

JIU JITSU TRAINING REDUCES SYMPTOMS OF PTSD AND RELATED PSYCHOPATHOLOGIES

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Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a disabling anxiety disorder that may occur after witnessing a traumatic event. While existing therapies often require a long-term, time-intensive and costly commitment from the patient, the overall success rate remains low. Therefore, there is a need for alternative therapies that can effectively help our veterans and service personnel overcome the effects of PTSD and lead fully productive lives as they reintegrate into society. Anecdotal evidence suggests that routine practice of Jiu Jitsu, a martial art that focuses on self-defense and control, can reduce symptoms of PTSD, both psychological and physiological. The purpose of this project is to examine whether Jiu Jitsu effectively reduces symptoms of PTSD among US service members and veterans. To accomplish this objective, 7 male U.S. active duty service members and veterans participated in and completed a 5 month Jiu Jitsu training program (the program is ongoing). The participants attended two 70 minute classes per week for 20 weeks. Self-report measures were used to examine changes in PTSD and psychopathology symptoms over the course of the study. Study participants, the majority of whom were veterans (82%), ranged in age from 22 to 60 (mean = 34.5±13.1years). While most branches of the military were represented in our sample, the majority of participants served in either the Navy (29%) or Marine Corps (35%). Fifty percent served at least one overseas tour with 56.3% of all participants experiencing combat. The majority were deployed to either Iraq (30%) or Afghanistan (35%). Fully 58% of study participants reported previously seeking treatment for PTSD with treatments ranging from prescription medication to intensive psychotherapy. These individuals demonstrated a substantial, clinically meaningful and statistically significant decrease in scores on the PCL-5, our primary instrument for measuring PTSD symptoms. In addition, there were significant decreases in global psychopathology, as measured by the 125-item Psychiatric Diagnostic Screening Questionnaire. Improvements on both measures were continuous throughout the study. These preliminary data suggest that Jiu Jitsu training may be a beneficial, cost-effective and easily accessible therapy to assist service members and veterans with reintegration into civilian life.

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