



Move the Body and Relax the Mind



Facilitator Guide

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Move the Body and Relax the Mind

Facilitator Note:

The following two symbols are used as indicators:

-  (computer) indicates it is time to advance the slide on the associated PowerPoint;
-  (hand) indicates there is an exercise associated with the content.

*Essential class content is noted in **bold**.*

All class handouts are available for download on the [YRRP website](http://www.yellowribbon.mil/cms/event-handout) at www.yellowribbon.mil/cms/event-handout. Unless otherwise specified as online only in the Materials section below, all handouts should be printed for distribution to class participants.

Only trained yoga instructors are permitted to facilitate this class.

Class Description:

This class explores mind-body exercises as a tool to help manage stress. Participants will learn about the evidence-informed benefits of using exercises, including yoga, Tai Chi and Qi Gong, to help support mental, physical, and overall well-being. Participants will also have the opportunity to practice a few simple movements and leave with tips and resources to explore and to develop the practices discussed.

Stage:

Pre-deployment, During deployment, Post-deployment

DoDI:

1342.28 DoD Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP)

The content of this class has been developed for the Department of Defense Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program. The Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State has reviewed the class and is responsible for content management.

Audience:

YRRP attendees

Time:

45 minutes

Equipment:

- Projector
- Laptop

Materials:

- Facilitator Guide
- Core Material Checklist
- PowerPoint Presentation
 1. Move the Body and Relax the Mind
 2. Objectives
 3. What Are Mind-Body Exercises?
 4. Benefits of Mind-Body Exercises
 5. Mind-Body Exercise True or False
 6. Yoga: What Is It?
 7. Benefits of Yoga on the Body
 8. Benefits of Yoga on Mental Well-Being
 9. Yoga Demonstration
 10. Tai Chi: What Is It?
 11. Benefits of Tai Chi on the Body
 12. Benefits of Tai Chi on Mental Well-Being
 13. Tai Chi Demonstration
 14. Qi Gong: What Is It?
 15. Benefits of Qi Gong on the Body
 16. Benefits of Qi Gong on Mental Well-Being
 17. Qi Gong Demonstration
 18. Review of Key Points
 19. Review of Objectives
 20. Move the Body and Relax the Mind
- Handout
 1. Resources to Begin a Mind-Body Exercise Practice (online only)

Exercises:

1. Mind-Body Exercise True or False
2. Yoga Demonstration
3. Tai Chi Demonstration
4. Qi Gong Demonstration

Objectives:

After completing this class, participants will be able to do the following:

1. Identify common characteristics of mind-body exercises.
2. Discuss benefits of mind-body exercises.
3. Explore the suitability of mind-body exercises in their lives to manage stress.

Introduction

SHOW Slide 1: Move the Body and Relax the Mind

Facilitator Note:

Introduce yourself as the facilitator. State your name, military experience or affiliation, and perhaps one additional brief bit of relevant personal information that establishes your credibility (i.e., your professional training or experience).

Please limit your personal introduction to no more than 2 minutes to maximize the time attendees are able to engage with course content, practice skills, and participate in self-reflection activities.

In other YRRP sessions, such as Address Your Stress, you may have learned about good stress and bad stress and different tools to help you manage or work with stress. **Many different tools are available to help you deal with stress.** Today, we are going to explore mind-body exercises we can use as tools to help us cope with stress. In this session, we will learn about the evidence-informed benefits of mind-body exercises for our mental and physical well-being. We will have an opportunity to practice some brief movement techniques together, and you will leave with tips and resources to further explore which ones may be right for you. Ready?

SHOW Slide 2: Objectives

Let's go over our objectives. At the end of this class, you should be able to do the following:

1. **Identify common characteristics of mind-body exercises.**
2. **Discuss benefits of mind-body exercises.**
3. **Explore the suitability of mind-body exercises in your own life to manage stress.**

Let us begin by exploring descriptions of mind-body exercises and clarifying some of the common misconceptions about them.

