

Mindfulness: A New Frontier in Healthy Aging

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Objectives

- Define and discuss mindfulness and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)
- Review what we know about the use of mindfulness and MBSR for improving mental and physical health
- Explore the opportunities for the use of mindfulness and MBSR for healthy aging



What is healthy aging?



Mindfulness

“Intentionally focusing one’s attention on the experience occurring at the present moment in a nonjudgmental or accepting way”

(Kabat-Zinn, 1990)

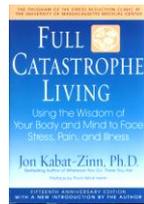


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Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

Program Developed at the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center

“The regular, disciplined practice of moment-to-moment awareness or mindfulness, the complete “owning” of each moment of your experience, good, bad, or ugly. This is the essence of full catastrophe living.”



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Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

- MBSR teaches a non-reactive approach to experience including difficult or painful situations
- The focus is on accepting what you are experiencing in your inner and outer world with nonjudgmental awareness

Uses a stance of compassion, interest, friendliness and open-heartedness toward the experience observed in the present moment, regardless of how adverse it may be (Baer, 2006)

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Stress
&
The Body, Mind and Emotions

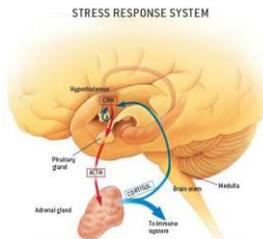
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Stress
*An unpleasant/
unhealthy
physical,
emotional and
mental response
to a real or
perceived danger*

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*Stress has
an adverse
effect on the
brain and the
physical body*



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Physiological Changes

Physical Effect

- Increased heart rate & breathing
- Rise in blood pressure
- Release of adrenaline & other hormones
- Release of sugars & fats into the circulation
- Tensing of the skeletal muscles

Purpose

- Provides fuel and oxygen for quick energy
- Prepare muscles for strenuous action
- Increase blood clotting mechanisms to protect against blood loss
- Improve sight & hearing and other protective actions

Stress Really Does Make You Sick!



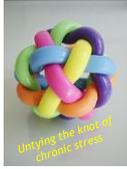
- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Cardiovascular Disease | Gastrointestinal Disorders |
| Diabetes | Immune Disorders |
| Hypertension | Chronic Fatigue Syndrome |
| Metabolic Syndrome | Sensory Modulation of Pain |

Effects of Stress on Mental Health

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Mood disorders
- Insomnia
- Impaired memory

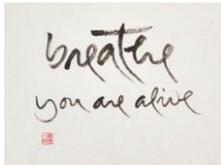


Short-Term Versus Long-Term Solutions to Stress



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Experiential: A Moment of Mindfulness



*Little breath, breathe me gently,
row me gently,
for I am a river I am learning to cross.*
W.S. Merwin

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Research on Mindfulness

- Chronic pain
- Symptom management in cancer treatment & other chronic conditions
- Phototherapy for psoriasis
- Anxiety disorders
- Depression
- Stress reduction
- Enhanced immune response
- Stress reduction for family caregivers of people with dementia
- Improve diabetes management



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Research Results



- Improved mood
- Decreased depression
- Decreased anxiety
- Improved sleep
- Improved immune response
- Decreases in physiological stress responses such as cortisol
- Changes in brain functioning (neuroplasticity)
- Decreases in medical symptoms & pain perception
- Marked improvement in overall wellbeing



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The Balance Study



BALANCING LIFE AND REDUCING STRESS FOR THOSE PROVIDING ELDER CARE

THE BALANCE STUDY

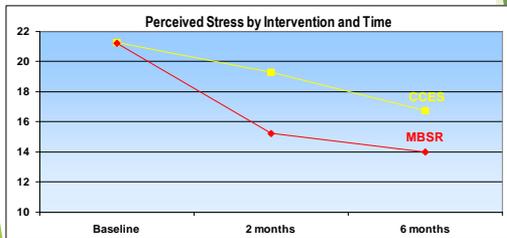
- A randomized controlled trial of 78 family caregivers for people with dementia comparing MBSR to community caregiver education & support (CCES)
- Outcomes looked at stress, mental health, depression, anxiety, burden and compassion
- Measures at baseline, 2 months and 6 months

