

INITIAL TESTING OF A GUIDED, INTERNET-DELIVERED COUPLE INTERVENTION FOR PTSD AND RELATIONSHIP ENHANCEMENT: Couple HOPES

Research that tries to better understand the complexities of military life has led to an increase in use of biopsychosocial approaches to the well-being of serving military, Veterans, and their families. The biopsychosocial approach looks at the whole person – their socio-economic and health status, their level of functioning and satisfaction in life, and their interactions with others – to inform new social and health care programs.

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Candice M. Monson, PhD, is Professor of Psychology at the Toronto Metropolitan University in Toronto, ON. She is one of the foremost experts on traumatic stress and the use of individual and conjoint therapies to treat PTSD.

Dr. Monson has published over 150 peer-reviewed publications, 7 books, and 40 book chapters on the development, evaluation, and dissemination of PTSD treatments more generally.

Project Summary & Impacts

Military members, veterans, and first responder (MMVFR) populations are disproportionately affected by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and have particularly elevated PTSD symptoms and higher occurrences of comorbid mental health problems – especially depression, anxiety, alcohol/substance use problems, psychosocial impairment, anger, and guilt.

PTSD can be debilitating, prevalent and it is associated with intimate partner distress and significant relationship problems. MMVFR also experience particularly strong associations between PTSD and intimate relationship problems.

Couple HOPES (Helping Overcome PTSD and Enhance Satisfaction) is a guided, online couple intervention adapted from Cognitive-Behavioral Conjoint Therapy for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It was created by Dr. Monson and her team to overcome a range of barriers (i.e. rural and remote, access to CBT, limited treatments for couples) to accessing evidence-based treatments for PTSD and the intimate relationship problems associated with it.

This project, funded through the True Patriot Love – CIMVHR research fund, was a randomized controlled trial

(RCT) of Couple HOPES involving couples in which one partner was a military member, veteran, or first responder and had probable PTSD (PTSD + partner) based on self-report assessment.

The study has contributed to improvements in how the participants' relationship functions, trauma recovery, and PTSD symptom reduction for military members, veterans, and their partners.

The project made these contributions by providing the Couple HOPES intervention and free online PTSD webinars, providing introductory information on how to identify PTSD symptoms, to military members, Veterans and their partners across Canada. In addition, the intervention and webinars provided knowledge and new skills to help military members, veterans, and their partners identify and reduce PTSD symptoms, de-escalate interpersonal conflict, reduce distress, and improve interpersonal communication. The entire project was highly accessible as users only required a smartphone and an internet connection to access the intervention and webinars. This accessibility enabled Couple HOPES to reach many military members, veterans, and their partners across all of Canada, particularly in rural and remote areas where there is a lack of professional mental health support.

Primary outcomes of interest were the reduction of PTSD symptoms and the enhancement of relationship satisfaction. This study suggests that Couple HOPES may be an acceptable, feasible, and efficacious means of reducing PTSD symptoms and enhancing relationship satisfaction in MMVFR and their partners.

These findings show the potential of Couple HOPES to have broad benefits not only for MMVFR individuals with probable PTSD, but also for enhancing relationships with their romantic partners.

Couple HOPES

Couple HOPES is an online self-help program for people who struggle with symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, and their intimate partners. Here's how it works. We've created seven modules for you and your partner that are based on the science of helping PTSD and relationships. Each module contains training videos and exercises to teach you both new skills to overcome PTSD and enhance your relationship at the same time. You will be assigned a coach, who will message with you through the Couple HOPES platform to help you get the most out of the program and make sure you're understanding and using your new skills.

Do you have questions about Couple HOPES? Contact us via email or by visiting the website below for more information or to signup for eligibility screening! website: www.couplehopes.com email:

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