Original paper for re-submission to Mental Health and Physical Activity

**Effects of combining physical activity with mindfulness on mental health and wellbeing: Systematic review of complex interventions**

AUTHORS: Masha Remskar, MSca,b, Max J. Western, PhDb, Emma L. Osborne, MResa, Olivia M. Maynard, PhDc, Ben Ainsworth, PhDa,d

aBath Centre for Mindfulness and Community, Department of Psychology, University of Bath, UK.

bCentre for Motivation and Health Behaviour Change, Department for Health, University of Bath, UK.

cSchool of Psychological Science, University of Bristol, UK.

dSchool of Psychology, Faculty of Environmental and Life Sciences, University of Southampton, UK.

ADDRESS CORRESPONDENCE TO: Masha Remskar, Department for Health, University of Bath, UK. Email: [mr988@bath.ac.uk](mailto:mr988@bath.ac.uk).

DECLARATION OF CONTRIBUTIONS: **MR:** Funding acquisition, Conceptualisation, Methodology, Data curation, Formal analysis, Project administration, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **MJW:** Conceptualisation, Methodology, Validation, Supervision, Writing – review & editing. **ELO:** Validation, Formal analysis, Writing – review & editing. **OMM:** Conceptualisation, Supervision, Writing – review & editing. **BA:** Conceptualisation, Methodology, Supervision, Writing – review & editing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Authors wish to thank research apprentices Leah Jenkins and Hannah Brighty.

FUNDING: This work was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council [grant number [2381338](https://gtr.ukri.org/project/71976CA5-09D8-4A90-98D1-ACDE33D1BA64)].

CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS: None declared.

DATA STATEMENT: Supplementary materials are available through the University of Bath Research Data Archive and accessible at <https://researchdata.bath.ac.uk/id/eprint/1331>.

WORD COUNT (excluding tables, figures and references): 6201

**Abstract**

**Background**: Physical activity and mindfulness practice both have established psychological benefits, yet research into their interaction and combined use is sparse. This systematic review aimed to pool the evidence examining the impact of interventions that combined physical activity and mindfulness on mental health and wellbeing outcomes, and their potential mechanisms of action.

**Methods**: Six databases (PubMed, Scopus, EMBASE, PsychINFO, Web of Science, Cochrane Library) were searched for trials reporting interventions that included 1) physical activity and mindfulness as primary treatments, 2) comparative control condition(s), 3) an adult sample, and 4) at least one mental health or wellbeing outcome. Screening, data extraction and quality assessment were conducted by two researchers. Findings are presented narratively due to clinical and methodological heterogeneity.

**Results**: Out of 7682 search results, 35 trials were included. Most eligible studies had pilot or feasibility designs (*n*=19, 54%) or small sample sizes. Combined interventions were feasible to deliver and improved psychological health relative to passive controls (25/33 outcome comparisons reported across trials). Effects on psychological health outcomes compared to active controls were mixed (12/38 comparisons favoured combination over physical activity only, 5/18 favoured combination over mindfulness only), as were results regarding physical activity engagement.

**Conclusions**: Interventions combining physical activity with mindfulness are effective for improving mental health and wellbeing, possibly more so than either approach alone. Further research, including larger randomised controlled trials, is required to determine effectiveness and optimal intervention parameters. Exploring mechanisms of change will clarify their effects on mental health, wellbeing, and potential for behaviour change.

**Keywords**: Physical activity, mindfulness, mental health, wellbeing, interventions, review

**Highlights**

* Combining physical activity and mindfulness shows promise for psychological health.
* Evidence base is currently limited but rapidly developing.
* Combined interventions are feasible to deliver and acceptable to varied populations.
* Combination may be more effective than controls, but more evidence needed.
* Mechanisms of change should be explored in future work to improve our understanding.

**Introduction**

A robust evidence base supports the use of physical activity (PA) for improving poor mental health and wellbeing (Pedersen & Saltin, 2015; Vella et al., 2023). Reviews consistently report medium-to-large improvements in mood, stress, anxiety, and depression following engagement in PA interventions (Chan et al., 2018; Singh et al., 2023). These effects are comparable to, and in some cases greater than, current front-line pharmacological and cognitive-behavioural treatments (Singh et al., 2023). The effectiveness of PA, paired with its potential to simultaneously address physical health issues that often co-occur with mental health conditions (Launders et al., 2022), has led to recognition of PA programmes as treatment options for depression in national and international guidelines (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence [NICE], 2022; World Health Organisation, 2010; Stubbs et al., 2018). Standards for treating other common mental health illnesses, including anxiety and PTSD, currently recommend PA as a preventative strategy and an adjunctive therapy (NICE, 2011). However, despite their strong evidence base, PA interventions are not consistently implemented in clinical populations (Thornton et al., 2016). Their success in research and practice is hindered by low retention rates (Stubbs et al., 2016), which often stems from the lack of psychological resources needed for effective engagement, such as motivation and self-efficacy (Glowacki et al., 2017).

Effective PA interventions for mental health are informed by psychological theory and provide support to individuals engaging in and sustaining PA (Thomas et al., 2020). These interventions incorporate various behavioural strategies, such as task planning, goal setting, behavioural activation, accountability mechanisms, or provide psycho-educational support with crucial psychological processes, including self-regulation, motivation, self-efficacy, locus of control, and responding to setbacks or discomfort (Glowacki et al., 2017). Such psychologically informed PA interventions have demonstrated better retention rates, greater improvements in clinical outcomes (Gourlan et al., 2016), and more robust long-term effects (Samdal et al., 2017). Therefore, current evidence encourages the inclusion of psychological support targeting relevant psychosocial constructs within PA interventions for mental health and wellbeing outcomes (Arrogi et al., 2017; Gourlan et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2020).

Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs)—structured programs teaching mindfulness skills by promoting greater awareness and acceptance of own thoughts, feelings, and experiences (Segal et al., 2002)—have been found to modify many psychosocial constructs that may be necessary for successful engagement in PA (see Schuman-Olivier et al., 2020 for a review and theoretical framework). As a result, the study of MBIs has recently expanded beyond traditional mental health settings (e.g., mindfulness-based stress reduction therapy for depression; Kabat-Zinn, 1982), with increasing utilisation in weight-management and health behaviour promotion (Roychowdhury, 2021; Schneider et al., 2019). Previous reviews have documented the benefits of MBIs in these contexts, highlighting the potential of mindfulness training for enhancing health behaviour change outcomes, including PA engagement (Kennedy & Resnick, 2015; Schneider et al., 2019; Sohl et al., 2016).

Combining PA and MBIs in interventions may yield augmented effects relative to either component alone. The two approaches likely operate through complementary mechanisms: mindfulness training might facilitate initial engagement in PA by encouraging an accepting, non-judgemental attitude to one’s potentially uncomfortable experience, and in turn, engagement in PA can boost an individual’s sense of achievement and motivation to continue engaging. These effects can create a beneficial cycle of behaviour. There are also shared neuropsychological mechanisms between the two techniques, whereby engaging in both practices is likely to reinforce the ‘lessons’ learned and experienced benefits. Examples include better handling of stress through adaptations of the autonomic nervous system (Sun et al., 2023) and increased sense of self-efficacy (Roychowdhury, 2021). Through the collection of shared and complementary mechanisms, the cycle of mutual reinforcement between PA and mindfulness may result in additive effects, which contribute to sustained benefits not only for mental illness but also for physical health, health behaviours, social participation, productivity, and overall wellbeing (Schneider et al., 2019; Schuman-Olivier et al., 2020).

Previous research has explored combined interventions involving PA and psychotherapeutic approaches, such as cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT). Thomas and colleagues (2020) reviewed their effects on mental health and wellbeing, concluding that combined interventions improved clinical outcomes over and above non-active controls (e.g., treatment as usual [TAU]), and comparably to PA interventions alone. Similarly, Bernard and colleagues’ (2018) meta-analysis of interventions combining PA with CBT for adults with chronic illness found significant moderate improvements in depression, anxiety, and fatigue, but not pain, relative to non-active controls, although limited evidence for additive effects of both techniques compared to either one alone.

In contrast, the combination of mindfulness and PA has been theoretically discussed at length (e.g., Roychowdhury, 2021; Schuman-Olivier et al., 2020), but to date there are no published reviews considering their additive effects. Yin and colleagues’ (2023) review compared the effects of Tai Chi, a form of Chinese martial arts pairing a mindful focus with light-to-moderate intensity exercise, to non-mindful exercise, concluding that Tai Chi may be more effective than non-mindful forms of exercise for reducing symptoms of anxiety, depression, and general distress (*d* = 0.20; 0.28; 0.40, respectively). However, the authors noted difficulties “quantifying mindfulness elements in Tai Chi practice”, highlighting the need for dedicated research to examine the mechanisms through which mindfulness and PA interact.

This paper aimed to systematically synthesise and evaluate literature on interventions combining mindfulness-based approaches with PA. Our primary focus was on the effects of these interventions on psychological health outcomes (i.e., wellbeing and mental health), with secondary consideration of their impact on PA engagement. We aimed to understand the mechanisms of action associated with each approach and how they can be effectively combined to optimise health outcomes, which will inform future intervention development.

**Methods**

We follow the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA; Page et al., 2021), along with extensions for literature searches (PRISMA-S; Rethlefsen et al., 2021) and reviewing complex interventions (PRISMA-CI; Guise et al., 2017). The review was guided by Cochrane recommendations for systematic reviews of interventions (Higgins et al., 2022) and prospectively registered on PROSPERO (CRD42021226880). We summarise our protocol below.

***Inclusion & exclusion criteria***

The review considered peer-reviewed primary controlled studies reporting on psychological health outcomes of longitudinal interventions in adult populations. Interventions had to consist of eligible PA and mindfulness components, which together made up over 50% of intervention time. Supplementary content beyond PA and mindfulness was permitted, as long as the > 50% threshold was met – we report on the presence and format of such content where applicable. Full criteria are given in Table 1.

***Search strategy***

We systematically searched six major electronic databases (The Cochrane Library, EMBASE, PsychINFO, PubMed, Scoups, Web of Science) to identify publications with at least one keyword per category for i) physical activity, ii) mindfulness, iii) psychological health, and iv) controlled trial methodology in their title or abstract up to August 2023 (see Supplementary Section 1 for search strategy). We manually screened reference lists of relevant publications.

***Screening and extraction***

Search results were screened in Covidence, an online systematic review software. After removal of duplicates, titles and abstracts were independently screened for relevance by two researchers. Full texts were obtained for potentially relevant publications, and again screened by two researchers against pre-specified eligibility criteria. Reasons for exclusion were recorded and categorised. Screeners had high agreement rates (>90% in both stages) and discrepancies were resolved by consultation a third researcher.

One researcher extracted relevant study information from eligible trials into a pre-prepared extraction form (Supplementary Section 2). A second researcher verified the extraction against full texts.

***Quality assessment***

The Cochrane Risk of Bias 2 tool (Sterne et al., 2019) was used to assess the methodological rigour of included studies. Two researchers independently rated each study on allocation procedure, blinding, protocol fidelity, data completeness, suitability of analyses and transparency of reporting, giving ratings of low, some or high risk of bias. Final quality judgements were agreed on by the wider research team.

***Data synthesis***

At pre-registration, and anticipating a paucity of literature with high variability in design, we declared our primary intention to adopt a narrative synthesis approach, and, in the case that it was deemed appropriate, a meta-analysis of intervention effects. We decided against conducting a meta-analysis due to a large proportion of pilot/feasibility trials in our dataset, which are not powered to detect effectiveness and can lead to inflated or unrepresentative conclusions (Beets et al., 2023). Additionally, eligible studies had high heterogeneity with respect to populations, study designs, intervention content, duration, and delivery. Therefore, a narrative synthesis with a visual summary was deemed most appropriate for the current state of the evidence (Thomson & Thomas, 2013), and a meta-analytic synthesis will be considered again when the review is updated.

**Results**

***Search results***

Database searches returned a total of 13893 results, reducing to 7682 after removal of duplicates. Title and abstract screening resulted in 187 full texts for appraisal. Thirty-five trials (reported in 39 publications) met all inclusion criteria. The PRISMA diagram in Figure 1 details the search process.

Characteristics of included studies are summarised in Table 2. The studies included 2243 total participants, with sample sizes of 14-194 participants (median *N* = 48). Mean age was 20-65 years. Most studies recruited mixed sex samples (female participant proportions 19.1%-93.8%) and nine female-only samples.

Studies with non-clinical populations recruited students/young adults, insufficiently active adults, or groups with high stress and poor sleep. Most studied samples were clinical, however, and included cancer survivors, people living with chronic pain, and other chronic conditions. A handful of studies recruited participants with mental illness or history of trauma (such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD], history of addiction and sexual trauma). Reporting of participants’ baseline activity levels and mindfulness experience was sparse, although populations were generally insufficiently active and not practised meditators.

