



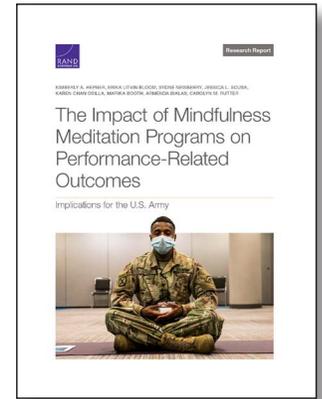
The Impact of Mindfulness Meditation Programs on Performance-Related Outcomes

Implications for the U.S. Army

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This report presents results from a systematic review and meta-analyses of research examining how mindfulness meditation affects 13 performance-related outcomes of interest to the U.S. Army and broader military. The authors supplemented the systematic review by examining how mindfulness meditation could support stress management and exploring characteristics of selected mindfulness programs.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the effects of mindfulness programs on attention/concentration; decisionmaking; emotion regulation; impulse control/impulsivity; and work-related outcomes pertaining to absenteeism, accidents, communication skills, interpersonal conflict, morale, productivity, social support, teamwork, and turnover among nonclinical adults in both civilian and military populations?
- What are the effects of mindfulness programs on general stress and parenting stress?
- What are the characteristics of selected mindfulness meditation programs?



KEY FINDINGS

- Mindfulness may improve some aspects of attention and emotion regulation, impulse control, and work-related morale and social support.
- The available evidence does not suggest that mindfulness improves other outcomes of interest to the Army.
- Mindfulness programs reduce stress and may reduce parental stress, which could benefit Army families.
- More research is needed to identify best practices for implementing mindfulness programs in the military.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- Conduct high-quality evaluations of mindfulness meditation with soldiers. The results of the systematic review indicate that there is not strong support for implementing mindfulness meditation programs Army-wide at this time. However, there was robust evidence for a medium-sized effect on reducing stress among civilian populations. The authors recommend that the Army conduct high-quality evaluations of mindfulness meditation before pursuing large-scale implementation. Such evaluations could help fill the evidence gap related to the impact of mindfulness meditation in military populations, identify best practices for implementation, and clarify the effects on individual and unit readiness and resilience. In particular, the authors provide explicit recommendations for designing studies of the rigorous quality needed to ensure that programs are effective and feasible before attempting large-scale implementation.
- Assess the effect of mindfulness meditation on military families. Further research is needed to rigorously analyze the effect of mindfulness meditation on military families—particularly the effect on outcomes that are relevant to this population, such as relationship problems, parenting, and child outcomes. Additional studies or pilot evaluations of these interventions would provide additional guidance on whether they should be made more widely available. Decreasing stress and improving the well-being of military families is a high priority for the Army Resilience Directorate and the Department of Defense overall, and programs that enhance the well-being and resilience of families can have a significant impact on military readiness.