

Relaxation, Meditation, and Mindfulness

An Evolving Lexicon of RMM

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Abstract

This article suggests a universal lexicon or wordlist of self-reported states associated with various approaches to self-relaxation. Techniques include progressive muscle relaxation, yoga stretching, tai chi, breathing exercises, autogenic self-suggestion, imagery/visualization, meditation (focused attention) and mindfulness (open monitoring). 31 published factor analytic studies support a list of 25 state descriptors that can be organized in a “5+1” level hierarchy: Level 1, Basic Relaxation; Level 2, Basic Quiet Focus; Level 3, Awakening; Level 4, Deepening; and Level 5, Transformation / Transcendence; Transcendent Positive Emotion. This lexicon has uses for individually tailoring training, comparing approaches, and tracking practice. Implications for research and theory are discussed.

Keywords: Relaxation, Meditation, Mindfulness, RMM, Yoga, Progressive Muscle Relaxation, Autogenic, Breathing, Imagery, visualization, tai chi, positive emotion, transcendence

Relaxation, Meditation, and Mindfulness

A Lexicon of RMM

Every approach to relaxation, meditation, and mindfulness (RMM) has had its time in the sun. Decades ago it was progressive muscle relaxation and, in Europe, autogenic self-suggestion. In the 1970's and 1980's it was mantra meditation. Now it is mindfulness (first, second, and third generation). Yoga has shown a slow but continuous rise. And then there are those techniques in the shadows enjoying glimpses of popularity. Centering prayer. Tai chi. Healing visualizations. Metta meditation. Diaphragmatic breathing, Hot yoga. The result is world of fiefdoms, each with passionate advocates claiming unique and special efficacy.

Since 1986 I have considered all together (Smith, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1999, 2001, 2005, 2007, 2012, 2015, 2017, in press; Smith, Amutio et al., 1996). All share something important. There is a bit of relaxation in all of meditation and mindfulness. There is a bit of meditation and mindfulness in all of relaxation (Smith, 2017, in press).

First some definitions. Decades of debate have attempted to define “relaxation.” Fortunately there is some agreement as to what self-directed exercises belong in this rubric¹. Most texts and manuals include (Smith, 2017): progressive muscle relaxation, yoga stretching, tai chi, breathing exercises, autogenic self-suggestion, and imagery/visualization. For our purposes, “relaxation” is what relaxation experts teach and study. We include meditation, and mindfulness. We will use the term “meditation” to refer to focused attention (“FA” or concentrative) meditation, and “mindfulness” as open monitoring (“OM”) meditation (Lutz et al, 2015). One set of meta-skills essential to all approaches to RMM is *sustained quiet focus* or more precisely, withdrawing from the day's activities while: (a) sustaining simple focus on a restricted stimulus or task, and (b) minimizing effort and judgmental thought. One has to do

this when tensing and letting go in progressive muscle relaxation, slowly stretching and maintaining postures in yoga and tai chi, breathing slowly and deeply, repeating self-suggestion phrases “warm and heavy,” visualizing a relaxing scene, focusing on a mantra, or being mindful of the world at large. Technique specific micro-skills (identifying zones of hidden muscle tension, maintaining balance, breathing with the diaphragm, etc.) are maintained and enhanced by meta-skills.

With these definitions in mind, we can stand back, and in the full light of day, explore the panorama of RMM. In this article I outline a twenty-year effort to create a natural universal lexicon of self-reported RMM states and identify theoretical implications for the entire spectrum of RMM techniques. We begin with a bit of history.

Lessons from History

Neurophysiological Perspectives

Early definitions of RMM focused on neurophysiological processes. Such approaches span from surgeon James Braid’s (1843) “neuro-hypnotism” (shortened to “hypnosis”) to Edmund Jacobson’s progressive muscle relaxation and Herbert Benson’s (1975) popular “relaxation response.” More recently, meditation and mindfulness researchers (Lutz et al., 2008, 2015) have focused on the brain’s executive, default, and salience networks (Smith, 2007).

It is beyond the scope of this article to review the neurophysiology of RMM. However, such models of relaxation have served us well. It is a focus that indeed provides some unity to a fragmented field. More importantly, it continues to form the primary justification for RMM training in most stress management programs. These models are persuasive and easy to explain to practitioners. Research consistently finds what happens in the body and brain to be associated with a wide range of health and performance outcomes. Neurophysiology models

have lifted techniques from the darkness of religion, pseudoscience, and the occult to genuine professional credibility.

However, an exclusive emphasis on neurophysiology risks missing something important. Most practitioners of relaxation appear to master arousal-reducing skills in a month or so; yet many go on to practice for years and decades (Smith, 1999). Often masters of meditation and yoga claim to progress deeper in their practice even after a lifetime of practice. Clearly, such individuals are discovering something more than reduced metabolic rate or enhanced cortical functioning (Smith, 2007).

What is this “more”? Actually the answer has been staring us at us for decades in general field of stress management. Here, major approaches are substantially informed and even derived from psychological theory. Learning theory underlies desensitization. Cognitive psychology is a basis to cognitive restructuring, stress inoculation training, and exposure training. In contrast, neurophysiological conceptualizations of RMM bear more similarity to justifications for exercise or diet, approaches defined by what happens in the body. But are the experiences of a lifelong meditator analogous to the experiences of a lifelong consumer of vegetables? How much do we really learn by comparing progressive muscle relaxation to Prozac or meditation to a marathon run? It is the premise of this article that much can be learned by listening to what practitioners actually say about what they do. Their lexicon of self-report enables us to view a rich and complex terrain in a new light.

Possible Psychological Lexicons of RMM

Bipolar Scales, Mindfulness, Positive Emotion, and Transcendent States

Psychology provides various secular and nontechnical self-report lexicons that can be applied to RMM. Researchers often use self-report symptom, anxiety, or negative affect scales

to measure relaxation. Here the assumption is that relaxation is the bipolar opposite of a particular symptom, anxiety, and negative affect. Less tension implies more relaxation. However, this assumption has been frequently challenged in research. For example, dimensions of relaxation and negative affect may be distinct, perhaps correlating a modest .40 with each other (Cropanzano et al, 2003). Note here that low scores on “anxiety” account for 16% of the variance of “relaxation.” Even with a high negative correlation of .70, low anxiety still accounts for less than half the variance of relaxation.

The problems multiply when we look at what happens in the brain. Lindquist’s (Lindquist et al, 2016) classic meta-analysis of 397 fMRI studies involving 6827 participants does not support the bipolar hypothesis but are more consistent with an “affective workspace hypothesis” in which positive and negative affect are supported by flexible and overlapping brain regions (Lindquist, et al, 2016). Relaxation and symptoms, anxiety, or negative affect are not bipolar but complex and sometimes overlapping dimensions.

Self-report measures of *positive* RMM states do exist but are a bit more difficult to find. One can discover considerable insight in research on mindfulness, positive emotion, and transcendent states.

Mindfulness

Of all approaches to RMM, mindfulness has inspired the largest number self-report lexicons, embodied in the form of mindfulness inventories. Table 1 presents the key content of 11 popular mindfulness questionnaires. All use words related to awareness, attention, and acceptance (Bishop et al, 2004), essentially the meta-skills of RMM. Many inventories persist with the incorrect assumption that RMM is represented by reverse-scored symptom or anxiety items (“criticize myself,” “impatient,” “disapprove of myself”; Baer et al., 2004, 2006). To

emphasize a point made earlier, what indeed is the bipolar opposite of “self-criticism and disapproval and impatience”? Relaxation? Mindfulness? Drowsiness? Sexual arousal? Pride? Rage?