When you hear the term, mind-body connection, what comes to mind? How would you describe it?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: the concept that thoughts and attitude affect health or disease; we become what we think)

A simple way to describe **mind-body connection** is that our thoughts, attitudes,

feelings, and beliefs may affect our biological functioning - positively or negatively (Hart, n.d.). Frequently, in the media, we hear about the mind-body connection and its importance in maintaining health and recovering from disease. Several popular books discuss these concepts. For example, Dr. Andrew Weil's Mind-Body Toolkit and several titles by Deepak Chopra are great resources from two well-respected physicians.

Defining Mind-Body Exercises

SHOW Slide 3: What Are Mind-Body Exercises?

So, what are mind-body exercises? Are they different from other forms of exercise with which we are familiar? As you might expect, there are several ways to describe mind-body exercises. Let's look at a few to understand how these exercises are different from more traditional forms of working out.

Exercises that foster kinesthetic awareness, which is the awareness of where the body is in space while in motion (Schmalzl et al., 2014).

Exercises that assist the practitioner to develop a deeper level of awareness or spiritual realization (Feuerstein, 1996).

In this sense, **spiritual does not mean religion**. Georg Feuerstein, the late renowned scholar of yoga, describes these practices as "creative variations on the same fundamental theme," and says the spiritual piece of these practices is "designed to lift the individual out of his or her ordinary perception of, and relationship to, the world." (Feuerstein, 1996, p.1).

SHOW Slide 4: Benefits of Mind-Body Exercises

Mind-body exercises are activities or exercises that coordinate breath with movement and are performed with an added internal awareness or focus. Mind-body exercises may do the following:

- **Build strength, muscle, and endurance** (Li et al., 2009).
- **Improve coordination and concentration** (Budhrani-Shani et al., 2016; McClafferty et al., 2016).
- **Help manage stress** (Jin, 1992; Terjestam et al., 2010).
- **Increase mindfulness** (Schmalzl et al., 2014).

SHOW Slide 5: Mind-Body Exercise True or False

EXERCISE 1: Mind-Body Exercise True or False

Facilitator Note:

The purpose of this exercise is for participants to understand the truths about mind-body exercises. This should take approximately 3 minutes.

There are many common ideas about mind-body exercise that can leave us feeling intimidated about exploring them or may lead us to believe they are something different than what they actually are. Maybe some of these statements are ones that you have thought of before.

Let's explore some common thoughts about mind-body exercise, and see what is true and what is false.

ASK the group to answer after each statement, perhaps taking a moment to ask why or why not to engage in discussion.

READ the following statement aloud, and then PAUSE while you get answers from the group.

You have to be physically flexible to do mind-body exercises.

CLICK to bring up the answer. (Answer: false)

Mind-body exercises, including Tai Chi (tie –chee) and Qi Gong (chee- gong), involve gentle, flowing movement coordinated with breath. While they traditionally are practiced standing, it is also possible to engage in some of the movements seated with modifications to traditional movement (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, n.d.). Yoga is a practice often associated with great flexibility. While some practitioners can reach this degree of **flexibility**, **it is not required to begin or sustain an enjoyable and beneficial practice.** One of the benefits of yoga is increased flexibility with continued practice (Cowen, 2010; Cowen & Adams, 2005; Lau et al., 2015).

READ the following statement aloud, and then PAUSE while you get answers from the group.

Mind-body exercises are Eastern religions.

CLICK to bring up the answer. (Answer: false)

Another common misconception about mind-body practices is that they are a form of practicing religion, but they are not. Tai Chi, for example, was developed and practiced originally in China as a form of martial art (Jahnke et al., 2010; Sandlund & Norlander, 2000). Mind-body exercise includes coordinating and being aware of the body's movement with breath. Religious practices are not included in the exercises (Wahbeh et al., 2008).

READ the following statement aloud, and then PAUSE while you get answers from the group.

Mind-body exercises are not really for fitness, like other types of exercises.

CLICK to bring up the answer. (Answer: false)

Does this one surprise you? **Tai Chi, for example, creates the same rate of physical exertion as brisk walking** (Hui et al., 2016; Jin, 1992). **Some forms of yoga, such as Ashtanga (osh-ton-ga) and power yoga, involve an increased pace in moving from one posture to the next, which can increase heart rate and cardiovascular activity** (Cowen & Adams, 2007; Hagins, Moore, & Rundle, 2007; Schubert et al., 2018).