With respect to study design, all were randomised controlled trials (RCTs) except five, which did not randomise allocation or failed to report it. Importantly, 19 of the 35 included trials were feasibility, pilot, or proof-of-concept studies, with one not specifying its aim and sample size calculation— leaving 15 full-scale RCTs that tested the effectiveness of combined interventions.

Comparator groups were active in 13 studies (9x PA only; 3x attention-matched; and 2x PA with attention-matched element for MBI), inactive in 11 studies (5x treatment as usual [TAU]; 6x waitlist), and 11 trials included more than one comparator arm. See Table 2 for detail.

***Intervention content***

Interventions varied substantially in the duration, frequency, intensity, mode of delivery, and facilitation (see Table 2). The PA component was performed in supervised groups in 14 trials, eight trials combined supervised group exercise with independent home practice (6x in-person groups; 2x online group sessions), four studies offered individual supervised appointments in combination with home practice, and nine trials had guided but entirely unsupervised PA components (5x initial one-off instructions provided in-person; 4x digital instructions).

The most prescribed type of PA was aerobic (n = 19), including nine walking interventions, two running and two dancing programmes, and non-specified aerobic activities. One trial involved resistance exercise only, whereas other interventions involved multiple exercise types or personalised the prescription to each participant. A minority of studies comprised PA psychoeducation or counselling (2x), self-monitoring with an activity monitor (1x), and one trial did not report the exercise type/intensity. Interventions were between two and 24 weeks long with a median duration of 8 weeks. The frequency of sessions ranged from 1-5x per week (except in trials with two or three total PA sessions), and the total time of PA component was between two and 30 hours (mean 13.4 hours).

The mindfulness component was delivered in supervised groups in most trials (n = 26; 11x in-person guidance; 1x digital facilitation), out of which 14 included independent home practice too (7x prescribed activities and durations; 7x optional home practice). Three trials offered individual supervised sessions at first, then transitioned into independent practice. Mindfulness components were entirely self-delivered in six studies, facilitated by audio guides on either audio devices or via mobile apps (3 studies each).

Ten programs referenced standardised mindfulness-based interventions when describing their mindfulness components (7x MBSR; 3x ACT). The rest contained common mindfulness meditation techniques, including focused attention, body scans and breathing exercises. In addition, 13 trials included elements of mindful walking or other movement. Two trials added mindful eating principles to the common meditation techniques. Mindfulness components were performed 1-5x per week in bouts varying from 10 minutes to four hours (except in Garcia and colleagues’ 2023 daily 5-minute bursts), adding up to total mindfulness practice time of 4-48 hours (mean 13.3 hours). Reporting of mindfulness interventions was inconsistent and at times lacked detail. The majority of included interventions delivered (and described) PA and mindfulness components separately, whereas eight consisted of holistic programmes that integrated the two techniques in every session.

Thirteen trials included elements beyond PA and mindfulness components. Additional content was inconsistently reported on, with only one trial specifying its duration (1x 2-hour nutritional counselling session in Johnson et al., 2015, which made up 8.3% of total intervention time). Two trials reported additional elements that would have taken negligible or very little time (i.e., continuing pharmacological treatment and weekly reminder email of PA goals). Five studies provided access to resources which participants used at their will (e.g., group chats or online forums with other participants, e-diary of practice, stress reduction techniques accessible in-app), making them hard to quantify. Finally, six trials mentioned other content without specifying its duration (e.g., weekly check-in calls, a one-off psychoeducation session, or summary audio clips of intervention content). Where additional content was not quantified, we relied on its prominence in the manuscripts. We guesstimate that none of the trials’ additional content made up > 20% of intervention time (see Table 2 for details).

***Quality assessment***

Full risk of bias assessment by domain is given in Figure 2. Nineteen trials were rated as methodologically strong, that is, judged as having low risk of bias in all RoB2 domains except for D4 (bias arising from measurement of the outcome) – the latter was judged ‘moderate’ in all included studies due to the nature of self-reported outcomes in behavioural interventions. Therefore, even the methodologically stronger studies had ‘moderate’ overall risk of bias. Further 10 studies raised ‘some concerns’ in the quality assessment, mainly due to lack of randomisation (Garcia et al., 2023; Johnson et al., 2015), reporting only per-protocol analyses (Demmin et al., 2022; Rabin et al., 2016; Zieff et al., 2022), or non-reporting on pre-registration/protocol and/or deviations from it (Mousavi et al., 2023; Norouzi et al., 2023; Shors et al., 2018; Spahn et al., 2013). Six trials were rated as having ‘high’ overall risk of bias, predominantly because of poor reporting on missing data (Daluee et al., 2021), omitting non-completers from the dataset (Lavadera et al., 2020; Majore-Dusele et al., 2021), unequal group characteristics at baseline (Millon et al., 2022), or non-reporting of randomisation, analysis, and deviation from protocol (Shors et al., 2014; Weng et al., 2022). Effectiveness trials were generally of good quality, with 10/15 rated as methodologically strong (Casey et al., 2022; Chaharmahali et al., 2023; Fischer et al., 2022; Haugmark et al., 2021; Henninger et al., 2023; Hooker et al., 2022; Mitarnun et al., 2022; Mourad et al., 2022; Siripanya et al., 2023; Srisoongnern et al., 2021), three moderate (Mousavi et al., 2023; Norouzi et al., 2023; Spahn et al., 2013) and two raising methodological concerns (Daluee et al., 2021; Weng et al., 2022). In the absence of meta-analysis, we were not able to determine the extent to which publication bias was present.

***Feasibility and acceptability***

Nineteen out of 35 included studies specified feasibility and/or acceptability in their aims. They concluded that feasibility and acceptability of interventions combining mindfulness and PA is generally high, although this was measured inconsistently (either with acceptability questionnaires or recruitment/retention rates). Six studies reported moderate feasibility, mainly due to rates of recruitment being lower (Signore et al., 2022; Rao et al., 2023) or attrition higher (Demmin et al., 2022; Henninger et al., 2023; Polaski et al., 2021) than pre-specified criteria. Improving adherence to self-delivered components of the intervention was also emphasised (Nymberg et al., 2021).

***Effects on psychological health***

Studies’ outcomes and statistical results are presented in Table 3. Psychological health outcomes generally improved over the course of combined interventions and outperformed passive controls (i.e., waitlist or TAU) in 26/36 comparisons (72%), whereas comparisons with active control conditions (including PA only, mindfulness-only and attention-matched) found mixed results: In effectiveness trials, 20/28 comparisons (71%) were not statistically different between combined and active control conditions, rising to 40/52 (77%) when pilot trials were included. No combined intervention was inferior to control conditions for any psychological health outcome.

***Depression***

The most studied mental health and wellbeing outcome was depression, for which 21 comparisons were reported on seven recognised measures. Depression symptoms significantly reduced in the combined intervention arm for 12/14 trials (86%; except in pilot trials by Garcia et al., 2023; Lavadera et al., 2020). Five trials—all feasibility studies—reported between-group comparisons to passive controls, and all favoured intervention condition for reduction of depressive symptoms (100%; vs. waitlist in Demmin et al., 2022; Johnson et al., 2015; Millon et al., 2022; Zieff et al., 2022; vs. TAU in Shors et al., 2014). Studies comparing to active controls found equivalent improvement in intervention and control arms (n = 12/13 [92%]: vs. PA only in Casey et al., 2022; Fischer et al., 2022; Garcia et al., 2023; Norouzi et al., 2023; Rao et al., 2023; Spahn et al., 2013; Shi et al., 2019; Zheng et al., 2022; vs. mindfulness-only in Fischer et al., 2022; Norouzi et al., 2023; Zieff et al., 2022; vs. attention-matched education group in Mourad et al., 2022; vs. PA plus attention-matched component in Hooker et al., 2022), except in Mousavi’s (2023) trial, where combined group outperformed both PA-only and mindfulness-only groups. Effects on depression were similar in effectiveness and pilot trials.

***Anxiety***

Anxiety was measured in 17 studies using five measures. Most studies determined pre-post improvement in intervention arms (n = 11/12 [92%]; including all five effectiveness trials). Compared to passive controls, intervention groups reduced anxiety most of the time (n = 1/3 [33%] vs. TAU; n = 3/4 [75%] vs. waitlist), including in the only effectiveness trial reporting this (Mitarnun et al., 2022). Active comparators again provided mixed results – combined interventions improved anxiety somewhat more than PA only (n = 4/8 [50%]; including in 2/4 effectiveness trials), but were equivalent to mindfulness-only (n = 1/3 [33%]; two effectiveness trials gave conflicting results) and attention-matched groups (n = 1/2 [50%]; effectiveness trial by Mousavi et al. [2023] found greater reductions in intervention group, whereas a pilot trial [Polaski et al., 2021] found no difference). Hooker and colleagues’ (2022) effectiveness trial comparing to PA with attention-matched components also found similar effects in both groups.

***Stress***

Stress was third most studied with 11 results on five measures. There was agreement on combined interventions reducing pre-post levels of stress (n = 8/8 [100%]; including two effectiveness trials). Comparisons to passive controls yielded varied conclusions (combined interventions favoured in 3/4 [75%] waitlist pilot trials but not in the only effectiveness trial comparing to TAU [Haugmark et al., 2021]). Seven studies (out of which five were pilots) reported between-group effects relative to active controls: combined interventions were favoured over 1/4 PA-only groups (25%; with effectiveness trial [Fischer et al., 2022] finding no differences), delivered stress reduction similar to mindfulness-only (n = 0/2; 0%), and reduced stress relative to attention-matched self-monitoring in the per-protocol analysis only (but not in intention to treat analysis; Lyzwinski et al., 2019). Effectiveness trial by Hooker and colleagues (2022) also found no stress reduction over and above PA with attention-matched component.

***Quality of life***

Quality of life (QoL) was assessed in 11 trials with eight measures, whereas five trials focused on disease-specific QoL using five different measures. General QoL improved in most intervention arms pre-post (n = 5/7 [71%]; including all three effectiveness trial reporting this). Interventions improved QoL more than waitlist controls (Demmin et al., 2022; Goldstein et al., 2018; Lavadera et al., 2020; all pilots), but not relative to TAU in Haugmark and colleagues’ (2021) effectiveness trial. Combined interventions provided equivalent increases in QoL as active comparators both in pilot (n = 3/3 [100%] vs. PA-only; Schröder et al., 2022; Shi et al., 2019; Torkhani et al., 2021) and effectiveness studies (n = 3/4 [75%]; only in Chaharmahali et al. [2023]’s comparisons intervention outperformed both PA-only and PA with attention-matched component). Disease-specific QoL largely improved in pre-post analyses of combined interventions, with increases reported for cancer (Siripanya et al., 2023; Spahn et al., 2013), diabetes (Weng et al., 2022) , but not for multiple sclerosis (Torkhani et al., 2021) or heart failure-related QoL (Srisoongnern et al., 2021). Compared to control conditions, effectiveness trials found combined interventions superior to TAU (Siripanya et al., 2023) but not PA only (Spahn et al., 2013; Srisoongnern et al., 2021).

***Wellbeing***

Two pilot trials reported wellbeing measures: Demmin and colleagues (2022) determined improvement on their own composite questionnaire relative to waitlist control, whereas Garcia and colleagues (2023) used the Mental Health Continuum Questionnaire and found no improvement pre-post, nor relative to a PA-only control.

***PTSD***

PTSD symptoms were assessed in four trials with three measures. All studies assessing pre-post changes found a reduction in PTSD symptoms in intervention arms (including Fischer et al. (2022) effectiveness trial), whereas comparisons to passive controls favoured combined interventions over waitlist in 2/3 studies (67%; Goldstein et al., 2018; Shors et al., 2018; but not Millon et al., 2022). PTSD symptoms did not improve relative to active comparators in Fischer and colleagues’ (2022) trial.

***Self-rated health***

Four trials explored changes in perceived health using three measures. Two effectiveness trials (Casey et al., 2022; Haugmark et al., 2021) measured perceived improvement with the Patient Global Impression of Change Scale (PGICS; Kamper et al., 2009) – Casey and colleagues’ (2022) trial determined pre-post improvement in the intervention arm, as well as improvement over and above a PA-only control. PGICS scores also improved relative to a TAU control (Haugmark et al., 2021). Feasibility work by Nymberg and colleagues (2021) reported improvement on a single-item self-rated health measure within the intervention arm, but this was no greater than effects in mindfulness-only or PA-only groups. Finally, spiritual health was monitored in Daluee’s (2021) trial: they found increased spiritual health over time for the intervention arm, which outperformed the passive TAU condition but not active mindfulness-only control arm.

***Mechanistic variables***

Several potential mechanisms were also explored. Rumination, defined as maladaptive repetitive thought (Nolen-Hoeksema & Morrow, 1991), was also monitored in six trials (five pilots), mostly using the Ruminative Responses Scale (RRS; Nolen-Hoeksema & Morrow, 1991). Levels of rumination were reduced in pre-post analyses (n=5/6 [83%]; including in Hooker et al. [2022] effectiveness trial), as well as relative to waitlist controls (n = 3/4 [75%]). Comparisons with active control conditions favoured combined interventions in 1/3 trials (33%).