However additional words in such inventories are revealing. (See Tables 1 and 2)

Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

Existing mindfulness lexicons, as embodied in mindfulness scales, define mindfulness in terms of awareness, attention, and acceptance. However, content analysis of definitions and questionnaires reveals additional descriptors, most notably “pleasant,” “calm/relaxed,” “curious”, “ease,” “happy,” “thankful,” “peaceful,” “losing oneself.” However, factor analyses of mindfulness scales consistently yield only the dimensions of awareness and attention as well as acceptance. That our additional words do not form separate factors is most likely an artifact of paucity of item representation. I suspect that had mindfulness inventories included more items related to “happiness” and “thankfulness,” say “compassion,” “love,” and “kindness,” these would have arisen as factors. This possibility is supported by research on transcendent positive emotions and transformational transcendent states.

Transcendent Positive Emotions

For decades the study of positive emotion has existed as a robust field of scholarship, part of the study of positive psychology. Positive emotions all have a “pleasant subjective feel” (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2012). They are associated with specific facial expressions such as “smiling” (Eckman, 1992) and approach behaviors such as reinforcement seeking and maintenance, rather than avoidance (Cacioppo, 1999). Most popular inventories include the

Differential Emotions Scale, Multiple Affect Adjective Checklist, and the Profile of Mood States (Naragon & Watson, 2009).

Perhaps most relevant for students of RMM are what Yaden et al, 2017 term “self-transcendent emotions,” or “transient mental states of decreased self-salience and increased feelings of connectedness” with other people and one’s surroundings. These would be distinct from other positive emotions that might involve an increase experience of self-salience (or personal importance) and reduced awareness of or connectedness with others or the environment (feelings of pride, control, grandiosity, narcissism, sadistic rage, conquest, domination, etc.) Frequently noted transcendent positive emotions are:

Admiration,

Attentiveness

Awe

Compassion,

Concentration

Curiosity

Elevation,

Enthusiasm

Gratitude,

Happiness, joviality, Joy

Inspiration

Interest

Love,

Optimism

Serenity

Silence

Surprise

Fredrickson has proposed a “broaden-and-build hypothesis,” Transcendent positive emotions broaden ones “thought-action repertoire” build one’s personal resources, whether physical, intellectual, or social. They “prompt individuals to discard time-tested or automatic (everyday) behavioral scripts and to pursue novel, creative, and often unscripted paths of thought and action.” (Fredrickson, 1998).

Transcendent positive emotions counter the aftereffects of negative emotion, enabling one to “loosen the hold that (no-longer-relevant) negative emotions gain on an individual’s mind,” a notion similar to concepts of letting go in many traditions or reduced effort and judgmental thinking in our RMM meta-skill. It is not surprising that Fredrickson proposes that positive emotion may well be one mechanism underlying meditation and mindfulness (Fredrickson, et al., 2008) and by implication to RMM. Specifically they help channel or focus attention, help one put aside distraction and mind wandering, and provide motivation to continue practicing (Fredrickson et al., 2008). Indeed, we have just noted that current measures of mindfulness touch on positive emotion by including such terms as “happy,” “thankful,” and “pleasant.” That such words have not emerged as mindfulness factors may again be an artifact of inadequate item representation. However, such terms are frequently mentioned in manuals and treatises on RMM. Again, as meditation and mindfulness are often blended with many other approaches to RMM, and all approaches share cognitive meta-skills, I propose that transcendent positive emotions are not incidental descriptors, triggers, or

aftereffects, but a part of the lexicon of RMM. Furthermore, items such as “awe” point to another aspect of RMM experience.

Transformational Transcendent States

States of transformation go beyond transcendent emotion both in degree and kind. Not only are they vivid and intense, but they involve a redefinition of oneself, others or the environment, and the relationship between self and others and the environment. Specifically, transformational states involve a profound reduction in self-referential thinking and increased awareness of something larger or greater than oneself (Smith, 2017).

One doesn't simply forget oneself while feeling love towards one's infant child. The very quality of oneself (who one is) and others/the environment (who and what they are) is changed. Self is fundamentally less important, perhaps less real. Others/the environment are more important, perhaps more real. In this sense one's very identity, the identity of others and the environment, and one's relationship to others and the environment is qualitatively transformed.

Transformational states may be dualistic, in that they include awareness of oneself and of something other (“I feel so small when gazing at the immense Grand Canyon”). At extreme levels, they can be non-dualistic, in which the sense of self dissolves or merges with the world, and all is seen as timeless, eternal, or “at one.”. This conceptualization is somewhat similar to what Yaden et al (2017) term *self-transcendence*: “the subjective sense of one's self as an isolated entity can temporarily fade into an experience of unity with other people or one's surroundings, involving the dissolution of boundaries between the sense of self and ‘other.’” (p143) Note that I prefer “transformational” over “transcendent” to emphasize that for such RMM states, the very nature of oneself and the world has (at least temporarily) changed.

Such experiences are an important part of the wisdom literature on meditation, mindfulness, and occasionally yoga, tai chi, and breathing, and often provide a defining or guiding context. One can argue that like positive emotion they motivate practice and enhance core meta-skills.

It is informative to examine the research literature on mystical states (Maclean et al, 2012; Pahnke, 1963, 1969; Stace, 1960). The most frequent measures are the Mystical Experiences Questionnaire (Maclean et al, 2012) and Hood's Mysticism Scale (Hood, 1975) This literature most often note the following states.

Unity (oneness, internal and external merging of self),
Transcendence of time and space,
Noetic quality (deep understanding of hidden mysteries),
Sacredness,
Positive mood (which I consider to be a transcendent state), and
Ineffability.

Such experiences are central to many approaches to meditation and mindfulness. They appear in some approaches to relaxation, such as yoga, breathing exercises, tai chi, imagery and visualization. Instructors of more secular approaches such as progressive muscle relaxation may question their relevance. However, as I will discuss later, practitioners of even the most secular techniques can have transformational experiences. As we shall see later, they every much reflect the meta-skill of quiet sustained focus, and can contribute to the development and maintenance of technique-specific micro-skills. Our model provides a model for putting

transformational states in context. They merit consideration for inclusion in a comprehensive lexicon of RMM states.

A Lexicon of RMM

Research on relaxation, mindfulness, transcendent positive emotions, and transformational states provide a tantalizing hint that there is much going on in RMM than reduced symptoms, self-reported anxiety, or negative affect. Any trainer or practitioner quickly discovers this world by asking a simple question: What do you experience when you relax, meditate, or practice mindfulness? For example, if you ask students of progressive muscle relaxation if they physically relaxed, they may have little difficulty giving a scaled answer on a single bipolar scale. However, if you listen to their complete relaxation story, you may quickly encounter a rich variety of states. They may report feeling “at ease,” “contentment,” “far away,” “focused,” “unbothered,” or even “spiritual.” Even Jacobson, the creator of progressive muscle relaxation, reports patients feeling “quiet.” Such reports are not of insignificant, akin to an occasional pleasant thought or giggle. They point to the very heart and soul of RMM (Smith, 2007).

For over half a century I have explored a myriad of basic instructional texts and practitioner reports of progressive muscle relaxation, yoga, breathing, autogenic self-suggestion, tai chi, imagery contemplation, prayer, meditation, and mindfulness. Although this personal journey was triggered in 1965 by the homophobic sermons of a dogmatic religionist pastor, it quickly acquired a life of its own. My pursuits included ancient approaches as well as those that are new, approaches from the East and West, and approaches from spiritual and secular traditions. I have recounted this story before (Smith, 1985, 1992, 1999, 2001, 2007, 2015, in press). However, it provides a context worth repeating.

Early on, I found trainer and practitioner accounts easier to understand than the esoteric language of mystics, philosophers, or theologians, or the technical language of scientists. I was uninspired by legions of arbitrary dogma. I was equally unimpressed by unsubstantiated paranormal claims, particularly those that seemed to permeate self-suggestion, imagery, meditation, and mindfulness. Finally, I was deeply suspicious of technique founders who indulged in blatantly immoral, pseudoscientific, authoritarian, or dehumanizing practices, a concern I have to this day for some approaches to yoga, imagery, autogenic healing suggestion, and meditation (Brunner et al, 2008; Lilienfeld & Ruscio, 2008; Smith, 2018).

