

# Spiritually-Enhanced Mindful Strategies for Symptom Management: *Mantram Repetition Program*

Jill E. Bormann, PhD, RN, FAAN  
Associate Nurse Executive/Research, VA San Diego Healthcare System  
Clinical Professor, Hahn School of Nursing & Health Sciences, University of San Diego  
Adjunct Associate Professor, San Diego State University School of Nursing  
[jill.bormann@va.gov](mailto:jill.bormann@va.gov)   [www.jillbormann.com](http://www.jillbormann.com)   [jillbormannphd@gmail.com](mailto:jillbormannphd@gmail.com)

## **Objectives: At the end of this presentation, participants will be able to . . .**

1. Identify the difference between a “mantra” and “mantram”—one component of a spiritually-based intervention to manage symptoms of PTSD.
2. Describe components of the Mantram Repetition Program and its application for training attention and initiating the relaxation response.
3. Describe research studies that demonstrate positive health outcomes of the Mantram Repetition Program in a variety of groups.

## **Frequently Asked Questions:**

- 1. What is a mantram?** A mantram is a spiritual word, phrase, or brief prayer that we repeat silently to ourselves to calm the body, quiet the mind and improve concentration to restore the spirit. It can be repeated at anytime, anyplace, and intermittently throughout the day.
- 2. Can I use any word or phrase?** We recommend using a word or phrase that has spiritual connections and has been handed down for generations—it has passed the “test of time.”
- 3. How do I choose a mantram?** See list attached. Pick one that has a positive feeling, meaning, or even sound. Try it out and see how it feels to you.
- 4. How do I use a mantram?** Use it simply by repeating it to yourself as often as you can—silently, aloud, or in writing. Use it at times when you are calm and relaxed at first.
- 5. When can I use it?** Anytime! In the beginning, repeat it when you don’t need it. With practice, you’ll be able to use it during stressful times. Repeat it every night before sleep, and when you are waiting in lines, while walking, etc.
- 6. How often will I need to use my mantram?** The more you use it, the better results you’ll notice. Build the mental muscle of your mind. Make it a daily habit.
- 7. Will it help me feel less stress? To sleep better? To improve quality of life?** With practice and persistence, yes! The more you use it, the better you’ll feel, think, and be.



### **How to Choose a Mantram**

Much care should be taken in choosing a mantram. Take your time and choose it wisely. Avoid words that evoke negative associations or bad memories. Choose one that appeals to you or offers strength and support. Choose one that is compatible with your religious background and/or spiritual beliefs. Some people have no difficulty choosing a mantram, such as when a word or phrase jumps out at them immediately. Others have to “try it on” and practice repeating it silently for a few days or even weeks, to see how it feels, only to discover that when they decided to pick a new one—they couldn’t! Their minds automatically reverted to repeating the first one! Using that mantram had already become a habit.

### **Using a Mantram for Slowing Down**

Our culture values speed and doing many things at once or multi-tasking. People groan that there are “not enough hours in the day” to accomplish all they want. Such thinking promotes a sense of urgency and the need to hurry through life. Slowing down involves discrimination. Yes, there are many things to attend to—daily maintenance of household and career, caring for relationships with family and friends. Discrimination is needed to decide what is most important, and then do those things at a moderate pace to avoid carelessness and error. Contrary to what most of us believe, slowing down means efficiency! One makes fewer mistakes, has fewer accidents, and becomes more creative.

Discrimination really means setting priorities and learning to “let go” of the non-essentials. This alone takes time for reflection and evaluation, and for some people, it involves risk-taking. It may feel threatening to evaluate one’s pace and realize the need to change and slow down. Nevertheless, slowing down involves making a conscious effort to choose wisely each day and in each activity—all aspects of life. The end result is living more fully, consciously, and intentionally.

### **Using a Mantram for Developing One-Pointed Attention or Mindfulness**

Mantram repetition forces the mind inherently to become one-pointed with focused attention and serves to raise awareness of the thinking process. Many times, people are unaware of their thoughts and how poor decisions and bad habits are made. The mantram is a very concrete, practical tool whereby “you know when you are repeating it, and you know when you are *not*.” Each time your mind wanders and you bring it back to focus on the mantram, you have an opportunity to increase mindfulness and your ability to control attention. Attention, explained in this way, is a valuable resource that is often wasted. Just as sunlight can be focused through a magnifying glass to create a laser sharp point capable of burning a leaf, attention can be focused on completing one task at a time with efficiency and carefulness.