This project was supported by Award #R21-AT003654 from The National Institutes of Health- NCCAM



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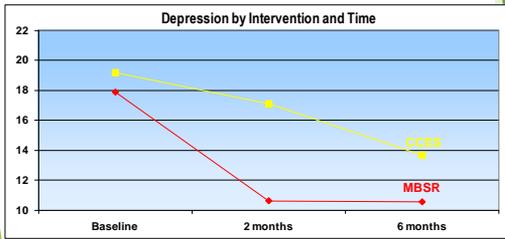
Balance Study: Outcomes





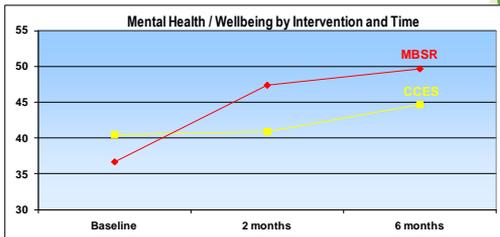
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Balance Study: Outcomes



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Balance Study: Outcomes



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Balance Study Results

Results also showed statistically significant benefits at both 2 and 6 months for MBSR on self-compassion ($p < .05$, $p < .04$); with a trend toward improvement in mindfulness ($p < .06$, $p < .08$)

State anxiety, perceived burden and social support improved significantly in both groups



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Diabetes is a serious and progressive chronic condition made worse by the metabolic and psychosocial effects of stress

A pilot study on the use of MBSR for improving patient management of diabetes as measured by HbA1c, perceived stress, anxiety, depression, mental health and self-efficacy

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This project was supported by Award # K23-AT002919 from the National Institutes of Health - NCCAM

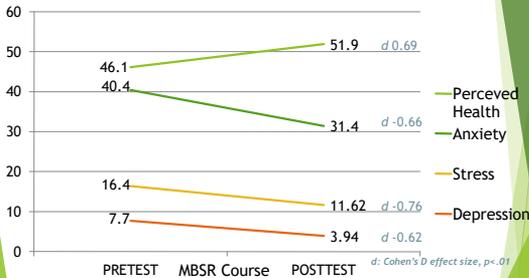
Results: Diabetes Outcomes

DM Outcomes	PRE (M/ SD)	POST (M/SD)	Change /d	P significance
HbA1c	9.18 (1.17)	8.37 (1.28)	-.79*	.0004
Problem Area in Diabetes Scale	30.28 (2.73)	18.34 (0.14)	-.71*	.002
Diabetes Empowerment Scale	3.42 (0.14)	4.09 (0.11)	.80 *	.000

*D = Cohen's D effect size

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Results – Mental Health



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Results – Mental Health

- Significant increase in coping engagement and problem solving coping ($D=.52, p=.00$)
- Significant increase in social support ($D=.38, p=.02$)
- Significant increase in self-compassion ($D=.33, p=.03$)



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Conclusions from My Research

- MBSR is more effective at decreasing stress and depression and improving mental health in family caregivers than a standard educational intervention and performs just as well in improving anxiety, social support and perceived burden
- MBSR may offer a safe and effective method for helping people better manage their diabetes and improve their mental health

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Opportunities for Healthy Aging

Improvements in Physical Health:

- increased immune response
- decreased cortisol and its negative effects
- improved management of chronic disease

Improvement in Mental Health

- decreases in stress & its consequences
- decreases in depression & anxiety
- decreases in rumination & worry
- improved sleep
- improved mood



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Opportunities for Healthy Aging

Improvements in Cognitive Function

- improved attention and concentration
- improved brain function – increased gray matter and cortical thickness






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Opportunities for Healthy Aging

A regular mindfulness or MBSR practice can have long-lasting and significant effects leading to enhanced well-being and health

Mindfulness of the present moment from a non-judgmental and accepting stance leads to increased attention control, self-awareness and emotional stability






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Final Thoughts

Coming Home to Yourself

The Potential of Mindfulness






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