Eventually I became something of a scavenger of words. In the 1990's, after gleaning over 200 texts, I assembled an initial RMM lexicon of 400 ordinary dictionary words practitioners use to describe psychological states associated with practice. Removing redundancies shortened this list to 230 words (Alexander, 1991), I proceeded to subject this list to more formal research, using both qualitative and quantitative methods: trainee reports and factor analysis (Smith, 2017; Smith, in press). Here is a brief summary.

Trainee Reports and Focus Groups

I started systematically teaching in RMM in 1985 as part of my full-time teaching duties at Chicago's Roosevelt University (Smith, 1985). I created a 15 week, 3 semester hour course ("Stress, Coping, and Mindfulness") which has been scheduled in the classroom and online for over three decades. The University now schedules an average of seven sections a year, with about 25 students per section. To date I can claim roughly 2,000 graduates (about 4,000 if we include students not subjected to my full RMM format). Each student learns and practices a complete menu of exercises, including at least the following: progressive muscle relaxation, yoga, tai chi, breathing exercises, autogenic self-suggestion, imagery, mantra meditation, and

mindfulness. Students take shortened versions of my RMM word list (Appendix A) to track progress and make technique comparisons. Each week and at the end of 15-week training I conduct informal class discussion focus groups in which students explain how they interpret the RMM words they have selected to describe their experience.

Factor Analysis

Factor analysis is a useful tool for screening and sorting large numbers of items. Factors, of course, are groups of related items. One might start with a large sample, for us 230 RMM word candidates (Smith, 1999; Alexander, 1991). Factor analysis would show us which form groups and equally important, which words do not belong to any groups and can be screened out in future studies.

In 1995 a talented psychology student and current mindfulness expert, Alberto Amutio, moved to America to work with me on our first formal screen and factor analysis of RMM words. This project ended up as the largest empirical exploration and factor-screening of RMM on record. We gave 940 Midwest practitioners of a wide range of RMM techniques an 82-item wordlist that survived previous factor analytic screening. Subsequent studies applied factor analysis to successively screened item lists to over 6000 additional participants reporting over 40 types of RMM (Borgogna & Smith, 2016, Smith, 1986, 1988, 1999, 2001, 2005, 2007, 2012, 2015; Smith, Amutio et al., 1996).

To this work we can add 16 supporting studies (Akande, 2002; Alexander, 1991; Baer et al., 2008; Baum, et al., 2010; Boyle, 1986; Cardaciotto et al, 2008; Chadwick, et al, 2008; Chan, et al., (2016); Corbeil et al, 2015; Feldman, et al., 2007; Lao, et al., 2006; Maclean et al, 2012; Smith et al., 2000; Watson & Clark, 1999; Watson & Naragon, 2009; Yaden et al, 2018;

Zevon & Tellegen, 1982). In sum I count 31 published studies (plus the Alexander MA thesis) that have subjected various selections of RMM words to factor analysis.

Factors vs. survivor items.

At this point it is important to emphasize our use of factor analysis. First, we are most emphatically *not* looking for a single universal set of RMM factors. I do not believe that such a thing exists. Such a search, currently in vogue in meditation and mindfulness research, is a fool's errand. At the very least, for those still on the quest for universal RMM factors, substantial differences in sample characteristics and scale content, combined with reporting omissions, make any conclusions premature.

I propose that different RMM populations may well report experiences characterized by different factor structures. For advanced Buddhist monks, "quiet" and "aware" may form a distinct factor. For beginning college students practicing their first meditation, "quiet" may define one factor consisting of items like "unbothered" and "calm." "Aware" may form a completely separate factor defined by "happy" and "joyful." For those in a Christian prayer retreat, yet another factor structure may emerge, perhaps "quiet" and "love." And yet another factor solution for seniors taking a nature walk.

More serious is the possibility that the factor structure of RMM words is truly idiographic. Every practitioner may display a unique factor pattern. I have found this to be definitely the case for RMM words practitioners use to describe sessions. Some may prefer "Physically Relaxed" to describe a good session, others "Far Away," "Focused," or "Quiet." It is quite possible that the practitioners may also display consistent patterns of words. One prefer to describe good sessions in terms of "Physical Relaxation, Quiet, and "Unbothered."

Another, the word group “Centered, Easy, and Reverent.” A single epiphany can transform word meanings and groupings.

This said, our first task is to identify “survivor items,” RMM words that survive screening and can contribute to a working RMM lexicon. Using a very permissive selection criterion appropriate for beginning research (where it would be more damaging to future studies to be underinclusive rather than overinclusive), we removed words from the initial RMM 230 that did not pass at least one factor analytic screening out of 31 conducted. We identified 25 groups of items. I use this lexicon in training, research, and theoretical musing (Smith, 2017). It is not a final product chiseled in stone, but glimmerings of light filtered through the forest. I fully expect this lexicon will continue to evolve in future editions over time.

Provisional default semantic word groups.

Given the problematic nature of the current crop of factor analytic studies on RMM words, is any grouping strategy justified? At the least, we can provisionally group words according to semantics, that is, meaning. (Figure 1). These can serve as useful default groupings. To elaborate, RMM words “reverent” and “prayerful” have very similar meaning, and can be grouped. A simple dictionary check shows that “At ease,” “at peace,” “calm,” and “carefree” merit membership in the same semantic group. “Physically relaxed,” “limp,” “warm,” and “heavy” also form a semantic group.

Semantic word groups often parallel factors. However, often they do not. For “at ease” and “at peace” may merge with “physically relaxed” and “limp” to form a general relaxation factor. At times they may form separate factors. “Focused” and “Observer” have appeared together to form a mindfulness factor, and they have at times formed separate factors. “Happy” and “thankful” at times merge with “awe / wonder” and “spiritual,” and sometimes

these two groups define separate factors. Again, it is premature to make firm conclusions about any underlying RMM factor structure. However, the RMM words that survive and remain in play are worthy of our attention. Provisional semantic groups provide a convenient way of simplifying our list. It tentatively reveals a landscape we can explore.

The “5+1 Hierarchy”

From this research and my training experience I propose a “5+1” hierarchy of 25 RMM states. Again, each consists of items that have survived at least one of 31 separate published factor analytic studies. All reflect states reported by practitioners in every RMM class I have taught (Figure 1). Each level reflects the core cognitive RMM meta-skills of sustained simple focus with minimal judgment and effort. Note, that these meta-skills can be manifest in a variety of ways, as can other aspects of human experience like “love,” “conscientiousness,” and “openness to experience.”

Over the past three decades my lexicon has undergone many tweaks, revisions, and incarnations (Smith, 1985, 1988, 1999, 2001, 2005, 2007, 2015, 2017, in press; Smith & Amutio, 1996). The reader should not expect identity between any, for example Lexicon Edition 2001 and Lexicon Edition 2017 (or “in press”). Some changes have been minor, some major. The organization of words has changed from pyramids to windows to simple lists. Segments of the lexicon have repeatedly remained unchanged and are duly and fully reported. Since 1996 we have followed this convention for lexicon construction: whenever an RMM lexicon is revised, the new edition is published in its entirety, including changed and surviving repeat content. We continue this convention in this article and so advise future researchers (permission granted for copying lexicon content.)