### **Stages of Mantram Practice**



## List of Commonly Used Recommended Mantrams\*

<b>Mantrams (pronunciation)</b>	<b>Description</b>
Om mani padme hum (Ohm mah-nee pahd-may hume)	An invocation to the jewel (Self), in the lotus of the heart
Namo Butsaya (Nah-mo Boot-see-yah)	I bow to the Buddha
My God and My All	St. Francis of Assisi's phrase
Maranatha (Mah-rah-nah-tha)	Lord of the Heart (Aramaic)
Kyrie Eleison (Kir-ee-ay Ee-lay-ee-sone)	Lord have mercy
Christe Eleison (Kreest-ay Ee-lay-ee-sone)	Christ have mercy
Jesus, Jesus	Son of God
Hail Mary or Ave Maria	Mother of Jesus
Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me	Jesus Prayer
Rama (Rah-mah) (see longer version of "Haré Rama, Hare Krishna)*	Eternal joy within (Gandhi's mantram)
Om Namah Shivaya (Ohm Nah-mah Shee-vah-yah)	Invocation to beauty and fearlessness
Om Prema (Ohm Pray-Mah)	A call for universal love
Om Shanti (Ohm Shawn-tee)	Invocation to eternal peace
Shalom (Shah-lome)	Peace, completeness
So Hum (So Hum)	Hindu for I am that Self within
Barukh Atah Adonoi (Bah-rookh At-tah Ah-doh-nigh)	Hebrew for Blessed art Thou, King of the Universe
Ribono Shel Olam (Ree-boh-no Shel O-lahm)	Hebrew for Lord of the Universe
Bismallah ir-Rahman ir-Rahim (Beese-mah-lah ir-Rah-mun ir-Rah-heem)	Arabic—In the name of God, the most gracious, the most merciful
Wakan Tanka (Wah-Kahn Tahn-Kah)	O Great Spirit
*Haré Rama, Haré Rama, Rama Rama, Haré Haré, Haré Krishna, Haré Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Haré Hare	Sanskrit names of 3 Supreme Beings: "Hare," "Krishna," and "Rama"

***Note: This is not an all inclusive list.***

## Ways to Use Your Mantram

**Practice mantram repetition first when relaxed and before sleep to experience the relaxation response. Then use it intermittently throughout the day or night, as often as possible, including:**

### **While waiting**

- For a job interview, or in a grocery or ticket line
- For the bus, plane, train, taxi, or other transportation
- For a doctor's appointment or lab tests
- For people who are late

### **While doing mechanical tasks to bring attention back to that task**

- Washing dishes, sweeping, vacuuming, dusting
- Sweeping, raking, gardening, watering plants
- Brushing teeth, combing hair, bathing or showering
- Digging, hauling, painting

### **While exercising**

- Walking or jogging, swimming or bike riding
- Doing any repeated exercise

### **When dealing with annoying situations**

- Getting cut off in traffic
- Tackling an unpleasant job
- Struggling with insomnia or nightmares
- Dealing with difficult people
- While on hold on the telephone
- When bored

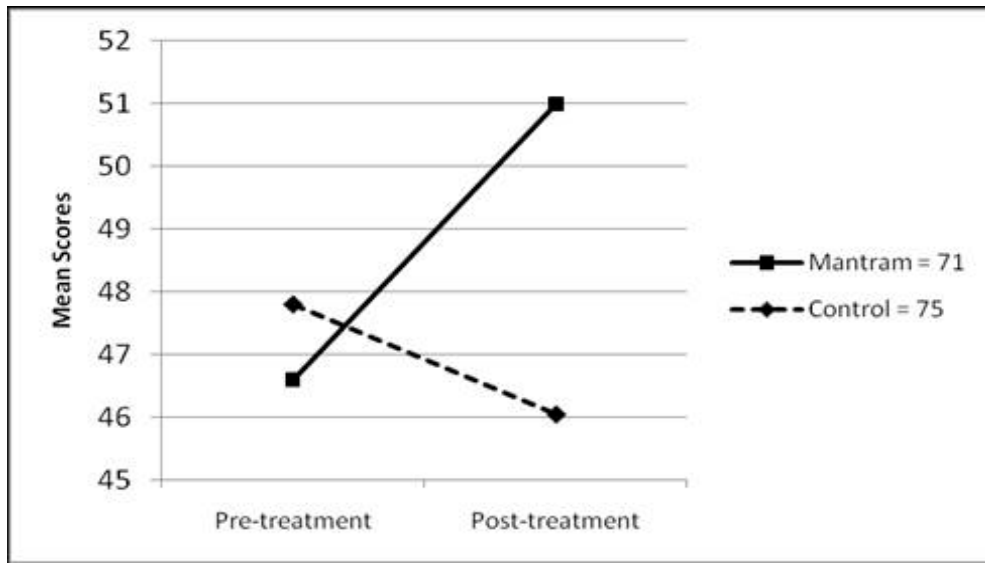
### **Other times**

- Before meals or going to sleep
- While in the presence of a dying person
- While dealing with pain, illness, or surgery
- When dealing with likes or dislikes
- For ruminating thoughts, compulsions and/or addictions

