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Yoga for breast cancer survivors: psychological recovery and QOL

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Background

Many studies about yoga for cancer survivors have shown their effectiveness on physical and psychosocial QOL. It is also gradually accepted that applications of yoga to be helpful for grieving process. We consider breast cancer diagnosis as “object loss” directly impacts on their QOL.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the psychological effects and its mechanisms afforded by 12-week yoga program for cancer survivors.

Methods

20 Japanese breast cancer survivors aged over 20 were recruited for 12-week yoga intervention program. A 75 minutes yoga session consists of warm up, basic yoga postures, breath work and meditation. Group interviews and QOL assessments (FACT-B) were conducted at baseline and after 12

weeks intervention. All interviews were audiotaped with consent, and transcribed to analyze. The recovery stages were assessed and identified by two certified psychotherapists and the first author individually, then made it into a consensus.

Results

18 participants aged 36 to 53 (mean: 46.6) completed the program. Mean attendance was 11.3 of 12 classes. No serious adverse events were reported. We found that psychoanalytic defense mechanism “denial” was used commonly in participants who marked down on FACT-B score and the appearance of “denial” related words were significantly decreased after intervention.

Conclusion

Results suggested that yoga has a significant potential and should be further explored as a releasing trigger from “denial” stage of psychological recovery.