

Mindfulness Interventions for Trauma-Exposed Civilians: A Scoping Review



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BACKGROUND

Mindfulness interventions include mind-body practices such as meditation and yoga aimed at awareness of the present, stress reduction, and increased happiness

Research supports mindfulness meditation as a means of improving physical, mental, and emotional health¹

Mindfulness interventions in veteran populations have been effective at reducing PTSD symptomology²

OBJECTIVES

To synthesize studies investigating effects of meditation and yoga interventions on trauma-exposed non-military personnel

To identify areas of this field where additional research is needed

METHOD

A structured search of PubMed, PsycINFO, Academic Search Ultimate, CINAHL, and SPORTDiscus was conducted using a combination of free text keywords and controlled vocabulary terms.

Eligible studies were included if: (1) treatment was specifically a form of meditation, mind-body therapy, or yoga (2) study participants experienced a traumatic life event, (3) study population included at least 20 subjects, (4) studies measured changes in PTSD symptomology and (5) studies were published between 2000 and 2020 in English, peer-reviewed journals.

Author	Year	Number of Participants	Population	Intervention	Findings
Bandy, C. et. al	2019	68	College students with PTSD diagnosis	Transcendental Meditation	Significant reduction in PTSD symptoms compared to waitlist control, and greater reduction in participants practicing more frequently
Descilo, T. et. al	2010	183	Tsunami survivors	Yoga breath practices	Significant reduction in PTSD symptoms compared to waitlist control
Gallegos, A. et. al	2015	42	Adult women with history of interpersonal trauma in youth	Mindfulness-based stress reduction	Significant reduction in PTSD symptoms and inflammatory cytokine IL-6 levels from baseline
Jindani, F. & Khalsa, G.	2015	80	Adults with self-reported trauma	Kundalini yoga	Significant reduction in symptoms compared to waitlist control
Kelly, A. & Garland, E.	2017	45	Women with history of intimate partner violence	Mindfulness-based stress reduction	Significant reduction in PTSD symptoms compared to waitlist control
Kim, S.H. et. al	2013	22	Nurses with PTSD diagnosis	Mindfulness-based stretching and deep breathing	Significant decrease in PTSD symptoms and significant increase in serum cortisol levels compared to waitlist control
Lee, M. Y. et. al	2017	63	Women with history of interpersonal abuse and mental or substance use disorder	Meditation	Significant reduction in PTSD symptoms compared to waitlist control
Lyons, T. et. al	2019	54	Incarcerated men with history of substance use	Mindfulness based relapse prevention	No significant reduction in PTSD symptoms compared to waitlist control
Mitchell, K. et. al	2014	38	Women with PTSD diagnosis	Hatha yoga	No significant reduction in PTSD symptoms compared to waitlist control
Nidich, S. et. al	2016	188	Male inmates	Transcendental meditation	Significant reduction in PTSD symptoms compared to waitlist control
Nidich, S. et. al	2017	22	Female inmates	Transcendental meditation	Significant reduction in PTSD symptoms compared to waitlist control
Quinones, N. et. al	2015	100	Adults with PTSD diagnosis	Yoga	No significant reduction in PTSD symptoms compared to waitlist control
Rees, B. et. al	2013	42	Civilians exposed to trauma from war	Transcendental meditation	Significant reduction in PTSD symptoms compared to waitlist control, and reductions maintained 135 days post-intervention
Shors, T. et. al	2018	137	Women with history of sexual violence	Meditation and aerobic exercise	Significant reduction in PTSD symptoms with meditation and exercise and meditation alone compared to exercise alone and no training
Thorndottir, K. et. al	2014	66	Earthquake survivors	Hatha yoga	No significant reduction in PTSD symptoms compared to waitlist control

Figure 1: Selective quantitative studies from search strategy

RESULTS

Of the 1,583 articles identified in the initial search, 919 titles and abstracts were reviewed after removing duplicates, and 26 articles met the inclusion criteria

17 studies found quantitative reductions in PTSD symptomology, 4 found qualitative improvements, and 5 found no significant differences

Of the 26 studies, 16 of the interventions were performed in a group setting, 9 included group and individual components, and 1 was entirely individual interventions

DISCUSSION

Mindfulness-based interventions hold great promise for reduction of PTSD symptoms in trauma-exposed, non-military adults

Randomized controlled trials have established the efficacy of this intervention, but more longitudinal research is needed to evaluate long-term impacts

Future study design should include methods of tracking individual practice outside of group interventions and the quality of the participants' meditation in order to establish if more frequent, high-quality meditation is correlated with better outcomes

Further research is necessary to determine the role of a group setting in the efficacy of a mindfulness intervention, and the impact of different environmental conditions during mindfulness interventions



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