### **To manage unwanted emotions or physical cravings**

- |              |               |                   |
|--------------|---------------|-------------------|
| • Depression | • Frustration | • Anger           |
| • Fear       | • Anxiety     | • Guilt           |
| • Resentment | • Impatience  | • Irritability    |
| • Greed      | • Addictions  | • Over-excitement |

**Mindfulness Attention Awareness in Groups over Time:  
Intent-to-Treat Analyses<sup>+</sup> in Veterans with Military-Related PTSD**

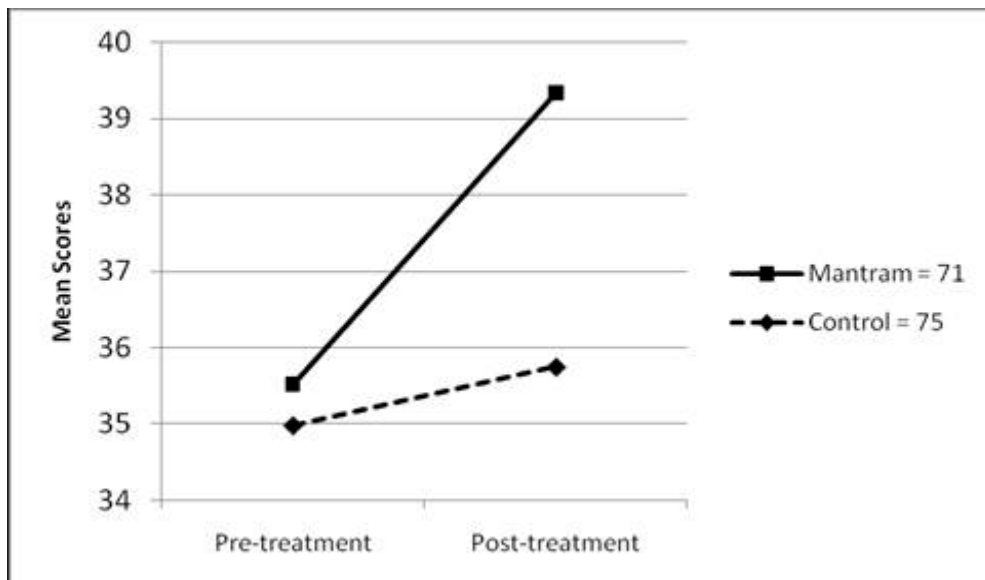


\*Mindfulness = Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS)

Higher scores mean greater mindfulness

<sup>+</sup> $F(1,134) = 9.91, p = .002$ , medium effect size

**Quality of Life Enjoyment and Satisfaction\* in Groups Over Time:  
Intent- to-Treat<sup>+</sup> in Veterans with Military-Related PTSD**



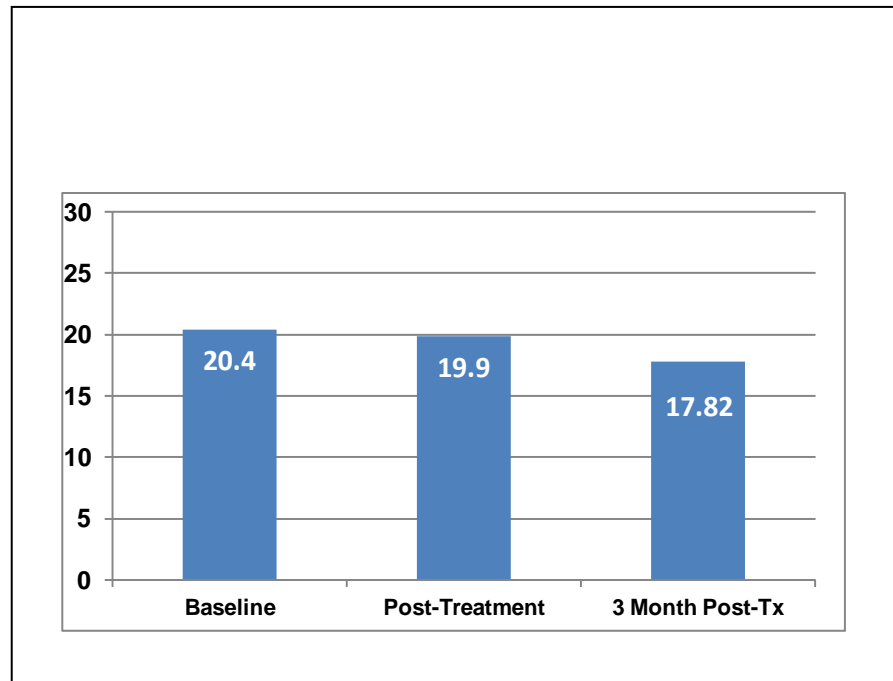
\*Quality of Life Enjoyment and Satisfaction Questionnaire (General Activities)-Short Form