Mood and affect were measured in four studies. Both effectiveness trials detected improvement in the intervention groups, as well as over and above active controls (Hooker et al., 2022; Norouzi et al., 2023). In contrast, Rabin and colleagues’ pilot (2016) found no changes in mood disturbance in their per-protocol analyses (with ITT analyses not reported). Signore’s (2022) trial reported no formal analyses of their negative affect scores, citing insufficient statistical power to detect effects.

Burnout was an outcome in Fischer and colleagues’ (2022) effectiveness trial. Their combined intervention group reduced symptoms in pre-post comparisons, as well as relative to PA-only control, but not relative to mindfulness only. A single pilot trial (Demmin et al., 2022) assessed distress tolerance, detecting no change in the intervention group, nor relative to waitlist control. Finally, one pilot trial (Shors et al., 2018) studied participants’ sense of self-worth, concluding that their combined intervention led to higher self-worth over time, as well as relative to passive (waitlist) and active (PA-only and mindfulness-only) comparators.

***Effects on PA***

PA was an outcome of 13 included studies, out of which four measured it objectively (Casey et al., 2022; Garcia et al., 2023; Nymberg et al., 2021; Torkhani et al., 2021), six through self-report (Goldstein et al., 2018; Haugmark et al., 2021; Henninger et al., 2023; Johnson et al., 2015; Lyzwinski et al., 2019; Siripanya et al., 2023), and three studies used both types of measure (Rabin et al., 2016; Shi et al., 2019; Signore et al., 2022). Accelerometer-measured PA did not improve over the course of the intervention in the two pilot trials reporting this (Rabin et al., 2016; Shi et al., 2019), nor relative to passive (Rabin et al., 2016) or active control conditions (Nymberg et al., 2021; Shi et al., 2019; Casey et al., 2022, the latter being the only effectiveness trial using accelerometers). An exception to this was Garcia and colleagues’ (2023) pilot, where intervention group increased the number of daily steps over PA-only control, even though the same effect was not found for active minutes.

Self-reported PA results were mixed: combined interventions led to increased PA in pre-post analyses (n = 4/4 [100%]; Johnson et al., 2015; Rabin et al., 2016; Shi et al., 2019; Siripanya et al., 2023; all but the latter pilots), and some of the time relative to passive comparators (n = 3/5 [60%]; in Goldstein et al., 2018; Rabin et al., 2016; Siripanya et al., 2023, but not in Johnson et al., 2015; Haugmark et al., 2021). Active comparators yielded equivalent effects on PA based on the sparse data available (Shi et al., 2019; Lyzwinski et al., 2019). Two trials with objective measures and two using self-report did not perform inferential analyses on PA data (Signore et al., 2022; Torkhani et al., 2021 & Henninger et al., 2023; Signore et al., 2022, respectively).

**Discussion**

This systematic review aimed to synthesise and evaluate trials reporting on the effects of interventions combining PA with mindfulness-based approaches on mental health and wellbeing outcomes, and, where reported, PA engagement. The work provides a necessary assessment of this emerging field, highlighting the current lack of consensus, and research questions to be answered in future empirical work.

The review’s principal takeaway is that combined interventions show promise, although the evidence base is presently insufficient to draw firm conclusions. We found considerable heterogeneity between study interventions, populations, methodologies, and quality, as well as a relative overabundance of pilot studies. Available data indicate that combined interventions are generally feasible to deliver and acceptable to a range of populations, if care is taken with recruitment and support provided for continued engagement with self-delivered components. Further full-scale effectiveness trials will be able to research the specific elements of combined interventions that make them effective, for whom, and under what circumstances (Michie et al., 2013; Yardley et al., 2015).

***Combined interventions and psychological health***

Evidence from 35 trials with 2243 total participants suggests that interventions combining PA and mindfulness training can improve psychological health outcomes across populations, despite variations in intervention protocols, durations, and delivery methods. Their broad effectiveness hints at the potential utility of combined interventions in a range of contexts and may suggest that similar mechanisms drive their effects—although further research into these drivers is needed to confirm this. Combined interventions are also safe, with few reported adverse events (generally not related to the intervention) and no studies reporting a deterioration in the intervention arm. Relative to passive controls, including waitlist and TAU, combined interventions effectively reduce symptoms of depression (6/6 trials [100%]), anxiety (4/7 [57%]), and stress (3/4 [75%]). There is currently mixed evidence comparing to active controls, with most trials reporting equivalent effects in PA-only arms (intervention favoured for depression in 1/10 trials [10%], 4/8 for anxiety [50%], 1/4 for stress [25%], and 1/5 for QoL [20%]). Data are presently sparse against mindfulness-only controls, although combination shows promise for improving rumination, emotion regulation, and self-worth over and above mindfulness training itself.

Population characteristics, particularly its clinical status, did not play a decisive role in intervention effectiveness. Across the 12 trials with non-clinical populations, 23/29 (79%) mental health outcomes improved in the intervention groups. Clinical samples with mainly physical conditions (17 trials) reported improvement in 19/25 (76%) comparisons, whereas clinical samples with psychiatric concerns (5 trials) saw their mental health outcomes improve in all 11 comparisons (100%). This could indicate particular value of combined interventions for populations with existing mental health concerns, for whom mindfulness training could be a valuable catalyst for participation in otherwise inaccessible PA (Roychowdhury, 2021). Yet, the current data is not yet robust enough to substantiate this: All but one trials were pilots and only one was rated methodologically strong. One pilot trial recruiting participants with both physical and mental symptoms (Rao et al., 2023) did not report a pre-post comparison.

Interventions delivered in all-female groups seemed particularly reliable at improving mental health in the intervention arm (6/6 trials reporting pre-post comparisons), although four were pilot studies and all had small sample sizes. While there is currently insufficient data to conclude that sex had an influence on the effectiveness of combined interventions, these findings may reflect the value of shared group identity (e.g., gender) for the effectiveness of health interventions. Previous work suggests that interventions with more varied member characteristics (e.g., mixed gender groups) may still be able to harness these effects by actively fostering social cohesion, in turn promoting higher attendance and enhancing the effects (Izumi et al., 2015). Alternatively, they may highlight the importance of carefully considering the target group’s needs and tailoring the intervention to them, as advocated for by person-centred and co-creation approaches to intervention development (e.g., Yardley et al., 2015).

Other examples of good practice from reviewed effective interventions include adapting intervention content to the population’s key concerns (e.g., ACT focusing on pain management in Casey et al., 2022), or providing personalised advice and demonstrations (Johnson et al., 2015). In contrast, some research has found that interventions relying solely (or largely) on self-delivery may be less effective than regular supervised sessions (e.g., Polaski et al., 2021; Rabin et al., 2016; Srisoongnern et al., 2021; Torkhani et al., 2021), highlighting the importance of cultivating a supportive intervention setting with regular check-ins to enhance adherence and fidelity. Providing separate (versus integrated) sessions of PA and mindfulness yielded comparable results—separate components led to improvements in 43/53 (81%) comparisons, integrated components in 12/14 (86%) comparisons—suggesting that the exact format of delivering combined interventions may be tailored to population preferences or optimised for scalability when targeting mental health. These pragmatic concerns can be balanced alongside insights from neuroscience literature, which stipulates that the greatest benefits to cognitive and executive control may be gained from tasks requiring simultaneous mental and physical effort (Herold et al., 2018).

***Combined interventions and PA levels***

Although only a subset of the included studies measured participants’ PA levels, the evidence suggests that combined interventions have equivalent effects on PA levels compared to control groups (except in Goldstein et al. [2018] and Siripanya et al. [2023], both self-reported relative to passive controls). The latter was the only effectiveness trial that observed a PA level increase (versus TAU), whereas Haugmark and colleagues’ (2021) trial with a similar design did not, nor did Casey and colleagues’ (2022) work comparing objectively measured activity to PA-only control.

In line with existing evidence (Dyrstad et al., 2014; Slootmaker et al., 2009), self-reported PA data suggests greater increases in PA levels than accelerometer-based data, at times giving conflicting results in the same studies (Rabin et al., 2016; Shi et al., 2019 – although both trials were primarily focused on exploring feasibility rather than effectiveness). Therefore, it is crucial to include objective measures of PA where possible, to ensure accurate assessment and interpretation of intervention effects on PA engagement.

***Mechanisms of combined interventions***

Few studies to date have explored mechanisms of change or attempted to determine ‘active ingredients’ of successful interventions (Michie et al., 2013). Several studies in this review provided psycho-educational support for engagement with PA, finding benefits to mental health. Examples include content on “goal-setting, understanding pain, managing setbacks” (Casey et al. 2022), personalised PA recommendations and techniques aiming to support adherence, like motivational interviewing (Haugmark et al., 2021). There was mixed evidence for assisting with the transition from supervised to independent PA practice – this model of support was successful in a sample of adults with Parkinson’s disease (Mitarnun et al., 2022) but not in a larger trial for non-cardiac chest pain (Mourad et al., 2022). Existing evidence from behavioural interventions therefore concurs with the notion that targeting psychological constructs (e.g., motivation, self-efficacy, goal-setting) is key to engagement and maintenance of PA behaviour, and that this is more effective than mere ‘prescription’ of PA—particularly in the long term (Samdal et al., 2017; Williams & French, 2011).

Previous research has captured effects of mindfulness training on psychological constructs related to behaviour change. Verhaeghen’s (2021) review concluded that mindfulness training reliably improves one’s attentional resources and executive control—cognition researchers affirm that partaking in PA can do the same (Leshem et al., 2020; Pesce et al., 2016). Increased attentional control, paired with the non-judgement that MBIs promote, enables better recognition and regulation of emotional states, as discussed in models of mindful or embodied emotion regulation (Chambers et al., 2009; Guendelman et al., 2017). Furthermore, mindfulness training facilitates the development of autonomous motivation, which is consistently associated with greater wellbeing and more sustained engagement in health behaviours (Donald et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2021). Evidence also demonstrates increases in self-efficacy (Bowen et al., 2014; Moniz-Lewis et al., 2022), self-compassion (Ferrari et al., 2019; Quist Møller et al., 2019), and better coping with pain or discomfort (McClintock et al., 2019; Zeidan et al., 2012) as a result of MBIs. These findings hint at the possible mechanisms involved in effects of combined interventions and should be explored in future work alongside intervention effectiveness.

However, the current evidence base is insufficient to be able to demonstrate that combined interventions of PA and mindfulness training indeed change above constructs or improve PA engagement. Notably, only two small-scale interventions to date tailored their mindfulness-based components to support PA engagement (Mousavi et al., 2023; Norouzi et al., 2023), which could help explain the relative lack of effects on participants’ PA levels (Yardley et al., 2015). Future interventions aiming to change exercise participation should consider tailoring mindfulness training to support PA engagement and address relevant cognitive aspects to enhance intervention effectiveness. This could not only lead to increased PA engagement, but also make mindfulness training more tangible and immediately relevant to participants, in agreement with previous qualitative research (Remskar et al., 2022).

***Strengths, limitations, and future research***

We adhered to rigorous methodology and reporting guidelines (PRISMA) in providing an overview of this emerging field. Yet, the review is not without its limitations. Our scope and inclusion criteria were iterative throughout the screening process, as new dilemmas emerged (e.g., specifying that athlete’s usual training does not qualify as PA component). This is characteristic of reviews of complex interventions (Kelly et al., 2017), where multiple intervention components and mechanistic pathways make defining a focus and eligibility more difficult than in simple reviews. Each change to the protocol was agreed by the research team and transparently communicated. The cut-off for PA and mindfulness being primary intervention components (> 50% intervention time) was set arbitrarily, meaning that we could have excluded valuable interventions that did not satisfy this criterion. We also excluded studies of yoga, tai chi, and other mind-body therapies where no purposeful teaching of mindfulness could be confirmed. While this allowed us to better delineate contributions of either component, it removed a substantial number of potentially relevant studies. Other work previously reviewed research in this area (e.g., Capon et al., 2019; Pascoe et al., 2021; Yin et al., 2023).

The predominant inclusion of feasibility trials impeded our ability to draw firm conclusions regarding intervention effectiveness, yet signals the rapid growth of research on combined interventions. To strengthen the evidence base, pilot and feasibility trials should be followed up with full-scale randomised controlled trials, ideally including active (or multiple) control conditions. We know that several large trials are ongoing or forthcoming (e.g., Sylvia et al., 2023), indicating that the field may be shifting from feasibility to efficacy testing. Future research should also aim to measure process variables or adopt mixed-methods approaches to help elucidate the mechanisms of action in combined interventions, as well as who they work for; in what frequencies/durations; and how we can best deliver them to different target populations. We aim to update this review in the coming years to get a more complete picture of the effectiveness of interventions combining mindfulness training and PA for mental health outcomes, including a meta-analytic review and sub-group analyses (e.g., clinical vs. non-clinical samples, young vs. older adults), once sufficient data is available.

