

Project Research Presentation

The use of trauma-informed yoga programs as a health promotion intervention for women and their children who have experienced domestic violence and Transition and Second Stage housing staff



Speaker: Renee Turner, BC Society of Transition Houses

This project will provide Trauma-informed yoga to women and children who are using services at transition and second stage housing programs across British Columbia. For those of you who are not familiar with trauma-informed yoga, some features of it are using invitational language rather than directive language around the posture and the guiding through the class, giving lots of options for different versions of the postures, using repetition and predictability within the classes. No music or religious references or chanting. Also, no hands on adjustments for obvious reasons. In our context, we are catering yoga for the specific safety and health needs of our participants, which are both women and children as well as staff using/working at these housing programs.

Provide a Synopsis of the Intervention

This project will provide trauma-informed yoga training and programs to examine the health benefits for women and children who have experienced domestic violence, and staff working in Transition and Second Stage housing programs across British Columbia.



Trauma-informed yoga tailors traditional yoga techniques to the specific health and safety needs of victims of violence.

We have two participant groups within the client participant group, women and children – and they are going to be in separate yoga classes. Then we have the yoga group for staff. The interventions look a little bit different for those groups. For the clients, we are going to be implementing trauma-informed yoga classes with trained yoga teachers who have had additional training in both violence against women and trauma-informed yoga. We are starting in the pilot phase with women and then we are going to be moving into piloting classes with children in the next phase of the study. The classes include therapeutic breathing, grounding techniques, simple yoga postures and some simple meditation and mindfulness practices. Also, depending on the capacity of the transition house, we are going to be offering them weekly or bi-weekly. The intervention for the staff participants looks a little bit different, it is still based on trauma-informed yoga, but it's going to be a half day workshop that's offered on site. It will basically give staff the tools and techniques to bring into their daily work to reduce stress and to deal with symptoms of vicarious or secondary trauma. It will also provide them with an experience with trauma-informed yoga so that they get a sense of what their clients are participating in. The staff will not participate in weekly yoga classes, whereas the clients will do so.

Provide a Synopsis of the Intervention

Participant Group	Intervention	Measurement
Clients: Women and children using the services of the TH/SS project sites	Trauma-informed yoga classes: - Separate classes for women and children - Include therapeutic breathing, grounding techniques, yoga poses, and meditation. - Offered weekly or twice-weekly	Surveys: Pre- and post-intervention; post-class enjoyment Semi-structured Interviews
Staff: Working at the TH/SS project sites	Using Yoga in Your Work workshop: - No previous experience of yoga or mindfulness required - Include therapeutic breathing, grounding techniques, trauma-sensitive chair yoga poses and meditation - Focus on self-care - Tools to support symptoms associated with secondary/ vicarious trauma <i>Note: staff will not participate in yoga classes</i>	Surveys: Pre- and post-intervention Semi-structured Interviews

What are your Research Questions?

- ❖ To explore the health and social impacts of providing trauma-informed yoga programs for women and their children who have experienced domestic violence and are living in Transition or Second Stage housing.
- ❖ To explore the impacts on health and self-care practices that trauma-informed yoga programs have for staff working in Transition and Second Stage housing programs.

Research Questions:

One: to explore the health and social impacts of providing trauma-informed yoga programs to women and their children who have experienced domestic violence and are accessing services at the Transition or Second Stage housing programs.

Two: To explore the impacts on health and self-care practices for staff working in these housing programs.

Research Methodology:

Mixed Methods, grounded in Feminist and Trauma-Informed Principles

Research Methodology:

As many of our projects ensure, our research methodology is mixed methods, and our philosophy is grounded in feminist and trauma-informed research and principles. A few of the feminist research principles that guide our projects and have guided the development of our methodology are: the fact that it is women-centred, there is a focus on women's expertise, women's lived experience, prioritization on marginalization and the experience of marginalization. We are committed to being iterative and reciprocal in our learning, as well as adapting as we go. We are using a broad range of data collection tools and are committed to adapting those as we go as well, especially from what we learn in the pilot phase. We are being really cognizant of power dynamics that exist between our community and participants (staff members and the clients). There is going to be some crossover, because the staff members are going to be trained to be community-based research assistants. We are going to each of the project's sites and doing an overview training of research methods with the staff. They are going to be going through the consent forms, facilitating surveys with their clients, as well as facilitating the semi-structured interviews.

Research Methodology: Timing of Data Collection

Pilot Phase:

4 sites will be selected for the implementation of the Reaching Out with Yoga (ROWY) program with the women (clients) using services at the house, and the Using Yoga in Your Work (UYiYW™) program for staff.

Data collection: June 2016 to May 2017

Phase 1:

10 sites will be added for the implementation of ROWY and UYiYW (4 of which will pilot ROWY classes for children)

Data collection: September 2017 to August 2018

Phase 2:

Another 10 sites will be added for the implementation of ROWY and UYiYW (6 for women and staff, 4 for children)

Data collection: January 2019 to December 2019

Some of the trauma-informed principles we are working with include general awareness of how trauma impacts women's lives physically, mentally and emotionally. A strong emphasis on safety and trust and establishing it from the very beginning with a rigorous and explanatory informed consent process, the predictability of yoga classes, creating a safe space for data collection as well as for the yoga classes to take place. A strengths-based approach building on existing skills and resilience within the two participant groups, and a commitment to continuous communication and choice to participate or not participate in any aspect of the project.

Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods

Baseline and final surveys will ask some of the same questions. Post class surveys will be just for the clients and it will ask questions around how they are feeling after the class and it will be a short Likert-scale questionnaire with the opportunity to provide open-ended comments on their experience. The semi-structured interviews will get some more qualitative information, and the questions and the probes will act as a guide, but can be adaptive and reflexive as needed. For memos, we have got a champion, or Key Contact person who is a staff member at each of the project's sites, and we are asking her to keep a research journal on how it's going from a process and logistical perspective.

Timing

We selected our first four pilot sites, one locally in Lower Mainland in Burnaby, and then we are going into Revelstoke, then Ucluelet, and Kitmat. We are anticipating to start data collection in June 2016 to May 2017. In Phase One, we are going to add ten more sites and we are going to be piloting with children. The final stage will add ten more sites, and the data collection will start in January 2019 to December 2019.

What are your Process and Outcome Indicators?

Outcome-related Indicators of Success:

- Increase in engagement in healthy activity following intervention
- Increase in interest in healthy activity
- Use of yoga or UYiYW techniques learned
- Plan to continue using yoga or UYiYW techniques learned
- Decrease in (vicarious) trauma symptoms
- Enjoyment of the yoga classes or UYiYW techniques
- Appropriateness of yoga classes
- Decrease in stress symptoms

What are your Process and Outcome Indicators?

Process-related Indicators:

- Information gleaned from Key Contacts' Memos:
 - Impact on workload (addition of project-related duties)
 - Interest from other staff members
 - Impact on staffing/shifts
 - Sustainability of the program for the organization
- Information gleaned from Yoga Teachers' Memos:
 - Enjoyment of teaching in this setting
 - Successes of the classes
 - Challenges of the classes
 - Sustainability of teachers
- Information gleaned from Research Coordinator's Journal:
 - Process of setting up the project (research ethics, development of tools, protocols)
 - Learnings from being in the field during research training
 - Ongoing support & communication with project sites
 - Sustainability of an intervention like ROWY for similar organizations

Some process and outcome indicators that we are interested in looking at, which our data collection tools will measure include:

Indicators of success:

Increase and engagement in healthy activity following the intervention; increase in interest in participating in healthy activity, such as yoga; the use of yoga techniques learned; decrease in trauma symptoms; enjoyment and appropriateness for the level of participation; decrease in stress symptoms.

Process-related indicators:

Information gleaned from the Key Contacts' Memos: the impact on their workload, interest in the project from other staff members, the impact on staffing or shifts depending on how much work this creates for them, and sustainability of the program beyond the scope of this project. Our ideal goal is to have the yoga classes continue beyond the scope of this research project.

We are also asking the yoga teachers to keep a journal. We are going to be doing check-ins with them about their experience of providing yoga in this setting, successes, challenges as well as sustainability from their perspective.

Information from the Research Coordinator's research journal will include reflections about the process of setting up the project, research ethics, and ongoing support and communication with the sites and how that's going, as well as ideas and indicators around sustainability of the intervention.

Questions & Answers

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Anna-Lee Straatman: *I am curious about how you do yoga with children?*

Renee Turner: *We are partnered with Yoga Outreach, a community-based organization which does trauma-informed yoga with communities and social service agencies. They are developing the content for the teacher training for the specific classes. It is similar to yoga for adults, but there are different activities that you could use, different visualizations, a lot of nature references, and it is generally less structured.*

Linda Baker: *I think we all have an understanding of what women and children are facing and dealing with in the settings that you are using as the context for your trauma-informed yoga. When we read about trauma-informed approaches we learn the importance of understanding the impacts of trauma and that people's attendance or participation is likely to be different than if you were working with a group of individuals who haven't experienced trauma. What does that mean for projects generally, in terms of whether there is a manualized program that requires consistent attendance in each weekly session, or whether people are concerned or have thought about that and how they incorporate that piece of trauma-informed approach into their work, while recognizing that dosage of the intervention may also be important to see the kind of benefit desired.*

Questions & Answers

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Renee Turner: *It is definitely something that we have discussed at length about how we are going to work with those limitations, and also we are considering the robustness and the rigor of our research. What we have put forward with our ethics application and what's been approved is that we are recognizing that there are going to be lots of people that become participants, but don't complete the full data set. So, our goal at each site is for 10 women to participate in a minimum of six trauma-informed yoga classes and then have the full data set for them, which would include a completed Baseline Survey, post-class surveys for the 6 classes they've attended, Final Survey and an Interview for a minimum of ten women. This number will vary depending on the size and the capacity of the house, and of course will mostly depend on what other factors are at play with the women. We also acknowledge that women residing at the houses not be interested in or prioritizing yoga classes, so the yoga classes are also going to be accessible to women accessing other services offered by the Transition House organization (i.e. outreach clients). We anticipate that by opening it up to other women, that we may be more successful in reaching the number of participants we are hoping for.*