Higher scores mean greater quality of life

<sup>+</sup> $F(1,134) = 9.33, p = .003$ , medium effect size

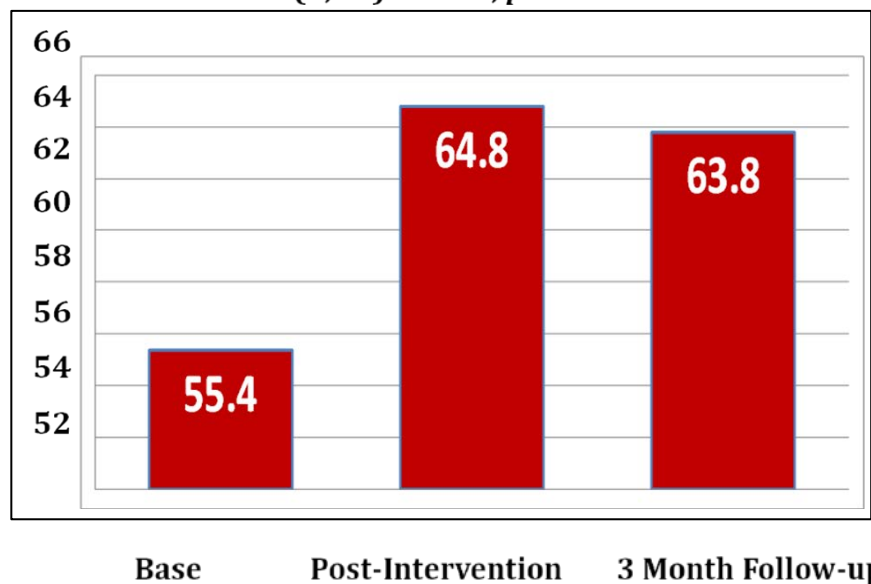
## Internet-Delivered Mantram Repetition Program for Burnout in Healthcare Workers

Leary, S., Bormann, J.E., Smith, T. L., Georges, J. & Andrews, T. (2013, April). *Internet-delivered Mantram Repetition program for burnout in healthcare workers*. Podium presentation at the Western Institute of Nursing 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Communicating Nursing Research Conference, Anaheim, CA.



## Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale in 39 Healthcare Employees

