

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
National
Guard

Longitudinal Evaluation of the Relationship Between Mindfulness, General Distress, Anxiety, and PTSD in a Recently Deployed National Guard Sample

Call, D., Pitcock, J., & Pyne, J. (2015). Longitudinal evaluation of the relationship between mindfulness, general distress, anxiety, and PTSD in a recently deployed national guard sample. *Mindfulness*, 6(6), 1303-1312.
doi:10.1007/s12671-015-0400-0

SUMMARY: Post-deployment self-report data were used to examine the effects mindfulness has on general distress, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms of recently deployed Army National Guard members. Results indicated that mindfulness was associated with reduced distress, anxiety, and some symptoms of PTSD.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Higher levels of mindfulness at three months post-deployment predicted lower levels of distress at 15 months post-deployment, after controlling for distress, combat zone deployment, and combat experience.
- After controlling for anxiety level at three months, combat zone deployment, and combat experience, mindfulness was associated with lower levels of anxiety at 15 months post-deployment.
- Higher levels of mindfulness at three months post-deployment did not predict lower levels of PTSD at 15 months post-deployment overall, but did predict lower hyperarousal symptoms.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide mindfulness education and training to Service members to promote resilience prior to deployment
- Offer workshops during reintegration to help Service members and their families adjust to the Service members' return
- Disseminate information regarding possible mental health symptoms Service members may encounter when returning from deployment and encourage the use of mindfulness-based skills to help Service members cope

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Promote the development of programs that teach Service members mindfulness-based skills to promote resilience
- Encourage collaboration among DoD programs and community-based organizations to help support Service members as they reintegrate after deployment
- Recommend education for service providers regarding the potential usefulness of mindfulness-based skills for recently deployed Service members

This product is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with The University of Minnesota.



Putting Research to Work for Military Families



METHODS

- Army National Guard Soldiers from aviation or infantry battalions, who were deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq in 2011, were recruited during a pre-deployment Solider Readiness Processing drill weekend.
- Data were collected as part of a larger longitudinal study that examine pre- and post-deployment predictors of post-deployment combat stress.
- Guard Soldiers completed two post-deployment measures at three months and 15 months post-deployment during post-deployment drill weekends.

PARTICIPANTS

- One hundred and ninety eight National Guard Soldiers completed both post-deployment measures; most participants were infantry members (n = 146).
- The majority of participants were male (92.5%), White (71.9%), and between the ages of 18-60 years.
- Guard Soldiers were deployed for an average of seven to eight months.

LIMITATIONS

- The sample consisted of National Guard Soldiers, therefore results may not be generalizable to other service branches.
- Mindfulness measures were administered during post-deployment, making it difficult to know Guard Soliders level of mindfulness prior to deployment and how deployment may have impacted levels of mindfulness.
- This study utilized self-reported data, which may not accurately capture mindfulness-based skills and limits the conclusions that can be drawn about Guard Soliders mindfulness skills.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Explore which aspects of mindfulness are most helpful for fostering resilience among Service members
- Explore how to effectively integrate mindfulness-based skills into training and treatment approaches for Service members
- Assess mindfulness during pre-deployment as well as during post-deployment to more accurately evaluate the effects of mindfulness over time

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:
<https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>