

MINDFULNESS & COMPASSION

The Art and Science of Contemplative Practice

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ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Mindful Awareness Practices in an Alternative High School Program for At-Risk Adolescents: Feasibility and Preliminary Outcomes

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Introduction: A paucity of research exists investigating adolescents' experiences with mindful awareness practices (MAPs) in alternative education programs, and none, to our knowledge, that have explored adolescents' evaluations of different MAPs via a mixed-method design. The present study was designed to address this gap by exploring the acceptability/feasibility of MAPs in a program for at-risk adolescents.

Methods: Participants included 14 11th and 12th grade adolescents (30% female). The intervention included a variety of empirically-validated MAPs (e.g., daily sitting mindfulness meditation, compassion, yoga) that were incorporated into the curriculum over 10 weeks. Measures administered to participants at pre- and posttest included self-reports of well-being and objective measures of attention. Adolescents provided weekly reflections about their experiences and completed "satisfaction" surveys for each of the MAPs. Educators were interviewed about their acceptance of MAPs.

Results: Thematic analysis of journals/open-ended survey questions revealed that adolescents' were highly satisfied with all MAPs, and perceived several benefits, including increased feelings of calm, focus, and positive affect. Challenges were also reported, including increased anxiety when first introduced to MAPs. Teachers reported their intention to make daily MAPs a part of their curriculum. Quantitative analysis of student outcome data indicated a statistical trend toward increased mindful awareness and self-compassion. Further analyses are underway.

Discussion: Integrating MAPs into an alternative high school curriculum was found to be feasible and well-received by students and educators. Details of the program and related outcomes and some of the challenges linked to conducting research in this setting will be discussed.

Desert Wisdom for Mundane Practice

Siobhan Benitez

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Introduction: This paper explores the Sayings of the Desert Fathers, considering the role and truth and applicability of desert wisdom for “mundane” (i.e., worldly, non-monkish) practice.

Methods: I consider a number of chapters from the Sayings and interpret their meaning with regard to the virtue of contentment in vocation (particularly in material goods, place, and social station).

Results: Though the desert fathers and mothers usually spoke for the benefit of other monks and hermits, their words remain applicable to those of us who are more mundane.

Discussion/Conclusion: “God is in the cell,” Abba Daniel comments, “and, on the other hand, he is outside [in the world] also.” The desert dwellers learned to reach for God in silence, solitude, fasting, celibacy, poverty, and other voluntary abstinences unusual and even unreasonable in the world. A silent politician is a poor representative; a fasting lumberjack soon fells his strength rather than trees. A careful reading of desert wisdom reveals a primacy not of good works but of contentment. Contentment here is both virtue and injunction, a divine command to gracefully and uncomplainingly (i.e., virtuously) accept one’s vocation.

Waking Up at Work: First Person Action Research on Mindfulness

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INTRODUCTION

We are curious about what enables a person to become present. Rather than studying mindfulness training or its impact, we wished to elicit the intention to be present. This approach came from years of experience with meditative practices that arrive, after extensive training, at inviting people simply to be present to their minds, people, and the space around them. The root teachings for such practices focus on what we might call alive presence. Such a capacity to bring oneself present is the foundation for the most exciting organizational change projects aimed towards systemic, global change.

METHODS

The researchers took a first person approach to noticing and systematically exploring the experience of being present or awake at work. This 2-year qualitative project involved phenomenological analysis of contemporaneous notes taken for four weeks by 15 participants in an action research project that aimed both to strengthen participants' awareness and to understand its nature.

RESULTS

The themes that we identified in the data were 1) Waking up as either a gradual or sudden shift, 2) Heightened experience of bodily sensations, feelings, and thoughts, 3) Connectedness, safety, appreciation, and gratitude, 4) Empathy, relationships, and meaning, and 5) Creativity, flow, and effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

This project begins to put in place an empirical, first-person, qualitative foundation for affirming the value of awareness practice for leaders. Unless leaders sustain some ongoing awareness practice, they are not likely to have the steadiness and flexibility needed for addressing the "adaptive problems" of our world.

