

RESEARCH REVIEW | ISSUE 267

■ A Novel Mind-Body Podcast Program for Military and Veteran Caregivers

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SOURCE: International Journal of Mental Health**YEAR:** 2023**LINK:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207411.2023.2250938>**KEYWORDS:** Podcast; perceived stress; military; caregivers; mindfulness**ABSTRACT:**

“Mind-body interventions reduce stress and improve overall health and functioning among caregivers but are not readily available in the community. We adapted an existing 8-week mind-body program into a 28-day daily podcast series that included psychoeducation about the stress response, relaxation-response training, and self-compassion practices. The intervention was piloted among military caregivers in an open trial. Participants were N = 55 caregivers (100% cisgender women, M(SD)age = 42.3 (9.1)) who were assessed at baseline, midpoint (on the fourteenth day of the program), and endpoint (upon completion of the 28-day program) for symptoms of perceived stress (primary outcome), depression, anxiety, somatic complaints, and functioning. From baseline to endpoint, there were significant decreases in perceived stress (coefficient = -1.77, SE = 0.47, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.5$), depressive symptoms (coefficient = -1.33, SE = 0.39, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.53$), and somatic complaints (coefficient = -4.01, SE = 1.66, $p = 0.02$, $d = 0.36$); and increase in ability to perform social roles (coefficient = 0.84, SE = 0.24, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.46$). A mind-body daily podcast program is feasible and may be effective in reducing perceived stress and symptoms of depression and anxiety among military and veteran caregivers.”

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS:

- This study adapted an existing 8-week mind-body program into a condensed 28-day daily podcast series specifically designed for military caregivers showcasing the adaptability of interventions to meet specific needs.
- 55 caregivers, all cisgender women with an average age of 42.3 years took part in the study (podcasts), revealing the program's focus on addressing the unique challenges faced by this demographic.
- Significant improvements were observed from baseline to endpoint, including notable reductions in perceived stress (mean decrease of 1.77 points), depressive symptoms (mean decrease of 1.33 points), and somatic complaints (mean decrease of 4.01 points). Participants also reported an enhanced ability to perform social roles, with a mean increase of 0.84 points, reflecting the program's holistic approach to caregiver well-being.
- Results suggest that an online, mind-body intervention administered via podcasts is feasible, acceptable, and may be effective in reducing perceived stress, as well as psychiatric and somatic symptoms among individuals exposed to the chronic stress of caregiving for someone.

Implications

FOR PRACTICE

The study's findings suggest significant implications for practice, particularly in addressing the challenges faced by military and veteran caregivers. By adapting an existing 8-week mind-body program into a 28-day daily podcast series, the intervention demonstrated tangible benefits in reducing stress and improving overall well-being among participants. Thus, one key impact for practice is the potential for implementing similar mind-body podcast programs to offer accessible and effective support for military and veteran caregivers. These programs can equip caregivers with practical, in-the-moment stress reduction techniques that they can easily integrate into their daily lives. Given the high levels of stress experienced by caregivers, providing accessible resources like a podcast series can be crucial in supporting their mental and emotional health. Moreover, healthcare professionals could integrate similar interventions into their practice to bolster the well-being of caregivers grappling with chronic stress.

FOR POLICY

The findings from the study highlight the critical need for policy initiatives to prioritize the development and funding of flexible mental health programs tailored specifically to the unique needs of military and veteran caregivers. First and foremost, policymakers should allocate funding towards the development and dissemination of mental health programs, including podcasts, that cater to the needs of military and veteran caregivers. In addition to funding support, policymakers should also advocate for enhanced recognition and support for caregivers within current healthcare policies and programs. This could involve implementing policies that specifically acknowledge the unique challenges faced by caregivers and provide targeted resources and services to meet their needs.

FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Implications for future research in this area could explore the scalability and sustainability of adapted interventions, like the 28-day podcast series, to reach broader caregiver populations beyond military contexts. Additionally, investigating the long-term effects of such interventions on caregiver well-being and resilience could provide valuable insights into their lasting impact. Furthermore, comparative studies evaluating the effectiveness of online mind-body interventions versus traditional in-person programs could offer valuable guidance for optimizing intervention delivery methods. Finally, research examining the mechanisms underlying the observed improvements in perceived stress, psychiatric symptoms, and somatic complaints could deepen our understanding of how these interventions promote caregiver resilience and well-being.

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