The current Lexicon (2019 Edition) begins at Level 1, Basic Relaxation, in which one experiences withdrawal from sources of stress, reduced psychological and physiological tension, and less fatigue. In addition one experiences positive default mode activity or mind wandering (Buckner, et al, 2008). Although Level 1 is in its early levels defined as an absence of a negative, it is only a fragment of what defines the full hierarchy. Beyond Basic Relaxation, higher levels show:

- Increasingly abstract perceptions of oneself, the world, others, and one's relationship to others and the world.
- An increasingly encompassing understanding RMM states and how they interrelate.
- Reduced self-referential thinking.
- Greater awareness of others, the world, and one's relationship to both.

Together this hierarchy helps us understand what tension-relaxation bipolar scales and current inventories of mindfulness, positive emotion, and transcendent states miss. It provides a serious challenge for the measurement of all forms of RMM. See Figure 1 for a summary of our lexicon, defining item content, and supporting research.

Level 1a: Basic Relaxation

The first achievement of practitioners of RMM may indeed be basic relaxation. Basic relaxation is initially negative reinforcement, reduction in aversive stimulation. In terms of our meta-skills it involves sustained simple focus away from aversive stimulation in combination with reduced distracting and diverting effort and judgment. On our hierarchy it is reflected in the RMM states of: Far Away (Disengagement); Physically Relaxed; At Ease, At Peace; and Refreshed.

RMM 1: Far Away (Disengagement). Beginning students of RMM learn to get away or let go of the day's stressors. When they experience RMM 1 Far Away (Disengagement) they feel distant and far away, indifferent to cares and concerns, and nicely detached from the surrounding world. They may even lose awareness of the relaxation trainer, or of parts of the body. Words selected through factor analysis include: "Distant, far away, in my own world, detached, indifferent, not caring, withdrawing, unmoved." All these words clump together as a unified "factor" group, defined by the words "far away."

RMM 2: Physically Relaxed. RMM 2 is the subjective experience of physical relaxation. Self-reported physical relaxation may or may not correlate with objective measures such as those obtained through neurophysiological equipment. One should not assume that one is more "real" than the other. Subjective and objective physiological relaxation can be the same, or different, a question beyond the scope of this article. Key highest loading descriptors in our empirical lexicon from practitioners includes "warm and heavy" and breathing that is "even and effortless." Our complete list of words include:

- *Dissolving,*
- *Elastic,*
- *Listless,*
- *Limp,*
- *Light,*
- *Liquid,*
- *Heavy,*
- *Massaged,*
- *Melting,*

- *Motionless,*
- *Sensual,*
- *Sinking,*
- *Slack,*
- *Slow,*
- *Supple,*
- *Throbbing,*
- *Tingling,*
- *Warm*

RMM 3: At Ease, At Peace (Mental Relaxation). One group of words has consistently emerged in factor analytic studies (Table 3):

- *Calm,*
- *Relaxed,*
- *Rested,*
- *Refreshed,*
- *Peaceful,*
- *Carefree,*
- *Contented,*
- *Unhurried*
- *Soothed,*
- *At ease*
- *Laid back*

Interpretation of RMM 3 is readily informed by a simple semantic analysis. The everyday dictionary reveals that each word in our list is a positive state associated with the release of one type of negative distraction or physical or psychological tension. "Calm" is released "tension." "Rested" is released "fatigue." "Peace" is released "conflict," "Carefree" is released "worry." "Contented" is released "desire." "Unhurried" is reduced "action." "Soothed" is released "pain and discomfort." And "At Ease and Laid Back" are released effort. The highest loading and defining items are *At Ease, At Peace, or Mental Relaxation*, our chosen label.

RMM 3 is associated with lower levels of stress and psychopathology. Imagine something is creating fear for you. Perhaps your child has gone out for the evening and is late. You feel fear. You call, and discover she is one block down the street coming home with her

friends. Suddenly your mind is relieved—mentally relaxed. Imagine you are driving home and haven't eaten for hours. There is no place to eat in sight. Suddenly a favorite restaurant appears, and you quickly go for a delicious meal. Your hunger turns to contented satisfaction—again you are mentally relaxed. Maybe you are having an argument with your boss over her unfair demands. She realizes she has been pushing too hard, and agrees with your request for an easier schedule. The conflict is resolved, and you are mentally relaxed. Or you have burned your foot and are in pain. You apply a soothing lotion, and you feel soothing relief, mentally relaxed.

The absence of mental relaxation can be a barrier to growth in RMM. It can suggest unfinished business requiring attention. If one is filled with fear that needs to be resolved, that needs to be dealt with. Get out of the thunderstorm before meditating. If you are hungry, eat a banana. If one is in conflict, it needs to be confronted. In pain, try to relieve it, and so on. If actions to relieve psychological distress fail, then relaxation and mindfulness may be your last, best solution. Or try active coping supplemented by RMM.

RMM 4: Refreshed. RMM 4 Refreshed is an aspect of At Ease / At Peace. It is characterized by the simple feeling of being refreshed and energized, perhaps the opposite of feeling fatigue. I am conflicted over whether the term “energized” should be part of the item content for RMM 4. For some forms of RMM, feelings of energy, often embodied in notions of “chi” or “grace,” are central. Yet, self-reported “energy” can be central to controlling and self-focused positive states most do not include under the rubric of relaxation. These include states such as “pride,” “conquest,” “control,” “anger,” and “domination.” Some may be a part of aggression, narcissism, or grandiosity. This is an issue future RMM researchers can sort out.

Level 1b: Mind Wandering and Fantasy

From the perspective of the cognitive meta-relaxation skills we have introduced (sustained simple focus, minimal effort and judgment), Level 1a Basic Relaxation represents a reduction of distraction, or more precisely, mind wandering. Neurologically, mind wandering is associated with increased default mode activity (Buckner, et al, 2008). Is it always contrary to RMM?

The antithesis between mind wandering and RMM is a popular understanding that derives from a 2010 study Killingsworth and Gilbert used an iPhone app to survey 2250 individuals from 83 countries. Specifically, phones for each study participant called randomly throughout the day and asked how one felt and what was thinking. Nearly 250,000 calls revealed that minds wandered about 47% of the time. Furthermore, Killinger and Gilbert concluded (as stated in the title of their Science article), “*A Wandering Mind is an Unhappy Mind.*” This conclusion was widely conveyed across the internet as well as in major articles in Scientific American and the New York Times. It is emerging as a core justification for some forms of RMM.

Lost in the flurry is the possibility of positive mind wandering. This is rarely talked about in texts of RMM, although it has recently emerged as an exciting aspect of default network activity (Baumeister & Vohs, 2016). Indeed, students frequently share with me experiences in which random or loosely organized thought is pleasurable, relaxing, meditative, and mindful. On the basis of personal trainee experiences as a trainer I have added *a priori* a second Level 1 Basic Relaxation Dimension: Mind Wandering and Fantasy. I propose these are more likely to emerge from the reduction of stressful stimulation, physiological or psychological tension, and

fatigue. They reflect the second component of our meta-skills of RMM: reduced effort and judgment. Attention may be sustained on a simple focus in that it is directed away from deliberate thought and stressful stimuli, tension, fatigue. Clearly mind wandering and fantasy occur in many, if not all forms of RMM. Core training and wisdom texts typically consider this type of thinking a distraction, or at best, an irrelevant experience. I speculate they may an important role in growth in RMM and include these dimensions with an invitation for future research.

RMM 5: Pleasant Mind Wandering. Sometimes when people relax, they simply let go of deliberately planning and doing things, and enjoy the pleasures of undirected fantasy and random mind wandering. This is both relaxing and possibly an easy type of meditation or mindfulness as long as one does not get caught up in planning, analyzing, or reacting to one's fantasy. Researches need to identify the role this state plays in RMM.

RMM 6: Fantasy, Daydreaming. Sometimes mind wandering becomes more directed, perhaps with a plot or story. Here it becomes a pleasant fantasy or daydream. For many of my trainees find RMM 6 Fantasy, Daydreaming to be something of a distraction. I offer it as an *a priori* dimension and invite experimental consideration.

