

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Effects of Sensory-Enhanced Yoga on Symptoms of Combat Stress in Deployed Military Personnel

Stoller, C. C., Greuel, J. H., Cimini, L. S., Fowler, M. S., & Koomer, J. A. (2012). Effects of sensory-enhanced yoga on symptoms of combat stress in deployed military personnel. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 66(1), 59-68. doi:10.5014/ajot.2012.001230

SUMMARY: It is important to identify techniques that can help Service members reduce combat stress during deployment. The effects of sensory-enhanced yoga on anxiety and sensory processing were examined, and results showed that sensory-enhanced yoga reduced anxiety symptoms.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Sensory-enhanced yoga decreased anxiety when comparing the treatment group with the control group (no treatment).
- Participants reported a greater quality of life after completing a sensory-enhanced yoga treatment.
- Of treatment participants, 54% reported sleep improvements and 37% noted that they felt more calm and relaxed.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Engage Service members in pre-deployment classes that provide sensory-enhanced techniques that addresses stress related to combat exposure
- Disseminate information to military families regarding possible symptoms of distress Service members may face during deployment and where individuals can find help
- Provide education to Service members that helps increase positive coping skills for anxiety during deployment

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Promote the development of activities at installations that engage Service members and their families in positive coping behaviors related to high stress situations
- Encourage the training of professionals to better identify Service members who are showing symptoms of combat stress
- Continue to support programs that aim to reduce the stigma around seeking help

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METHODS

- Participants were recruited from a U. S. military installation in Iraq via email and flyers.
- Data were collected via self-administered assessments, both pre- and post-treatment.
- Over a three week period, half of the participants took part in at least two sensory-enhanced yoga sessions a week and minimum of nine sessions for the entire period.
- The relationships between participation in sensory-enhanced yoga, anxiety, and sensory processing were analyzed.

PARTICIPANTS

- Active Duty participants included 48 men and 22 women.
- The sample had an average age of 32 years (SD = 8.05).
- Among the sample, 40% were in the Army and 60% were in the Air Force.
- The race/ethnicity of the Service members were not reported.

LIMITATIONS

- Participants were in the Army and the Air Force, which limits the ability to extend results to other branches of the military.
- Length of deployment and amount of combat exposure were not measured, which may have influenced findings.
- Due to self-administered assessments, the Service member may have been biased on their responses.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Conduct longitudinal studies to examine the effect of sensory-enhanced yoga on Service members
- Replicate the current study and include measures on combat exposure and length of deployment
- Study current pre-deployment programs that incorporate combat stress management and compare that to this treatment study

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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