$F(2,33)=18.19, p < .001$



## Selected References and Web Sites

- Barger, M. K., Weinrich, S., Bormann, J. E., Bouvier, M., & Brosz Hardin, S. (2015). Mantram repetition program decreases insomnia among homeless women: A pilot study. *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services*, 53(6), 44-49. doi:10.3928/02793695-20150526-03
- Benson, H. (1996). *Timeless healing*. New York, NY: Scriber.
- Berkovich-Ohana, A., Wilf, M., Kahana, R., Arieli, A., & Malach. 2015. Repetitive speech elicits widespread deactivation in the human cortex: the "Mantra" effect? *Brain and Behavior (open access)* 5(7), e00346, doi: 10.1002/brb3.346.
- Bernardi, L., Sleight, P., Bandinelli, G., Cencetti, S., Fattorini, L., Wdowczyk-Szulc, J., et al. (2001). Effect of rosary prayer and yoga mantras on autonomic cardiovascular rhythms: Comparative study. *British Medical Journal*, 323, 1446-1449.
- Bormann, J. E. (2005). Frequent, silent mantram repetition: A Jacuzzi for the mind. *Topics in Emergency Medicine*, 27(2), 163-166.
- Bormann, J. E. (2010). Mantram repetition: A "portable contemplative practice" for modern times. In T. G. Plante (Ed.), *Contemplative Practices in Action: Spirituality, Meditation, and Health*, (pp. 78-99). Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.
- Bormann, J. E., Aschbacher, K., Wetherell, J. L., Roesch, S., & Redwine, L. (2009). Effects of faith/assurance on cortisol levels are enhanced by a spiritual mantram intervention in adults with HIV: A randomized trial. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research* 66(2), 161-171.
- Bormann, J. E., Becker, S., Gershwin, M., Kelly, A., Pada, L., Smith, T. L., et al. (2006). Relationship of frequent mantram repetition to emotional and spiritual well-being in healthcare workers. *Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*, 37(5), 218-224.
- Bormann, J., & Carrico, A. (2009). Increases in positive reappraisal coping during a group-based mantram intervention mediate sustained reductions in anger in HIV-positive persons. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 16, 74-80.
- Bormann, J. E., Gifford, A. L., Shively, M., Smith, T. L., Redwine, L., Kelly, A., et al. (2006). Effects of spiritual mantram repetition on HIV outcomes: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 29(4), 359-376.
- Bormann, J. E., Hurst, S., & Kelly, A. (2013). Responses to Mantram Repetition Program from Veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder: A qualitative analysis. *Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development*, 50(6): 769-784, doi:10.1682/JRRD.2012.06.0118.
- Bormann, J., Liu, L., Thorp, S., Lang, A. J. (2012). Spiritual Wellbeing Mediates PTSD Change in Veterans with Military-related PTSD. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*. 19(4), 496-502. Doi: 10.1007/s12529-011-9186-1
- Bormann, J. E., & Oman, D. (2007). Mantram or holy name repetition: Health benefits from a portable spiritual practice. In T. G. Plante & C. Thoresen (Eds.), *Spirit, science and health: How the spiritual mind fuels physical wellness* (pp. 94-112). Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Bormann, J. E., Oman, D., Kempainen, J. K., Becker, S., Gershwin, M., & Kelly, A. (2006). Mantram repetition for stress management in veterans and employees: A critical incident study. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 53(5), 502-512.
- Bormann, J. E., Smith, T. L., Becker, S., Gershwin, M., Pada, L., Grudzinski, A., et al. (2005). Efficacy of frequent mantram repetition on stress, quality of life, and spiritual well-being in veterans: A pilot study. *Journal of Holistic Nursing*, 23(4), 394-413.
- Bormann, J. E., Smith, T. L., Shively, M., Dellefield, M. E., Gifford, A. L. (2007). Self-monitoring of a stress reduction technique using wrist-worn counters. *Journal of Healthcare Quality* 29(1), 45-52.
- Bormann, J. E., Thorp, S., Wetherell, J. L., Golshan, S. (2008). A spiritually based group intervention for combat veterans with PTSD: Feasibility study. *Journal of Holistic Nursing*, 26(2), 109-116.
- Bormann, J. E., Thorp, S. R., Wetherell, J. L., Golshan, S. & Lang, A. J. (2013). Meditation-based mantram intervention for veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder: A randomized trial. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice and Policy*. 5(3):259-267, doi: 10.1037/a0027522.
- Bormann, J. E., Warren, K. A., Regalbuto, L., Glaser, D., Kelly, A., Schnack, J., Hinton, L. (2009). A spiritually-based caregiver intervention with telephone delivery for family caregivers of Veterans with dementia. *Family and Community Health*, 32(4), 345-353.
- Bormann, J. E., Weinrich, S., Allard, C. B., Beck, D., Johnson, B. & Holt, L. (2014). Mantram repetition: An evidenced-based complementary practice for military personnel and veterans in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In C. E. Kasper & P. W. Kelley (Eds.), *Annual Review of Nursing Research*, 32, (pp. 79-108). New York, NY: Springer.
- Chan, R. R. (2014). Mantra as a bedside intervention. *MedSurg Nursing*, 23(2), 84-89.
- \*Easwaran, E. (2013). *Strength in the storm: Transform stress and live in balance and peace of mind*. Tomales, CA: Nilgiri Press.
- \*Easwaran, E. (2008). *The mantram handbook* (5th ed.). Tomales, CA: Nilgiri Press.
- Hunter, L., Bormann, J., Belding, W., Sobo, E. J., Axman, L., Reseter, B. K., Hanson, S. M., Miranda, V. (2011). Satisfaction with the use of a spiritually-based mantram intervention for childbirth-related fears in couples. *Journal of Applied Nursing Research*, 24, 138-146.
- Kempainen, J., Bormann, J. E., Shively, M., Kelly, A., Becker, S., Bone, P., Belding, W. & Gifford, A. L. (2012). Living with HIV: Responses to a Mantram Intervention using the Critical Incident Research Method. *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, 18(1):76-82.
- Lang, A. J., Strauss, J. L., Bomyea, J., Bormann, J. E., Hickman, S. D., Good, R. C., Essex, M. (2012). The theoretical and empirical basis for meditation as an intervention for PTSD. *Behavior Modification*, 36(6): 757-784, doi: 10.1177/0145445512441200.
- Lazar, S. W., Kerr, C. E., Wasserman, R. H., Gray, J. R., Greve, D. N., Treadway, M. T. et al (2005). Meditation experience is associated with increased cortical thickness. *Neurological Report*, 16(17), 1893-1897.
- Oman, D., & Driskill, J. D. (2003). Holy name repetition as a spiritual exercise and therapeutic technique. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 22(1), 5-19.
- Peng, C.-K., Henry, I. C., Mietus, J. E., Hausdorff, J. M., Khalsa, G., Benson, H., et al. (2004). Heart rate dynamics during three forms of meditation. *International Journal of Cardiology*, 95, 19-27.
- Richards, T.A., Oman, D., Hedberg, J., Thoresen, C.E., & Bowden, J (2006). A qualitative examination of a spiritually-based intervention and self-management in the workplace. *Nursing Science Quarterly*, 19(3), 231-239.
- Wachholtz, A., & Pargament, K. I. (2005). Is spirituality a critical ingredient of meditation? Comparing the effects of spiritual meditation, secular meditation, and relaxation on spiritual, psychological, cardiac, and pain outcomes. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 28, 369-384.
- Wachholtz, A., & Pargament, K. I. (2008). Migraines and meditation: Does spirituality matter? *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 31(4), 351-366.
- Wolf, D. B., & Abell, N. (2003). Examining the effects of meditation techniques on psychosocial functioning. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 13(1), 27-42.
- Yong, J., Kim, J., Park, J., Seo, I. & Swinton, J. (2011). Effects of a Spirituality Training Program on the Spiritual and Psychosocial Well-Being of Hospital Middle Manager Nurses in Korea. *Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing* 42(6), 280-288.
- \* recommended reading and used in mantram intervention research studies