Level 2: Basic Quiet Focus.

Early on in relaxation training, practitioners of most approaches to RMM experience both Level 1 Basic Relaxation and Level 2 or Basic Quiet Focus. We consider five RMM States:

RMM 7: Focus, Absorption. Attention is directed to a target stimulus or task. One can sustain such focus for a period of time. When this attention is completely engaged to the exclusion of competing stimuli, one is absorbed. This can occur for any approach to RMM. In Progressive muscle relaxation one might sustain focus on detecting subtle sources of tension, the

sensation of tensing up, and of releasing tension. In yoga and tai chi one might attend to a stretch, posture, balance, or the flow of “chi.” In breathing exercises, the focus is the flow of breath and associated energy. In self-suggestion, it is the passive repetition of a phrase like “warm and heavy.” In visualization and imagery, it is a mental picture or story. In meditation it may be a mantra, a simple sensation of air flowing through the nostrils, or the release of muscle tension. In mindfulness is the accepting observing of all stimuli that come and go.

RMM 8: Centered, Grounded. Here sustained focus and absorption is comfortably stable like a rock or tree firmly planted in the ground. Initially this was an *a priori* state introduced for exploration.

RMM 9: Quiet. One experiences a reduction of thought and emotional activity. The mind is quiet and still. Even feelings of peace and serenity are absent. =

RMM 10: Unbothered. One is accepting. Negative thoughts or feelings might emerge, however one is not “caught up” in them. They may be seen as simple thoughts rather than final realities. Formally this is “dereification,” or in terms of our guiding definition, reduced judgment.

RMM 11: Easy, Effortless. It is easy to let go of mind wandering and distraction, return to task, and sustain focus. It is easy to let things be, accept what is, and go on. The task at hand, whether it be relaxation, mindfulness, or even work or recreation feels effortless. Initially this was an *a priori* state.

Level 3: Awakening

Once one has acquired skills of quiet sustained focus, new experiences may emerge. These generally reflect an increased awareness of oneself and the world. This reflects the beginning of experiences of transcendence and transformation, or a *dynamic* (*changing, evolving,*

interacting), *other-directed orientation* Smith, 2017) in which one is less aware of or concerned with oneself and aware of a changing and expanding outside world. We can consider four RMM States:

RMM 12: Observer. Here one simply stands aside and watches things come and go, as a neutral and objective witness.

RMM 13: Clear, Awake, Aware. As an observer one may have a sense of experiencing things as they really are. Things may seem “vivid” or particularly “real.” One’s mantra may cease to be a mechanical chant, but a sound with a life and direction of its own. A prayer may become more than a mechanical chant, but words from God. The flow of the present moment may be seen clearly, as for the first time, perhaps as seen by a child.

RMM 14: Interested, Curious, Fascinated. When one is interested, curious, or fascinated in a task, whether it be mindfulness, yoga, relaxation, or even work or recreation, one is displaying a type of quiet focus. Perhaps this is a step beyond simple awareness as an objective observer. It is more than viewing a stimulus vividly as “really real.” An important new dimension is added: There is more than first appeared. The deeper reality of breath is more than the inflow and outflow of air. The deeper reality of the mantra is not just a repeated sound or syllable. The reality of the present moment is more than a series of events. What is this more? We experience RMM 14 Interest, Curiosity, and Fascination.

RMM 15: Beautiful. Things seem beautiful, harmonious.

Level 4: Deepening

I hypothesize that when meta-skills develop, transcendent and transformational states begin to occur. In Level 4 Deepening, a new feature of sustained quiet focus emerges, the experience of the potential of something more, a sign of things to come. Our focal target is no

longer a static state but one that is dynamic. It changes and evolves in a way as experienced as increasingly deep. Here I am positing more of a level rather than specific RMM marker or indicator states. Perhaps one is more prone to have vivid visual dream-like experiences. Perhaps intense emotions, both positive and negative. Perhaps hallucinations emerge. Perhaps experiences that seem “paranormal” or outside the realm of scientific explanation. I leave it to researchers to explore possible “pre-Level 5” RMM states. On an *a priori* basis I suggest four:

RMM 16: Going Deeper. Things are unexpected, new, interesting. Things are changing, opening up, being revealed. It may feel like one is in a different place or space. Initially an *a priori* state.

RMM 17: Spaciousness, Expansiveness. One has a sense of spaciousness and expansiveness. Initially an *a priori* state.

RMM 18: Sense of Something Greater. One may feel the sense of something greater than oneself (God, a higher power, spirit, energy, love, or consciousness). If religiously inclined, you may feel that God is with you. Initially an *a priori* state.

RMM 19: Meaning, Purpose, Direction. Initially an *a priori* state.

Level 5: Transformation / Transcendence

In rare and special moments of relaxation the relaxer comes in touch with the deeper side of life. Transformational transcendent RMM states reflect awareness of a world larger or greater than oneself. These are often noted in the literature on mystical literature and transcendence.

Our research identifies the following:

RMM 20: Reverent, Prayerful. Feelings of reverence and prayerfulness reflect an emotional response to something larger or greater than oneself. These are expressive states,

coming from oneself. One “reveres,” one “prays.” It should be noted that atheists (including myself) are quite capable of having authentic RMM 20 experiences. But this is another book.

RMM 21: Awe/Wonder, Deep Mystery. RMM State Awe and Wonder reflects a nonanalytic and goal-less awareness of a larger and greater reality that is new, awesome, beyond ordinary familiar comprehension and expectations. We don’t have words for “it.” Our language provides many phrases that convey this notion: “shock of the new,” “blinding truth,” “dumbstruck,” “speechless,” “far out,” “mindblowing,” “knocks one’s socks off,” or simply “Wow!” or “Amazing!” However expressed, one’s adult, verbal, analytic thinking cap has been knocked askew; one is temporarily freed or released from these constraints and sees things anew.

RMM State Deep Mystery is somewhat familiar to most people. We all have discovered things we do not understand, and sometimes we encounter profound questions and mysteries that seem to transcend any possibility of understanding.

There is a subtle difference between Awe/Wonder and Deep Mystery. RMM State Awe/Wonder suggests we simply do not have the words to describe what we experience. Deep Mystery implies we do not understand it. We may understand the geology of the Grand Canyon, but experience it with awe and wonder. We may have words to describe the complex constellations in the sky, but recognize the mysteries of the expanding universe, the big bang, dark matter, and so on.

RMM 22: Spiritual, Mystical. RMM 22 is the core of what others describe as spiritual or mystical experience, moments of profound and personal meaningful experience—a sudden awakening or insight. The empirical literature on transcendent states, as well as my factor analyses, suggest the following features of RMM 22.

- Feelings of an underlying hidden truth. One might feel as if one has special and important insightful and intuitive knowledge. There is a sense of certainty of encounter with ultimate reality, a sense of seeing or knowing what is “really real,” ultimate reality.
- One might have feelings of being “at one” with the universe or others, a sense of selflessness.
- One common feature of transcendent experiences is that they are difficult to describe or communicate to others. One feels unable to justify the experience by simply putting it into words. This goes beyond the R/M State of awe and wonder, which reflects more an emotional experience that is ineffable.

Transcendent Positive Emotions

Many strong transcendent positive emotions can emerge in all forms of RMM. Such emotions can help one sustain simple focus, reduce needless effort and judgment, and let go of self-referential thinking and mind wandering. They can emerge at any time and form a supportive emotional tone for RMM. We note three:

RMM 23: Happy, Optimistic, Trusting.

RMM 24: Loving, Caring.

RMM 25: Thankful.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Is this Relaxation?

