Mantram Repetition Program (MRP): Mind-Body-Spiritual Approach to Symptom & Stress Management

Background & Goal

Veterans living with PTSD, adults living with HIV/AIDS, homeless women, and professional and family caregivers are specific populations confronting significant stressors. The general population also suffers from chronic stress with information overload and interruptions caused by our technological “time-saving” devices! To address symptoms of psychological distress, Dr. Jill Bormann and colleagues led the development and research on an innovative, complementary mind-body-spiritual intervention for symptom management and well-being entitled the Mantram Repetition Program (MRP): Mind-Body-Spiritual Approach to Symptom and Stress Management. A mantram is a self-selected word or phrase defined as sacred or having divine power, originating from ancient wisdom traditions and having a positive effect on the one who repeats it. Mantram repetition comes from the work of Sri Eknath Easwaran (1910-1999), a teacher of meditation who translated ancient wisdom into practical habits for Westerners.

Project Description

The MRP is an experiential intervention with aims of 1) choosing and using a mantram, 2) slowing down thoughts and behaviors, and 3) developing one-pointed attention for symptom and stress management. Repeating one’s self-selected mantram serves as a “pause button for the mind”—a brief respite from daily hassles shown to decrease reactivity and immediately bring the individual into the present moment for a rest. The program is hands on, portable, nonpharmacological and therapeutic. MRP can be practiced anywhere and at any time, making it both practical and sustainable. MRP also encourages the unique contributions of spiritual tools, without imposing religious dogma, to improve spiritual wellbeing, an often overlooked resource in our complex healthcare system.

Evidence of Success

Quantitative and qualitative research demonstrating MRP’s effectiveness includes, but is not limited to:

- Insomnia in homeless women
- Self-efficacy in managing PTSD
- Burnout/exhaustion in healthcare workers
- Improving mindfulness in Veterans
- Decreasing fear in couples during childbirth
- Decreasing PTSD symptom severity
- Positive coping for people with HIV/AIDS
- Decreasing caregiver burden and depression in family caregivers

Cost effectiveness of MRP:

In a Department of Veterans Affairs-funded demonstration project comparing costs of delivering different types of meditation to Veterans with PTSD, MRP was estimated to cost $163 per person at the VA medical center in San Diego, CA and Loma Linda, CA, compared to:

- $575 estimated per person cost at the Syracuse, New York VA for Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), and
- $3,848 and $4,736 per person estimated cost for Transcendental Meditation (TM) at the Minneapolis VA Healthcare System, Minneapolis, MN and the Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center, Saginaw, MI, respectively.

Mind-body interventions, making up the core components of the MRP, have been shown to reduce emergency room (ER) visits with an estimated savings of $2,360/patient/year (Stahl, About Raise Dossett, LaJoie, Denninger, Mehta, et al., 2015).

Raise the Voice

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