

Exploring Women's Experiences of Healing from Sexual Trauma through Engagement in Body-Based Practices. A Systematic Review

Molly Nixon Molly.Nixon@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk
Trainee Counselling Psychologist
The University of Manchester

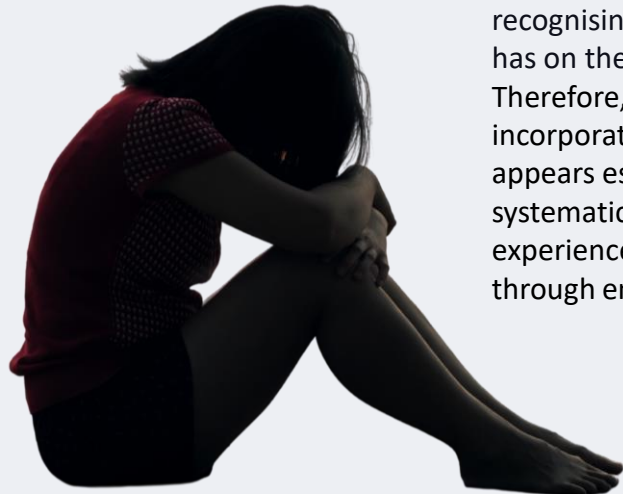
Background: Research is increasingly recognising the profound effect that trauma has on the body (Van der Kolk, 2014). Therefore, exploring holistic treatments that incorporate a mind and body intervention appears essential for healing. This is the first systematic review exploring women's experiences of recovery from sexual trauma through engagement in body-based practices.

Aims: To contribute to the understanding and development of holistic treatments that encompass a body element for women recovering from sexual trauma.

Method: A systematic review of the literature was conducted using four databases: PsycINFO, Medline, CINAHL Plus and Scopus. 2,392 records were generated from the searches. After screening 11 articles were considered eligible and were analysed using thematic synthesis.

Themes: Data synthesis led to the conceptualisation of 5 main themes and 3 subthemes.

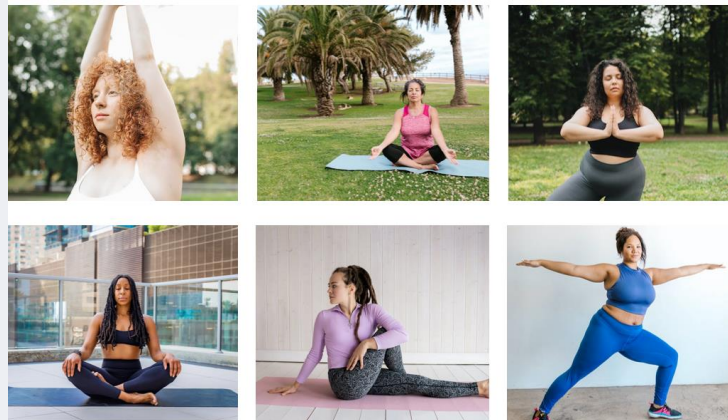
- **Integrating Mind and Body** (*Reconnecting to the body & Processing emotions*)
- **Self-compassion**
- **Trauma-sensitive Approach**
- **Connection** (*Relationships Within the Group, Safety in relationships & Spiritual connection*)
- **Fun and Spontaneity**



Research Questions:

What does the qualitative literature tell us about...

- **Women's' lived experiences of healing from sexual trauma through engagement in body-based practices?**
- **The healing processes of body-based practices for women recovering from sexual trauma?**



Discussion: Findings suggest that the healing processes function as a powerful channel to release negative emotions, establish inner safety, gain a sense of empowerment, connect with others and nature and encourage self-acceptance.

Conclusion: This study provides evidence for the use of mind-body interventions with a focus on positive growth. Continued research is needed to help determine women's readiness to engage and to understand how to support multifaceted needs.