**Conclusion**

This review represents the first comprehensive synthesis and evaluation of existing literature on interventions combining physical activity and mindfulness training, with a focus on mental health and wellbeing outcomes. Although research into the combined impact of these behaviours is in its infancy, the evidence base offers promise that such interventions are feasible to administer and evaluate, are well adhered too, and point to favourable psychological health outcomes. Further research is needed to guide the development and establish robust evidence for the effectiveness of combined interventions, as well as delineate the mechanisms through which they work.

**References**

Arrogi, A., Schotte, A., Bogaerts, A., Boen, F., & Seghers, J. (2017). Short-and long-term effectiveness of a three-month individualized need-supportive physical activity counseling intervention at the workplace. *BMC Public Health*, *17*, 1-20.

Beets, M. W., Weaver, R. G., Ioannidis, J. P., Pfledderer, C. D., Jones, A., von Klinggraeff, L., & Armstrong, B. (2023). Influence of pilot and small trials in meta-analyses of behavioral interventions: a meta-epidemiological study. *Systematic Reviews, 12*(1), 21. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13643-023-02184-7>

Bernard, P., Romain, A. J., Caudroit, J., Chevance, G., Carayol, M., Gourlan, M., ... & Moullec, G. (2018). Cognitive behavior therapy combined with exercise for adults with chronic diseases: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *Health Psychology*, *37*(5), 433.

Bowen S, Witkiewitz K, Clifasefi SL, et al. Relative Efficacy of Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention, Standard Relapse Prevention, and Treatment as Usual for Substance Use Disorders: A Randomized Clinical Trial. JAMA Psychiatry. 2014;71(5):547–556. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2013.4546

Capon, H., O'Shea, M., & McIver, S. (2019). Yoga and mental health: A synthesis of qualitative findings. *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice*, *37*, 122-132. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ctcp.2019.101063>

Casey, M. B., Smart, K. M., Segurado, R., Hearty, C., Gopal, H., Lowry, D., ... & Doody, C. (2022). Exercise combined with Acceptance and Commitment Therapy compared with a standalone supervised exercise programme for adults with chronic pain: a randomised controlled trial. *Pain*, *163*(6), 1158-1171. *DOI:*10.1097/j.pain.0000000000002487

Chaharmahali, L., Gandomi, F., Yalfani, A., & Fazaeli, A. (2023). The effect of mindfulness and motivational interviewing along with neuromuscular exercises on pain, function, and balance of women affected by knee osteoarthritis: a rater-blinded randomized controlled clinical trial. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2023.2228691>

Chambers, R., Gullone, E., & Allen, N. B. (2009). Mindful emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Clinical psychology review*, *29*(6), 560-572. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2009.06.005>

Chan, J. S., Liu, G., Liang, D., Deng, K., Wu, J., & Yan, J. H. (2019). Special issue–therapeutic benefits of physical activity for mood: a systematic review on the effects of exercise intensity, duration, and modality. *The Journal of psychology*, *153*(1), 102-125. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223980.2018.1470487>

Daluee, A. K., Shahhabizadeh, F., Nasry, M., Samari, A. A. (2021). Effectiveness of ACT with and without Mindfulness plus Exercises on Spiritual Health in Hemodialysis. Health, spirituality & medical ethics journal 2021, 8(3), 171‐179. <http://dx.doi.org/10.32598/hsmej.8.3.6>

Demmin, D. L., Silverstein, S. M., & Shors, T. J. (2022). Mental and physical training with meditation and aerobic exercise improved mental health and well-being in teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, *16*, 847301. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2022.847301>

Donald, J. N., Bradshaw, E. L., Ryan, R. M., Basarkod, G., Ciarrochi, J., Duineveld, J. J., ... & Sahdra, B. K. (2020). Mindfulness and its association with varied types of motivation: A systematic review and meta-analysis using self-determination theory. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *46*(7), 1121-1138.

Dyrstad, S. M., Hansen, B. H., Holme, I. M., & Anderssen, S. A. (2014). Comparison of self-reported versus accelerometer-measured physical activity. *Medicine & science in sports & exercise*, *46*(1), 99-106. DOI: [10.1249/MSS.0b013e3182a0595f](https://doi.org/10.1249/mss.0b013e3182a0595f)

Ferrari, M., Hunt, C., Harrysunker, A., Abbott, M. J., Beath, A. P., & Einstein, D. A. (2019). Self-compassion interventions and psychosocial outcomes: A meta-analysis of RCTs. *Mindfulness*, *10*, 1455-1473.

Fischer, J. M., Kandil, F. I., Kessler, C. S., Nayeri, L., Zager, L. S., Rocabado Hennhöfer, T., ... & Jeitler, M. (2022). Stress Reduction by Yoga versus Mindfulness Training in Adults Suffering from Distress: A Three-Armed Randomized Controlled Trial including Qualitative Interviews (RELAX Study). *Journal of Clinical Medicine*, *11*(19), 5680. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jcm11195680>

Garcia, L., Ferguson, S. E., Facio, L., Schary, D., & Guenther, C. H. (2023). Assessment of well-being using Fitbit technology in college students, faculty and staff completing breathing meditation during COVID-19: A pilot study. *Mental Health & Prevention*, *30*, 200280. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mhp.2023.200280>

Glowacki, K., Duncan, M. J., Gainforth, H., & Faulkner, G. (2017). Barriers and facilitators to physical activity and exercise among adults with depression: A scoping review. *Mental health and physical activity*, *13*, 108-119. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mhpa.2017.10.001>

Goldstein, L. A., Mehling, W. E., Metzler, T. J., Cohen, B. E., Barnes, D. E., Choucroun, GJ., Silver, A., Talbot, L. S., Maguen, S., Hlavin, J. A., Chesney, M. A., & Neylan, T. C. (2018). Veterans Group Exercise: A randomized pilot trial of an Integrative Exercise program for veterans with posttraumatic stress. Journal of Affective Disorders, 227, 345-352. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2017.11.002>

Gourlan, M., Bernard, P., Bortolon, C., Romain, A. J., Lareyre, O., Carayol, M., ... & Boiché, J. (2016). Efficacy of theory-based interventions to promote physical activity. A meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials. *Health psychology review*, *10*(1), 50-66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17437199.2014.981777>

Guendelman, S., Medeiros, S., & Rampes, H. (2017). Mindfulness and emotion regulation: Insights from neurobiological, psychological, and clinical studies. *Frontiers in psychology*, *8*, 220. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00220>

Guise JM, Butler ME, Chang C, Viswanathan M, Pigott T, Tugwell P; Complex Interventions Workgroup. AHRQ Series on Complex Intervention Systematic Reviews - Paper 6: PRISMA-CI Extension Statement & Checklist. J Clin Epidemiol. 2017;90:43-50.

Haugmark, T., Hagen, K. B., Provan, S. A., Smedslund, G., & Zangi, H. A. (2021). Effects of a mindfulness-based and acceptance-based group programme followed by physical activity for patients with fibromyalgia: a randomised control trial. BMJ Open, 11(6). doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2020-046943

Henninger, S.H., Fibieger, A.Y., Magkos, F., Ritz, C. (2023). Effects of Mindful Eating and YogaDance among Overweight and Obese Women: An Exploratory Randomized Controlled Trial. Nutrients, 15, 1646. https:// doi.org/10.3390/nu15071646

Herold, F., Hamacher, D., Schega, L., & Müller, N. G. (2018). Thinking while moving or moving while thinking–concepts of motor-cognitive training for cognitive performance enhancement. *Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience*, *10*, 228.

Higgins JPT, Thomas J, Chandler J, Cumpston M, Li T, Page MJ, Welch VA (editors). Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions version 6.3 (updated February 2022). Cochrane, 2022. Available from [www.training.cochrane.org/handbook](http://www.training.cochrane.org/handbook).

Hooker, A. R., Sagui-Henson, S. J., Daubenmier, J., Moran, P. J., Hartogensis, W., Acree, M., ... & Hecht, F. M. (2022). Effects of a Mindfulness-Based Weight Loss Intervention on Long-term Psychological Well-being Among Adults with Obesity: Secondary Analyses from the Supporting Health by Integrating Nutrition and Exercise (SHINE) Trial. *Mindfulness*, *13*(9), 2227-2242. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-022-01951-2>

Izumi, B. T., Schulz, A. J., Mentz, G., Israel, B. A., Sand, S. L., Reyes, A. G., ... & Diaz, G. (2015). Leader behaviors, group cohesion, and participation in a walking group program. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, *49*(1), 41-49.

Johnson, J. R., Emmons, H. C., Rivard, R. L., Griffin, K. H., & Dusek, J. A. (2015). Resilience training: A pilot study of a mindfulness-based program with depressed healthcare professionals. Explore, 11(6), 433-444. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.explore.2015.08.002>

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1982). An outpatient program in behavioral medicine for chronic pain patients based on the practice of mindfulness meditation: Theoretical considerations and preliminary results. *General hospital psychiatry*, *4*(1), 33-47.

Kelly, M. P., Noyes, J., Kane, R. L., Chang, C., Uhl, S., Robinson, K. A., ... & Guise, J. M. (2017). AHRQ series on complex intervention systematic reviews—paper 2: defining complexity, formulating scope, and questions. *Journal of clinical epidemiology*, *90*, 11-18. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclinepi.2017.06.012>

Launders, N., Kirsh, L., Osborn, D. P., & Hayes, J. F. (2022). The temporal relationship between severe mental illness diagnosis and chronic physical comorbidity: a UK primary care cohort study of disease burden over 10 years. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, *9*(9), 725-735. <https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(22)00225-5>

Lavadera, P., Millon, E.M., & Shors, T.J. (2020). MAP train my brain: Meditation combined with aerobic exercise reduces stress and rumination while enhancng quality of life in medical students. The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine, 26(5), 418-423. <https://doi.org/10.1089/acm.2019.0281>

Leshem, R., De Fano, A., & Ben-Soussan, T. D. (2020). The implications of motor and cognitive inhibition for hot and cool executive functions: The case of quadrato motor training. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*, 940.

Lyzwinski, L. N., Caffery, L., Bambling, M., & Edirippulige, S. (2019). The mindfulness app trial for weight, weight-related behaviors, and stress in university students: randomized controlled trial. *JMIR mHealth and uHealth*, *7*(4), e12210. doi: [10.2196/12210](https://doi.org/10.2196/12210)

Majore-Dusele I, Karkou V and Millere I (2021) The Development of Mindful-Based Dance Movement Therapy Intervention for Chronic Pain: A Pilot Study With Chronic Headache Patients. Front. Psychol. 12:587923. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.587923

McClintock, A. S., McCarrick, S. M., Garland, E. L., Zeidan, F., & Zgierska, A. E. (2019). Brief mindfulness-based interventions for acute and chronic pain: a systematic review. *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, *25*(3), 265-278. <https://doi.org/10.1089/acm.2018.0351>

McGuinness, LA, Higgins, JPT. Risk-of-bias VISualization (robvis): An R package and Shiny web app for visualizing risk-of-bias assessments. Res Syn Meth. 2020; 1- 7. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jrsm.1411>

Michie, S., Richardson, M., Johnston, M., Abraham, C., Francis, J., Hardeman, W., ... & Wood, C. E. (2013). The behavior change technique taxonomy (v1) of 93 hierarchically clustered techniques: building an international consensus for the reporting of behavior change interventions. *Annals of behavioral medicine*, *46*(1), 81-95. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12160-013-9486-6>

Millon, E. M., Lehrer, P. M., & Shors, T. J. (2022). Meditation and aerobic exercise enhance mental health outcomes and pattern separation learning without changing heart rate variability in women with HIV. Applied Psychphysiology and Biofeedback, 47, 27-42. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10484-021-09530-2>

Mitarnun, W., Mitranun, W., Mitarnun, W., & Pangwong, W. (2022). Home-based walking meditation decreases disease severity in Parkinson's Disease: A randomized control trial. Journal of Integrative and Complementary Medicine, 28(3), 227-233. <https://doi.org/10.1089/jicm.2021.0292>

Moniz-Lewis, D.I.K., Stein, E.R., Bowen, S. *et al.* Self-Efficacy as a Potential Mechanism of Behavior Change in Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention. *Mindfulness* **13**, 2175–2185 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-022-01946-z>

Mourad, G., Eriksson-Liebon, M., Karlström, P., & Johansson, P. (2022). The Effect of Internet-Delivered Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Versus Psychoeducation Only on Psychological Distress in Patients With Noncardiac Chest Pain: Randomized Controlled Trial. Journal of medical Internet research, 24(1), e31674. doi: [10.2196/31674](https://doi.org/10.2196/31674)

Mousavi, S. S., Molanorouzi, K., Shojaei, M., & Bahari, S. M. (2023). Physical Activity Plus Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Can Decrease Anxiety Symptoms and Insomnia Severity Among Individuals With Poor Sleep Quality. Sleep Medicine Research, 14(2), 88-97. <https://doi.org/10.17241/smr.2022.01543>

