psychological distress
07	06/24/2020	Solitude and the sacred space	Self-knowledge
08	07/01/2020	Listening to one’s Inner Master	Analytical Psychology, the Self
09	07/08/2020	Spirituality: the search for meaning	Transpersonal Psychology, the meaning of life
10	07/15/2020	Resilience and the human capacity for recovery	Behavioral Psychology
11	07/22/2020	Time: love, forgiveness, and ritual	Psychology, poetry, and Traditional Knowledge
12	07/29/2020	Indoor ecology	Ecology, self-knowledge
13	08/05/2020	What is the purpose of life?	Transpersonal psychology, meaning of life
14	08/12/2020	Patience: virtuous art	Traditional Knowledge
15	08/19/2020	Will and desire	Emotions, Self-Development
16	08/26/2020	Mystical power of the word, sound	Traditional Knowledge
17	02/09/2020	The self, the other, sympathy, and empathy	Humanistic Psychology



18	09/09/2020	Body: the temple of the spirit	Traditional Knowledge
19	09/16/2020	The art of maintaining balance	Traditional Knowledge
20	09/22/2020	In search of peace	Traditional Knowledge
21	09/30/2020	The proof of love	Poetry, interpersonal relationships
22	10/07/2020	The cycles and rhythms of life	Developmental Psychology
23	10/14/2020	Dream, the sacred food of the soul	Analytical Psychology, unconscious
24	10/21/2020	Fraternity, the family of the heart	Interpersonal relationships
25	10/27/2020	Sorrow, guilt, and forgiveness	Psychology, emotional states
26	11/04/2020	The blessing and the feather	Traditional Knowledge
27	11/11/2020	People and collective choices	Human rights, subject autonomy, politics
28	11/18/2020	Logic: insights and levels of reality	Philosophy and Analytical Psychology
29	03/12/2020	Dealing with mistakes	Developmental Psychology
30	12/22/2020	Long and prosperous life: Death or the Great Initiation	Human rights, Developmental Psychology
31	03/22/2021	The search for self-realization	Transpersonal Psychology
32	04/20/2021	Gratitude for life	Philosophy and Traditional Knowledge
33	09/09/2021	The Path	Traditional Knowledge

In addition to the Thematic Meditations, starting in April 2021, a series of programs with a contemplative focus was created. Thus, instead of presenting a text for reflection, the contemplation of a “virtue” or keyword was proposed. The proposal was that the meditators could, themselves, carry out their own reflections. This program was called “Sitting Calmly to Contemplate.” Fifteen sections were carried out in this program whose keywords can be seen in Table 4. Participants were encouraged to keep a notebook where, after the contemplative process, they could express, without criticism, what happened to them about the contemplative focus.

**Table 4 -Themes Proposed for Contemplation**

No	Date	Key-words
1	04/27/2021	Commitment
2	05/04/2021	Fraternity
3	05/11/2021	Healing
4	05/18/2021	Tolerance
5	05/25/2021	Respect
6	06/01/2021	Acceptance
7	06/08/2021	Power
8	06/15/2021	Understanding
9	06/22/2021	Integrity
10	06/29/2021	Clarity

11	07/06/2021	Vision
12	07/13/2021	Disposition
13	07/20/2021	Compassion
14	07/27/2021	Courage
15	09/07/2021	Joy

## Discussion and Results

The Transpersonal Online Meditation project took place from April 2020 to September of 2021. The work started with a face-to-face interaction carried out to raise students' awareness of the activities in a specialization course in Transpersonal Psychology. This beginning was composed of three stages: 1) Sensitization; 2) Body Relaxation; and 3) Focusing Attention. With the adaptations made throughout the process, from the interaction with the public and the monitoring of the metrics, at the end of the analyzed period, the process was composed of seven stages: 1) Waiting and Reception period; 2) Awareness Raising; 3) Vowel Harmonization; 4) Body Relaxation; 5) Evocation of Health; 6) Focusing Attention; and 7) Reflection.

The online meetings, through Facebook, took place once a week, on Tuesdays in the evening. After holding the meetings, the session was edited and made available in a reduced version on Spotify every Thursday in the form of a podcast, with the elimination of the first stage (Waiting and Reception).

The data was later analyzed, focusing on their impacts based on the information provided by the metrics offered on the two platforms, as well as in the light of the two evaluations carried out with Facebook participants.

Sixty-five meetings were held from April 4, 2020 to September 14, 2021. In total, seventy programs were produced, thirty-three of which were thematic (see Table 3); fifteen were contemplative (see Table 4); and sixteen were basic, only focusing on the first four phases of the meditation process. In addition, there was a special program in English and four short programs: two attunements (one for waking up and one for falling asleep) and two programs focusing on breathing concentration: one that lasted five minutes, the other ten.

At the end of the project, the content was structured into four types of programs: a) "Thematic Meditation," which was around 25 minutes, ending with a reflective theme ; b) "Sitting Calmly to Contemplate," which lasted about 20 minutes, with a keyword for contemplation at the end; c) "Just Sit Calmly," which ran about 20 minutes, emphasizing only the first four basic steps (anchors) with a focus on: hearing/sound emission, body relaxation, evocation of health, and concentration on breathing; d) "Moment of Relaxation and Meditation," which lasted from 5 to 10 minutes, aimed at beginners, containing only a phase of the basic steps, available only on Spotify.

In May 2020, one month after the start of the project, a first assessment was carried out, the results of which can be seen in Table 5 (N= 11).