Is our RMM Lexicon really about relaxation? Is it not a model of meditation or mindfulness, or even spirituality and transcendent states? At one level, a backache or pain

patient who experiences relief using yoga or progressive muscle relaxation may well express no interest in notions of “awakening,” “deepening,” “transcendence,” and transformation.” These are typically not a part of a presenting complaint. Perhaps the most important way of addressing such questions is to consider what is meaningful and useful for practitioners.

Returning to our backache patient, perhaps she finds relief with progressive muscle relaxation (PMR). From the RMM Lexicon, RMM 1 (Far Away), RMM 2 (Physical Relaxed), and RMM 3 (At Ease, At Peace . . . “relief from pain”) would likely apply. As her PMR skills progress she may note increased RMM 7 (Focus, Absorption), RMM 8 (Centered, Grounded), and RMM 11 (Easy). Most PMR trainers would have little difficulty interpreting her self-reports as indicators that PMR is working. In time she might conclude training, a treatment success.

But what if she begins reporting RMM 13 (Clear, Awake, Aware), RMM 14 (Interested, Curious, Fascinated), or RMM 16 (Going Deeper). A traditional trainer, perhaps in the lovable and crusty spirit of relaxation pioneer Edmund Jacobson (Kremer, 2015), might muster a polite smile and mutter “interesting.” However our 5+1 hierarchy suggests at the very least that core meta-skills (quiet, sustained focus) are developing. What are the implications of this? Perhaps new manifestations of meta-skills enhance the technique-specific skills of PMR, such as identifying hidden muscle tension or tensing and releasing isolated zones of tension. Furthermore, our client might find rewarding exploration into the world of RMM techniques and enjoy additional RMM states. Having talked to hundreds of individuals (not my students) who have tried various RMM techniques, I find this is more often the rule than the exception. A student who truly enjoys and regularly practices one approach to RMM will typically try others. Some they discard, some they may embrace. And I propose, such explorations are motivated, maintained, and perhaps guided by a path they may see in our 5+1 hierarchy of relaxation words.

Incidentally, the RMM hierarchy is neutral concerning religion or lack thereof. It is compatible with most. I propose that trainers of all approaches to RMM serve their clients best by at least having a passing familiarity of the landscape they share. I believe this is applicable for even the most crusty amongst us.

This is reflected in my classes. As mentioned earlier, when I teach RMM I cover a full menu of approaches (progressive muscle relaxation, yoga, active breathing, passive breathing, self-suggestion, deepening imagery, loving-kindness meditation, focused attention meditation, and mindfulness). Each approach gets about two weeks. At times students practice more than one technique. A complete class lasts 15 weeks. After an approach is introduced, students are encouraged to practice daily and record the experiences of their best session on our RMM Tracker scale (see appendices A and B for state and trait versions).

Comparing RMM Trackers for techniques enables students to discover:

- What RMM States are the best indicators meditation effectiveness? No RMM state or set of states emerge as a universal indicator. Students have highly individualized preferences for what a good session is. Identifying individualized reinforcing RMM states is an important part of training.
- Which exercises work best? Different techniques clearly work for different students at different times in training. Early on, meditation is often not preferred, even when it is emphasized. Progressive muscle relaxation, breathing, and yoga are initial preferences.
- Which exercises are the best warmup preparations for other techniques?
- How do RMM experiences evolve and change over time?
- How does meditation impact life at large?

RMM Trackers enable students of RMM to create their own RMM narrative and explore possible ideas. Traditional inventories, whether simple bipolar anxiety-relaxation queries or multi-item mindfulness questionnaires are not ideal tools for this. Let me illustrate.

A student learns meditation and practices daily for three months. Once every two weeks she completes one of 11 popular mindfulness scales. Results may support this conclusion:

“I’m getting better at focusing on my mantra and accepting distractions nonjudgmentally as they come and go.”

The same student may complete the RMM Tracker every two or three weeks for three months and report:

“At the beginning I let go and began to feel FAR AWAY from my troubles and concerns. This led to feelings of PHYSICAL RELAXATION and peace. After two weeks I was getting better at simply letting my troubled thoughts come and go like clouds in the sky. I felt UNBOTHERED and meditation became EASY and EFFORTLESS. Having put aside my outside troubles, and no longer bothered by distracting physical tension, I could FOCUS and remain QUIET. In time this became EASY AND EFFORTLESS and I found myself GOING DEEPER sensing SOMETHING GREATER. Near the end of the session I felt CLEAR and AWARE, with a touch of AWE AND WONDER and THANKFULNESS for what meditation has done. Freshly energized, I found I could sustain focus more easily and with increased depth.”

At the very least our student has incorporated meditation into the story of her life. To some extent, this happens for every trainee, even those who decide approaches other than RMM may be more appropriate for the challenges of the moment.

Is our RMM Lexicon really about relaxation? As I have repeatedly noted, all states in our RMM lexicon have been reported by actual trainees. I invite trainers and practitioners to find out for themselves and complete the RMM Tracker State Version (Appendix A) after a good practice session of their favorite approach.

Research Questions

Research on RMM has relied on neurological assessment (not the concern of this article), or limited bipolar or mindfulness scales. A handful of studies have examined the full spectrum of RMM states. Here are some questions:

- Are RMM Levels 1 and 2 (Basic Relaxation and Basic Quiet Focus) immediately accessible to most RMM trainees? Do they serve as preparation for more advanced training?
- I hypothesize that each of 25 RMM states reflects a different manifestation of meta-skills sustained simple focus with minimal effort and judgment (see Smith, 2017 for a full discussion). As such, the emergence of any RMM state should enhance mastery of any RMM technique. Specific RMM techniques often have unique technique-specific skills. For progressive muscle relaxation, one must learn to detect, then let go of targeted muscle tension. For yoga, one must maintain a stretch or balance. For breathing exercises, one may learn to breathe more with use of the diaphragm. For self-suggestion a phrase, “warm and heavy,” repeat effortlessly, with “passive volition.” With visualization, one might achieve an image that has real-life clarity. Do RMM meta-skills enhance any of these technique-specific skills? Put concretely, which RMM States are most likely to be associated with mastery of technique-specific skills?

- In spite of my fervent skepticism concerning universal RMM factors, they may well be some factors that persist among some RMM and non-RMM populations. I would speculate “Basic Relaxation/Mindfulness,” “Transformation / Transcendence,” and “Transcendent Positive Emotions” (Borgogna & Smith, 2016, Corbeil et al, 2015; Malia, 2018; Smith, Amutio et al., 1996; Smith et al, 2000).
- RMM state Transformation / Transcendence” may for the largest variance for practitioners of meditation / mindfulness (Smith, Amutio, et al, 1996; Borgogna & Smith, 2015; Corbeil, et al., 2015; Malia, 2018). It should be noted that none of current 11 popular mindfulness scales tap this dimension.
- Texts and scholars of meditation and mindfulness (and to some extent other approaches) consider mind wandering, or default mode activity, as a distraction or impediment to technique mastery. In this article I suggest that mind wandering and fantasy (possibly positive) may well contribute to the development and deployment of technique-specific meta-skills and well as the meta-skills of quiet sustained focus. Perhaps positive mind wandering and fantasy might be conceptualized as a subcategory of quiet sustained focus, implying that this set of meta-skills may well be a rubric, or umbrella construct, encompassing a variety of general related skills. This is another book.
- I propose Level 4 (Deepening) as a precursor to Level 5 (Transformation / Transcendence). The specific RMM states I suggest are entirely speculative. I invite researchers and trainers to offer their suggestions.
- In my experience the majority of practitioners of all forms of RMM experience RMM Levels 1 and 2, Basic Relaxation and Basic Quiet Focus. A clear emerging controversy in meditation and mindfulness research is whether these levels form one or two factors

(Borgogna & Smith, 2015; Corbeil et al., 2015; Malia, 2018). I suspect the answer depends on what population one is studying (advanced meditators vs. naïve college students).