Sattva-ā lambana Karuṇā: Mistaking Selflessness and Self-abnegation as the Bases of Buddhist Compassion

Stephen Jenkins

Humboldt State University

This oral presentation seeks to balance the overwhelming focus on selflessness and self-abnegation as keys to understanding Buddhist compassion. Based on broad textual studies in Pāli and Sanskrit sources, it argues that central aspects of Buddhist ethical thought are being eclipsed and that ontological selflessness is being misrepresented as a general basis for Buddhist ethics. Only a small elite, even among monks, engaged in such ontological analysis. In abhidharma theory, compassion is definitively based on conventional sentient beings, sattvā lambana, even in cases where compassion is emanated in the six directions. Mahāyānist theory on the object, ā lambana, of compassion, explicitly states that compassion based on no-self or emptiness is only for highly advanced bodhisattvas. Indeed, compassion must precede such realizations, since it is the motivation for their attainment. Buddhist sources do not conflate moral and ontological selflessness.

Various kinds of reasoning supported the beings-based, sattvā lambana, compassion of the vast majority of Buddhists. Perhaps most central is the idea that compassion benefits the compassionate. The benefits to individuals include concerns for better rebirth, prestige, health, spiritual progress etc., as well as protection from everything from snakebite to arrows. The benefits to polities include internal stability, a verdant environment, prosperity, moderate penal codes, and freedom from enemies. The connection of these benefits to compassion is explicated with valuable practical reasoning. In conclusion, the importance of person less perspectives has been exaggerated for Buddhist ethics, which is more focused on beings than impersonal ontologies and on human flourishing than self-abnegation.

The Art of the Improviser: Contemplative Inquiry as Creative Path

Mark Miller

Naropa University

Awareness is more than a heightened state of sensory and cognitive receptivity. Awareness is also generative, an expression of the creative energy of life itself. In the arts, awareness is the key to creativity. Using sitting meditation and musical improvisation as a framework, this presentation will discuss the principles of contemplative practice as they relate to and support the process of individual and group creativity.

With a contemplative orientation, the basis of creative process is our lived experience, not a preconceived model or conceptual framework. Through practice, we discover what our experience is, and this experience (mediated by our skill set and aesthetic values) becomes the source of individual artistic voice. Because music making so often involves others, the improviser also cultivates an ethic of inclusion in which all voices are valued equally in collaboration. Contemplative creative process is a practice of openness, perceptual discernment and generosity, as we work together in community.

Mindfulness as a private vs. social/collective practice

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Mindfulness has been shown to be an effective tool for reducing stress and mitigating chronic symptoms in individuals, but it should not be limited to this use. Just as the 12 steps of AA are not simply techniques for abstinence but an archetypal spiritual path for development of mind, body, and social life, so, too, should mindfulness be a psycho-ethical practice of 'being in the world'. Understanding mindfulness as an essential part of culture expands the practice and orients it within a 'mindscape-to-landscape' perspective that greatly expands its benefits.

Beyond the quantifiable efficacy demonstrated by mindfulness research, its genuine impact on humanity has more to do with behavior oriented towards the cultural environment. Cultivation of perspicacity ("clear seeing"), one of the most remarkable elements of mindfulness, must expand beyond the personal. Awareness of the impact of our psycho-ethical actions arises as we expand mindfulness into the cultural sphere. What we write on social media or how we communicate with our neighbors makes a difference because it influences and contributes to our collective dis-ease (dukka). In other words, you can meditate and practice mindfulness at home but still be a jackass in the larger world!

What does it mean to live mindfully? With awareness of hurtful actions we begin to let go and do what is better for the collective. As we educate new generations of mindfulness teachers, the cultural and ethical dimensions of mindfulness must be taught in order to nourish the mindfulness movement.