Müller, C., Dubiel, D., Kremeti, E. *et al.* Effects of a Single Physical or Mindfulness Intervention on Mood, Attention, and Executive Functions: Results from two Randomized Controlled Studies in University Classes. *Mindfulness* **12**, 1282–1293 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-021-01601-z>

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2011). Common mental health problems: identification and pathways to care [CG123]. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg123>

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2022). Depression in adults: Treatment and management [NG222]. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng222>

Nolen-Hoeksema, S., & Morrow, J. (1991). Response styles questionnaire. *Psychological Assessment*. [https://doi.org/10.1037/t03823-000](https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/t03823-000)

Norouzi, E., Rezaie, L., Bender, A. M., & Khazaie, H. (2023). Mindfulness plus physical activity reduces emotion dysregulation and insomnia severity among people with major depression. *Behavioral sleep medicine*, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15402002.2023.2176853>

Nymberg, P., Calling, S., Stenman, E., Palmér, K., Hansson, E. E., Sundquist, K., ... & Zöller, B. (2021). Effect of mindfulness on physical activity in primary healthcare patients: a randomised controlled trial pilot study. *Pilot and Feasibility Studies*, *7*(1), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40814-021-00810-6>

Page MJ, McKenzie JE, Bossuyt PM, Boutron I, Hoffmann TC, Mulrow CD, Shamseer L, Tetzlaff JM, Akl EA, Brennan SE, Chou R, Glanville J, Grimshaw JM, Hróbjartsson A, Lalu MM, Li T, Loder EW, Mayo-Wilson E, McDonald S, McGuinness LA, Stewart LA, Thomas J, Tricco AC, Welch VA, Whiting P, Moher D. The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. PLoS Med. 2021;18(3):e1003583. PMID: [33780438](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33780438/)

Pascoe, M. C., J de Manincor, M., Hallgren, M., Baldwin, P. A., Tseberja, J., & Parker, A. G. (2021). Psychobiological mechanisms underlying the mental health benefits of yoga-based interventions: a narrative review. *Mindfulness*, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-021-01736-z>

Pedersen, B. K., & Saltin, B. (2015). Exercise as medicine–evidence for prescribing exercise as therapy in 26 different chronic diseases. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*, *25*, 1-72.

Pesce, C., & Ben-Soussan, T. D. (2016). "Cogito ergo sum" or "ambulo ergo sum"? New perspectives in developmental exercise and cognition research. In T. McMorris (Ed.), Exercise-cognition interaction: Neuroscience perspectives (pp. 251-282). Elsevier Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-800778-5.00012-8>

Polaski, A. M., Phelps, A. L., Smith, T. J., Helm, E. R., Morone, N. E., Szucs, K. A., Kostek, M. C., & Kolber, B. J. (2021). Integrated meditiation and exercise therapy: A randomized controlled pilot of a combined nonpharmacological intervention focused on reducing disability and pain in patients with chronic lower back pain. Pain Medcine, 22(2), 444-458. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pm/pnaa403>

Quist Møller, S., L Shapiro, S., & Sami, S. (2019). Health benefits of (mindful) self-compassion meditation and the potential complementarity to mindfulness-based interventions: A review of randomized-controlled trials. *OBM Integrative and Complementary Medicine*, *4*(1), 1-20. doi: [10.21926/obm.icm.1901002](http://dx.doi.org/10.21926/obm.icm.1901002)

Rabin, C., Pinto, B., & Fava, J. (2016). Randomized trial of a physical activity and meditation intervention for young adult cancer survivors. Journal of Adolescent and Young Adult Oncology, 5(1), 41-47. <https://doi.org/10.1089/jayao.2015.0033>

Rao, A., Zecchin, R., Newton, P. J., Read, S. A., Phillips, J. L., DiGiacomo, M., ... & Hickman, L. D. (2023). Feasibility of Integrating MEditatioN inTO heaRt Disease (the MENTOR Study): A Phase II Randomized Controlled Trial. *Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing*, *38*(5), 492-510. 10.1097/JCN.0000000000000997

Remskar, M., Western, M. J., Maynard, O. M., & Ainsworth, B. (2022). Exercising body but not mind: A qualitative exploration of attitudes to combining physical activity and mindfulness practice for mental health promotion. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 984232. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.984232>

Rethlefsen ML, Kirtley S, Waffenschmidt S, Ayala AP, Moher D, Page MJ, Koffel JB; PRISMA-S Group (2021). PRISMA-S: an extension to the PRISMA Statement for Reporting Literature Searches in Systematic Reviews. *Syst Rev, 10*(1):39. PMID: [33499930](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33499930/)

Roychowdhury, D. (2021). Moving mindfully: The role of mindfulness practice in physical activity and health behaviours. *Journal of Functional Morphology and Kinesiology*, *6*(1), 19. [**https://doi.org/10.3390/jfmk6010019**](https://doi.org/10.3390/jfmk6010019)

Ryan, R. M., Donald, J. N., & Bradshaw, E. L. (2021). Mindfulness and motivation: A process view using self-determination theory. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *30*(4), 300-306. [https://doi.org/10.1177/096372142110095](https://doi.org/10.1177/09637214211009511)

Samdal, G. B., Eide, G. E., Barth, T., Williams, G., & Meland, E. (2017). Effective behaviour change techniques for physical activity and healthy eating in overweight and obese adults; systematic review and meta-regression analyses. International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity, 14, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-017-0494-y>

Schneider, J., Malinowski, P., Watson, P. M., & Lattimore, P. (2019). The role of mindfulness in physical activity: A systematic review. *Obesity Reviews*, *20*(3), 448-463.

Schröder, M. L., Stöckigt, B., Binting, S., Tissen-Diabaté, T, Bangemann, N., Goerling, U., Kröz, M., Blohner, J, Ortiz, M.,& Brinkhaus, B. (2022). Feasibility and possible effects of mindful walking and moderate walking in breast cancer survivors: A randomized controlled pilot study with a nested qualitative study part. Integrative Cancer Therapies, 21, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15347354211066067>

Schuman-Olivier, Z., Trombka, M., Lovas, D. A., Brewer, J. A., Vago, D. R., Gawande, R., ... & Fulwiler, C. (2020). Mindfulness and behavior change. *Harvard Review of Psychiatry*, *28*(6), 371.

Segal, Z. V., Williams, J. M. G., and Teasdale, J. D. (2002). *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression: A New Approach to Preventing Relapse*. New York: Guilford Press

Shi, L., Welsh, R. S., Lopes, S., Rennert, L., Chen, L., Jones, K., Zhang, L., Crenshaw, B., Wilson, M., & Zinzow, H. (2019). A pilot study of mindful walking training on physical activity and health outcomes among adults with inadequate activity. Complementary Therapies in Medicine, 44, 116-122. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ctim.2019.03.009>

Shors, T. J., Chang, H. Y., & Millon, E. M. (2018). MAP Training My Brain™: meditation plus aerobic exercise lessens trauma of sexual violence more than either activity alone. *Frontiers in neuroscience*, *12*, 211. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnins.2018.00211>

Shors, T. J., Olson, R. L., Bates, M. E., Selby, E. A., & Alderman, B. L. (2014). Mental and Physical (MAP) Training: a neurogenesis-inspired intervention that enhances health in humans. *Neurobiology of learning and memory*, *115*, 3-9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nlm.2014.08.012>

Signore, A. K., Jung, M. E., Semenchuk, B., Kullman, S. M., Tefft, O., Webber, S., ... & Strachan, S. (2022). A pilot and feasibility study of a randomized clinical trial testing a self-compassion intervention aimed to increase physical activity behaviour among people with prediabetes. Pilot and Feasibility Studies, 8(1), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40814-022-01072-6>

Singh, B., Olds, T., Curtis, R., Dumuid, D., Virgara, R., Watson, A., ... & Maher, C. (2023). Effectiveness of physical activity interventions for improving depression, anxiety and distress: an overview of systematic reviews. *British Journal of Sports Medicine, 57*, 1203-1209.

Siripanya, S., Parinyanitikul, N., Tanaka, H., & Suksom, D. (2023). Home-Based Buddhist Walking Meditation Mitigates Cardiotoxicity of Anthracycline Chemotherapy in Breast Cancer Patients: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Journal of Integrative and Complementary Medicine*. <https://doi.org/10.1089/jicm.2022.0778>

Slootmaker, S. M., Schuit, A. J., Chinapaw, M. J., Seidell, J. C., & Van Mechelen, W. (2009). Disagreement in physical activity assessed by accelerometer and self-report in subgroups of age, gender, education and weight status. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, *6*(1), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1479-5868-6-17>

Sohl SJ, Birdee G, Elam R. Complementary Tools to Empower and Sustain Behavior Change: Motivational Interviewing and Mindfulness. *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine*. 2016;10(6):429-436. doi:[10.1177/1559827615571524](https://doi.org/10.1177/1559827615571524)

Spahn, G., Choi, K. E., Kennemann, C., Lüdtke, R., Franken, U., Langhorst, J., ... & Dobos, G. J. (2013). Can a multimodal mind–body program enhance the treatment effects of physical activity in breast cancer survivors with chronic tumor-associated fatigue? A randomized controlled trial. Integrative cancer therapies, 12(4), 291-300. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534735413492727>

Srisoongnern, S., Pajareya, K., Sriboon, R., Thanakiatpinyo, T., Chirakarnjanakorn, S., & Thirapatarapong, W. (2021). Effects of Buddhist walking meditation on exercise capacity and quality of life of patients with chronic heart failure: a randomized controlled trial. Heart & Lung, 50(3), 363-368. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrtlng.2021.02.005>

Sterne JAC, Savović J, Page MJ, Elbers RG, Blencowe NS, Boutron I, Cates CJ, Cheng H-Y, Corbett MS, Eldridge SM, Hernán MA, Hopewell S, Hróbjartsson A, Junqueira DR, Jüni P, Kirkham JJ, Lasserson T, Li T, McAleenan A, Reeves BC, Shepperd S, Shrier I, Stewart LA, Tilling K, White IR, Whiting PF, Higgins JPT. RoB 2: a revised tool for assessing risk of bias in randomised trials. BMJ 2019; **366**: l4898.

Stubbs, B., Vancampfort, D., Hallgren, M., Firth, J., Veronese, N., Solmi, M., ... & Kahl, K. G. (2018). EPA guidance on physical activity as a treatment for severe mental illness: a meta-review of the evidence and Position Statement from the European Psychiatric Association (EPA), supported by the International Organization of Physical Therapists in Mental Health (IOPTMH). *European Psychiatry*, *54*, 124-144. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eurpsy.2018.07.004>

Stubbs, B., Vancampfort, D., Rosenbaum, S., Ward, P. B., Richards, J., Soundy, A., Veronese, N., Solmi, M., & Schuch, F. B. (2016). Dropout from exercise randomized controlled trials among people with depression: A meta-analysis and meta regression. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, *190*, 457–466. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2015.10.019>

Sun, W., Lu, E. Y., Wang, C., & Tsang, H. W. H. (2023). Neurobiological mechanisms for the antidepressant effects of mind-body and physical exercises: A systematic review. *Mental Health and Physical Activity*, 100538. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mhpa.2023.100538>

Sylvia, L. G., Gold, A. K., Rakhilin, M., Amado, S., Modrow, M. F., Albury, E. A., ... & Nierenberg, A. A. (2023). Healthy hearts healthy minds: A randomized trial of online interventions to improve physical activity. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, *164*, 111110. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpsychores.2022.111110>

Thomas, J., Thirlaway, K., Bowes, N., & Meyers, R. (2020). Effects of combining physical activity with psychotherapy on mental health and well-being: A systematic review. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, *265*, 475-485. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2020.01.070>

Thomson, H. J., & Thomas, S. (2013). The effect direction plot: visual display of non‐standardised effects across multiple outcome domains. *Research synthesis methods*, *4*(1), 95-101. [**https://doi.org/10.1002/jrsm.1060**](https://doi.org/10.1002/jrsm.1060)

Thornton, J. S., Frémont, P., Khan, K., Poirier, P., Fowles, J., Wells, G. D., & Frankovich, R. J. (2016). Physical activity prescription: a critical opportunity to address a modifiable risk factor for the prevention and management of chronic disease: a position statement by the Canadian Academy of Sport and Exercise Medicine. *British journal of sports medicine*, *50*(18), 1109-1114.