## WEB SITES for more information on Mantram Repetition

**Free self-training modules of Mantram Repetition Program at [www.PsychArmor.org](http://www.PsychArmor.org)**  
<http://www.caregiver.psycharmor.org/> Look for four individual sessions.

**You Tube Video: Mantram Repetition to Reduce Stress – Caregiver Support**  
[https://www.google.com/?gws\\_rd=ssl#q=you+tube+bormann+mantram](https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=you+tube+bormann+mantram)

**Dr. Jill Bormann's website with information about the Mantram Repetition Program:**  
[www.jillbormann.com](http://www.jillbormann.com)

**Blue Mountain Center of Meditation & Nilgiri Press with Eknath Easwaran's work:**  
[www.bmcm.org](http://www.bmcm.org)

**Mantram Technique benefits Veterans with PTSD: May 2013 *VA Research Currents***  
[Mantram' technique benefits Veterans with PTSD](http://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/news/research_news/bormann-033012.cfm)

**Mantram Repetition Found to be Effective for PTSD: *Research News March 30, 2012***  
[http://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/news/research\\_news/bormann-033012.cfm](http://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/news/research_news/bormann-033012.cfm)

**Wikipedia: The Mantram Handbook**  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Mantram\\_Handbook](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Mantram_Handbook)

### Media Links

#### **Vets Find Mantram Repetition Helps PTSD Symptoms – YouTube (KPBS April 3, 2012)**

This is a 5 minute video how veterans with PTSD are using mantram repetition for symptom management.

<http://www.kpbs.org/news/2012/apr/03/vets-find-mantram-repetition-helps-ptsd-symptoms/>

#### **CYBERSEMINAR FEB 2015**

Symptom Management for PTSD: Mantram Repetition Program Randomized Clinical Trial Results  
Content is about 45 minutes with Q&A at the end.

[http://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/for\\_researchers/cyber\\_seminars/archives/video\\_archive.cfm?SessionID=928](http://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/for_researchers/cyber_seminars/archives/video_archive.cfm?SessionID=928)