Brief Mindfulness Induction Increases Pro-Environmental and Pro-Social Behavior

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Previous research has demonstrated that brief mindfulness inductions can enhance attention and other cognitive skills, but few studies have examined the effects of such a short and relatively simple practice in the social and environmental domains. Even fewer studies attempt to directly relate pro-social behaviors to mindfulness practice devoid of any explicit instructions to cultivate compassion. In our study, we examined the impact of a brief mindfulness induction on pro-social and pro-environmental behaviors. Undergraduate subjects (N=40) were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. Subjects either underwent a 10 minute mindfulness of breathing induction in which they were instructed to merely follow the breath or read a filler article for the same length of time on human respiration. Subjects in the mindfulness condition were more likely to exhibit greater environmental mindfulness (recycling) than control subjects. A greater proportion of mindfulness subjects were also willing to come back to the lab to help the researcher after being told that their data file had been lost relative to controls, suggesting an increased tendency toward pro-social helping behaviors. Relative to controls, the mindfulness induction decreased the tendency to place recyclable paper in the trash [$t(38)=2.147$, $p<.001$], increased recycling behavior [$t(38)=1.378$, $p=.011$], and increased willingness to help another with no direct benefit to oneself [$t(38)=1.125$, $p=.026$]. These findings suggest that even a brief mindfulness induction can contribute to pro-environmental and pro-social behavior, paving the way for future research on environmental and social mindfulness.

Exploring the Meaning of Mindfulness across a Range of Clinical Applications

*Lynn C. Waelde, Jean Kristeller, Doug Oman, Robyn Walser
Palo Alto University*

Clinical applications of mindfulness employ diverse definitions and meditation practices in psychotherapeutic contexts. This panel will explore clinical mindfulness implementations that reflect a spectrum of usage intensity, ranging from incorporation of mindfulness exercises to more intensive uses of mindfulness meditation in MBSR-influenced interventions. We will also consider whether mantra repetition promotes mindfulness or is a distinct practice. Presenters will discuss their theoretical perspectives, clinical experience, and research findings regarding the therapeutic effects of mindfulness and related practices. Jean Kristeller will discuss her multisite clinical trial of the MBSR-influenced Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness Training (MB-EAT); Lynn Waelde will present clinical trials and neuroimaging findings about the integration of mindfulness meditation and mantra repetition in Inner Resources (IR); Doug Oman will discuss the uses of mantra in clinical trials of Easwaran's Eight-Point Program (EPP); and Robyn Walser will present mindfulness data from the use of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) with military veterans. Presenters will address the following questions about their respective interventions. 1) What is the working definition of mindfulness? Is it a method, skill, trait, state of awareness, or something else? 2) How is this definition informed by traditional Buddhist or other religious/spiritual sources? 3) How is mindfulness used in the intervention? If a mantra is used, to what extent does it promote mindfulness or other states of awareness? 4) What evidence is there that mindfulness constitutes a change mechanism in treatment? There will be time for discussion and incorporation of viewpoints from the audience.

Randomized Pilot Study of Inner Resources for Veterans Mindfulness and Mantra Intervention for PTSD among Military Veterans

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The use of mindfulness and mantra in PTSD treatment is an emerging area. This randomized controlled pilot study examined the effects of a group-based manualized mindfulness and mantra meditation intervention (Inner Resources for Veterans; IRV) vs. a PTSD psychotherapy preparation group (PTSD 101). Participants were N = 41 military veterans with diagnosed PTSD. Results indicated that participants in both groups experienced significant decreases in PTSD symptoms from baseline to post-treatment and from baseline to the 12-week follow-up, on the clinician-administered (CAPS) and self-report PTSD (PCL-S) measures. IRV patients were significantly more likely to be treatment completers (attending at least 6 of the 9 sessions) and had significantly better homework adherence than the PTSD 101 patients. These results provide preliminary indications that both IRV and PTSD 101 produced were associated with significant improvements in PTSD symptoms, though IRV patients had better adherence. IRV mindfulness meditation appears feasible, acceptable, and effective for veteran PTSD.

Yoga and Mindfulness: Effective Clinical Applications - Stabilizing Mood, Navigating Life Transitions

Debra Alvis

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This interactive paper, illustrated by case studies, explores the application of yoga and mindfulness to support life transitions and mood stability. Life passages offer rich opportunities for releasing outdated emotional and cognitive patterns. These patterns, when unaddressed, often lead to anxiety and depression and impede movement through key changes - marriage, divorce, loss of a partner, and retirement. Impasses in navigating life transitions often stem from difficulty in staying with or tolerating internal events. Through yoga and mindfulness, individuals build awareness, acceptance, and self-compassion cultivating the capacity to witness thoughts, feelings and sensations. Over time, the moment-to-moment awareness, supported by new neural pathways, allows for greater cognitive and emotional flexibility providing the resources needed to successfully navigate such transitions.