Torkhani, E., Dematte, E., Slawinski, J., Csillik, A., Gay, M. C., Bensmaïl, D., ... & de Marco, G. (2021). Improving Health of People With Multiple Sclerosis From a Multicenter Randomized Controlled Study in Parallel Groups: Preliminary Results on the Efficacy of a Mindfulness Intervention and Intention Implementation Associated With a Physical Activity Program. Frontiers in Psychology, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.767784>

Vella, S. A., Aidman, E., Teychenne, M., Smith, J. J., Swann, C., Rosenbaum, S., ... & Lubans, D. R. (2023). Optimising the effects of physical activity on mental health and wellbeing: A joint consensus statement from Sports Medicine Australia and the Australian Psychological Society. *Journal of science and medicine in sport*, *26*(2), 132-139. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsams.2023.01.001>

Verhaeghen, P. Mindfulness as Attention Training: Meta-Analyses on the Links Between Attention Performance and Mindfulness Interventions, Long-Term Meditation Practice, and Trait Mindfulness. *Mindfulness* **12**, 564–581 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-020-01532-1>

Weng, X., Liao, S., Wang, F., Wang, H., & Yang, L. (2022). Evaluation of mindfulness training combined with aerobic exercise on neurological function and quality of life in patients with peripheral neuropathy type 2 diabetes mellitus. *Contrast Media & Molecular Imaging*, *2022*. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/7665483>

Williams, S. L., & French, D. P. (2011). What are the most effective intervention techniques for changing physical activity self-efficacy and physical activity behaviour—and are they the same?. *Health education research*, *26*(2), 308-322. <https://doi.org/10.1093/her/cyr005>

World Health Organisation (2010). Global recommendations on physical activity for health. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241599979>

Yardley, L., Morrison, L., Bradbury, K., & Muller, I. (2015). The person-based approach to intervention development: application to digital health-related behavior change interventions. *Journal of medical Internet research*, *17*(1), e4055. doi: [10.2196/jmir.4055](https://doi.org/10.2196/jmir.4055)

Yin, J., Yue, C., Song, Z., Sun, X., & Wen, X. (2023). The comparative effects of Tai chi versus non-mindful exercise on measures of anxiety, depression and general mental health: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Affective Disorders, 337*, 202-214.

Zeidan, F., Grant, J. A., Brown, C. A., McHaffie, J. G., & Coghill, R. C. (2012). Mindfulness meditation-related pain relief: evidence for unique brain mechanisms in the regulation of pain. *Neuroscience letters*, *520*(2), 165-173. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neulet.2012.03.082>

Zheng, F., Zheng, Y., Liu, S., Yang, J., Xiao, W., Xiao, W., ... & Wang, C. (2022). The effect of M-health-based core stability exercise combined with self-compassion training for patients with nonspecific chronic low back pain: a randomized controlled pilot study. *Pain and Therapy, 11*(2), 511-528. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40122-022-00358-0>

Zieff, G. H., Stoner, L., Frank, B., Gaylord, S., Battle, S., & Hackney, A. C. (2022). Aerobic exercise, mindfulness meditation, and stress-reduction in high-stress, college-based young adults: A pilot study. *Journal of American College Health*, 1-5. DOI: 10.1080/07448481.2022.2076103

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Inclusion criteria | Exclusion criteria |
| * Primary study published in a peer-reviewed journal in English language | * Review article, commentary, letter to editor, graduate thesis |
| * Adult sample (mean age between 18 and 65 years), with no restrictions on medical conditions |  |
| * Reports a longitudinal intervention (> 1 session) with physical activity **and** mindfulness components, which together made up > 50% of contact time | * Multimodal intervention where PA and mindfulness not primary components |
| * + Eligible physical activity components: PA interventions of any type, delivery format, activity, or intensity delivered beyond participants’ baseline activity | * + Athletes’ usual training is not eligible PA component because it constitutes participants’ baseline activity |
| * + Eligible mindfulness components: any mindfulness-based or mindfulness-informed interventions, including acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), delivered in any format for any duration, which purposefully taught mindfulness principles and skills | * + Mind-body interventions for which we could not determine that purposeful teaching of mindfulness principles took place (e.g., yoga, tai-chi) are not eligible for either component due to difficulty in specifying the source of effects |
| * Includes at least one control condition, which could be of any type (e.g., PA only, mindfulness only, attention-matched control, TAU, waitlist) | * Pre-post comparison only studies |
| * Outcome is any psychometrically validated measure of psychological wellbeing, mental health, self-rated health, or quality of life, whether primary or secondary outcomes of included interventions |  |

Table 2. Characteristics of included studies.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Authors | Sample | Design | Intervention: physical activity | Intervention: mindfulness training | Intervention: other | Comparator(s) | Outcome measures of interest |
| Casey et al. (2022)  (Ireland) | *n* = 175  70.9% female  *M*age = 48.1  Chronic pain | RCT | 8 wks, 1x 90 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised  Aerobic & resistance | 8 wks, 1x 120 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised  ACT focused on pain | / | PA only | Depression (PHQ-9), Anxiety (GAD-7), Health improvement (PGIC) |
| Chaharmahali et al. (2023)  (Iran) | *n* = 60  100% female  *M*age = 54.4  Knee osteoarthritis | RCT | 6 wks, 4x 60 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised  Resistance & balance exercise | 6 wks, 4x 20 min p/w  Group, in person (wk 1) + individual, digital, self-delivered (wks 2-6) audio-guided  Body scans, breathing exercises | / | PA only  PA+AM | QoL (SF-36) |
| Daluee et al. (2021)  (Iran) | *n* = 60  NR female  *M*age = 49.6  Haemodialysis | RCT | 5 wks, 3x 60 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised  Body weight exercises | 5 wks, 3x 60 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised  ACT & mindfulness exercises | / | M only  TAU | Spiritual health (SHQ) |
| Demmin et al. (2022)  (USA) | *n* = 72  93.8% female  *M*age = 39.9  Teachers w/ high stress | Pilot RCT | 6 wks, 2x 30 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised (1x / wk) + individual, digital, guided (1x/ wk)  Aerobic exercise | 6 wks, 2x 30 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised (1x p/w) + individual, digital, guided (1x p/w)  Focused attention, mindful walking | / | WL | Depression (PHQ-9)  Anxiety (GAD-7)  Stress (PSS-10, DTS)  Wellbeing (MAP-Q)  QoL (ProQOL)  Rumination (RRS) |
| Fischer et al. (2022)  (Germany) | *n* = 102  89.2% female  *M*age = 46.7  Adults w/ high stress | RCT | 12 wks, 1x 45 min p/w  Group, in person, superviseda  Resistance, stretching | 12 wks, 1x 45 min p/w  Group, in person, superviseda  MBSR, mindful breathing & movement | / | PA only  M only | Depression (HADS)  Anxiety (HADS)  Stress (PSS)  QoL (SF-36)  PTSD (PCL-5)  Burnout (MBI) |
| Garcia et al. (2023)  (USA) | *n* = 34  76.5% female  *M*age = 32.6  University students & staff | Pilot RCT | 2 wks, D NR  Individual, self-delivered  Self-monitoring with activity tracker (Fitbit Inspire 2) | 1 wk, 7x 5 min p/w  Individual, digital, self-delivered, app-guided focused attention & breathing exercises | / | PA only | Depression (HADS)  Anxiety (HADS)  Wellbeing (MHC-SF)  Rumination (PSWQ) |
| Goldstein et al. (2018)  (USA) | *n* = 47  19.1% female  *M*age = 46.8  Veterans w/ PTSD | Pilot RCT | 12 wks, 3x 30 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised  Aerobic & resistance | 12 wks, 3x 30 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised  MBSR, mindful breathing | / | WL | PTSD (CAPS)  QoL (WHOQOL-BREF) |
| Haugmark et al. (2021)  (Norway) | *n* = 170  93.5% female  *M*age = 42.5  Fibromyalgia | RCT | 12 wks, 3x NR (total)  Individual, personalised  PA consultation & recommendations | 10 wks, 1x 240 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised (+ optional IP)  Body scans, breathing exercises, mindful walking | / | TAU | Distress (GHQ-12)  QoL (EQ-5D-5L)  Health improvement (PGIC) |
| Henninger et al. (2023)  (Denmark) | *n* = 61  100% female  *M*age = 41.9  Inactive women w/ overweight or obesity | Pilot RCT | 8 wks, 3x 75 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised  Aerobic, moderate (dance), strength, balance, yoga | 8 wks, 4x 90 min (total)  Group, in person, supervised  Mindful eating principles & exercises | Audio clips summarising intervention content (1-2x p/w, D NR) | M only  AM (education) | QoL (WHOQOL-100) |
| Hooker et al. (2022)  (USA) | *n* = 194  80.0% female  *M*age = 47.0  Adults w/ overweight or obesity | RCT | 24 wks, F/D NR  Individual, guided, self-delivered  Aerobic, light (walking) | 24 wks, 16x 150 min (total) + 1 full day (5 hrs)  Group, in person, supervised + encouraged IP  MBSR-inspired focused attention, breathing exercises, mindful eating | / | PA+AM | Depression (PHQ-9)  Anxiety (STAI)  Stress (PSS)  Affect (DES)  Rumination (RRQ) |
| Johnson et al. (2015)  (USA) | *n* = 40  85% female  *M*age = 47.3  Healthcare professionals w/ depression | Pilot CT | 8 wks, 2x 60 min (total)  Individual, personalised  PA consultation & recommendations | 8 wks, 1x 150 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised (+ optional IP)  Body scans, breathing exercises | Nutrition counselling (1x 120 min) | WL | Depression (PHQ-9, CESD-10)  Stress (PSS-4)  Anxiety (STAI) |
| Lavadera et al. (2020)  (USA) | *n* = 47  63.8% female  *M*age = 24.0  Medical students | CT | 8 wks, 2x 30 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised  Aerobic exercise | 8 wks, 2x 30 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised  Focused attention, mindful walking | / | WL | Depression (PHQ-8)  Stress (PSS)  Rumination (RRS)  QoL (QOLS) |
| Lyzwinski et al. (2019)  (Australia) | *n* = 90  67.5% female  *M*age = 20.2  Students wishing to lose weight | Pilot RCT | 11 wks, F/D NR  Individual, digital, self-delivered  Type NR | 11 wks, F/D NR  Individual, digital, self-delivered  MBSR, mindful eating exercises | Stress reduction techniques in mobile application, F/D variable | AM (self-monitoring) | Stress (PSS) |
| Majore-Dusele et al. (2021)  (Latvia) | *n* = 29  100% female  *M*age = 37.8  Chronic headaches | Pilot RCT | 5 wks, 2x 45 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised  Aerobic, moderate (dance) | 5 wks, 2x 45 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised  Body scans, sitting & walking meditation | Pharmacological treatment continued throughout, D negligible | TAU | Depression (PHQ-9, HADS)  Anxiety (HADS) |
| Millon et al. (2022)  (USA) | *n* = 26  100% female  *M*age = 37.8  HIV | Feasibility CT | 6 wks, 1x 30 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised  Aerobic exercise | 6 wks, 1x 30 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised  Focused attention, mindful walking | / | WL | Depression (BDI-II)  Anxiety (BAI)  Stress (PSS)  PTSD (PTCI)  Rumination (RRS) |
| Mitarnun et al. (2022)  (Thailand) | *n* = 33  57.6% female  *M*age = 61.3  Parkinson’s disease | RCT | 12 wks, 3x 30 min (supervised) +  3x 30 min p/w (IP)  Group, in person, supervised +  individual, self-delivered  Aerobic, light (walking) | 12 wks, 3x 30 min (supervised) +  3x 30 min p/w (IP)  Group, in person, supervised +  individual, digital, self-delivered  Sitting meditation, body scans | / | TAU | Anxiety (HADS) |
| Mourad et al. (2022)  (Sweden) | *n* = 109  61.5% female  *M*age = 55.6  Non-cardiac chest pain | RCT | 5 wks, 1x NR (supervised) +  5x 30 min p/w (IP)  Individual, personalised PA consultations + individual, self-delivered PA of any type | 5 wks, 1x NR (supervised) +  5x 10 min p/w (IP)  Individual demonstration + individual, digital, self-delivered mindfulness breathing exercises | Psychoeducation on chest pain, symptom management, safety of PA, F/D NR | AM (education + self-monitoring) | Depression (PHQ-9)  QoL (EQ-VAS) |
| Mousavi et al. (2023)  (Iran) | *n* = 60  61.7% female  *M*age = 39.3  Adults w/ poor sleep | RCT | 8 wks, 1x 45 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised  Aerobic, moderate (bodyweight exercises, running) | 8 wks, 1x 45 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised  ACT-inspired exercises, focused attention, body scans, self-compassion | / | PA only  M only  AM (group discussions) | Depression (BDI)  Anxiety (BAI) |
| Norouzi et al. (2023)  (Iran) | *n* = 50  59.0% female  *M*age = 33.2  Major depression | RCT | 8 wks, 1x 45 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised  Aerobic, moderate (bodyweight exercises, running) | 8 wks, 1x 45 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised  Focused attention, body scans, self-compassion, acceptance | / | PA only  M only | Depression (BDI)  Affect (DERS) |
| Nymberg et al. (2021)  (Sweden) | *n* = 88  72.7% female  *M*age = 53.7  Inactive adults | Pilot RCT | 8 wks, F/D variable  Individual, in person PA consultation & recommendations  Type variable | 8 wks, 1x 120 min p/w (supervised) + 6x 20 min (IP)  Group, in person, supervised +  individual, digital, self-delivered  MBSR & MBCT techniques | / | PA only  M only | Self-rated health (single-item) |
| Polaski et al. (2021)  (USA) | *n* = 38  68.4% female  *M*age = 37.6  Chronic back pain | Pilot RCT | 4 wks, 5x 30 min p/w  Individual, in person, supervised + individual, self-delivered  Aerobic (treadmill walking) | 4 wks, 5x 15 min p/w  Individual, digital, self-delivered breathing exercises & body scans | / | AM (audiobook + rest) | Anxiety (STAI) |
| Rabin et al. (2016)  (USA) | *n* = 35  82.9% female  *M*age = 33.6  Cancer survivours | Feasibility RCT | 12 wks, up to 5x 30 min p/w  Individual, self-delivered  Aerobic, moderate (variable PA) + self-monitoring with activity tracker | 12 wks, 4x D NR p/w  Individual, digital, self-delivered breathing exercises & body scans | Weekly check-in call, D NR & online community forum, F/D variable | WL | Mood (POMS) |
| Rao et al. (2023)  (Australia) | *n* = 31  29.0% female  *M*age = 60.5  Cardiovascular disease & depression | Feasibility RCT | 6 wks, 2x D NR p/w  Individual, in person, supervised  Personalised exercise & education (cardiac rehabilitation program) | 6 wks, 1x 20 min p/w (supervised)  + 6x 20 min p/w (IP)  Group, in person, supervised +  individual, digital, self-delivered  Breathing exercises, body scans, focused attention | / | PA only | Depression (DASS-21, HADS)  Anxiety (DASS-21, HADS)  Stress (DASS-21) |
| Schröder et al. (2022)  (Germany) | *n* = 51  100% female  *M*age = 55.8  Breast cancer survivours | Pilot RCT | 8 wks, 1x 45 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised (+ optional IP)  Aerobic, light (walking) | 8 wks, 1x 45 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised (+ optional IP)  Breathing exercises, body scans | / | PA only | QoL (WHOQOL-BREF)  Stress (PSQ) |
| Shi et al. (2019)  (USA) | *n* = 38  86.8% female  *M*age = 49.3  Inactive adults | Pilot RCT | 4 wks, 1x 30 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised (+ optional IP)  Aerobic, light (walking) | 4 wks, 1x 30 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised (+ optional IP)  Focused attention, body scans | Weekly email reminder to meet PA goals, D negligible | PA only | Depression (BEDS)  Stress (PSS)  QoL (MHI-5) |
| Shors et al. (2014)  (USA) | *n* = 14  100% female  *M*age = 25.0  History of abuse or addiction | Pilot CT | 8 wks, 2x 30 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised  Aerobic, moderate (dance) | 8 wks, 2x 30 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised  Focused attention, mindful walking | / | TAU | Depression (BDI-II)  Anxiety (BAI) |
| Shors et al. (2018)  (USA) | *n* = 105  100% female  *M*age = 20.0  History of sexual trauma | Pilot RCT | 6 wks, 2x 30 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised  Aerobic, moderate (treadmill or elliptical) | 6 wks, 2x 30 min p/w  Group, in person, supervised  Focused attention, mindful walking | / | PA only  M only  WL | PTSD (PTCI)  Rumination (RRS)  Self-worth (BSS) |
| Signore et al. (2022)  (Canada) | *n* = 18  87.5% female  *M*age = 58.2  Inactive adults w/ prediabtetes | Pilot RCT | 6 wks, 1x 45 min (supervised) +  variable IP  Group, digital PA education & recommendations  Type variable | 6 wks, 1x 45 min (supervised) Group, digital, guided Mindfulness & self-compassion training, incl breathing exercises | / | PA + AM | Affect (NAF) |
| Siripanya et al. (2023)  (Thailand) | *n* = 30  100% female  *M*age = 45.0  Women w/ breast cancer | RCT | 12 wks, 3x 30-40 min p/wb  Individual, digital, self-delivered  Aerobic light-moderate (walking) | 12 wks, 3x 30-40 min p/wb  Individual, digital, self-delivered  Focused attention, labelling, mindful walking | Weekly check-in call, D NR | TAU | DSQoL (QLQ-C30) |
| Spahn et al. (2013)  (Germany) | *n* = 64  100% female  *M*age = 56.7  Breast cancer survivours | RCT | 10 wks, 3x D NR (supervised) +  3x 30 min p/w (IP)  Group, in person, supervised +  Individual, self-delivered IP  Aerobic, light (walking) | 10 wks, 1x 360 min (supervised)  + variable F/D (IP)  Group, in person, supervised +  Individual, self-delivered IP  MBSR techniques, incl body scan | Nutrition education, naturopathic self-help, F/D NR | PA only | Depression (HADS)  Anxiety (HADS)  DSQoL (QLQ-C30) |
| Srisoongnern et al. (2021)  (Thailand) | *n* = 48  45.8% female  *M*age = 65.0  Chronic heart failure | RCT | 6 wks, 3x 30-40 min p/wb  Individual, in person, supervised (2 wks) + self-delivered IP (4 wks)  Aerobic, light-moderate (walking) | 6 wks, 3x 30-40 min p/wb Individual, in person, supervised (2 wks) + self-delivered IP (4 wks)  Focused attention, labelling | / | PA only | DSQoL (MLHFQ) |
| Torkhani et al. (2021)  (France) | *n* = 35  80.0% female  *M*age = 43.9  Multiple sclerosis | Pilot RCT | 8 wks, 4x 30 min p/w  Individual, digital, self-delivered  Various types (walking, strength, stretching, balance) | 8 wks, 6x 60 min p/w  Individual, digital, self-delivered  Breathing exercises, focused attention | Weekly check-in call, D NR | PA only  PA + AM | QoL (EQ-5D-5L)  DSQoL (MFIS, MSIS) |
| Weng et al. (2022)  (China) | *n* = 120  37.5% female  *M*age = 42.7  Type 2 diabetes & peripheral neuropathy | RCT | 12 wks, 3x 75 min p/wb  Group, in person, supervised  Aerobic, moderate intensity | 12 wks, 3x 75 min p/wb +  4x 45 min p/w (IP)  Group, in person, supervised + individual, digital, self-delivered IP  Focused attention, breathing exercises, body scans | Online group chat with other participants, F/D variable | PA only  AM (education) | DSQoL (DMQoLS) |
| Zheng et al. (2022)  (China) | *n* = 37  75.7% female  *M*age = 35.3  Chronic back pain | Pilot RCT | 4 wks, 1x 90 min (supervised) +  3x 35 min p/w (IP)  Group, in person, supervised +  individual, digital, self-delivered  Resistance & stretching, light-moderate | 4 wks, 3x 20 min (supervised) +  F/D NR p/w (IP)  Group, in person, supervised +  individual, digital, self-delivered  Mindfulness & self-compassion training, incl focused attention | eDiary of practice, F/D NR | PA only | Depression (PHQ-9)  Anxiety (GAD-7) |
| Zieff et al. (2022)  (USA) | *n* = 32  84.4% female  *M*age = 20.5  High stress | Pilot RCT | 4 wks, 3x 20 min (supervised) +  1x 60 min p/w (IP)  Group, in person, supervised +  individual, digital, self-delivered  Aerobic, moderate (cycle ergometer) + variable IP | 4 wks, 3x 20 min (supervised) +  F/D NR p/w (IP)  Group, in person, supervised +  individual, digital, self-delivered  MBSR techniques incl breathing exercises | eDiary of practice, F/D NR | M only  WL | Depression (DASS-21)  Anxiety (DASS-21)  Stress (DASS-21) |