Today, we will take a closer look at three mind-body exercises – yoga, Tai Chi, and Qi Gong – to learn more about their benefits and see if one or more of them may be exercises you wish to incorporate in your own routines.

Introduction to Yoga

SHOW Slide 6: Yoga: What Is It?

Perhaps the most popular mind-body exercise currently practiced in the United States is yoga. About 31 million adults in the United States have practiced yoga in their lifetime (Cramer et al., 2016; Yoga Journal & Yoga Alliance, 2016). How many of you have practiced yoga before?

PAUSE for a show of hands.

If you have practiced yoga before, this may be familiar to you. Yoga, a Sanskrit word that translates to mean union or literally to yoke, is believed to have its origins in India more than 5,000 years ago (Feuerstein, 1996). A philosophy and complex system, it is comprised of eight limbs or branches. The yoga classes we are most familiar with in the United States are from the Hatha limb, which includes a series of movements coordinated with breath. This is also called yogasana (*yog-a-suana*), which translates to mean seat or posture (Feuerstein, 1996; Iyengar, 1976).

Benefits of Yoga on Mind and Body

SHOW Slide 7: Benefits of Yoga on the Body

Practicing yoga under the guidance of a trained and skilled instructor may be a beneficial addition to a wellness lifestyle, but how does it help? Please keep in mind, as with all exercise programs, it is important to consult with your healthcare provider before beginning a yoga practice. Let us take a moment to explore some of the **potential physical benefits of yoga** exercise:

- **Relieves lower back pain** (Sherman et al., 2005; Williams et al., 2009).
- **Decreases heart rate and lowers blood pressure** (Cade et al., 2010; Okonta, 2012).
- **Helps the body return to a resting state after stressful events** (Streeter et al., 2012).

Can you think of other ways in which yoga exercises may help our physical state?

PAUSE for responses, providing some of the possible answers if participants have a difficult time answering this question. (Possible answers: managing or reducing pain; better sleep)

SHOW Slide 8: Benefits of Yoga on Mental Well-Being

Yoga exercises are not only beneficial for physical health, but they have been found to be useful for mental and emotional well-being in the **following beneficial ways**:

- **Reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression** (Janakiramaiah et al., 2000; Khalsa & Cope, 2006; Stoller et al., 2012; Woolery et al., 2004).
- **Reduces symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), including depression and hyperarousal** (Brown & Gerbarg, 2005; Carter & Byrne, 2004; van der Kolk, 2006; van der Kolk et al., 2014).
- **Increases a sense of emotional, social, and spiritual well-being** (Brown & Gerbarg, 2005; Gard et al., 2012; Moadel et al., 2007).

SHOW Slide 9: Yoga Demonstration

EXERCISE 2: Yoga Demonstration

Facilitator Note:

The purpose of this exercise is for participants to experience Yoga. This should take approximately 10 minutes.

This brief sequence of exercises offers an introduction to some simple yoga poses that demonstrate how yoga links the breath with the body. These particular poses can be performed in regular clothing without specialized equipment. Only a chair is needed. Yoga classes typically involve practicing on a mat in loose-fitting clothing, can range from relaxing to vigorous, and can span beginner to advanced levels. However, certified yoga instructors can suggest modifications to suit physical needs, which can make most classes accessible to anyone. Let's begin.

IF the room allows for it, have participants move their chairs apart so they have more room.

1. **Three-Part Breath:** Sit on the edge of your chair with your feet about hips' width apart and the soles resting flat on the floor. Keep your spine upright but relaxed. Drop your shoulders away from the ears and visualize your shoulder blades sliding down your back. Place one hand on your chest and one hand on your abdomen. Close your eyes. Gently begin to increase the depth of your inhales and exhales, such that you can feel an expansion of your abdomen, ribs, and chest with each inhale and the completeness of each exhale. It may help to visualize blowing up a balloon. Practice this for a few rounds on your own time. Then, breathe naturally for a few rounds, without trying to influence the breath, and notice any sensations that you feel. Open your eyes.
2. **Sitting Side Bends:** On an inhalation, raise your arms overhead. Grasp your left wrist with your right hand, bend sideways to the right as you exhale, and keep your chest open and gaze up at the ceiling while keeping both hips grounded on the chair. Notice a stretch on the left side of your body. Visualize your chest feeling broad and open across the collar bones as you pause here and breathe. On an inhale, lift your arms back up and return to center; exhale and lower your hands to your sides.
3. **Seated Cat and Cow:** Inhale as you arch your back and open your chest and lift your chin to look up at the ceiling. As you exhale, round your back, pull your abdominal muscles in, and lower your head. Repeat a few times at your own

pace moving with your inhales and exhales.

