

Buddhist meditation helped calm boys, coach trapped in Thai cave

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In this July 3, 2018, file image taken from video provided by the Royal Thai Navy Facebook Page, the boys smile as a Thai navy medic helps them inside a cave in Mae Sai, Thailand. Photo by: Royal Thai Navy Facebook Page via AP

MAE SAI, Thailand — Twelve boys and their soccer coach were trapped in a cave in Thailand.

On June 23, they were exploring the cave in Mae Sai, Thailand. Suddenly, water flooded in around them. They were stuck in the cave.

On Sunday, July 8, four boys were rescued. They were taken to nearby hospitals for treatment.

On Monday, July 9, four more boys were rescued. On Tuesday, July 10, the four remaining boys and the coach were rescued.

Ekapol Chanthawong is the coach. He meditates every day.

The Buddhist Practice Of Meditation

Mediation is important in the Buddhist religion. The practice involves paying attention to the breath, body and feelings. When people meditate, they observe what happens in their mind. Many people find that meditating helps them stay calm.

It also could have helped the coach and the boys.

The group was discovered July 2. They were mostly healthy. Still, experts say the event has likely hurt them mentally. It could have gotten worse the longer they were stuck.

While stuck, the boys could have been afraid and anxious or worried. They may have been confused and maybe even hopeless, said Paul Auerbach. He works for Stanford University's medical school in California.

Anxious Moments For Group Stuck In Cave

Most people feel anxious every now and then. It is a normal feeling. For example, you might have a test coming up that you feel anxious about. In certain situations, and for certain people, anxiety can be different. Some people feel so worried or anxious that it is difficult to do everyday things. Anxiety can be helped by talking to a doctor. Meditation can help, too.

Thai navy divers had been sent to visit the boys. They had taken them supplies. They had also given the boys medical treatment.

Videos taken inside the cave July 2 showed the boys looking skinny. Still, they were laughing and joking with the divers.

Weather Worries For Remaining Boys, Coach

The group left in the cave over the weekend did not know when they could leave. It was not clear when they could. More storms were on the way. The storms could have made the flooding worse.

It could have been months before the boys left. Thailand has lots of rain until October.

The boys were happy when discovered, Auerbach said. However, they have challenges ahead. Getting rescued brought more worries.

David Spiegel studies the mind at Stanford University. Teenagers and pre-teens are very social, he said. Having friends around can be a great help, he said.

The boys and their coach are close. They've been on many adventures together. They have gone bike riding in the mountains.

Experts say Ekapol's meditation helped the group, too.

Coach's Calming Influence

Meditation, Spiegel said, makes it seem like fearful thoughts are like a storm passing. With calmness, one can fight through them.

Aisha Wiboonrungrueng's 11-year-old son Chanin was trapped in the cave. She also believes Ekapol's calm personality helped the boys.

The group will continue to face challenges, experts say.

Thai hospitals are ready to care for the boys. The hospitals will monitor the boys until they feel better.

Coming back to the real world will bring them a lot of attention. The news, family and friends will want to talk to them. It is very important the boys be watched over even after this attention passes, Auerbach said.

Quiz

1 Read the section "Anxious Moments For Group Stuck In Cave."

Select the sentence from the section that shows that the boys seemed to be in good mood.

- (A) Anxiety can be helped by talking to a doctor.
- (B) Thai navy divers had been sent to visit the boys.
- (C) They had also given the boys medical treatment.
- (D) Still, they were laughing and joking with the divers.

2 Read the paragraph from the section "Coach's Calming Influence."

Meditation, Spiegel said, makes it seem like fearful thoughts are like a storm passing. With calmness, one can fight through them.

Which question is answered in this paragraph?

- (A) Did the boys' families meditate to keep calm?
- (B) What religion is meditation important in?
- (C) What can meditation help with?
- (D) Who showed the boys how to meditate?

3 Which event happened FIRST in the article?

- (A) Navy divers took supplies to the boys in the cave.
- (B) The coach was rescued from the cave.
- (C) Water flooded the cave.
- (D) The soccer team explored the cave.

4 WHY do experts think the boys will continue to face challenges?

- (A) because being trapped in the cave may have hurt the boys mentally
- (B) because the hospitals do not have room to take care of the boys
- (C) because family and friends will want to talk to the boys
- (D) because the boys will no longer be with their soccer coach

Answer Key

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