Using Yoga to Improve Wellness: Exploring the Effects of a Four-Week Luna Yoga Program on Female Counselors and Counselors-in-Training.

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In an environment where women in the counseling professions struggle to balance self-care with the needs of their clients (Cummins, Massey & Jones, 2007), finding the time and resources to improve well-being can be challenging. This four-week Luna Yoga program, specially designed for women, was unlike traditional yoga in that it placed an emphasis on more gentle Moon Salutations instead of Sun Salutations and was completed in a circle, rather than rows facing the instructor, to enhance connection and facilitate a socially supportive environment for the participants.

Rationale, Instruments, and Method

This experimental study was developed to examine the impact of the Luna Yoga program on female counselors and counselors-in-training. Initially, 63 women responded to participate, however after random assignment to groups and scheduling conflicts were cleared, only 36 women remained in the study (15 experimental; 21 control/delayed).

Pre and post assessments of the Five Factor Wellness Inventory (5F-Wel; Myers & Sweeney, 2004) measured overall wellness and subscales: (a) creative self, (b) coping self, (c) social self, (d) essential self, and (e) physical self.

Results

A series of repeated measures mixed ANOVAs were used to compare pre and post test means between groups. The analysis revealed no statistically significant changes in wellness scales at or above the p < .05 level. Therefore any positive changes cannot be attributed to the experimental yoga program.

Discussion, Limitations and Implications for Future Research

While there were no significant changes, both groups started above the average assessment norms indicating that counselors in this sample may already have a higher level of wellness or have been involved in other wellness activities. Also, anecdotal evidence indicated the experience was beneficial for participants, however formal qualitative data was not collected. Therefore, future studies could gather qualitative data about perceived benefits from the yoga program, involvement in other wellness activities, and general level of interest in personal wellness.
Implications for Chi Sigma Iota and for the Counseling Profession

This study introduced a Luna Yoga program created for female professional counselors and counselors-in-training to explore the effects on their overall wellness, social support, and body image and awareness. This research project is directly relevant to CSI’s wellness counseling research priorities by fostering holistic wellness through yoga practice (i.e., Theme F, Objectives 2 & 3). This may be a step in the direction towards infusing wellness into Counselor Education programs and encouraging student-led groups to continue their efforts to promote individual wellbeing for the counseling professional, the counselor-in-training, and ultimately the client.

Note: Dr. Ana Puig, Research Director, Office of Educational Research, University of Florida served as faculty advisor for this study. Partial funding for this research was provided by grants from the Chi Sigma Iota Counseling Academic and Professional Honor Society International and the University of Florida’s Center for Spirituality and Health.

References