4. **Seated Spinal Twist:** On an inhale, raise your arms overhead. As you exhale, twist to the left, place your right hand on your left knee, and reach back with your left hand (grasping the back of the chair if you like) and look over your left shoulder. Pause here. With each inhale, visualize stretching tall through the crown of your head, and, with each exhale, allow yourself, without straining, to relax a little deeper into the twist. Inhale as you release out of the twist, and raise your arms overhead; exhale as you lower your arms to your sides. Repeat the twist to the right.
5. **Sitting Ankle to Knee:** Sitting up straight on the edge of your chair, bring your right ankle to rest on your left knee. Notice the feeling in your right hip. To increase the intensity of the stretch, lean forward with your back straight. Repeat on the left side.
6. **Modified Downward Dog:** Stand facing the seat of the chair with your feet about 2-3 feet in front of the chair. On an inhale, raise your arms overhead; exhale and fold forward with your back flat and your legs straight and place your palms on the seat of the chair with your arms straight. Allow your head to hang with the back of your neck long; stretch your hips back and up. Breathe deeply and notice the expansion in your ribs with each inhale.
7. **Sitting Forward Fold:** Sit on the edge of your chair with your feet about hips' width apart and the soles supported by the floor. Inhale and raise your arms overhead; fold forward and bring your torso to rest on your thighs. Allow your head to hang heavy with the crown of your head sinking toward the floor and your neck relaxed and long. Pause here and, consciously, inhale and exhale for a few moments.
8. **Conclusion:** Sitting on the edge of your chair, inhale as you raise your arms overhead. Reach up with one hand and then the other as if you are picking apples from a tree. Bring your palms together and, on an exhale, draw them down to rest at the center of your chest with your fingers pointing upward. Close your eyes and tune into the breath for a few moments, but do not try to influence it. Notice any changes in the quality of the sensations in your body and mind as a result of the practice.

PAUSE for responses after each question.

For those of you who have not done yoga before, how many of you would be interested in attending a yoga class after practicing this brief sequence of exercises?

Yoga may provide a wide range of benefits. Which aspects appeal most to you?

Introduction to Tai Chi

SHOW Slide 10: Tai Chi: What Is It?

Is anyone familiar with Tai Chi, or has anyone practiced Tai Chi before?

PAUSE for a show of hands.

This is another mind-body exercise practiced in the Eastern Hemisphere that is gaining popularity in the Western Hemisphere (Yoga Journal & Yoga Alliance, 2016).

Tai Chi has its origins in China and was developed as a form of meditative movement more than 300 years ago. It is derived from a form of martial art, which is over 5,000 years old (Jahnke et al., 2010; Sandlund & Norlander, 2000). Tai Chi uses slow sets of body movements and controlled breathing. “Tai Chi is [practiced] to improve balance, flexibility, muscle strength, and overall health” (National Cancer Institute, n.d.). Unlike high impact forms of exercise, such as running or weightlifting, **Tai Chi is a low-impact exercise and includes a focus on awareness of movement of the body with breath as a means to create mental focus** (Sandlund & Norlander, 2000).

Benefits of Tai Chi on Mind and Body

SHOW Slide 11: Benefits of Tai Chi on the Body

Some of the **benefits of Tai Chi exercise** on the body include the following:

- **Improves balance** (Gao et al., 2014; Hain et al., 1999; Maciaszek, Ozinski, Szekliki, & Stemplewski, 2007).
- **Reduces blood pressure** (Jahnke et al., 2010; Tsai et al., 2003; Young et al., 1999).

