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Sue Lynch instructs a yoga class for veterans at her studio in Charlestown. Photo: Tamara Johnson

## Veterans use yoga in war with PTSD

A year ago, Denise Moquin hit her breaking point. She'd returned from Iraq four years earlier after serving as a medic, but acclimating back to her life in Manchester, N.H., was extremely challenging both physically and emotionally. In her words, she was in an "unhealthy place."

That was until a Veterans Affairs doctor suggested looking into a yoga studio in Charlestown holding classes for veterans battling post-traumatic stress disorder and other related issues. Run by Gulf War veteran Sue Lynch, the class focuses on bringing veterans back to a peaceful place and helping them regain control of their lives.

"I found myself a lot less stressed and coping with everyday situations," said Moquin, 32.

The classes began four years ago as part of There & Back Again, a Cambridge-based nonprofit that offers healing services to veterans. Lynch also struggled with PTSD until she discovered yoga and wanted to share that experience with other vets.

Last month, President Obama announced 30,000 more troops will head to Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the emotional state of service members has received greater scrutiny in the aftermath of the Fort Hood shootings. Lynch acknowledged yoga has yet to fully catch on as a widely-accepted way for veterans to cope, but she said it's critical for veterans to seek out whatever help they feel they need.

"I know [yoga] worked for me, and to be able to share it and see the benefits they're experiencing is just phenomenal," she said.



Moquin Photo: DONALD ROCKHEAD/METRO

### AFTER WARTIME

- Massachusetts General Hospital, with help from the Red Sox Foundation, launched a program in September to help veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan who are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury. The program involves diagnosing and caring for veterans.
- Last month, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced the start of a four-year study of female veterans who served in the Vietnam War to analyze how their service has affected their physical and mental health.

**300K** Nearly 20 percent of military service members who have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan — 300,000 in all — since 2001 reported symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder or major depression, according to a 2008 study by the RAND Corporation's

Center for Military Health Policy Research. The study also found only about half of those sought treatment. metro

**Greg St. Martin**

Your turn:

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