More time spent practicing mindfulness techniques corresponded with higher levels of self-reported mindfulness after the 8-week course and an increase in level of mindfulness was associated with decreases in perceived stress. In interviews some Marines reported learning new skills such as focusing attention, staying with difficult experiences, understanding the stress activation cycle, using focused attention to support body and mind self-regulation; some married Marines reported improvements in family life as a result of the training. In addition, in interviews leaders and team members reported improved communication and unit cohesion; Leaders reported improved self-knowledge and improved ability to recognize emotions in themselves and others; team members reported increased awareness of individual strengths and weaknesses, which led to more effective task delegation and cooperation within the team.

Service members might benefit from both pre and postdeployment training that includes MMFT instruction as it may lead to reductions in perceived stress. MMFT may also be considered as a program component for programs or trainings focusing on individual stress or on team or group management as these were identified as benefits of MMFT in interviews.

Continued support should be provided to increasing awareness and working to reduce the stigma around seeking help for mental health issues. Military units and family support centers might consider including alternative strategies in their predeployment training activities, such as MMFT, to help alleviate stress and improve unit cohesiveness.

Future research is needed to determine the effectiveness of MMFT in reducing stress-related mental health issues and physical ailments. Longitudinal research would contribute to a better understanding of the efficacy of MMFT, particularly in high stress contexts. Future research should determine the efficacy of MMFT as a postdeployment program.

This mixed-methods study provides a comparison analysis of a cohort of U.S. Marine reservists who received an 8-week Mindfulness-based Mind Fitness Training (MMFT) as they prepared to deploy to Iraq to a control group of Marines from the same unit who did not receive the MMFT. Self-reported surveys were used to compare changes in levels of mindfulness, perceived stress, and personal outlook (e.g., novelty-seeking, flexibility, etc.); focus groups and interviews were also used to measure outcomes.

Key Findings:

Implications for Programs:

Implications for Policies:

Avenues for Future Research:

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Mixed ANOVAs (ANOVAs compare the variance between multiple groups in order to identify differences between groups) were used to compare two groups of Marine reservists who received MMFT (high practice time vs. low practice time) to a control group who did not receive MMFT, on their self-reported level of mindfulness, perceived stress, and personal outlook over time; focus groups and individual interviews were used to measure attitudes toward MMFT. Survey data were collected before and after the 8 week MMFT training. To assess the effectiveness of the training survey and interview data were conducted pre- and post-deployment.

Correlational analyses, assessing associations between practice time and perceived stress, were used to mitigate some of the shortcomings of the artificial dichotomization of practice time (high vs. low) used in the ANOVAs.

This study focused on Marine reservists who were preparing to deploy and agreed to receive the training. For the Marines who received the MMFT (N = 30); the average age was 29 years and in the control group (N = 17); average age was 25 years.

Marines who participated may differ from non-participants in a way that was not measured but affected the outcome variables; although the Marines in the two groups were from the same unit they were tested at different installations with different testing atmospheres and the two groups had different predeployment training components and schedules.

Conclusions based on a small, convenience sample may not generalize to other populations.

The design of the study (e.g., research plan, sample, recruitment) used to address the research question was...

The research methods (e.g., measurement, analysis) used to answer the research question were...

The limitations of this study are...

The implications of this research to programs, policies and the field, stated by the authors, are...

Not applicable because authors do not discuss implications