SHOW Slide 12: Benefits of Tai Chi on Mental Well-Being

At this time, more research is needed to determine how Tai Chi impacts mental health, but a recent study revealed that the practice may be helpful in **reducing depression and anxiety** (Yin & Dishman, 2014). Tai Chi has also been connected to an **enhanced perceived ability to handle stress and new experiences** (Jin, 1992; Lee et al., 2004; Wang et al., 2010). Tai Chi is also associated with **increased concentration on routine tasks and improved mood** (Galantino et al., 2005; Wang et al., 2009).

SHOW Slide 13: Tai Chi Demonstration

EXERCISE 3: Tai Chi Demonstration

Facilitator Note:

The purpose of this exercise is for participants to experience Tai Chi. This should take approximately 10 minutes.

Although Tai Chi and yoga have similarities in benefits and practices, there are some differences.

Tai Chi and yoga share many of the same mental and physical benefits, and both originate from Eastern mind-body practices. Tai Chi originated in China, and yoga emerged in India about 5,000 years ago. They integrate breath control, meditation, and poses in their practices to facilitate health and longevity. Tai Chi is derived from a form of martial arts that is comprised of slow meditative movement. Yoga, in contrast, is inherently nonviolent with a goal of unifying mind, body, and spirit. Yoga aligns poses with the breath and tends to hold poses. Tai Chi encourages slow breaths that are not necessarily coordinated with its slow, flowing movements. Both are low-impact forms of exercise; however, yoga can be much more physically demanding, and some advanced poses require significant levels of strength and flexibility.

Tai Chi may be done by any age group of almost any fitness level. Most Tai Chi movements are performed slowly from a standing position and work with the body's natural range of motion. Yoga encourages an expansion of flexibility and strength. When choosing to practice yoga or Tai Chi, consider whether you want to focus on physical and mental health and general wellness or spiritual engagement. The two mind-body practices complement one another. Tai Chi boosts meditation progress, and yoga improves physical strength and flexibility. Whether you choose to practice yoga or Tai Chi, you will experience significant mental and physical benefits.

Now let's take a few moments to try some Tai Chi (adapted from Bodian, 2020).

1. **Waist-Loosening Warm Up:** Stand with your feet parallel and slightly wider than hip-width distance apart. Let your arms hang relaxed by your sides. Rotate your hips to the right and then the left, and allow your arms to hang loosely and flat against your body as you make each rotation. Gradually include your neck, shoulders, and spine as you rotate and keep the movement smooth and fluid.
2. **Windmill Exercise:** Stand with your feet parallel and slightly wider than shoulder-width distance apart. Relax your shoulders, and let your arms hang

loosely. Bring your hands in front of your body by your pubic bone with your fingers pointing down toward the floor. Inhale and raise your arms up the center of your body and over your head with your fingers pointing up. Stretch toward the ceiling, and arch your spine slightly backward. Exhale and slowly bend forward to the floor while moving your hands down the center of your body. Bend forward from your hip joint while allowing your arms to hang loosely in front of you. Inhale and return to your starting posture.

3. **Knee Rolls:** Stand with your feet a few inches apart and your knees slightly bent. Place your hands on your knees with your fingers pointing toward each other. Rotate your knees in a clockwise circle as though you are tracing a large circle on the floor. Repeat counter-clockwise.
4. **Hand Exercises:** Stand with your feet a bit wider than shoulder-width distance apart. Raise your arms straight out in front of you, and ensure they are parallel to the floor at shoulder height. Stretch your fingers wide, then begin rotating your wrists in a clockwise and then a counter-clockwise direction.
5. **Balancing Your Energy:** Stand with your feet hip-width distance apart. Relax your shoulders, and bring your hands into a cupped position with your palms facing up and resting in front of your pelvis. Close your eyes. Inhale and imagine you are pulling your energy upward as you bring your hands up the center of your body to your chest. Exhale and rotate your hands so your palms are facing down. Imagine you are pushing your energy down as you push your hands toward the floor. Repeat this several times.

Let's take a few moments to reflect on this. Would you like to continue practicing Tai Chi regularly? Do you prefer it over yoga?

PAUSE for responses.

Introduction to Qi Gong

SHOW Slide 14: Qi Gong: What Is It?

Qi Gong and Tai Chi are very similar practices that coordinate breath with slow, flowing movements of the body. Qi Gong differs from Tai Chi in that it includes repetitive movements, and, unlike Tai Chi, the practice is always conducted at a relaxed pace and does not have a martial arts focus (Jahnke et al., 2010). Let's explore Qi Gong further by first reviewing what has been learned about its benefits on the body and mind.