**Table 5 – First Assessment of Process**

Questions	Answers		
How did you find out about this project?	On Facebook (10)	Invitation of a friend (1)	-
What are the benefits of participating?	Body relaxation, improvement in sleep quality (3)	Emotional benefits, serenity, well-being, peace (11)	Spiritual benefits (3)
What improvements can be implemented in the process?	Everything is all right (8)	Sound quality needs to be improved (1)	The wait for the start is too long (2)

In May 2021, a second and final evaluation of the project was carried out on Facebook, with sampling N=9. The disclosure was also made exclusively on the platform. The results point to the following:

Most participants, 66.7 percent on Facebook, followed the work during the live streaming at the time of its performance. Only 22.2 percent carried out the work after the stream ended, and only a small minority, 11.1 percent, followed it via Spotify. In this way, we can observe that there was a distinction between the audience of Spotify and Facebook.

As for participation, it was concluded that 44.4 percent of the participants followed the live streaming every week, so there was a large variation in the audience, although the number of participants was, on average, stable. People who showed up regularly usually introduced themselves via chat greetings. Fifty-five percent of the participants attended the sessions only occasionally, or two to three times per month.

Most participants, 88.9 percent, were more favorable than unfavorable to the time of the sessions (10 p.m. local time). The same percentage approved of the duration (30 minutes), as well as the four to five stages of the process.

When introducing the programs “Just Sit Calmly” and “Sitting Calmly to Contemplate,” the group showed a favorable trend 67.7 percent, but 33.3 percent were more favorable to the previous thematic programs. This may account for the small loss in average Facebook audience numbers in 2021.

As for the type of posture used in meditation, half of the participants, 55.6 percent, took part in the meditation sitting in a chair or armchair (Egyptian or coachman posture), while 44.4 percent took part in the meditation lying down.

As for the equipment used, 77.8 percent used their cell phone; of these, 55.6 percent with headphones, and 22.2 percent without headphones.

As for the work “Sit Calmly to Contemplate,” 77.8 percent followed the work and just thought of the keyword during it. Only 22.2 percent returned to the keyword during the week. None of the participants drew and/or wrote their intuitions after the work. This suggests that the participants were looking for an immediate result.

As for the visual presentation of the work—scenic and aesthetic aspects (screen with landscape, bonfire and presenter incorporated into the scenario)—66 percent liked the proposal. Eleven (11) percent only followed by listening; therefore, they were indifferent about aesthetics. The same percentage thought that the presenter was too far away in the image, and that the images were too small. A reminder that most followed the work by cell phone.

There was expressive acceptance of the ambience used in the process (background nature sounds). Seventy-seven point eight (77.8) percent rated this sound background as productive. The same percentage satisfactorily evaluated the variety of songs offered in the developed soundtrack.

As for the benefits (relevance of the process), the second evaluation reinforced the aspects observed in the first, that is, the participants reported the following psychological benefits such as: a) anxiety control; b) feeling of calm; c) confidence in the methodology; d) health feelings; f) connection as opposed to isolation.

The process was finalized as the pandemic numbers significantly decreased in Brazil. In September 2021, despite the country approaching 590,000 deaths, the scenario was one of stability with a downward trend.

At the end of the project in September 2021, analysis of the statistics on streaming platforms where the program was available, brought the following results:

**Facebook** - the captive audience was around 13 people, with peaks of 23 and a minimum of 7 participants throughout 2020. This reach declined a little from the second quarter of September 2021, revolving around 9 people per live stream, with peaks of 15 people at the end of the thematic section. The average reach of the videos, over the week they were made available, was around 200 people on average during 2020, lowering to around 140 people per week from 2021 onwards. Assessment data suggest that it may have been a lack of interest in the work without thematic reflection.

**Spotify** - there were 1,160 listeners until December 2020, and 170 followers. In September 2021, there were 282 followers, with 1,802 listeners. There was strong growth in the audience on this platform.

**Podcast** – it reached 24 countries in 2020. At the end of the project, in September 2021, the scope was 30 countries, with a large concentration in Brazil, in both years.

Around 2,500 hours of work were invested in carrying out the project, including research, study, analysis, preparation and revision of texts, audio recordings and editions, in addition to participation in events.

Regarding the audience, Spotify data indicate that: 54 percent of people who followed the podcast were female and 43 percent male. Only 2 percent were not specified. As for ages, it can be concluded that this is a proposal that reaches a more mature audience (see table 6).

**Table 6 - Spotify Public**

Public	Age
Above 60 years	9 percent
45-59 years	37 percent
35-44 years	23 percent
23-34 years	13 percent
23-27 years	10 percent
18-22 years	6 percent
17 years	2 percent

The final product of the project, with all the programs, music, as well as a summary of the project, was presented to the participants on the last working day on Facebook and can be found on the website [www.meditacaoatranspessoal.com.br](http://www.meditacaoatranspessoal.com.br).

## **Conclusion**

This descriptive study finds support within the theoretical parameters of Transpersonal Psychology. It is directly supported by the works of Ken Wilber and Carl Gustav Jung.

Utilizing Cardoso's operational definition of meditation (2011), Transpersonal Meditation Technique (TMT) is included with passive meditation techniques because it is a technique that has a clear definition of stages. One of those stages involves muscle relaxation and a relaxation of logic, in addition to promoting a self-induced state, using a self-focusing device.

Participants in the study were beginners in the practice of meditation. Despite their expressed thanks during and after the work, it was clear that the nature of the pandemic presented limitations on the therapist's ability to observe and directly communicate with each participant. The meditation interventions were made available on free platforms asynchronously and allowed the exercise of the subject's autonomy. The constraints from the technology utilized in administering interventions suggests further study.

## Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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