

Adapting *Move with HaRT* to the Filipino Cultural Context

The Move with HaRT Program

[*Healing and Resilience after Trauma*](#) (HaRT) collaborated with Eleison Foundation to culturally adapt their mind-body intervention, *Move with HaRT*. The *Move with HaRT* program is a 12-week group mind-body intervention which is grounded in recent advances in neuroscience and feminist theory. The program aims to improve the physical, psychological, and social well-being of participants through mindfulness, breathing exercises, yoga poses, and supportive group discussions.

This research brief addresses how the *Move with HaRT* program, which was originally designed for women and girls who have experienced human trafficking in Uganda, was adapted to suit the social and cultural context of the Philippines.

Importance of Cultural Adaptation

Cultural adaptation is essential to ensure the acceptability, feasibility, and effectiveness of mental health interventions. There is, however, limited research on the effectiveness of adapting mental health or mind-body interventions for individuals who have experienced human trafficking.

Guiding Principles of Collaboration

Our team consisted of two organizations: HaRT, the program originator, and Eleison, which provided cultural and contextual expertise. The collaboration was guided by three core principles: trauma-informed care, survivor-centeredness, and holistic healing.



Adaptation Framework

This research brief draws upon systematic feedback received from Eleison staff and select community partners in the Philippines. The feedback was collected through group discussions and questionnaires in an internal staff pilot study. It was later supplemented with feedback from Eleison's client advisory board members, the Survivor Leadership Council (SLC).

The pilot analysis revealed the following themes:

Language: The program content was translated to local dialects and abstract ideas were concretized to avoid isolation or alienation. Core concepts surrounding mindfulness and yoga were reframed to be culturally congruent and understandable.

Physical Adaptations: Challenges were identified with integrating yoga poses due to language inaccessibility, cultural perceptions, and facilitation difficulties. This led to a significant reduction and simplification of yoga poses and the streamlining of the program's physical aspects.

Changes in Thematic Content: Family and cultural concepts such as "kapwa" and "utang na loob" play a crucial role when discussing forgiveness in the Filipino context. To take this into account, key revisions were made to a session on forgiveness to highlight the importance of setting healthy boundaries and caring for one's own emotional needs in relationships.

Consent and Facilitation Guide: A pre-orientation session was added to ensure informed consent. In-depth scripting was included in the facilitator's guide. Both were done to create greater consistency with other Eleison programming.



Recommendations

- ❖ Heightened awareness of the cultural significance and sensitivity around the concept of forgiveness is essential. Strengthening an emphasis on maintaining boundaries is important for client safety.
- ❖ Partnership grounded in shared values and commitment is essential for cultural resonance, accessibility, and efficacy. This requires defining clear roles and responsibilities for involved organizations.
- ❖ Adequate time and financial resources should be allocated for thoughtful adaptation, and expectation management is important from the outset.
- ❖ Internal staff pilots are valuable for harm reduction and eventual program implementation.
- ❖ Client and community input should be integral to any adaptation. Consultation, participation, and feedback from clients are essential for safety and cultural resonance.

Why it matters

This mind-body intervention presents a promising alternative to traditional mental health treatment, such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT).

Research indicates that cultural adaptation enhances the effectiveness of mental health programs, but there is limited work on adapting community mental health programs in Asia. This underscores the importance of prioritizing research regarding cultural adaptation to meet the specific needs of populations in Asia.

Our adaptation process was characterized by mutual collaboration between partner organizations and clients, and was guided by systematic modifications that intentionally centered the needs of service users.