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Ray Dalio and Mario Batali Meditate on the Secret of Their Success

The billionaire founder of hedge fund firm Bridgewater and the frenetic Iron Chef share a strong taste for meditation.



By Michael Peltz

What do hedge fund billionaire Raymond Dalio and restaurateur Mario Batali have in common? Quite a bit, it turns out, as they explained to some 300 people during a Town Hall meeting on meditation in New York earlier this month. Dalio, founder of Bridgewater Associates—the world's largest hedge fund firm, with \$87 billion in assets—and Batali & Bastianich Hospitality Group co-owner Batali, who runs more than 20 restaurants, are both big devotees of Transcendental Meditation, which was introduced to the West by India's Maharishi Mahesh Yogi a half-century ago.

The event, held in a subterranean auditorium at the AXA Equitable Center on Manhattan's West Side, was hosted by the David Lynch Foundation. Lynch, the director of *Blue Velvet* and co-creator of the TV series *Twin Peaks*, started the foundation nine years ago to give children everywhere the opportunity to learn how to meditate. Lynch has been practicing TM since 1973.

Dalio for his part, has been meditating for 42 years. TM is the single most important reason for his success, he told journalist Andrew Ross Sorkin of *New York Times Dealbook* and CNBC *Squawk Box* fame, the moderator of the evening.

Dalio, who started Bridgewater in 1975 out of his two-bedroom Upper East Side apartment, says that meditation enables him to stay calm, clear and creative in the face of market craziness. “I feel like a ninja in a fight,” he explained. “What comes at you feels like it is moving in slow motion.”

Dalio built Bridgewater on what he calls a culture of “thoughtful disagreement,” in which employees of the Westport, Connecticut-based firm are encouraged to challenge one another’s ideas. “You need independent thinking to beat the market,” he told Sorkin.

Batali’s experience with meditation is far shorter than Dalio’s but no less transformative. The Iron Chef, sporting his trademark pink button-down shirt, blue fleece vest and orange Crocs, has been practicing TM twice a day for the past 18 months. “What surprised me was how quickly I could feel refreshment,” he said. “It’s not like, ‘Oh, man, I need a stiff shot of Transcendental Meditation.’ It puts you in a place where you don’t necessarily need that.”

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