

Mind-body Group Intervention for Orthodox Jewish women in fertility treatment: A Multicultural Perspective

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1

Introduction

Infertile patients often suffer from pain, stress, vulnerability to anxiety, depression, feelings of failure and loneliness. **Research findings show a positive correlation between psychological group intervention and stress reduction, wellbeing and increase of pregnancy rates.** Orthodox infertility patients often meet with unique challenges. For some, religious and/or spiritual beliefs ease the coping with the diagnosis, while religion may exacerbate suffering for others. We examined how a mind-body group model addressed the difficulties of Orthodox infertility patients.

2

Methods

The intervention was offered to the patients within fertility clinics. The participants included 10 single women and 20 married women. We outline the use of the model developed by James Gordon, MD, and the Center for Mind-Body Medicine as we have integrated it into groups of infertile women. **Each series included 8 meetings. The group is structured so as to provide a short didactic teaching session interwoven with opportunities to experience mind-body skills. The small group setting provides group support, structure and flexibility, giving participants the chance to discuss and process their experiences with mind-body skills. Participants are also encouraged to practice these skills outside of group. The model is based on skills that include biofeedback, imagery, meditation, art and music therapy, and spirituality.** In each session, we practice one of these skills. Mind-body approaches provide tools for self-awareness, self-regulation, self-care, emotional support, connectedness and encouragement.

During the sessions, the participants shared an ambivalent attitude regarding the group: deep gratitude on the one hand and anger and frustration on the other. For many of them, the group was the only place where they could share feelings and be understood. **They reported using new strategies in dealing with social pressure and religious issues, using Mind Body skills towards and during medical procedures,** experienced less stress and improved in their communication with family members, while experiencing more hope and less loneliness.

3

Results

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Conclusions

Religious women may be powered by their faith and beliefs, but belonging to the Orthodox community also exacerbates their sense of failure, loneliness and incompetence. **Mind-body groups offer therapeutic space, new strategies, support and skills for coping with these difficulties.**



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