Session participants will briefly review relevant research findings linking the scientific evidence with specific contemplative approaches. Participants will then focus on how to integrate gentle postures, breathing practices, meditation into clinical sessions and experience some of the practices employed. Interventions discussed will include gentle postures, breathing practices, meditations and deep relaxation. Detailed handouts will further support clinical application.

Law, Neuroscience and Compassion

Gavin Anderson

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This paper addresses the challenge of recent scientific developments in understanding the neurological bases of compassion for contemporary legal thought and policy-making. Lawyers are increasingly engaging with the findings of neuroscience, and have attempted to apply its insights to questions of free will and determinism, for example, in (re)assessing questions of guilt in criminal trials. These innovative lines of inquiry have helped establish a new field of law and neuroscience ('neurolaw'). However, this field has by and large neglected scientific research which has sought to establish the neural bases of an innate human capacity for compassion. Here, we consider how adverting to the neuroscience of compassion potentially transforms the emergent discipline of neurolaw, and legal thought and practice more generally. This renders explicit, and makes a central object of debate, the often implicit assumptions about the psychological bases of human behavior which underpin contemporary discourses of neurolaw. Moreover, doing so challenges the default model of competitive individualism that informs much of modern law with an alternative grounded in the importance of social nurturing for human development. Here, we consider how we can reorient the discourse of neurolaw if we take recent advances in the scientific understanding of compassion as our starting point. In particular, and taking the example of equality, if neuroscience is to influence questions of legal and social policy, how might we develop a discipline of social neuroethics to address issues in public law and human rights?

Engagement in Mindfulness-Based Intervention: What do we know so far?

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Objectives: There is growing evidence suggesting that mindfulness has positive consequences for psychological health in both clinical and non-clinical populations. Apart from positive consequences to health, a key indicator of effectiveness and acceptability of psychological interventions is participant engagement. Crane and Williams (2010) suggested that those who disengage from mindfulness may benefit from it the most. Despite the clinical relevance of the high attrition rates, research on factors associated with engagement in mindfulness interventions is at its infancy. In order to increase engagement in mindfulness interventions, it is crucial to identify the factors associated with engagement.

Method: One hundred and twenty six participants were given access to a 14-day mindfulness-based self-help interventions. Measures of mindfulness, rumination, worry and positive beliefs about rumination and worry were administered before the intervention and physical and psychological engagement questionnaires were administered after the intervention.

Results: Results revealed that maladaptive coping styles such as, rumination and worry accounted for both physical and psychological disengagement from mindfulness. It was also found that physical and psychological engagement in mindfulness had a significant small positive correlations indicating that formal practice and involvement in mindfulness are separate constructs.

Conclusions: Findings suggest that coping styles such as, rumination and worry are associated with disengagement from the intervention. These findings pave the way for future research optimizing engagement levels in mindfulness-based self-help interventions.

How do Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy and Mindfulness-based stress reduction improve mental health and wellbeing?

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Introduction: There is reason to believe that meditation or exercise may prevent or reduce impact of acute respiratory infection (ARI) illness.

Methods: Randomized controlled trial. Community-recruited adults are randomized to: 1) 8-week training in mindfulness based stress reduction; 2) matched 8-week training in moderate intensity sustained exercise; or 3) wait-list observational control. The primary outcome is area-under-the-curve global illness severity during one cold-and-flu season, using the Wisconsin Upper Respiratory Symptom Survey (WURSS-24) to assess severity. Health care visits and days-of-missed-work are counted. Nasal wash and serum collected during ARI are assayed for viral nucleic acid, and immune and inflammatory biomarkers.

