Touch Stretch Breathe

Literature Review

Introduction: mind body connection Yomassage was founded on the belief that there are significant therapeutic effects that can be had from engaging in therapeutic touch, gentle stretch, and mindfulness (based on the principles of yoga (with a focus on the connection to the breath (pranayama)

and the yogic philosophy of looking within to find enlightenment). These three tools, used together, can provide an avenue for healing. Yomassage provides the time, space, and therapeutic touch necessary for what we like to call “induced meditation” – when someone is focused on the sensations in their body and their breath rather than something they are anxious or upset about, they are engaging in meditation and mindfulness. The following summary of literature goes over the research done on these three tools for healing.

Yoga

Yoga has consistently been reported as a beneficial primary or additional treatment for numerous

Psychiatric disorders, including depression, anxiety, PTSD and reducing the use of drugs and

Alcohol as coping mechanisms. (Jindani, et al, 2015, Church & Brooks, 2014, Reddy, et al, 2014).

Yoga has been used as an intervention extensively in the Veterans Administration (Church &

Brooks, 2014). The practice of yoga allows for the opportunity to slow down and connect with

the body and can be described as “the integrative practice of physical postures and movement,

breath exercises, and Mindfulness” (Rhodes, et al, 2016). Much of yoga practice relates back to

the breath. It provides a tool that can be used for coping (Jindani, 2015). Restorative yoga, Thai chi,

Thai massage, and Amma all have similar effects on cortisol levels and it is hypothesized this

is the case because gentle stretching, not in conjunction exhaustive exercise, accesses the same

sensory receptors as massage (Field, 2016).

Yoga as a trauma-focused treatment helps to develop skills that improve toleration or physical

and emotional systems that have become dysregulated due to trauma (Rhodes, et al, 2016). One

study indicated the importance of frequent yoga practice to significantly decrease PTSD

symptoms and symptom severity (Rhodes et al, 2016).

Self-regulatory deficits, the fear response, and impulse regulation makes cognitive therapies

challenging. For cognitive therapies to be effective clients need to learn to stay in the present

moment. The focus on the mind-body connection that is inherent in yoga encourages this focus

on the present moment. Yoga has a direct effect on down regulating the sympathetic nervous

system -and the hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal axis (which is the stress response) (Rhodes, et al, 2016). Yoga practice has been shown to increase dopamine and decrease cortisol and the

body’s stress response. Qualitatively, yoga has also been shown to that yoga practice reduces the

clients perceived stress (Cramer,

et al, 2013).

\*While Yomassage is not “yoga” in the physical exercise sense, we are using the philosophy,

pranayama, and gentle stretch that has been shown to be an effective part of the practice.

Mindfulness/Breath

Pranayama is one of yoga’s main components. Pranayama is the focus on the breath utilizing

various techniques. As yoga has increased in popularity interest in holistic and wellness

approaches to medical care have also increased (Russo et al, 2017). One of the areas of interest is

breath work. Often, the instruction of yogic breathis an inhalation through the nose and an exhalation through the mouth. The breathingis slow witha pause between the inhalation and the exhalation

(Miles, 1964). According to the yoga tradition, the ideal breath rate is around six breaths per minute, with an exhalation twice as long as the inhalation.

Yogic breathing is believed to contribute to positivemental health, calm alertness, mental focus and stress tolerance (Ilst Van Diest, 2014). Slow breathing is known to help with hyperarousaland is defined as 4-10 breaths per minute, while the average respiration rate is 10-20 breaths per minute(Ilst van diest, 2014). Chang et al found that slow breathing helped to balance the parasympatheticnervous system and increase vagus nerve activity at 8 breaths per minute. Additionally, Zhang et al found that slow breathing, also at 8 breaths per minute, increased vagal power. Research has suggested that for the parasympathetic system to be dominant, slow breathing must be practice regularly. (Russo et al,

2017). Slow breathing has the potential to enhance autonomic reactivity to physical and mental

stress (Russo et al, 2017).

Another study showed that those breathing at 6 breaths per minute showed significantly better

mood, heart rate variability (HRV), and blood pressure. “HRV is a key marker of health, mood, and adaptation, and hence improvements in HRV improves health, mood, and adaptation to stress.

Low HRV, or less responsiveness to physiological needs, predicts mortality and morbidity and also occurs in depression, anxiety, and chronic stress” (Stefan, 2017).

A study was conducted to determine if slow breathing alone or slow breathing with a longer

exhalation was the contributing factor in reducing stress and stress related symptoms. The study

found that the group with the longer exhalation showed increased relaxation, stress reduction,

mindfulness and positive energy when breathingwith longer exhalations compared to nearly

equal inhalations and exhalations (Ilst van Diest, 2014). Touch Mindful and therapeutic touch has been used as a complementary and alternative therapy to address symptoms of trauma. The literature on massage and massage methods, including simple relaxation massage, has

been established as effective in treating a host of conditions, with anxiety and pain among the most commonly improved conditions (Collinge et al, 2012). Field et al reviewed the literature and found that massage has been shown to have beneficial effects on multiple conditions such as “prenatal depression, preterm infants, full-term infants, autism, skin conditions, pain syndromes including arthritis and fibromyalgia, hypertension, autoimmune conditions including asthma and multiple sclerosis, immune conditions including HIV and breast cancer and aging problems including

Parkinson's and dementia”. Typically, massage therapy shows more positive effects than control or comparison groups and this could