



Faith may help in trauma recovery

By **MARK BRUNSWICK**, Star Tribune

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A study conducted at the Minneapolis VA shows signs that victims of trauma and PTSD can be helped by programs that emphasize spirituality as part of recovery.

The study looked at a group intervention program called Building Spiritual Strength (BSS), an interfaith eight-session method that encourages participants to use their faith to manage the impact of trauma. The program includes steps such as keeping a "prayer log," group discussions of conflict resolution and how to build a personal relationship with a higher power. Perhaps not surprisingly, the study showed that using a spiritual resource was more effective for those who profess a religious association or at least a spiritual orientation. But the influence can't be dismissed among those who don't identify themselves as either religious or spiritual.

Fifty-four veterans were selected for the study with 29 assigned to the control group and 26 to the intervention group. Participants in both groups were measured for trauma symptoms and paid \$20 each time they completed measures of the study. At the end

of test, researchers measured changes in PTSD scores among the participants. The findings in reductions from the intervention group compared to the control group were regarded as "statistically significant."

While the authors say more research is suggested, the study may be the best evidence yet that addressing spiritually based concerns can reduce PTSD in trauma survivors. The information may be particularly helpful for veterans who might avoid treatment because of the stigma attached, but who might be willing to attend a support group at a local church or religious organization.

The study was recently published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychology*. It was conducted by researchers at the Minneapolis VA, the University of Minnesota, Loyola University and the Minnesota Veterans Research Council.

Mark Brunswick • 612-673-4434

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