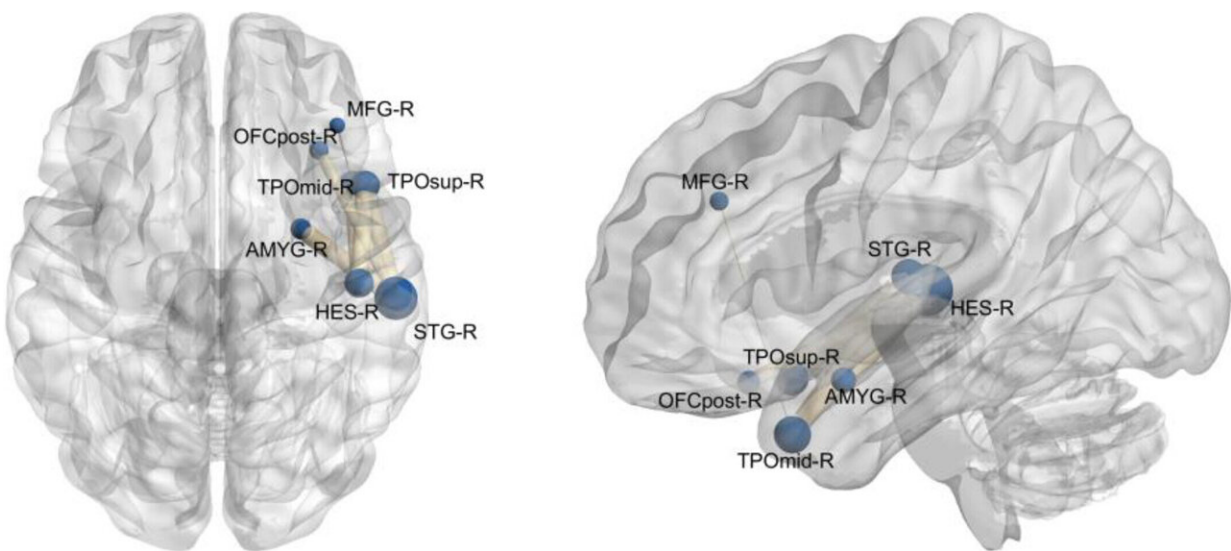


Compassion and mindfulness eight-week program for those with post-traumatic stress symptoms

December 29 2023



Significant network reflecting increases in Mid–Post alpha-band connectivity for the intervention group. Note: The relative node strength is denoted by the size of the node; a larger node size indicates greater node strength. AMYG-R, right amygdala; HES-R, right Heschl's gyrus; MFG-R, right middle frontal gyrus; OFCpost-R, right posterior orbital gyrus; STG-R, right superior temporal gyrus; TPOmid-R, right middle temporal gyrus; TPOsup-R, right superior temporal gyrus. Credit: *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy* (2023). DOI: 10.1002/cpp.2929

A little compassion can go a long way in life, and just eight weeks of a

new compassion and mindfulness-based program has made a world of difference to those with post-traumatic stress symptoms.

The new eight-week program, trialed as part of a study run by Murdoch University School of Psychology researchers, used compassion and mindfulness-based exposure therapy treatment in a group setting.

Results saw participants move from having clinical post-traumatic stress symptoms to non-clinical conditions.

Clinical Psychologist, Dr. Aretta Kummar, who led the study while completing her Doctor of Psychology (Clinical Psychology) at Murdoch said application of the group program more widely would be able to fill a gap for people who may otherwise suffer without treatment.

"Although post-traumatic stress symptoms can be debilitating, many people don't seek treatment unless they experience a full post-traumatic stress disorder," Dr. Kummar said.

The new eight-week program, focused on Compassion-oriented and Mindfulness-based Exposure Therapy (CoMET), was developed by Dr. Kummar and Murdoch University Adjunct Professor Helen Correia and provides participants an opportunity to receive support across a set time, in a supportive environment, with great results.

Dr. Hakuei Fujiyama, from Murdoch's School of Psychology supervised Dr. Kummar's research.

"Participants who took part in the study found post-traumatic stress symptoms improved from clinical to non-clinical levels and they also showed improved alpha-band connectivity in a [brain network](#) that includes the amygdala—the brain's fear center," Dr. Fujiyama said.

"Mindfulness and compassion are helpful emotion regulatory strategies and this innovative use of the same principles has been shown to improve quality of life for participants."

Researchers used participants' self-reports on questionnaires and also monitored changes in brain network connectivity, which were assessed at pre, mid and post-intervention points, while employing a waitlist control design.

Participants' engagement in mindfulness and self-compassion practices between sessions was also assessed via weekly homework reflection sheets.

The full study and results were [published](#) in the *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy Journal*.

Dr. Kummar now has her own clinic, ASK Psychology, in Fremantle, where she hopes to put this new technique into action.

"In line with my research, my expertise lies in the areas of anxiety and trauma, so the majority of my clients present with these issues," Dr. Kummar said.

"I already use elements of the intervention with my individual clients, but with the publication of this research, I hope to start group programs at my practice."

More information: Aretta Sonia Kummar et al, An 8-week compassion and mindfulness–based exposure therapy program improves posttraumatic stress symptoms, *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy* (2023). [DOI: 10.1002/cpp.2929](https://doi.org/10.1002/cpp.2929)

Provided by Murdoch University

Citation: Compassion and mindfulness eight-week program for those with post-traumatic stress symptoms (2023, December 29) retrieved 12 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-12-compassion-mindfulness-eight-week-post-traumatic-stress.html>

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