

Lessen the Stress

Military Combats Post-Traumatic Stress with iREST

By Bill Bedard

With both Camp Lejeune and MCAS Cherry Point capping either end of the Crystal Coast, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is something many residents, both military and civilian, have had to face. According to the National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH), PTSD, is an anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal. The list of symptoms for PTSD is a long and harrowing one, with even some of the most innocuous sounding ailments, such as lack of concentration or insomnia, ruining lives.

While NIMH lists talk and cognitive behavior theory (consisting of exposure therapy, or facing one's fears, making sense of bad memories and then reducing anxiety) as the main way to

help treat the disorder, a new adjunctive therapy called "iRest," or Integrated Restoration, is being considered at Veteran's Administrations, by PTSD sufferers, military hospitals and even Camp Lejeune in the Warrior Athlete Rehabilitation program as part of Wounded Warriors East.

Developed by Dr. Richard Miller, a noted clinical psychologist, author, and cofounder of the International Association of Yoga Therapy, the iRest program is a nonreligious educational series of relaxation or guided meditation techniques. Miller's students brought the program to the area following success with similar programs at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington DC.

According to Miller, preliminary clinical studies show iRest as being an effective addition to other treatments, helping participants achieve relaxation and even resolve symptoms such as sleeplessness, anxiety, fear, depression, and chronic pain.

Miller said the program was not designed to replace cognitive behavior therapies already being implemented at VA Centers and Hospitals. "I hope that [iRest] will be an alternate and adjunctive program.

We know that no one program fits all. My vision is that the program will be integrated into all VA centers, hospitals and clinics so that people who really resonate and can be helped by our approach can."

iRest has its roots in Yoga Nidra, guided meditation practices, but combines these ancient techniques with Miller's expertise with modern psychology. "I know cognitive psychology alone won't do the work, won't do the healing. It's got to be combined," Miller explained.

"We're trying to look at all work that's ever been done with PTSD and combine the best. We're not inventing anything that hasn't been around for thousands of years, this is just the Western take," he added.

Even with the "Western take," Miller said he knew that there would be skepticism and pushback at an approach with Eastern roots. He said the aim of the program wasn't to teach Eastern philosophy, but to teach a set of tools of self exploration. "There's no philosophy, no religious aspect to it, we take the spiritual aspect out and it helps them simply inquire into the ground of their own experience."



Dr. Richard Miller, left, is the founder and director of the nonprofit Center of Timeless Being, co-founder and co-president of the Institute for Spirituality and Psychology, and co-founder of The International Association of Yoga Therapy.

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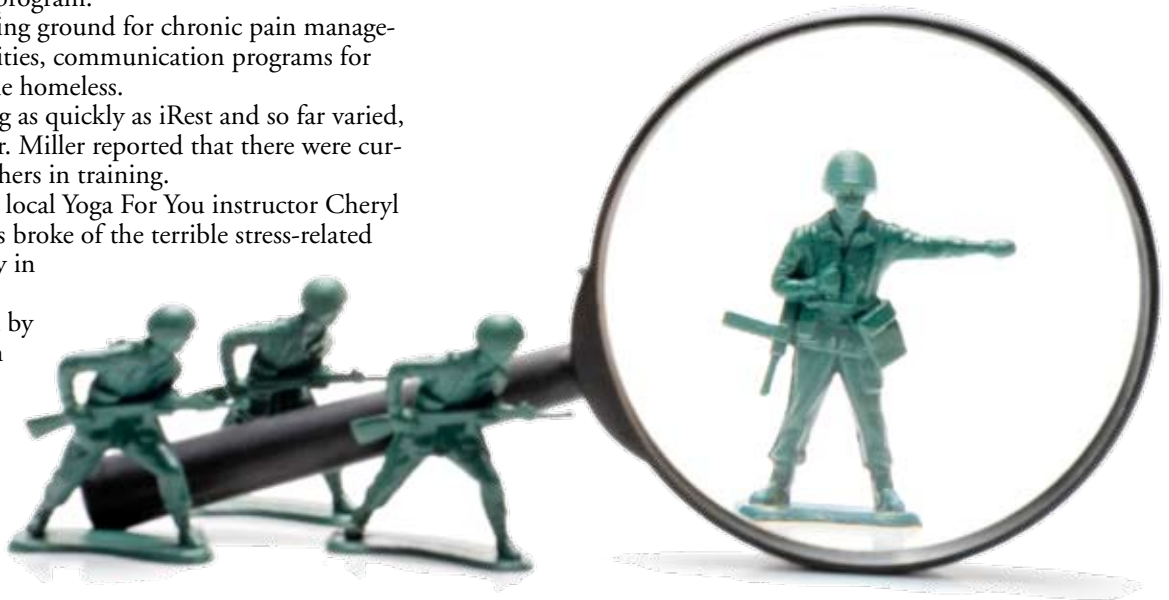
Miller added that by introducing the practice as integrative restoration, and involving different Western aspects including cognitive psychology, exposure therapy, emotional rational therapy and body sensitivity, iRest could “pretty well speak to critics.”

Miller and iRest have been receiving good reviews, especially from the military and Veteran’s Administrations. Walter Reed Army Medical Center has had so much success it adopted the program. In addition to Walter Reed, Miller said VA hospitals in Miami, Chicago and Ft. Sam Houston are all taking an interest and working with the program.

iRest has also been gaining ground for chronic pain management programs in universities, communication programs for children and work with the homeless.

With a program growing as quickly as iRest and so far varied, Miller isn’t the sole teacher. Miller reported that there were currently more than 300 teachers in training.

One of those teachers is local Yoga For You instructor Cheryl LeClair. Shortly after news broke of the terrible stress-related shootings at Camp Liberty in Badhdad, Yoga For You in Morehead City responded by offering the iRest program on the third Sunday of each month. LeClair said so far responses had been positive and that participants in her classes had been coming back saying they had less difficulty with insomnia after classes.



In addition to classes at Yoga For You, LeClair will begin teaching iRest classes at the Camp Lejeune Naval Hospital as part of their “Back on Track” mental health program, a two-week program for Marines when they get back from duty.

For those who aren’t eligible for Back on Track or are just looking to try something different, find out more at the iRest website, nondual.org or the Yoga For You site at yogaforyouandme.com. Members of the armed forces who are retired or on active duty can get four free classes from Yoga For You. ■

Integrative Restoration combines cognitive therapy and modern psychology with *Yoga Nidra*, a form of meditative relaxation and spiritual inquiry. The process is done lying down. There are no poses and no need for stamina or athleticism. Participants work with an instructor and take-home CDs and materials on a 10-step process to give them the tools to overcome PTSD and other ailments.



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