

## **An Introduction to iRest**

iRest is an evidence-based method of meditation that has been utilized by branches of the U.S. military since 2006. The practice of iRest within the military has been shown to benefit those who are already healthy and desire to function and live life to their fullest potential and those in need of physical, emotional or psychological healing. iRest has shown measurable, positive effects in those who practice iRest in as few as five sessions.

iRest is currently being utilized in over 60 VA Centers and also at Veterans Hospitals, military bases, military clinics, Yellow Ribbon reintegration events, private rehabilitation hospitals and private studios. In 2006, iRest became part of the Specialized Care Program offered by the Department of Defense at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. In 2010, the US Army Surgeon General and the Defense Centers of Excellence recommended iRest as an effective complementary and alternative medical practice for the management of chronic pain and for the treatment of PTSD. iRest has been shown to decrease one's experience of symptoms of PTSD, including hypervigilance, avoidance, over-reacting and sleep disturbance and decrease the symptoms associated with anxiety, depression and chemical dependency.

As aforementioned, the practice of meditation, in general, has been proven to have a beneficial impact in those who are already in good health and who desire to develop and utilize their skills and talents to their fullest potential. Meditation has been shown to enhance the following areas in healthy individuals:

- Resiliency - the ability to stay on task and accomplish goals in the face of life's challenging circumstances
- Self-regulation – reduced emotional reactivity
- Memory
- Focus of attention
- Social functioning

iRest can be taught comprehensively in a series of eight classes, with ninety minutes allotted for each class. The class is taught in both a didactic and experiential format. Accordingly, the setting for the classes should be relatively quiet and undisturbed. The setting for the class can be at a site of your choice. The ideal setting would be for the students to be able to lie on the floor, but iRest can be taught to those in a sitting position. As aforementioned, iRest has shown to have positive results in individuals in as few as five practice sessions.

Robert Cohen, PhD, LCPC, has been a practicing licensed clinical professional counselor for over twenty years. He is a certified iRest teacher and is a certified Warriors at Ease meditation teacher. Dr. Cohen has taught iRest at two Yellow Ribbon reintegration events as sponsored by the Maryland Air National Guard. In his counseling practice, Dr. Cohen has been teaching iRest to clients of varying populations, including those in need of pain management, those diagnosed with a variety of mental health and substance use diagnoses, including PTSD, Anxiety Disorders and Depressive Disorders and to offenders referred by the U.S. Probation Office.

## **OVERVIEW OF iRest**

### **Robert Cohen, LCPC**

- Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor practicing in Gaithersburg, Maryland
- Certified Integrative Restoration iRest Teacher
- Certified Warriors at Ease Meditation Teacher
- iRest Teacher at two Yellow Ribbon Events for Maryland Air National Guard
- Certified Clinical Trauma Professional
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### **What is iRest?**

Integrative Restoration – or iRest - is an evidenced-based form of meditation, whose practice promotes self-regulation, resiliency and stress reduction while restoring the body and mind to their natural levels of functioning. iRest has been utilized in military settings since 2006, when it was part of a Specialized Care Program at Walther Reed Army Medical Center. There are now approximately 80 VA and active duty military programs utilizing iRest. iRest has been utilized to treat PTSD, anxiety disorders, depressive disorders, substance use disorders and pain management.

### **What is Meditation?**

Meditation, as defined by the NIH National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH), includes the following elements: 1) utilization of a quiet location with as few distractions as possible; 2) a comfortable posture (sitting or lying down); 3) a focus of attention; and 4) an open attitude of letting distractions come and go naturally without judging them.

*Mindfulness* appears to be a Westernized word for *meditation*.

### **What Science Says About the Effectiveness of Meditation**

- Alleviates one's experience of anxiety, depression, insomnia, anger/hostility and emotional stress
- Pain management
- Hypertension
- Cessation of smoking

### **Other Benefits of iRest and Other Meditation Practices**

- Promotes resilience, a sense of well-being and stronger connectiveness to oneself and all of life
- Experientially shows one how to respond vs react to life circumstances
- Experientially shows one how to utilize the principles of iRest in daily life

### **What Neuroscience Says About Meditation**

- Reduces beta waves, increases gamma waves in the brain
- Overcomes negativity bias of the brain
- Default Network moves to Defocusing, Present-Centered network
- Autobiographical Self moves into Being – non-separate self, insight, open to more possibilities to resolve matters
- Rewires the brain
- Increases folds in brain

### **Tips for Today's iRest Practice**

- “Let Go”
- Welcome vs push away perceptions and experiences; all perceptions are a messenger
- Step inside and meet, greet and welcome whatever is arising
- Body sensing – “sensations” – feel vs think
- Breath sensing
- Witness vs Witnessing – “I-ness vs Being (You are more than what you are experiencing)
- Focusing into Defocusing
- “Sleep yoga”
- Customize the iRest practice to one's own needs – tools, mix and match; as needs change over time, iRest practice will change

### **Resources**

- The iRest Program for Healing PTSD, by Richard C. Miller, PhD (book)
- iRest Meditation: Restorative Practices, by Richard Miller, PhD (Set of 6 CDs)