Note. a Fischer et al. (2022) trial moved to digital delivery partway due to COVID-19 restrictions. b Intervention integrated PA and M into the same sessions without specifying proportion of each, so reported duration represents total of both components. ACT – acceptance and commitment therapy; AM – attention-matched; BAI – Beck’s Anxiety Inventory; BDI – Beck’s Depression Inventory; BEDS – Brief Edinburgh Depression Scale; BSS – Best Self Scale; CAPS – Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale; CESD-10 – Center for Epidemologic Studies Depression 10; CT – controlled trial; D – duration ; DASS-21 – Depression, Anxiety & Stress Scales 21; DERS – Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale; DES – Differential Emotions Scale; DMQOLS – Diabetes Mellitus Quality of Life Scale; DTS – Distress Tolerance Scale; EQ-5D-5L – EuroQoL 5-Level Quality of Life; EQ-VAS – EuroQoL Visual Analog Scale; F – frequency ; GAD-7 – Generalised Anxiety Disorder 7 ; GHQ-12 – General Health Questionnaire 12; HADS – Hospital Anxiety & Depression Scale; HIV – human immunodeficiency virus; IP – independent practice; M – mindfulness ; MAP-Q – Mental and Physical Training Questionnaire; MBCT – mindfulness-based cognitive therapy; MBSR – mindfulness-based stress reduction; MFIS – Modified Fatigue Impact Scale; MHC-SF – Mental Health Continuum Short Form; MHI-5 – Mental Health Inventory 5; MLHFQ – Minnesota Living with Heart Failure Questionnaire ; MSIS – Multiple Sclerosis Impact Scale; NAF – Negative Affect Scale; NR – not reported; p/w – per week; PA – physical activity; PGIC – Patient Global Impression of Change scale; PHQ-9 – Patient Health Questionnaire 9 ; POMS – Profile of Mood States; ProQOL – Professional Quality of Life scale; PSQ – Perceived Stress Questionnaire; PSS-10 – Perceived Stress Scales 10; PSWQ – Penn State Worry Questionnaire; PTCI – Post-Traumatic Cognitions Inventory; PTSD – post-traumatic stress disorder; QLQ-C30 – EORTC Core Quality of Life Questionnaire 30; QOLS – Quality of Life Scale; RCT – randomised controlled trial; RRQ – Rumination-Reflection Questionnaire; RRS – Ruminative Response Scale; SF-36 – Short Form 36 scale; SHQ – Spiritual Health Questionnaire; STAI – State-Trait Anxiety Inventory; TAU – treatment as usual; USA – United States of America ; w/ – with ; WHOQOL-BREF – World Health Organisation Quality of Life scale; wks – weeks ; WL – waitlist