Rubrics and the Dynamic Matrix

A Concluding Lesson from Stress Research

RMM is frequently covered in courses, texts, and journals on stress. Indeed, the history of stress research provides us an important lesson. For much of the 20th century, stress was defined as a unitary construct, for example the sum total of self-reported life change events (Holmes & Rahe, 1967) or the fight or flight response (Cannon, 1929). If you said you were “stressed” that meant you had experienced many life change events, or chronic levels of stress arousal. Richard Lazarus (Lazarus & Folkman (1984) transformed the field by arguing that stress is not a single thing, but a “rubric,” an umbrella term, a complex interacting construct including a wide range of emotions, feelings of physiological arousal, and appraised threats, resources, and coping options. I would call it a dynamic matrix. To properly define and measure stress one must include the changing matrix of variables and describe how they interrelate. Thus distressed student might score high on the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (Holmes & Rahe, 1967), a static single-dimension of stress. Reflecting on their score, they may elaborate:

I'm stressed out! What does this mean? So much has happened to me over the past three months. And everything has to be done at once. Work, school, family. Too much!"

However, using Lazarus' transactional definition, the student's self-report would be more informative:

"I'm stressed out! What does this mean? I have to take a serious exam tomorrow, which is causing me anxiety. Last week I had to work overtime every day, so I didn't

have time to study. I'm so anxious I'm finding it difficult to focus on my readings.

There's no one around to help me, and I simply don't know what I can do. I'm afraid I simply don't have what it takes.

Notice this is not a static snapshot. It is a rich panoramic portrait, a narrative or motion picture vignette. It includes not only the burden of life events, but reduced coping skills and resources, less social support, and aggravated stress appraisals. The Lazarus approach has now become the norm in the conceptualization and measurement of stress.

Current conceptualizations of RMM share the simplicity of early definitions of stress. In contrast, the RMM Lexicon views the full terrain of RMM as a rubric, a dynamic matrix of overlapping, interacting, changing, and evolving dimensions. Simple descriptions of RMM can be likened to a snapshot, an indicator of one thing that might be happening at one time. The photo of a first date may show a couple kissing. The RMM Lexicon is analogous to a video record, revealing a narrative or story. There is the kiss, the dinner, the night after, the wedding, the triplets, and so on. Relaxation training does not end with the release of tension but can be part of something more. The RMM Lexicon provides words to describe this journey.

Table 1

Content (other than words related to awareness, attention, and acceptance) of popular measures of mindfulness

Applied Mindfulness Process Scale (Li et al, 2016)

- Relaxation
- Detached
- Calm
- Pleasant

Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale – Revised (CAMS-R). (Feldman, et al, 2007)
(all items related to awareness, attention, acceptance)

Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (Baer, et al. 2006)

- Calm
- Nonreactive
- Undistracted
- Labeling thoughts
- Focus/losing awareness
- Body awareness

Frieberg Mindfulness Inventory (Walach, et al, 2006)

- Inner Peace
- Ease

Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (Baer, Smith & Allen, 2004)

- Absorbed
- Describe

Langer Mindfulness Scale (Pirson & Langer, 2015)

- Investigate
- Novel
- Involved
- Creative
- Curious

Mindful Attention Awareness Scale MAAS (Brown and Ryan 2003)

All items related to awareness, attention, acceptance

Philadelphia Mindfulness Scale (PHLMS) Cardaciotto et al, 2008)

All items related to awareness, attention, acceptance

Table 1 (continued)

Solloway Mindfulness Survey (Solloway and Fisher, 2007)

Happiness,
See things new way
Thankful

Southampton Mindfulness Questionnaire (SMQ) Chadwick et al (2008)

Calm
Lose myself

Toronto Mindfulness Scale (Lau et al, 2006)

Curious (6 items)
Receptive
Invested

Table 2

Word count for popular mindfulness inventories.

<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Term</u>
3	Calm, Relaxed
4	Curious/ investigate
2	Describe and label
2	Ease
2	Happiness / thankful
1	Absence of worry
1	Absorbed
1	Concentration
1	Creative
1	Detached
1	Engagement
1	Investigate
1	Invested
1	Involved
1	Labeling
1	Losing oneself
1	Nonreactive
1	Novel
1	Peace
1	Pleasant
1	Receptive
1	Seeing things new way
1	Undistracted

Figure 1:

RMM Lexicon with Defining Content and Presenting Font as well as Supporting Factor Analytic Studies

RMM State	Defining Content (and presenting format and font) ¹	Supporting Factor Analytic Studies
Level 1 Basic Relaxation		
RMM 1 Far Away	FAR AWAY and distant from the troubles around me.	1, 14, 15, 16 (13 studies)
RMM 2 Physically Relaxed	PHYSICALLY RELAXED. Muscles relaxed, loose, limp, warm and heavy. Breathing slow, even, and easy.	1, 5, 10, 14, 15, 16 (13 studies)
RMM 3 At Ease, At Peace	AT EASE, AT PEACE.	1, 5, 14, 15, 16 (13 studies), 17, 20
RMM 4 Refreshed	REFRESHED.	14, 16
RMM 5 Pleasant Mind Wandering	PLEASANT MIND WANDERING. Undirected, random positive thoughts.	14
RMM 6 FANTASY, DAYDREAMING	Lost in FANTASY and DAYDREAMING.	14
Level 2 Basic Quiet Focus		
RMM 7 FOCUS, ABSORPTION	Periods of sustained, continuous FOCUS. ABSORPTION.	1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 14, 17, 18, 20
RMM 8 CENTERED, GROUNDED	CENTERED, GROUNDED.	5, 14
RMM 9 QUIET	QUIET. Still, few thoughts. Little mind wandering.	1, 5, 14, 15, 16(12 studies)
RMM 10 UNBOTHERED	UNBOTHERED. Accepting. When I have a negative thought or feeling, I don't get caught up in it. No judging, clinging, pushing away, figuring things out.	1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 15,

Figure 1 (continued)

RMM 11 EASY, EFFORTLESS	EASY, EFFORTLESS. Effortless to let go, put thoughts aside, sustain focus.	5, 8, 14
Level 3 Awakening		
RMM 12 OBSERVER	<i>I feel like an OBSERVER standing aside and watching what happens.</i>	3, 4, 8, 12, 14
RMM 13 CLEAR, AWAKE, AWARE	CLEAR, AWAKE, AWARE. <i>I see things as they really are.</i>	1, 7, 9, 11, 14, 15
RMM 14 INTERESTED, CURIOUS, FASCINATED	INTERESTED, CURIOUS, FASCINATED.	1, 2, 7, 12
RMM 15 BEAUTIFUL	<i>Things seem BEAUTIFUL.</i>	14
Level 4 Deepening		
RMM 16 GOING DEEPER	GOING DEEPER. <i>Things seem unexpected, new, changing, opening up, being revealed. Feel like I was in a different place or space.</i>	5, 14
RMM 17 SPACIOUSNESS, EXPANSIVENESS	<i>Sense of SPACIOUSNESS, EXPANSIVENESS.</i>	14
RMM 18 SENSE OF SOMETHING GREATER	<i>I feel the SENSE OF SOMETHING GREATER than myself (God, a higher power, spirit, energy, love, or consciousness.); God is with me.</i>	14
RMM 19 MEANING, PURPOSE, DIRECTION	<i>Sense of MEANING, PURPOSE, DIRECTION.</i>	14
Level 5 Transformation / Transcendence		
RMM 20 REVERENT, PRAYERFUL	<i>I feel REVERENT, PRAYERFUL.</i>	1, 5, 10, 15, 16 (12 studies)
RMM 21 AWE / WONDER, DEEP MYSTERY	AWE / WONDER, DEEP MYSTERY of things beyond my understanding.	5, 10, 14, 15, 16 (4 studies), 20
RMM 22 SPIRITUAL, MYSTICAL	<i>I feel a profound personal meaningful "SPIRITUAL" or "MYSTICAL" experience sudden awakening or insight.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Feel an underlying hidden TRUTH.</i> • <i>Feel AT ONE.</i> • <i>Feelings so profound they COULD NOT BE PUT INTO WORDS.</i> 	1, 5, 10, 13, 14, 19

Figure 1 (continued)

	Transcendent Positive Emotions	
RMM 23 HAPPY, OPTIMISTIC, TRUSTING	<i>HAPPY, OPTIMISTIC, TRUSTING.</i>	, 2, 5, 10, 14, 15, 16 (13 studies), 17, 20
RMM 24 LOVING, CARING, COMPASSION	<i>LOVING, CARING, COMPASSION.</i>	1, 5, 14, 15
RMM 25 THANKFUL	<i>THANKFUL. Grateful.</i>	14

¹ In my experience, the meaning of RMM states is influenced not only by item content but by scale format and font size. Over 20 years I have experimented with 12 questionnaire styles and have found the following formats and fonts most readable interpretable by participants. Note that the title of each RMM state is presented in all caps.

