

YogaHOPE RESEARCH IN BRIEF

TIMBo Implementation in Women's Groups in Massachusetts and Maine

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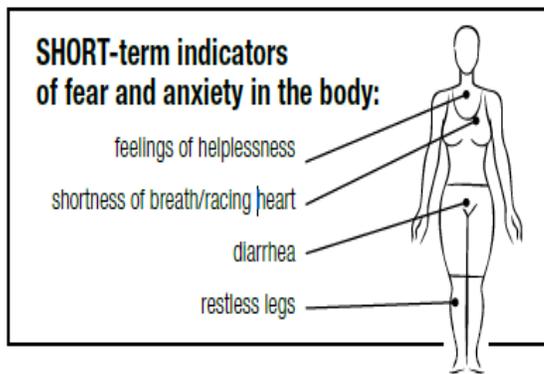
Overview

A growing evidence-base supports the connection between trauma and disease. Research suggests that mindfulness practices, such as yoga and meditation, can lead to neurological and physiological changes that may counter the impact of trauma, and promote health and well-being.

yogaHOPE

yogaHOPE, is a non-profit organization dedicated to bringing rehabilitative trauma-informed mind-body programming to women across the globe. yogaHOPE strives to lead women toward empowerment and recovery by cultivating mindfulness through yoga, meditation, and non-judgmental self-inquiry.

yogaHOPE's focus is on the implementation of a Trauma Informed Mind Body (TIMBo) program. TIMBo offers a deliverable, research-based curriculum addressing the ways in which mind-body practices allow for long-term traumatic stress recovery. TIMBo was developed specifically for women suffering from chronic trauma, addiction and/or abuse and offers women the tools needed to address the psycho-social, emotional, and physiological root causes, and enabling them to heal from trauma and to improve emotional regulation. The program is evidence-based, trauma-informed, and gender-responsive, utilizing the strengths that already are present in female survivors of trauma.



The TIMBo program provides teachers with a structured curriculum of 16 sessions that leaves participants with tools to address their habituated patterns and symptoms that lead to relapse and entrapment in the cycle of trauma.

The TIMBo program addresses three primary objectives:

1. The first and most concrete objective of this program is to give women simple, effective and accessible **tools** to utilize as active coping strategies for self-regulation. These tools can be used anywhere, anytime and take just minutes to utilize.
2. The second objective is to help women gain **awareness** of their bodies and their body sensations. Emotional traumatic memory becomes lodged in the body and is triggered in an endless feedback loop that becomes chronic and debilitating in many.
3. The third and long-term objective is to help women renegotiate their self-belief through awareness of their inner experience, and begin the process of **transformation**.

Context

Beginning in the Spring of 2013, the TIMBo program was implemented in women's groups in Massachusetts and Maine, led by trained and certified TIMBo facilitators. The sessions were run 2 times per week for 8 weeks. Each session was approximately 2 hours long. The first and last sessions were introduction and exit sessions with the remaining 14 sessions focused on seven specific topics; one topic for every two sessions. The structure of each session included 30 minutes group discussion (process/talk therapy), 45 minutes asana practice (yoga), 20 minutes guided meditation. Women were recruited from the general population.

Trauma informed programming includes:

1. *Safety*
2. *Predictability*
3. *Structure*
4. *Repetition*

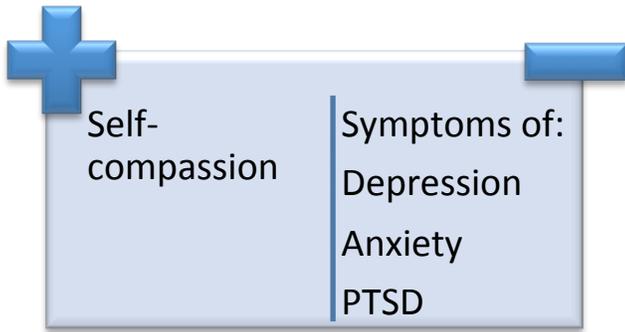
Synthesis of Findings

The facilitators distributed two assessments over the course of the program, one in the beginning and one at the end. Fourteen women completed the pre and post assessments. Measures examined symptoms of depression, anxiety and traumatic stress and explored levels of self-compassion. Women were also able to respond to more open-ended qualitative questions regarding their experience of the program. (See sample responses on the following page.)

General Findings

For participants, a history of abuse was common. The majority of women had experienced physical or sexual violence. A history of physical assault was reported by 57% of the women. Sixty-four percent of women reported experience of sexual assault, and 79% reported a history of unwanted sexual experiences.

After completion of the TIMBo program, symptoms of **depression, anxiety, and trauma (PTSD)** were **significantly lower**. In addition, women scored **significantly higher** on a measure of **self-compassion** after participation in the program as compared to before.



In addition to the above measures, there was a significant difference in the number of tools utilized by the women after completing TIMBo as compared to before participation in the program. After completing the program, the women on average used more tools to manage emotions than prior to programming. There was a significant increase in participant's utilization of *writing/journaling, meditation, yoga practice, and self-talk*. As one participant explained, "The breathing and meditation help me remain calm, and think before I react. I use the self-talk to change how I talk to myself."

	Pre	Post
Writing	38%	57%
Prayer	85%	86%
Breath	93%	100%
Meditation	46%	86%
Yoga	33%	89%
Self-talk	43%	100%

*Skills utilized pre and post programming.
Italic= slightly significant, **bold** = highly significant

In addition to finding benefit from tools learned, participants also shared tools with others. All of the participants indicated sharing tools with other women; 43% shared tools with men. As one participant stated, "Many of these tools are universal and I always share what I learn."

To date, results are promising and indicate the benefit of the TIMBo program to increase coping strategies as well as to significantly decrease the experience of symptoms of anxiety and traumatic stress. It should be noted that outcomes are limited based on the small number of participants to date. A full scale implementation of the program will provide additional data.

"I have re-found my faith in myself and my confidence. Life hasn't been as much of a struggle." – TIMBo participant

Moving Forward

The yogaHOPE Research Team has a number of research components planned that will be incorporated as part of the full scale implementation of the TIMBo program throughout the US and in numerous countries all over the world.

Ongoing assessment strategies will include:

- Enhanced pre and post assessment
- Potential for longer-term follow-up
- Extensive qualitative analysis
- Case studies
- Exploration of cultural translation and implementation of the program

"TIMBo has helped me to use the tools to view an issue using perspective, confidence, creativity, clear communication and compassion." –TIMBo participant

Well-constructed and implemented evaluation strategies will allow for additional demonstration of the effectiveness of the program. yogaHOPE understands the benefit of program evaluation through research strategies. The hope is that this research will provide data to better understand how yoga and related mindfulness practices can serve survivors of trauma. Well-supported research will allow for further exploration of the impact of program.

"I feel much better equipped than previously at distancing myself from stressful emotions and at handling stressful or traumatic events." –TIMBo participant