Table 3. Visual summary of intervention effects.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Authors | Outcomes | Within-group effects | | | | | | Between-group effects |
|  |  | INT | PA | M | TAU | WL | AM |  |
| Casey et al. (2022) | Dep (PHQ-9) | ++ | / |  |  |  |  | Group x time interaction *SMD* = -1.35, *p* = .13 |
|  | Anx (GAD-7) | ++ | / |  |  |  |  | Group x time interaction *SMD* = -0.97, *p* = .22 |
|  | Health (PGIC) | + | / |  |  |  |  | NR |
| Chaharmahali et al. (2023) | QoL (SF-36) | ++ | ++ |  |  |  | ++ | Omnibus ANCOVA *F*(2, 49) = 7.40, *p* = .002, INT vs PA 95% *CI*(1.33 to 2.55), *p* < .001 |
| Daluee et al. (2021) | Health (SHQ) | + |  | ++ | - |  |  | Group x time interaction *F* = 22.89, *p* < .001 |
| Demmin et al. (2022)\* | Dep (PHQ-9) | +a |  |  |  | /a |  | Group x time interaction *F*(1,43) = 6.34, *p* = .02 |
|  | Anx (GAD-7) | +a |  |  |  | +a |  | Group x time interaction *F*(1,43) = 13.15, *p* <. 01 |
|  | Stress (PSS) | /a |  |  |  | /a |  | Group x time interaction *F*(1,43) = 7.97, *p* = .01 |
|  | Wellbeing (MAP-Q) | +a |  |  |  | -a |  | Group x time interaction *F*(1,43) = 5.40, *p* = .02 |
|  | QoL (ProQOL) | /a |  |  |  | -a |  | Group x time interaction *F*(1,43) = 7.74, *p* = .01 |
|  | Distress tolerance (DTS) | -a |  |  |  | -a |  | Group x time interaction n.s. |
|  | Rumination (RSS) | /a |  |  |  | /a |  | Group x time interaction n.s. |
| Fischer et al. (2022) | Dep (HADS) | ++ | + | + |  |  |  | Group x time interaction n.s. |
|  | Anx (HADS) | ++ | ++ | ++ |  |  |  | Group x time interaction n.s. |
|  | Stress (PSS) | + | + | + |  |  |  | Omnibus ANOVA *F* = 2.62, *p* = .078 |
|  | QoL (SF-36) | ++ | ++ | + |  |  |  | Group x time interaction n.s. |
|  | PTSD (PCL-5) | ++ | + | + |  |  |  | Group x time interaction n.s. |
|  | Burnout (MBI) | + | + | + |  |  |  | Group x time interaction < .05, INT vs PA *p* = .017; M vs PA *p* = 0.036, INT vs M *p* > .05 |
| Garcia et al. (2023)\* | Dep (HADS) | / | / |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA *p* = .536 |
|  | Anx (HADS) | + | / |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA *p* = .046 |
|  | Wellbeing (MHC-SF) | / | / |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA *p* = .825 |
|  | Rumination (PSWQ) | / | / |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA *p* = .538 |
| Goldstein et al. (2018)\* | QoL (WHOQOL-BREF) | / |  |  |  | - |  | Group x time interaction ‘psychological domain’ *d* = .53, *p* = .005: ‘physical domain’  *d* = .33, *p* = .183 |
|  | PTSD (CAPS) | + |  |  |  | / |  | Group x time interaction *d* = -.90, *p* = .038 |
| Haugmark et al. (2021) | Distress (GHQ-12) | NR |  |  | NR |  |  | INT vs TAU *SMD* = 1.57, *p* = .11 |
|  | QoL (EQ-5D-5L) | NR |  |  | NR |  |  | INT vs TAU *SMD* = 0.02, *p* = .86 |
|  | Health (PGIC) | / |  |  | - |  |  | INT vs TAU *p* = .01 |
| Henninger et al. (2023) | QoL (WHOQOL-100) | NR |  | NR |  |  | NR | Group x time interaction ‘psychological domain’ *MD (CIs)* = 1.2 (−1.9, 4.3), *p* = .46; ‘physical domain’  *MD (CIs)* = 1.0 (−1.6, 3.6), *p* = .46 |
| Hooker et al. (2022) | Dep (PHQ-9) | + | + |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA+AM *MD* = -0.83, *p* = .14, *d* = -0.22 |
|  | Anx (STAI) | + | + |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA+AM *MD* = -0.15, *p* = .88, *d* = -0.02 |
|  | Stress (PSS) | + | / |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA+AM *MD* = -0.87, *p* = .28, *d* = -0.15 |
|  | Affect (DES) | + | / |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA+AM *MD* = 2.35, *p* = .01, *d* = 0.36 |
|  | Rumination (RRQ) | + | + |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA+AM *MD* = -0.06, *p* = .51, *d* = -0.08 |
| Johnson et al. (2015)\* | Dep (PHQ-9) | ++ |  |  |  | / |  | Group x time interaction *MD* = -6.46, *p* = 0.001 |
|  | Dep (CESD-10) | ++ |  |  |  | / |  | Group x time interaction *MD* = -6.67, *p* = 0.002 |
|  | Anx (STAI) | ++ |  |  |  | / |  | Group x time interaction ‘state’ *MD* = -7.97, *p* = 0.068; ‘trait’  *MD* = -9.11, *p* = 0.008 |
|  | Stress (PSS-4) | ++ |  |  |  | / |  | Group x time interaction *MD* = -3.19, *p* = 0.002 |
| Lavadera et al. (2020)\* | Dep (PHQ-8) | / |  |  |  | / |  | INT vs WL *t*(1,16) = 1.21, *p* > .05 |
|  | Stress (PSS) | + |  |  |  | - |  | INT vs WL *t*(1,16) = 2.22, *p* < .05 |
|  | QoL (QOLS) | + |  |  |  | - |  | INT vs WL *F*(1,45) = 5.64, *p* < .05 |
|  | Rumination (RRS) | + |  |  |  | / |  | INT vs WL *F*(1,45) = 5.36, *p* < .05 |
| Lyzwinski et al. (2019)\* | Stress (PSS) | / |  |  |  |  | / | INT vs AM ITT *p* > .05; per protocol  *p* = .02; |
| Majore-Dusele et al. (2021)\* | Dep (PHQ-9) | / |  |  | / |  |  | Group x time interaction *MD* = -3.17, *p* = 0.02 |
|  | Dep (HADS) | / |  |  | / |  |  | Group x time interaction *MD* = -1.94, *p* = 0.07 |
|  | Anx (HADS) | / |  |  | / |  |  | Group x time interaction *MD* = -2.08, *p* = 0.06 |
| Millon et al. (2022)\* | Dep (BDI-II) | ++ |  |  |  | - |  | Group x time interaction *F*(1, 24) = 4.83, *p* = 0.04 |
|  | Anx (BAI) | + |  |  |  | - |  | Group x time interaction *p* = 0.15 |
|  | Stress (PSS) | ++ |  |  |  | / |  | Group x time interaction *p* = 0.41 |
|  | PTSD (PTCI) | ++ |  |  |  | / |  | Group x time interaction *p* = 0.54 |
|  | Rumination (RRS) | ++ |  |  |  | - |  | Group x time interaction *F*(1, 24) = 17.37, p < 0.001 |
| Mitarnun et al. (2022) | Anx (HADS) | + |  |  |  | - |  | NR |
| Mourad et al. (2022) | Dep (PHQ-9) | + |  |  |  |  | / | INT vs AM *p* > .05 |
|  | QoL (EQ-VAS) | + |  |  |  |  | - | INT vs AM *p* = .03 |
| Mousavi et al. (2023) | Dep (BDI) | + | + | + |  |  | / | Group x time interaction *F*(6, 84) = 3.84, *p* < .01, INT > AM but not PA or M |
|  | Anx (BAI) | + | + | + |  |  | / | Group x time interaction *F*(6, 84) = 4.57, *p* < .05, INT > PA, M, AM |
| Norouzi et al. (2023) | Dep (BDI) | + | + | + |  |  |  | Group x time interaction *F*(4, 84) = 0.33, *p* = .85 |
|  | Affect (DERS) | + | + | + |  |  |  | Group x time interaction *F*(2) = 4.38, *p* = .01, INT > PA, M |
| Nymberg et al. (2021)\* | Health (single-item) | / | / | / |  |  |  | Group x time interaction *p* = 0.86 |
| Polaski et al. (2021)\* | Anxiety (STAI) | / |  |  |  |  | / | INT vs AM ‘state’ *p* = .258, ‘trait’  *p* = .805 |
| Rabin et al. (2016)\* | Mood (POMS) | NR |  |  |  | NR |  | INT vs WL *p* > .05 |
| Rao et al. (2023)\* | Dep (DASS-21) | NR | NR |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA  *p* > .05 |
|  | Dep (HADS) | NR | NR |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA  *p* > .05 |
|  | Anx (DASS-21) | NR | NR |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA  *p* > .05 |
|  | Anx (HADS) | NR | NR |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA  *p* > .05 |
|  | Stress (DASS-21) | NR | NR |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA  *p* > .05 |
| Schröder et al. (2022)\* | QoL (WHOQOL-BREF) | + | + |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA ‘psychological domain’ at 8 wks *p* = .796, at 16 wks  *p* = .312; ‘physical domain’ at 8 wks  *p* = .958, at 16 wks  *p* = .721 |
|  | Stress (PSQ) | + | + |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA at 8 wks *p* = .972, at 16 wks  *p* = .796 |
| Shi et al. (2019)\* | Dep (BEDS) | + | + |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA at 4 wks *p* = .92, at 8 wks  *p* = .80 |
|  | Stress (PSS) | + | - |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA at 4 wks *p* = .02, at 8 wks  *p* = .77 |
|  | QoL (MHI-5) | / | / |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA *p* > .05 |
| Shors et al. (2014)\* | Dep (BDI-II) | + |  |  | / |  |  | INT vs TAU *F*(1,12) = 7.61, *p* < .05 |
|  | Anx (BAI) | + |  |  | / |  |  | INT vs TAU *p* > .05 |
| Shors et al. (2018)\* | PTSD (PTCI) | + | - | ++ |  | / |  | NR |
|  | Rumination (RRS) | ++ | / | / |  | - |  | NR |
|  | Self-worth (BSS) | + | / | / |  | - |  | NR |
| Signore et al. (2022)\* | Affect (NAF) | NR |  |  |  |  | NR | NR |
| Siripanya et al. (2023) | DSQoL (QLQ-C30) | + |  |  | / |  |  | INT vs TAU *p* < .05, *d* = .136 |
| Spahn et al. (2013) | Dep (HADS) | / | / |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA *p* > .05 |
|  | Anx (HADS) | + | + |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA at 10 wks *p* = .043, at 22 wks *p* = .422 |
|  | DSQoL (QLQ-C30) | + | + |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA *p* > .05 |
| Srisoongnern et al. (2021) | DSQoL (MLHFQ) | / | - |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA *p* = .577 |
| Torkhani et al. (2021)\* | QoL (EQ-5D-5L) | NR | NR |  |  |  | NR | NR |
|  | DSQoL (MFIS) | + | / |  |  |  | + | NR |
|  | DSQoL (MSIS) | ++ | + |  |  |  | + | NR |
| Weng et al. (2022) | DSQoL (DMQLS) | + | / |  |  |  | / | NR |
| Zheng et al. (2022)\* | Dep (PHQ-9) | / | / |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA at 4 wks *p* = .471 |
|  | Anx (GAD-7) | + | - |  |  |  |  | INT vs PA at 4 wks *p* = .030 |
| Zieff et al. (2022)\* | Dep (DASS-21) | + | + |  |  | / |  | Group x time interaction *p* = 0.07 |
|  | Anx (DASS-21) | + | + |  |  | / |  | Group x time interaction *p* = 0.07 |
|  | Stress (DASS-21) | + | + |  |  | / |  | Group x time interaction *p* = 0.09 |

Note. / positive effect (non-significant); + (*p* < .05); ++ (*p* < .01); - negative effect (from Thomson & Thomas, 2013). \* denotes feasibility and pilot trials, which are less likely to detect effects due to insufficient statistical power. a within-group analyses reported for compliant participants only (i.e., per-protocol). AM – attention-matched group; ANCOVA – analysis of covariance; ANOVA – analysis of variance; Anx – anxiety outcomes; BAI – Beck’s Anxiety Inventory; BDI – Beck’s Depression Inventory; BEDS – Brief Edinburgh Depression Scale; BSS – Best Self Scale; CAPS – Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale; CESD-10 – Center for Epidemologic Studies Depression 10; CI – confidence intervals; DASS-21 – Depression, Anxiety & Stress Scales 21; Dep – depression outcomes; DERS – Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale; DES – Differential Emotions Scale; DMQOLS – Diabetes Mellitus Quality of Life Scale; DTS – Distress Tolerance Scale; EQ-5D-5L – EuroQoL 5-Level Quality of Life; EQ-VAS – EuroQoL Visual Analog Scale; GAD-7 – Generalised Anxiety Disorder 7 ; GHQ-12 – General Health Questionnaire 12; HADS – Hospital Anxiety & Depression Scale; INT – intervention group (combined physical activity and mindfulness); ITT – intention-to-treat analysis; M – mindfulness-only group; MAP-Q – Mental and Physical Training Questionnaire; MBCT – mindfulness-based cognitive therapy; MBSR – mindfulness-based stress reduction; MD – mean difference; MFIS – Modified Fatigue Impact Scale; MHCSF – Mental Health Continuum Short Form; MHI-5 – Mental Health Inventory 5; MLHFQ – Minnesota Living with Heart Failure Questionnaire ; MSIS – Multiple Sclerosis Impact Scale; n.s. – not significant; NAF – Negative Affect Scale; NR – not reported; PA – physical activity-only group; PGIC – Patient Global Impression of Change scale; PHQ-9 – Patient Health Questionnaire 9 ; POMS – Profile of Mood States; ProQOL – Professional Quality of Life scale; PSQ – Perceived Stress Questionnaire; PSS-10 – Perceived Stress Scales 10; PSWQ – Penn State Worry Questionnaire; PTCI – Post-Traumatic Cognitions Inventory; PTSD – post-traumatic stress disorder; QLQ-C30 – EORTC Core Quality of Life Questionnaire 30; QoL – quality of life; QOLS – Quality of Life Scale; RRQ – Rumination-Reflection Questionnaire; RRS – Ruminative Response Scale; SF-36 – Short Form 36 scale; SHQ – Spiritual Health Questionnaire; SMD – standard mean difference; STAI – State-Trait Anxiety Inventory; TAU – treatment as usual group; Vs – versus; WHOQOL-BREF – World Health Organisation Quality of Life scale; WL – waitlist group.

Figure 1: PRISMA flow diagram of study selection process.

Records identified from:

Databases (n = 13893)

Other sources (n = 111)

Duplicate records removed (n = 6322)

**Identification**

Records irrelevant (n = 7490)

Records screened

(n = 7682)

Reports not retrieved (n = 5)

Reports sought for retrieval

(n = 192)

**Screening**

Reports excluded:

Wrong intervention (n = 57)

Wrong publication type (n = 39)

No results published = (n = 24)

Wrong comparator (n = 10)

Wrong population (n = 11)

Wrong outcomes (n = 4)

Duplicate record (n = 2)

No English full text (n = 3)

Wrong study design (n = 2)

Reports assessed for eligibility

(n = 187)

Studies included in review

(n = 35)

Reports of included studies

(n = 39)

**Included**

*From:*  Page MJ, McKenzie JE, Bossuyt PM, Boutron I, Hoffmann TC, Mulrow CD, et al. The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. BMJ 2021;372:n71. doi: 10.1136/bmj.n71

For more information, visit: <http://www.prisma-statement.org/>

Figure 2: Risk assessment of included studies by domain according to the Cochrane Risk of Bias 2 tool. Created with Robvis tool (McGuiness & Higgins, 2020).

A screenshot of a test

Description automatically generated