Results: The first MEPARI trial randomized 154 people (82% female, 94% white, mean age $59.3 \pm SD 6.6$ years). There were 27 ARI episodes and 257 days of ARI illness in the meditation group ($n=51$), 26 episodes and 241 illness days for exercise ($n=47$), and 40 episodes and 453 days for control ($n=51$). Mean global severity was 144 for meditation, 248 for exercise, and 358 for control. Compared to control, meditation significantly reduced global severity ($p=0.0042$) and duration ($p=0.034$); effects of exercise were more marginal ($p=0.16$ and $p=0.032$, respectively). Adjusting for covariates using zero-inflated multivariate regression substantiated these results. There were 67 ARI-related days-of-missed-work in the control group, 32 in the exercise group ($p=0.041$), and 16 for meditation ($p<0.001$). Based on these results, a second larger MEPARI-2 trial was funded and is well underway.

Conclusions: Meditation and exercise may be effective in preventing and reducing ARI illness burden.

Inner peace outer action

Mamun Barua (Bodhipal Sraman)

Wat Nantikaram

There is no fire like lust, there is no evil like anger and hatred, There is no ill like the bender of the five aggregates of existence, and there is no bliss like the perfect peace of Nibbana.

There are two kinds of happiness.

1. Mental Happiness
2. Physical happiness

It's my Understanding that inner peace is "Peace of mind or mental happiness". Inner peace refers to a state of being mentally and spiritually at peace, with practical understanding to keep oneself strong in the face of discord. Without outer action inner peace is impossible.

We can see there are many millionaires and famous people in high positions who should be happy with all the things they have, but we cannot find real happiness from material things, power, or being in a high position. These people are not happy with all the things they have because their possessions and power are not the source of real happiness. Real happiness comes from inside our mind.. As a Buddhist monk I proud that Meditation is the method by which people can achieve Inner peace and true happiness.

Meditation is a method for acquainting our mind with thoughts and feelings that are conducive to Inner peace and true happiness. A very simple meditation technique used by nearly all Buddhists is Samatha Meditation or Concentration and Vipassana Meditation or Inside Meditation. Although Samatha Meditation is only an introductory Meditation, this meditation can still lead us to experience a real Inner peace. We can achieve an Inner peace is through our own experiences with Samatha. We must practice Meritorious action by giving up our Mental Stains, because our actions are all lead by the mind. The mind is our Master, Our mind is our maker. We must give up Anger or Khodha, Envy or Earsha, Ungratefulness or Akathawa, Miserliness or Macchhariya, Hypocrisy or Maya, Greed or Lobha, Aversion or Dosa, Delusion or Moha. And then practice physical meritorious action, to abstain from Killing, Stealing, Committing Immoral Sexual conduct and Verbal deceptions. To abstain from lying or Amusa vacca, from Slandering or Apisona vacca, from Uttering harsh word or Aparuca vacca, from Talking nonsense or Asampalapa vacca.

Finally we can easily understand that Inner peace is considered a state of consciousness that may be naturally cultivated by observing meritorious action and practicing Meditation.

The Effect of a Mindfulness-Based Intervention Program on the Multicomponent process of Empathic Responding: a comparison to other well-being intervention programs

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Although intersubjectivity and compassion lie at the core of mindfulness (MF) in its Buddhist cradle, few investigations have been led on its effects in the interpersonal domain, such as the phenomenon of empathy. The capacity to respond empathically in a functional way relies on commonly acknowledged components, such as an affective response, perspective taking and emotion regulation. In addition to these processes, compassion or empathic concern seems to be a significant factor for the engagement in empathy. Interestingly, many authors, conceptually or empirically suggest that mindfulness impacts the way we respond empathically to witnessed others' emotional experiences. Importantly however, a clear lack of experimental investigations of empathy and understanding of underlying processes springs from the MF literature. This study (N=125) aimed at further testing the link between MF and empathy, by using self-reported (e.g., IRI, VDQ, PEC), explicit and implicit cognitive-behavioral measures of empathy and its subcomponents (e.g., empathic accuracy paradigms, pro-sociality paradigm, compassion and emotion regulation paradigm) and comparing a MF training program (MBCOP; Lynch et al., 2011) to two active control groups (well-being intervention programs based on positive psychology or cognitive-behavioral therapy) and one passive group. The data collected one month before (double-blind procedure) and after the 8-week programs show how mindfulness training fosters perceived emotional well-being but also shapes reactions toward other's affective states. The specific impact of MF, in comparison to other well-being intervention programs, on emotion regulation and perspective taking, as core dimensions of empathy, will be discussed and new methodological perspectives will be presented.