Benefits of Qi Gong on Mind and Body

SHOW Slide 15: Benefits of Qi Gong on the Body

Qi Gong practice shows that the **benefits to the body** are similar to those of Tai Chi, which is not surprising since they are so closely aligned. Similar to Tai Chi, Qi Gong has been found to do the following:

- **Lowers blood pressure** (Lee et al., 2004; Lee et al., 2003; Xiong et al., 2015).
- **Reduces inflammation and boost immune response** (Chen, Yeh, & Lee, 2006; Manzanique et al., 2004; Vera et al., 2016).

SHOW Slide 16: Benefits of Qi Gong on Mental Well-Being

This form of mind-body exercise **may support our mental state and our ability to manage stress** through the following:

- **Reduces symptoms of anxiety** (Johannsen et al., 2011; Tsai et al., 2003; Yin & Dishman, 2014).
- **Reduces feelings and symptoms of stress similar to effects of meditation or brisk walking** (Lee et al., 2003; Terjestam et al., 2010).

SHOW Slide 17: Qi Gong Demonstration

EXERCISE 4: Qi Gong Demonstration

Facilitator Note:

The purpose of this exercise is for participants to experience Qi Gong. This should take approximately 5 minutes.

Now we have the opportunity to try Qi Gong (adapted from Cohen, 2018). If you are able, take a moment to stand up just where you are. Create a little space, about a foot in front and a foot or so behind you, so you can move with ease.

1. **Bounce to warm up:** With your feet parallel, stand with your feet about shoulder's width apart. Bounce with your knees loose and your arms hanging at your sides, and allow your arms to jiggle for about 1 minute.
2. **Accordion to feel qi energy:** Now, close your eyes halfway. Clear your mind, and concentrate your attention on your palms. Allow your breath to become slow, easy, without force, so you cultivate a trance-like state. Bring your hands together, palms touching and fingers pointing upward. Slowly move your hands

apart, and keep the palms facing one another. When they are about 12 inches apart, slowly move them together using the least amount of physical effort possible. Move your hands slowly back and forth, varying the range of the bellows. Repeat the accordion technique in different directions: horizontally, vertically, and diagonally.

PAUSE for responses after each question.

Let's take a few moments to reflect on what we observed about this exercise. What did you notice?

How did it feel to move in this way?

Can you think of ways that this practice may be helpful in your own life?

Great job everyone, we have really explored some interesting techniques today!

Summary

SHOW Slide 18: Review of Key Points

Stress can impact our bodily systems and cause discomfort (Pearlin et al., 1981). **Mind-body exercises may help you manage your stress, return to a relaxed state more quickly when you experience stress, and alleviate some of the mental symptoms of stress** (Brown & Gerbarg, 2005; Brown et al., 2013; Cowen & Adams, 2005; Gerbarg et al., 2011; Jin, 1992; Lee et al., 2003; Streeter et al., 2012).

Today, we explored three different mind-body exercises that you may want to investigate further to incorporate into your wellness practices to help you manage stress. On the [YRRP website](http://www.yellowribbon.mil/cms/event-handout) at www.yellowribbon.mil/cms/event-handout, you will find a handout with more information about these exercises. You can research them further, and consult with your healthcare provider about which one may be right for you.

Do you have any questions about anything we discussed today?

PAUSE for responses.

SHOW Slide 19: Review of Objectives

Let's see if we met our objectives:

1. **What are some characteristics of mind-body exercises that each of the exercises we explored had in common?** *PAUSE for responses.*
(Possible answers: coordination of breath and movement; moving meditation; mental focus while developing awareness of body's movement in space)
2. **What are some of the benefits of mind-body exercises on the body and our mental state?** *PAUSE for responses.*
(Possible answers: decreases blood pressure; helps influence state of calm; reduces anxiety and depression; reduces hyperarousal symptoms of PTSD)
3. **Which of the mind-body exercises and techniques might you use to help you manage signs of stress?** *PAUSE for responses.*

SHOW Slide 20: Move the Body and Relax the Mind

Thank you, and please complete your evaluation for this class.

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