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**Mental Health Report**  
**As Reported on BBC News and NPR.**

**BBC Report on Art of Living's Trauma Relief Programs in Nagapattinam, India**

Concerned about the lack of mental health support for survivors of the tsunami, yoga experts are banding together to help survivors deal with trauma. Host Lisa Mullins gets the story from correspondent Daniel Lak.

India felt the power of the tsunami, especially in the southern state of Tamil Nadu. Today the state asked the central government for more than a billion dollars in emergency funding. Much of that will be used to rebuild tens of thousands of homes. It will take more than money though to rebuild tens of thousands of lives. The tsunami left many survivors with emotional wounds, and psychologists are few and far between in India.

So the BBC's Daniel Lak in Nagapattinam says Indian authorities have deployed another kind of counselor:

*They've reached into their traditions. They've asked for yogic healers, for people who are experts in meditation, breathing techniques and so on. And it's really working quite well; I had a chance today to see some of it in action.*

And where did you go and what did you see?

*I went over to a school that's serving as a temporary home to about 350 families who all pretty much lost a loved one somewhere in this disaster.*

*What was happening was a classroom full of women, mostly women, all bereaved, specially chosen, they were being taught to breathe clearly and properly by someone from the Art of Living Foundation - that's a pretty big Indian spiritual organization with offices in America and Europe as well. And then they were singing songs, chanting a few Hindu mantras, singing some Christian songs, all religions basically are encompassed. Just a way for people to get out of themselves, to stop dwelling on the horror that they've been through.*

*And I saw faces light up in front of me as people - at least temporarily - didn't have to deal with what was going on inside their minds.*

Pretty amazing scene given the fact that these women – you said they were primarily women, have presumably lost so much if basically they were finding a new home in this school.

*I think it's pretty hard to overstate how horrible it is for a woman in India to be through something like this. If a husband is gone there's not much hope, especially if the woman is in her 40's or so. And someone of these women lost not only their husbands, which means their livelihoods, also many children perished around me here where I'm speaking to you. Three thousand odd people died and 40% of them were children.*

*The woman really needed this support, this kind of help more than anything else. Something like this really seemed to make a difference to them, if only temporarily.*

So the yoga teacher, what did he or she say that seemed to affect these women?

*Just to not forget to breathe, very simple things. They said, the breath connects the mind with the soul. And then they would do rhythmic breathing in time with some exercises, very simple stretching exercises. And then he tell them little jokes, he would make them smile, he would tease them a little. I think they were just glad to have that sort of attention paid to them. And probably getting a little tired of people fawning over them and processions of dignitaries and journalists saying look at these poor suffering people. It was a very light moment and that must have been good.*

Does it seem that it would provide the same amount as good as having the expertise of a psychological counselor?

*I think in some ways it will do them more good. Psychology and psychiatry is very culture-based. And to analyze how someone is feeling and why their feeling that way you have to come from the same culture.*

*Within India the kind of people who would have that education to get that far from the medical profession or the counseling profession would be from an entirely different culture from these women. They come from fishing communities on the coast. They've not had a chance to turn their heads to the wider world and take in ideas and thoughts and things like that. Probably even the best Indian psychologist and counselor would really have to do their homework to reach people like this.*

*Whereas something simple which to the women probably come from their Hindu religion – although some of them were Muslim and some of them were Christian as well – but their culture, the culture of India, really was more effective.*