Mindfulness meditation and improvement in sleep quality and daytime impairment among older adults with sleep disturbances: A randomized controlled trial

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Importance: Sleep disturbances are most prevalent among older adults and often go untreated. Treatment options for sleep disturbances remain limited and there is a need for community-accessible programs that can improve sleep.

Objective: To determine the efficacy of a mind-body medicine intervention, mindfulness meditation, to promote sleep quality in older adults with moderate sleep complaints.

Design, Setting, and Participants: Randomized controlled trial with two parallel groups conducted in 2012 at a medical research center among an older adult sample (M age, 66.27; SD, 7.43) with moderate sleep complaints (Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index >5).

Interventions: A standardized mindfulness meditation intervention (n=24) or a sleep hygiene education intervention (n=25) was randomly assigned to participants who received a 6-week, 2-hours per week, intervention with assigned homework.

Main Outcomes and Measures: The study was powered to detect between-group differences on the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) at post-intervention. Secondary outcomes pertained to sleep-related daytime impairment and included validated measures of insomnia symptoms, depression, anxiety, stress, and fatigue, as well as inflammatory signaling via nuclear factor (NF)- κ B.

Results: Using ITT analysis, participants in the mindfulness meditation group showed significant improvement relative to those in the sleep hygiene education group on the PSQI (MAPs M at baseline: 10.2 [SD, 1.7], at post: 7.4 [SD, 1.9]; SHE M at baseline: 10.2 [SD, 1.8], at post: 9.1 [SD, 2.0]; between-group M difference: 1.8 [95% CI: 0.6-2.9], effect size=0.89, P=0.002). The mindfulness meditation group showed significant improvement relative to sleep hygiene education on the secondary health outcomes of insomnia symptoms, depression, fatigue interference, and fatigue severity (all P's < 0.05). Between-group differences were not observed for anxiety, stress, or NF- κ B, although NF- κ B significantly declined over time in both groups (P < 0.05).

Conclusions and Relevance: The use of a community-accessible, mindfulness meditation program resulted in improvements in sleep quality at immediate post-intervention, which was superior to a highly structured sleep hygiene education program. Formalized mindfulness-based interventions have clinical importance by possibly serving to remediate sleep problems in older adults in the short-term, and this effect appears to carry over into reducing sleep-related daytime impairments that have implications for quality of life.

Mindfulness for Older Adults

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Abstract:

Introduction: Mindfulness-based interventions have been developed for many population groups, but the potential benefits of mindfulness practice by older adults has been under-appreciated by the elderly as well as by clinicians caring for them.

Discussion: This presentation will be an overview of the scientific evidence base for the benefits of mindfulness for older adults, including the results of meta-analyses and systematic reviews concerning its efficacy in preventing and treating age-associated diseases, alleviating chronic pain, preventing cognitive decline, and reducing the burden of caregiving, as well as a presentation of some of the evidence in other less-studied areas relating to quality of life in older adults. A case will be made for the importance of further research in these areas.

Conclusion: Given the rapid growth of an aging population and the strong evidence for mindfulness as an effective, low cost, safe, and non-pharmacological intervention in many realms of geriatric care, more attention should be given to this important area.

Enhancing Well-Being in Adolescents: A Pilot Study

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Adolescence is often marked by significant psychological and emotional challenges which may interfere with developmental processes, leading to an increased risk for maladaptive behavior trajectories and long-term mental health challenges. For this reason, intervening at this developmental stage is critical.

