A Qualitative Pilot Study of a Trauma-Informed Mind-Body Program forAdult Female Survivors of Sexual Assault

From global adaptation to local implementation

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Introduction

- Sexual violence is associated with significant psychological, physical, and social consequences for survivors (Carey et al., 2018; Dworkin et al., 2018).
- Survivors have expressed interest in healing options beyond psychotherapy alone, and evidence suggests mind-body approaches may support trauma recovery (Braun et al., 2021; Justice & Brems, 2019; Nicotera & Connolly, 2020; Yamasaki, 2022).
- Move with HaRT (MwH), a trauma-informed mind-body program developed in Uganda, has been associated with positive outcomes but had not been piloted in the United States (Namy et al., 2022).

Atlanta Pilot Study

Study Purpose: To explore participant experiences of a U.S. pilot of MwH with adult female survivors of sexual trauma
Setting: Mosaic Georgia, a survivor-serving organization in Atlanta
Program: 12-session MwH pilot (90-minute sessions)
Key Themes: Safety in the Body, Radical Self-Love, Compassion in Action
Participants: Adult female survivors of sexual assault
Data collection: Post-program qualitative interviews
Focus: Participant experiences and perceived impacts of the pilot
Engagement: Eight program participants; five completed in-depth interviews

Methods

In-depth interviews conducted at the end of the program. Audio recordings from the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Analysis was conducted on the transcriptions. Thematic analysis identified how the program impacted participants' well-being. Three key domains of change emerged, highlighting perceived gains in physical, emotional, and relational health.

Program Journey

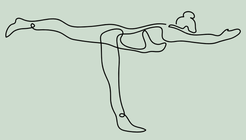
Uganda
2016 — Pilot Study: MwH developed as a trauma-informed mind-body intervention
2020 — Quasi-Experimental Study
2023-2025 — Randomized Control Trial

Philippines
2021 — Cultural Adaptation & Pilot: Culturally adapted for a new setting and community-based implementation

Atlanta
2025 — First U.S. pilot

Alabama
2026 — Adaptations & Pilots

Results



Physical

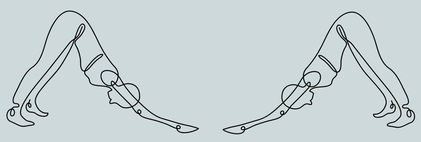
- Greater mind-body awareness and connection
- More energy, calm, and presence
- Improved sleep and less physical discomfort

> *It allowed me to connect with my body with less expectation and help me slow my mind down to be in my body.*

Emotional

- Improved ability to regulate emotions
- Feeling more present in body, mind, and emotions
- Increased self-compassion and self-acceptance
- More confidence, discipline, and motivation

> *Now, I'm feeling a lot more gratitude. I think it's allowed me to open up to different experiences off the mat. I definitely feel more confident. I feel more purposeful. I feel like I'm supposed to be exactly where I am.*



Relational

- Greater sense of safety in community
- Less fear and self-consciousness in relationships
- Increased connection, belonging, and acceptance

> *Just doing the yoga, being around the people that also have trauma in the same way, it really, really helped me. I felt like I had a community, for sure.*

Implications

- This pilot highlights that MwH provided a meaningful mind-body healing space for adult female survivors of sexual violence in the U.S., suggesting the trauma-informed content may have cross-culture resonance.
- Participants described changes across body, emotion, and connection, echoing themes seen in prior MwH research.
- These findings support continued adaptation, implementation, and future study of MwH in the U.S.
- This pilot helps inform ongoing adaptation and implementation efforts.

Alabama Pilot Studies

- Adult and teen pilots underway in Tuscaloosa.
- Program adapted to a 10-session format.
- These pilots reflect continuity and growth, building on prior global learning while expanding access to mind-body healing.