

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Promoting Reintegration of National Guard Veterans and Their Partners Using a Self-Directed Program of Integrative Therapies: A Pilot Study

Collinge, W., Kahn, J., & Soltysik, R. (2012). Promoting reintegration of national guard veterans and their partners using a self-directed program of integrative therapies: A pilot study. *Military Medicine*, 177(12), 1477-1485. doi:10.7205/MILMED-D-12-00121

SUMMARY: This study analyzed report pilot data from phase one of a project to develop and evaluate a self-directed program of integrative therapies for National Guard personnel and significant relationship partners (N = 43 dyads) to support reintegration and resilience after return from Iraq or Afghanistan. Results suggest that a trusted relationship may offer a viable approach to implementing self-directed interventions for promoting well-being during post-deployment reintegration.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Veterans reported significant reductions in ratings of physical pain, physical tension, irritability, anxiety and worry, and depression after massage therapy.
- Results suggested declining levels of tension and irritability in both Veterans and partners.
- Significant improvements in posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, and self-compassion were seen in both Veterans and partners; and in stress for partners.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Veterans reported significant reductions in ratings of physical pain, physical tension, irritability, anxiety and worry, and depression after massage therapy
- Results suggested declining levels of tension and irritability in both Veterans and partners
- Significant improvements in posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, and self-compassion were seen in both Veterans and partners; and in stress for partners

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support additional research on integrative therapy methods and their relation to resilience during the reintegration process
- Encourage the development and continuation of programs that can promote resilience in Service members, their partners, and children
- Promote reintegration programs that include attention to assisting Service members' families in adjusting to the Service member's return

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METHODS

- Participants were recruited at reintegration events and via e-newsletters.
- The monthly survey package was administered to both Veterans and partners at baselines one and two (30 days apart), four weeks after beginning intervention, and again at eight weeks (end of intervention).
- Intervention was guided meditative, contemplative, and relaxation exercises (audio) and instruction in simple massage techniques (video) to promote stress reduction and interpersonal connectedness.
- Participants were instructed to practice their choice of techniques at least three to four times per week for eight weeks and to try them all at least once during the course of the eight week intervention period.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants (N = 43 dyads) consisted of National Guard personnel and their significant partner.
- Of the sample, 37 of 43 dyads were White, and all participants had at least high school education or further. No other demographic data were provided.
- Participant compensation was \$20 for each weekly report and \$25 for each monthly survey.

LIMITATIONS

- The study does not include a comparison group, which influences program effect.
- Hurricane Irene struck New England midway through the intervention phase, requiring temporary deployment of some participants which delayed any reporting from Service members for multiple weeks.
- The sample was only taken from the National Guard, which limits generalizability to other military branches.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Expand on phase one of this study, and explore other variables such as optimal duration of intervention period and longevity of effects for phase two
- Explore usability of the intervention by including more ethnically diverse populations, and effects for Veterans from various branches of the military
- Include web-based delivery to computers and mobile devices and compare outcomes to an in-person program currently being used in the military to promote reintegration

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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