

# A NOVEL APPROACH TO THE MANAGEMENT OF CHRONIC PAIN USING AN EMOTIONAL-SOMATIC RELEASE TECHNIQUE IN A YOGA CONTEXT



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## Introduction

The link between chronic pain, stress, emotion, and the fascial system has become compelling.<sup>1</sup> It is now clear that to effectively help those in chronic pain, both the physical and mental/emotional aspects of pain must be addressed. Less evident is how to make use of this relationship, since mindbody approaches, such as mindfulness and yoga, show only small effect sizes and inconsistent outcomes, compared to traditional pharmaceutical approaches.<sup>2,3,4</sup> Correspondingly, many commonly used pain medications have negative consequences, such as drowsiness, constipation, dependence, and addiction.<sup>2</sup> Certainly, consideration of new approaches is warranted. The purpose of this study is to investigate if HeartSpeak, a new mindbody intervention should be considered for management of chronic pain.



## Methods

During this prospective, uncontrolled study, participants were recruited from a bimonthly gentle yoga / movement class targeted to those in chronic pain. Along with the gentle yoga-type movements, participants were invited to participate in HeartSpeak, a new mindbody intervention that involved feeling specific feelings. At various times during this 1-hour class, the instructor would guide the participants through feeling a selection of emotions, whose goal was to release pain, muscle tension and fascial adhesions. Over the course of 6 months (12 classes), volunteers completed a 0-10 numerical pain rating scale (NPRS; 0=No pain, 10=Worst pain ever), both before and after class, and using a paired sample t-test the differences in NPRS scores pre- and post-class were analysed.

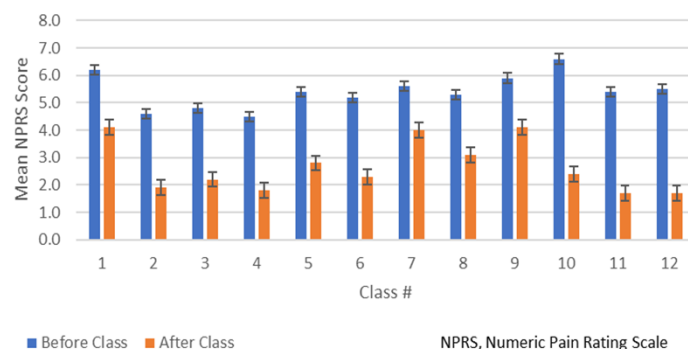
Table 1 – Mean NPRS Scores per Class

CLASS #	Participants			NPRS SCORES				p-value
	n	Female	Male	Before Class	SD	After Class	SD	
1	12	10	2	6.2	2.1	4.1	2.9	0.021
2	8	5	3	4.6	2.6	1.9	2.6	0.004
3	5	4	1	4.8	1.3	2.2	1.5	0.003
4	6	5	1	4.5	1.8	1.8	1.8	0.034
5	10	8	2	5.4	2.9	2.8	3.7	0.013
6	6	5	1	5.2	2.5	2.3	1.4	0.060
7	10	8	2	5.6	1.6	4.0	2.5	0.016
8	7	6	1	5.3	2.1	3.1	2.9	0.078
9	11	10	1	5.9	2.3	4.1	3.0	0.016
10	8	7	1	6.6	2.7	2.4	3.3	0.004
11	7	6	1	5.4	2.4	1.7	1.8	0.014
12	6	6	0	5.5	3.4	1.7	1.4	0.043
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>96</b> (μ=8)	<b>80</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>&lt;0.01</b>

SD, Standard Deviation; NPRS, Numerical Pain Rating Scale

Figure 1

Mean Before and After Class NPRS Scores by Class #



## Results

In the 12 classes, a total of 96 participants provided NPRS feedback, including 16 males and 80 females (17% males, 83% females). The mean number of participants providing feedback per class was 8 (SD=2.2), which represented approximately half of each class. Over the 12 classes, the mean pre-class NPRS was 5.5 (SD=2.3), and the mean post-class NPRS was 2.9 (SD=2.7), which difference reached statistical significance ( $p < 0.01$ ). In all 12 classes, the mean NPRS scores were lower after class (post-class) compared to before class (pre-class), which reached significance ( $p < 0.05$ ) in 10 of the 12 classes. For a summary of NPRS scores by class, see Table 1 and Figure 1.



## Conclusion

These preliminary results may suggest that HeartSpeak, a novel mindbody, emotional-somatic release technique, may be useful in lowering subjective pain in those suffering from chronic pain. Limitations of this study include the lack of control group and the inability to blind participants and the instructor. Further research is warranted and should incorporate more comprehensive blinding and a control group. As an example, a control group could participate in only the yoga / movement aspect of the class, while the experimental group would receive the emotional-somatic release intervention as well as the yoga / movement class. Until such a randomised controlled trial is completed, no causation of effect can be established, and therefore, caution is urged when interpreting these results.

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