

**The War Within**

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Fetzner, M. G., & Asmundson, G. J. G. (2015). Aerobic Exercise Reduces Symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, 44*(4), 301–313. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16506073.2014.916745>

Fetzner and Asmundson, both from the Department of Psychology at the University of Regina, suggest that moderate physical exercise helps improve symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. In their study, they found that “Results demonstrated that more than 90% of participants had reductions in PTSD severity, which were maintained at one month follow-up (Fetzner & Asmundson, 2015, p. 302). In their study, “participants exercised on a stationary bicycle at 60 – 80% heart rate reserve for six 20-minute aerobic exercise sessions in two weeks” (Fetzner & Asmundson, 2015, pp. 304-305). They did note that while this study supports the data found in other studies, that exercise does benefit both anxiety and PTSD, some of the effect may come from a sense of accomplishment as well as from the actual exercise. However, they do note that “PTSD symptoms were assessed thrice before the first session (online screen, clinical interview, pretreatment measures), with no indications of significant change until the onset of exercise” and believe that the most important factor in the improvement seen in participants is due to exercise itself (Fetzner & Asmundson, 2015, p. 311). Finally, they point out that a number of things should be further investigated, including how much participants pre-existing activity levels affect the benefits provided, but note that their participants had very little training in aerobic practices before the study and still showed dramatic benefits in a short time. How long that benefit lasts should also be further studied.

This source is relevant to my research paper because it discusses the preferred method of treatment for veterans as well as various physical activity coping strategies to combat Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. (272 words)

Hall, K. S., Morey, M. C., Beckham, J. C., Bosworth, H. B., Sloane, R., Pieper, C. F., & Pebole, M. (2019, October 24). Warrior wellness: A randomized controlled pilot trial of the effects of exercise on physical function and clinical health risk factors in older military veterans with PTSD. *Journals of Gerontology: Medical Sciences*. 75(11), p 2130-2138, DOI: 10.1093/gerona/glz255

Hall and her colleagues, all researchers, educators, or health care providers in Durham, North Carolina, developed the Warrior Wellness Study to “evaluate the effects of a tailored 12-week exercise intervention on physical function and cardiometabolic risk factors in older adults with PTSD” (Hall et al., 2019, p. 2131). They point out that people with PTSD are more likely to spend less time exercising than those without, and wanted to examine ways to change this in older veterans with a program that was tailored specifically to fit their needs. They found that older veterans faced many barriers to exercising including a tendency to socially isolate and body image dissatisfaction. Not only did participants work with an exercise physiologist on a personalized regimen and to learn proper technique and form, but researchers also worked with them in terms of discussing and planning for barriers that might keep them from working out or continuing to work out, and developed ways to deal with PTSD in a crowded place like a public gym. In addition, they branded the program (Warrior Wellness) and provided “swag” items to

encourage adherence to the program. Participants also were given the opportunity to provide feedback and were provided with stipends to cover transportation costs. By the end of the 12 week study, 100% of participants were exercising at levels that met public health guidelines (Hall et al., 2019, p. 2136) “The results of this pilot study suggest clinically meaningful benefit of exercise across multiple domains of function associated with independent living and quality of life” (Hall et al., 2019, p. 2136). Hall et al. admit that their study was limited as a small group and that they participants were largely male Vietnam veterans, so that bears some consideration in terms of the overall outcome, but they also stress that “Exercise is a low-cost and low-stigma health intervention that is relatively easy to implement and warrants consideration as a potent clinical intervention for older adults with PTSD” (Hall et al., 2019, p. 2136).

This will be valuable in showing that exercise is can be a part of PTSD treatment for all ages. (353 words)

Whitworth, J. W., & Ciccollo, J. T., (2016, September 1). Exercise and post-traumatic stress disorder in military veterans: A systematic review. *Military Medicine*, 181(9), 953-960.

Whitworth and Ciccollo (2016), both from the Department of Biobehavioral Sciences at Columbia University claim that “Exercise may be an ideal treatment or adjunct to treatment because it can positively affect many of the psychological and physiological symptoms and comorbid conditions specifically faced by military veterans with PTSD” (p. 953). According to them, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder brings on a lot of hardship in the life of the affected person. Some symptoms include depression, sleep deprivation, substance abuse, anxiety, suicidal

ideation, and even suicidal attempt. These are tough obstacles to face, especially if you are alone. Of the personnel in the United States that are diagnosed with PTSD, a majority of them are service members or veterans. There are a few treatment plans in place to help veterans with these symptoms however, it seems like psychotherapeutic interventions and pharmacotherapies have very little successful rates among veterans.

In a 2015 study, it was found that exercise had a greater effect on depression than antidepressant medication did. It may also be a solution to acute and chronic pain as well. Exercise has the effect of hypoalgesia, which will interfere or disrupt the pain stimulus in a conscious mind because the mind will be focused on a deliberate movement of a particular muscle group. Exercise therapy would also be a better fit with military veterans because it is what most of them are used to and it is easy to do any time of the day and even in the comfort of their homes. They wouldn't have to worry about cost, appointments, or even judgment. There have been roughly thirteen studies conducted from 1992 to 2015 that involved exercise and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. None of them involved an independent or dependent variable for their study. There are plenty of angles at which we can adjust and fine-tune case studies to directly relate the two subjects and the effect they have on one another. However, from the thirteen studies conducted, there is sufficient evidence to show that exercise improves symptoms caused by Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

This resource assists my research paper because it compares multiple studies conducted within the last couple of decades that help anchor my argument that exercise helps reduce symptoms of PTSD. (373 words)