**INTERVENTIONS**

**Articles testing the applied science and implementation of mindfulness-based interventions**


Contents
51 New Cites p1
19 Interventions
18 Associations
5 Methods
8 Reviews
1 Trial
Highlights p5
Announcements p7


ASSOCIATIONS
Articles examining the correlates and mechanisms of mindfulness


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51 New Cites p1
19 Interventions
18 Associations
5 Methods
8 Reviews
1 Trial

Highlights p5
Announcements p7

Editor-in-Chief
David S. Black, PhD, MPH

Highlights by
Seth Segall, PhD

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Reviews

Articles reviewing content areas of mindfulness or conducting meta-analyses of published research


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Trials

Research studies newly funded by the National Institutes of Health (MAR 2015)

University of Colorado (K. Hutchison, PI). Dismantling MBRP: Identifying critical neuroimmune mechanisms of action. NIH/NIAAA project #1R01AA024632-01. [link]
Highlights

A summary of select studies from the issue, providing a snapshot of some of the latest research

Can being mindfully aware heighten the pleasure of eating? Arch et al. [Behavior Research and Therapy] addressed this question in a series of studies while also exploring whether mindfulness promotes more healthful food choices.

In the first study, 81 male and female undergraduates were randomly assigned to either a mindful eating or a distracted eating condition. Participants in the mindful eating condition were instructed to eat a series of five chocolate chips while focusing on their sensory experience. Participants in the distraction condition ate their chocolate chips while searching for hidden words in a find-a-word puzzle. Mindful participants rated their chocolate chips as significantly more enjoyable (Cohen’s d = 0.51) and had a marginally significantly greater desire to eat another chocolate chip (d = 0.38) than distracted eaters.

In the second experiment with 136 male and female undergraduates, the researchers repeated the first study using raisins instead of chocolate chips. Mindful eaters showed a marginally significant tendency to enjoy the raisins more (d = 0.27) and a significantly higher desire to eat another raisin (d = 0.39) than distracted eaters.

The researchers wanted to know if people who ate mindfully ended up consuming more calories because they enjoyed eating more, or fewer calories because their improved attention led to greater behavioral control. The mindful eaters again rated the raisins as significantly more enjoyable and were significantly more likely to desire another raisin than either of the control groups.

Following eating the raisins, participants were led into a room with healthful (almonds, carrot sticks) and “unhealthful” (candy, pretzels, potato chips) snacks and told to avail themselves of the food choices. Following five minutes during which participants could eat as they liked (free-eating), they were then asked to sample as much as they wanted of each of the snacks and rate them on taste while under the same mindful or distraction conditions they were under while eating the raisins. The researchers measured their caloric intake under both the free-eating and taste-rating conditions.

There were no group differences in caloric intake during free-eating. During taste-rating, mindful eaters consumed significantly fewer “junk food” and total overall calories than controls—54 fewer calories than the distracted eaters. Eaters in the distraction condition consumed 48% more calories during taste-rating than during free-eating, presumably because being distracted on the find-a-word puzzle while taste-rating interfered with regulating food intake.

Together, these studies suggest that an undistracted sensory focus can increase eating pleasure and even help people regulate the type and amount of food consumed. The study is limited by its assumption that the instruction to “focus on sensation” induces a state of “mindfulness” similar to that obtained by meditative practice.
Jobs can be a major source of stress. Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) can reduce stress, but employers may be reluctant to offer them due to time and cost concerns. Web-based MBIs may help to address such concerns, but research suggests participant engagement in online programs tends to be low. Allexandre, et al. [Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine] randomly assigned employees to a web-based MBI with and without group and clinical expert support in an effort to discover how to best improve web-based MBI engagement and outcomes for workers.

The researchers recruited 161 predominantly Caucasian (77%), female (83%) (average age = 40) debt collectors, customer service representatives, and fraud representatives from a pool of 900 employees working at a corporate call center in Ohio. These employees reported greater levels of stress and exhaustion than average American workers. The employees were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions: 1) a web-based MBI, 2) a web-based MBI with group support, 3) a web-based MBI with both group and clinician support, and 4) a wait-list control. All three intervention conditions ran for 8 weeks and participants had access to both weekly online and weekly CD/MP3-delivered mindfulness lectures and guided meditations including a body scan, sitting, and lovingkindness meditation. Group support consisted of small-to-medium sized practice-and-discussion groups which met weekly for one hour. All groups were employee-led, but the groups with clinician support met on three occasions with a licensed social worker or counselor who did not serve as a “mindfulness teacher” but discussed topics such as letting go, acceptance, non-judging, and compassion from a cognitive-behavioral perspective.

Participants were assessed on self-report measures of emotional wellbeing, vitality, stress, burnout, exhaustion, professional efficiency, and mindfulness (the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale) at baseline, 8 and 16 weeks, and one-year follow-up. Company performance ratings were also analyzed. Sixty-three percent of participants completed their self-report measures at 8 weeks, and 50% at 16 weeks, with no difference in completion rates between groups. At one-year follow-up, 19% of those without support groups completed the measures, while over 40% of those with group support did. Participants preferred using the CDs and MP3s to using the web-based modules: about half of the participants never logged on to the online resource. Participants with group support were twice as likely to log on and three times as likely to engage in home practice. At 16 weeks, 64% of the participants with group support still meditated, compared to only 25% of those without group support.

Participants in all the intervention groups improved significantly by eight weeks on all measures of wellbeing. Changes in measures of professional efficiency and productivity were not shown. Participants with group support improved more (average Cohen’s $d = 0.8$) than those without ($d = 0.4$). Participants with group support expressed significantly higher program satisfaction and saw their stress and exhaustion levels decline to that of the average U.S. worker. Most improvements were maintained at 16 weeks, and improvements in stress, vitality, emotional wellbeing and role functioning remained significant at one year, mostly for the participants with group support. The wait-list controls improved on only one variable—stress—and their stress improvement was significantly less than that of the treatment groups. Clinician support did not further improve outcomes and the groups without a clinician actually tended towards better outcomes.

The study supports the efficacy of a web-based MBI offered in the workplace to improve several domains of employee wellbeing. These benefits did not extend to employee productivity and efficiency. Adding practice-and-support groups improved engagement with mindfulness practice and wellbeing outcomes, but adding limited, part-time support from a clinician did not extend extra benefit.
ANNOUNCEMENTS

Categories: Events & Conferences, Research & Education, Books & Media, and Employment & Volunteer

Events & Conferences

Anxiety Study Group

Our center's professional staff is dedicated to the insights and meditative practices that dramatically reduce anxiety. We focus on three groups who are in transition stages of life: young adults; people in recovery; aging adults. We provide personal guidance to individuals and organizations and train and certify health professionals in our methods.

INFO: Go to: http://www.huntingtonmeditation.com or contact Dr. Richard Schaub at drrichardschaub@gmail.com

Research & Education

Seeking Mindfulness Practitioners for Survey

We are seeking mindfulness practitioners to complete online survey for mindfulness research. Please consider participating if you are currently taking or have ever completed a mindfulness meditation course, such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction. The purpose of this study is to help develop a new survey for mindfulness research. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to complete survey questions online now and again in two weeks. If you are interested in participating, please copy or click on the link provided below:

INFO:
Survey link: https://redcap.vanderbilt.edu/surveys/?s=YM87WL844Y