1 = Alexander, 1991. (included non-relaxation filler items, not considered)

2 = Akande, 2002

3 = Baer et al., 2008

4 = Baum, et al., 2010

5 = Borgogna & Smith, 2015,

6 = Boyle, 1986

7 = Cardaciotto et al, 2008

8 = Chadwick, et al, 2008

9 = Chan, et al., (2016)

10 = Corbeil et al, 2015

11 = Feldman, et al., 2007

12 = Lao, et al., 2006

13 = Maclean et al, 2012

14 = Malia, 2018

15 = Smith, Amutio et al, 1996

16 = Smith et al., 2000 (13 separate studies)

17 = Watson & Clark, 1999

18 = Watson & Naragon, 2009

19 = Yaden et al, 2018

20 Zevon & Tellegen, 1982

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Appendix A
RMM Tracker - State

WHAT DID YOU FEEL OR EXPERIENCE IN THE EXERCISE OR ACTIVITY YOU JUST COMPLETED?

CLICK BOXES USING THIS KEY

(SKIP ITEMS YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND OR DIDN'T FEEL OR EXPERIENCE)

Felt this SLIGHTLY

Felt this MODERATELY

Felt this VERY MUCH

Felt this EXTREMELY

1. FAR AWAY and distant from the troubles around me.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
2. PHYSICALLY RELAXED. Muscles relaxed, loose, limp, warm and heavy. Breathing slow, even, and easy.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
3. AT EASE, AT PEACE.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
4. REFRESHED.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
5. PLEASANT MIND WANDERING. Undirected, random positive thoughts.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
6. Lost in FANTASY and DAYDREAMING.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
7. Periods of sustained, continuous FOCUS. ABSORPTION.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
8. CENTERED, GROUNDED.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
9. QUIET. Still, few thoughts. Little mind wandering.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
10. UNBOTHERED. Accepting. When I had a negative though or feeling, I didn't get caught up in it. No judging, clinging, pushing away, figuring things out.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
11. EASY, EFFORTLESS. Effortless to let go, put thoughts aside, sustain focus.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
12. I felt like an OBSERVER standing aside and watching what happens.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
13. CLEAR, AWAKE, AWARE. I saw things as they really are.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
14. INTERESTED, CURIOUS, FASCINATED	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
15. Things seemed BEAUTIFUL.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
16. GOING DEEPER. Things seemed unexpected, new, changing, opening up, being revealed. Felt like I was in a different place or space.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
17. Sense of SPACIOUSNESS, EXPANSIVENESS.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
18. I felt the SENSE OF SOMETHING GREATER than myself (God, a higher power, spirit, energy, love, or consciousness.): God is with me.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
19. A sense of MEANING, PURPOSE, DIRECTION.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
20. I felt REVERENT, PRAYERFUL.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
21. AWE / WONDER, DEEP MYSTERY of things beyond my understanding.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
22. I felt a profound personal meaningful " SPIRITUAL " or " MYSTICAL " experience sudden awakening or insight.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Felt an underlying hidden TRUTH. • Feeling AT ONE. • Feelings so profound they COULD NOT BE PUT INTO WORDS. 	
23. HAPPY, OPTIMISTIC, TRUSTING.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
24. LOVING, CARING, COMPASSION.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
25. THANKFUL. Grateful.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix B (Continued)

12. **CLEAR, AWAKE, AWARE.** *I saw things as they really are.*

--

NEVER ONCE A YEAR ONCE A MONTH ONCE A WEEK ABOUT EVERY DAY

13. **INTERESTED, CURIOUS, FASCINATED.**

--

NEVER ONCE A YEAR ONCE A MONTH ONCE A WEEK ABOUT EVERY DAY

14. *Things seemed* **BEAUTIFUL.**

--

NEVER ONCE A YEAR ONCE A MONTH ONCE A WEEK ABOUT EVERY DAY

15. *I felt like an* **OBSERVER** *standing aside and watching what happened.*

--

NEVER ONCE A YEAR ONCE A MONTH ONCE A WEEK ABOUT EVERY DAY

16. **GOING DEEPER.** *Things seemed unexpected, new, changing, opening up, being revealed. Felt like I was in a different place or space.*

--

NEVER ONCE A YEAR ONCE A MONTH ONCE A WEEK ABOUT EVERY DAY

17. *Sense of* **SPACIOUSNESS, EXPANSIVENESS.**

--

NEVER ONCE A YEAR ONCE A MONTH ONCE A WEEK ABOUT EVERY DAY

18. *I felt the* **SENSE OF SOMETHING GREATER** *than myself (God, higher power, spirit, energy, love, or consciousness.)*

--

NEVER ONCE A YEAR ONCE A MONTH ONCE A WEEK ABOUT EVERY DAY

19. *A sense of* **MEANING, PURPOSE, DIRECTION.**

--

NEVER ONCE A YEAR ONCE A MONTH ONCE A WEEK ABOUT EVERY DAY

20. *Feeling* **REVERENT, PRAYERFUL.**

--

NEVER ONCE A YEAR ONCE A MONTH ONCE A WEEK ABOUT EVERY DAY

21. **AWE / WONDER, DEEP MYSTERY** *of things beyond my understanding.*

--

NEVER ONCE A YEAR ONCE A MONTH ONCE A WEEK ABOUT EVERY DAY

22. *I felt a profound personal meaningful* **"SPIRITUAL" or "MYSTICAL"** *experience -- sudden awakening or insight. Felt an underlying hidden TRUTH.*

Feeling **AT ONE.**
Feelings so profound they **COULD NOT BE PUT INTO WORDS.**

--

NEVER ONCE A YEAR ONCE A MONTH ONCE A WEEK ABOUT EVERY DAY

23. **HAPPY, OPTIMISTIC, TRUSTING.**

--

NEVER ONCE A YEAR ONCE A MONTH ONCE A WEEK ABOUT EVERY DAY

24. **LOVING, CARING, COMPASSION.**

--

NEVER ONCE A YEAR ONCE A MONTH ONCE A WEEK ABOUT EVERY DAY

25. **THANKFUL.** *Grateful.*

--

NEVER ONCE A YEAR ONCE A MONTH ONCE A WEEK ABOUT EVERY DAY

Footnote

¹ Consistent with current practice among researchers and trainers, we consider only “self-relaxation” exercises. Self-relaxation includes exercises one can do by oneself without the required assistance of a trainer or equipment. Thus, we do not include baths, massage, and biofeedback. We do not include active forms of leisure or recreation, given that all often involve a degree of complex and discursive effort and even judgment. Our RMM lexicon may well apply to assisted relaxation, leisure, or recreation, and these activities may well interact with RMM.