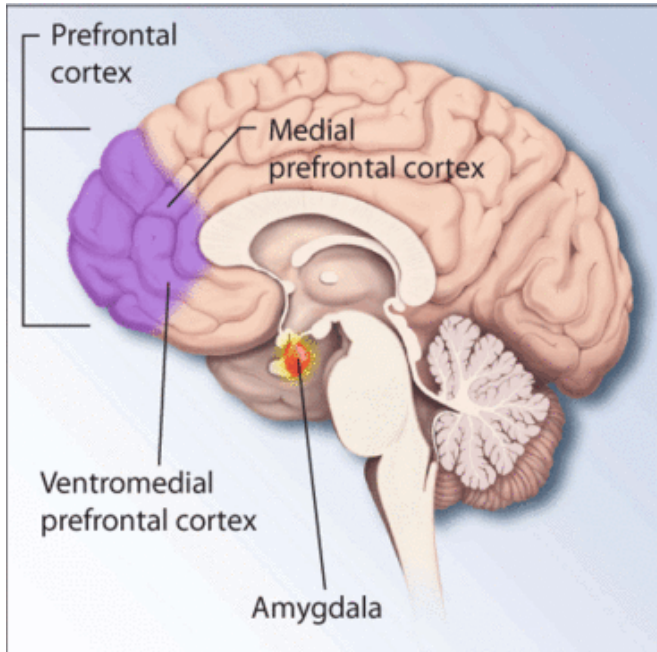


Combat-related PTSD calmed by yoga therapy

8 November 2017, by Annabel Mansfield



Regions of the brain associated with stress and posttraumatic stress disorder. Credit: National Institutes of Health

For thousands of years, yoga has been used to calm both mind and body.

Now, clinical [yoga](#) therapy has been found to alleviate the symptoms of chronic combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), potentially providing a [treatment](#) to deliver much-needed relief for the hundreds of military veterans in Australia suffering from the debilitating condition.

In a dynamic industry partnership, the research from the Repatriation General Hospital, the University of South Australia and Mindful Movement Physiotherapy, reveals across-the-board improvements for PTSD sufferers, including reduced stress, depression and anxiety.

Lead researcher, Senior Psychiatrist and Director of the PTSD Unit at the Repatriation General Hospital, Dr Linda McCarthy says the Australian-first study confirms the clinical utility of yoga as an adjuvant strategy for combat-related PTSD.

"Combat-related PTSD is the one of the most common mental health conditions impacting veterans and their families, representing 15 per cent of claims through the Department of Veteran's Affairs," Dr McCarthy says.

"Following the yoga intervention, 64 per cent of veterans in the study scored less than the diagnostic cut-off point for PTSD, with their average scores being nearly 10 per cent below the lower limit.

"And 85 per cent of participants showed decreased scores on the PTSD assessment tools; both clearly indicating the positive effects of yoga as a treatment for PTSD."

The research used a range of clinical assessment tools and biomarkers to track the responses of 30 Vietnam veterans as they participated in a series of eight weekly trauma sensitive yoga sessions, each lasting 90 minutes.

"By providing yoga as a treatment therapy, we've been able to clinically reduce the markers of depression, anxiety and stress among [military veterans](#). This has also extended to improvement in their sleep quality and quality of life scores," Dr McCarthy says.

Lead research consultant, UniSA's Associate Professor Chris Alderman says that the relative scarcity of effective treatment options for managing chronic PTSD presents a strong case for the exploration of alternative therapies.

"While psychological interventions and pharmacological treatments exist to treat PTSD,

these are often labor intensive and are associated with adverse side effects," Prof Alderman says.

"The research gives us reason to be optimistic about this as a new treatment strategy for sufferers of PTSD, with proven positive health benefits.

"Now we need to undertake further research into yoga as a potential treatment method for combat-related PTSD.

"As we prepare to mark Remembrance Day this weekend, the positive results of new approaches to this important issue are something to celebrate and embrace."

Provided by University of South Australia

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