

Passport to Freedom

A Trauma-Informed Mindfulness Approach to Foster Improved Health and Wellness for Formerly Incarcerated Women

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BACKGROUND

- Arrest and incarceration rates of women, especially substance using women of color, are rising rapidly.
- BUT much of this discourse has revolved around the experiences and needs of men.
- BUT the narrative is different for women.
- Studies estimate that up to 90% of incarcerated women report a history of violence (e.g., childhood sexual abuse, exposure to community violence, teen dating violence, intimate partner violence), with the majority experiencing poly victimization - resulting in multiple traumatic experiences.
- Upon re-entering the community women are expected to manage complex social roles as mothers, daughters, wives, and friends, while securing housing, food, clothing and employment for themselves and their families.
- Although there are many interventions that assist formerly incarcerated individuals, most are male oriented.
- Few interventions target women, even fewer, systematically help women heal from their multiple traumatic experiences



PURPOSE

The purpose of the Passport to Freedom (P2F) program was to develop and test the feasibility of a woman-centered, trauma-informed reentry program designed by an inter-professional team of nurse clinicians, public health professionals, social workers and women's advocates to provide a supportive context necessary for previously incarcerated women to process cumulative lifetime trauma and find ways to flourish in the communities they return home.



CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Trauma-informed Primary Care



McKnight, E. L., Cica, Y. P., Khanna, N., Dawson Rose, C., & Krieger, L. S. (2015). From Treatment to Healing: The Promise of Trauma-Informed Primary Care. *Women's Health Issues, 25*(2).

PROJECT METHODS

- DESIGN: An exploratory case study research design was used to examine the acceptability, feasibility and effectiveness of a pilot trauma-informed mindfulness-based intervention for formerly incarcerated women and to evaluate program outcomes.
- STUDY PHASES - The study involves three phases:
 - Phase 1: 4 Focus groups
 - Key informants (Pre and Post Intervention)
 - Previously incarcerated women (Pre and Post Intervention)
 - Phase 2: 6 weekly intervention sessions
 - Promote physical and emotional wellbeing through a combination of mindfulness techniques and health promotion activities
 - Phase 3: Follow-up evaluation 4 weeks after the intervention



METHODS

- Six weekly sessions.
- Each sessions was 90 minutes.
- Each session was opened with a mindfulness activity, followed by the session content and concluded with a mindfulness activity that connected the session content and the mindfulness activity.
- Session Topics:
 - Mindfulness
 - Connection between Health and Trauma
 - Healthy Relationships
 - Family Matters-Recognizing patterns
 - Career Planning-Setting Goals
 - Reflection



IMPLEMENTATION OF P2F

- 3 Cohorts (n= 24 women)
 - 1 = Transitional Housing after completing substance abuse treatment program
 - 1 = Parole officer recommendations
 - 1 = Residential Drug Treatment for Pregnant women (alternative sentence)
- 6 sessions/3 cohorts = 18 sessions



STUDY QUESTIONNAIRES

Outcome	Questionnaire
Mental Health (Depressive Symptoms)	CES-D
Stress	Everyday Stressor Index (ESI)
Intimate Partner Violence	Severity of Violence Against Women (SVAWS)

FINDINGS - DEMOGRAPHICS -BASELINE

Demographic Characteristic	Total Sample -n= 24(%)
Ethnic/Racial Background	
African American	12 (50%)
White	9 (37.5%)
Mixed Race	2 (8.3%)
Education	
<HS	5 (20.8%)
HS/GED	12 (50%)
Some College	4 (16.7%)
2 Year Degree	1 (4.2%)
4 Year Degree	1 (4.2%)
Age (Years)	
18 - 224	2 (8.3%)
25-34	12 (50%)
35-44	4 (16.7%)
45-55	6 (25%)

Pre-Post Violence, Depression and Stressor Scores

All Cohorts	SVAWS -Pre	SVAWS-Post	CES-D - Pre	CES-D - Post	ESI-Pre	ESI-Post
Mean	66.6	59.7	25.5	23.5	45	43.5
Min	46	46	5	3	15	26
Max	105	123	51	49	43	40
Median						
	59	50	25	24	43	40

PASSPORT TO FREEDOM PARTICIPANT TESTIMONIES

- How did our program improve your life or your day?*
- "The Hopkins Program improved my life on a day to day basis because it mainly helped with my coping skills, a few things that stick out from time to time was a how powerful and worthy I felt once I left the groups. I believe that I can deal with real life situations because of this Hopkins group."
- What did you think about the meditation...the information?*
- "The meditation helps me still today mainly when dealing with my child. I now know how to take time out to breathe my way back into reality. I thank Hopkins and the ladies from this group for changing my life forever."
- Some people feel Hopkins is not trustworthy. Did you have any concerns? Were we trustworthy?*
- "I feel very strongly that John Hopkins goes above and beyond to make sure that anyone who comes into anything dealing with them are satisfied so absolutely I believe and feel strongly when I say that Johns Hopkins is very trustworthy."

SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT EVALUATION OF OVERALL SESSIONS

- 68.4% (n=13) Strongly agreed that the classes will be helpful to their transition after they finish the program
- 63.2% (n=12) Strongly agreed that the mindfulness activities helped them manage stress
- 57.9% (n=11) strongly agree that the drawing activities helped reduce anxiety
- 84.2% (n=16) have practiced the mindfulness exercise they learned in class
- 84.2% (n=16) would recommend this program to other people

Lessons Learned: Next Steps

- Focus Groups - Post Interventions
 - Key Informants - Connect with women before they leave prison and integrate with existing programs
 - Women - High satisfaction with sessions, more time/session, more sessions, more practice with mindfulness techniques
- Re-designed Sessions - added more sessions (8 sessions) increased session time (2 hours), more mindfulness practice, more time for discussion, more career content, more time discussing family genogram
- Current Status
 - 2 Small internal grants funded
 - Donor gift
 - P2F - 2 sites - 1) transitional house for formerly incarcerated women and 2) domestic shelter for abused women

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