

Recaptured Ground: Experiences of Long-term Impact of Basic Body Awareness Therapy on Daily Life in Military Veterans with Severe PTSD Symptoms

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Background: Research indicate that Basic Body Awareness Therapy (BBAT) as add-on to trauma-focused psychotherapy effects body experience and self-regulation positively in military veterans with PTSD. No studies of long-term impact on daily life are known.

Purpose: To explore the experience of potential long-term changes on daily life for veterans with PTSD as a consequence of BBAT and which BBAT-aspects may have contributed to a change.

Methods: With semi-structured individual interviews we explored the experience of four Danish veterans with PTSD who in a cohort trial finalized seven months earlier had received 12 individual BBAT-sessions in addition to cognitive trauma-therapy. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis inspired the approach to interviews and data analysis.

Results: The central experience from BBAT was: 1) Via BBAT to be guided in contact with the body like a “recaptured ground”. 2) In daily life a sustained ability “to sense” the body and with the help of elements from BBAT as ‘simple effective tools’ to “take control” of arousal and get “room for more” with positive impact on sleep, energy and relations.

Conclusions: Experiences of reclaimed body awareness and ability to control arousal by using elements from BBAT had a sustained positive impact in daily life: sleep, relations and engagement in social, physical and work life – aspects associated with quality of life. Results must be seen in the light of the combination of trauma-focused psychotherapy and BBAT. This study might inspire the study and use of body-oriented approaches like BBAT as part of trauma-treatment.

Keywords: Daily life, BBAT, veterans, PTSD, body awareness