The aim of this pilot study was to determine the feasibility, acceptability, and effectiveness of a newly developed 6-week course entitled “Making Friends with Yourself: A Mindful Self-Compassion Program for Teens”, adapted from Neff and Germer’s adult Mindful Self-Compassion course. Participants included 35 adolescents (aged 14-17), 74% female and 77% Caucasian; 55% of mothers and 46% of fathers had graduate degrees. Results of online surveys administered pre- and post-intervention in this mixed-methods wait-list controlled study indicated significant differences in mindfulness, self-compassion ($t's < -3.08$, $p's < .01$), depression, anxiety, perceived stress and negative affect ($t's > 2.28$, $p's < .05$). Multiple regression results indicated that change in self-compassion was significantly associated with changes in anxiety, perceived stress, life satisfaction ($b's < -.12$, $p's < .05$), and change in mindfulness was significantly associated with changes in depression and anxiety ($b's < -.49$; $p's = .01$). Additionally, analyses revealed that mindfulness and self-compassion had unique associations with anxiety. Attendance and retention rates (>75%) demonstrated that this intervention was feasible, and transcriptions of audiorecorded classes indicated acceptability. Further, participants indicated that they preferred concrete practices (e.g., body scan) and shorter meditations, and offered suggestions on how to further tailor the intervention. In conclusion, this pilot study suggests that “Making Friends with Yourself” is a promising intervention that can help adolescents contend with the emotional challenges of this developmental stage.

Feasibility and Pilot testing of Two Online Stress Management Interventions: a study among university students in Sweden

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Purpose

The main objective of this study was to examine the feasibility of two emotion regulation and resilience training programs, and explore if they could provide an effective Internet-based resource for increasing psychological well-being and reducing vulnerability to depression. An additional objective was to explore questions regarding effects of the program in a randomized controlled pilot trial including the following main outcome measures: perceived stress, symptoms of depression, and psychological well-being.

Methods

In the spring of 2014, students at the Karolinska Institutet were invited to participate in a randomized pilot study of two online stress reduction interventions. Participants were randomly assigned to either an online mindfulness based stress reduction intervention or an online expressive writing intervention.

Results

Of 40 individuals initiating the Mindfulness-based intervention, a total of 18 (45%) completed the full program. Of 36 individuals initiating the Expressive Writing intervention, a total of 32 (89%) completed the full program. Although study retention was challenging, in particular for the more demanding mindfulness intervention, both studies seemed to reduce stress, and the Mindfulness-based intervention seemed to have a potential for reducing symptoms of depression and increasing psychological well-being.

Conclusions

Both an online Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program and an online Expressive Writing intervention was shown to be feasible and potentially effective stress reducing and resilience strengthening interventions.

A Pilot Study on the Effects of Brief Self-Compassion Training for Body Image and Eating Concerns

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Introduction: Body image distress (BID) and disordered eating are highly prevalent in American women. Self-compassion meditation training may be uniquely suited to address BID. Recent research by Albertson, Neff and Dill-Schackelford (2014) demonstrated the superiority of an online self-compassion training compared to a waitlist control in reducing negative body image. Our study extended these findings using a shorter laboratory-based paradigm, disordered eating measures, and objective measures of meditation practice time. We hypothesized that self-compassion meditation training (SCT) would lead to reductions in BID and disordered eating, and explored the extent to which meditation practice time was associated with changes in outcome variables. Additionally, we evaluated the feasibility and acceptability of SCT in young adults.

Method: 88 undergraduate females endorsing high levels of BID were randomized to either: one-week SCT (one lab-based self-compassion meditation training and access to guided meditations to practice daily at-home) or a waitlist control group. Measures of BID, disordered eating, and self-compassion were obtained at baseline and at follow-up. Online survey software was used to measure frequency and duration of at-home meditation practice. Subjective practice-quantity reports and general qualitative data were also collected.

Results: Preliminary analyses indicate that SCT led to greater reductions in BID compared to the control group. We will also report results from planned multiple regression analyses, which will test the relationship between practice time and outcome variables.

Discussion: Initial findings provide support for the usefulness of SCT in addressing body image and eating concerns in young adult women.

Secular Mindfulness Meditation and Ethics

Candy Gunther Brown

Indiana University

Introduction: This paper critically examines the recent popularity of “secular” mindfulness meditation programs in public schools, hospitals, prisons, and corporations, and raises ethical questions about how mindfulness gets marketed. The paper addresses CMC conference themes, including: Mindfulness and ethics; Mindfulness as technique vs. sensibility/way-of-being; Cultural appropriation and commodification; Mindfulness in schools; Corporate mindfulness training; Mindfulness teacher training.

Methods: The paper performs close readings and content analysis of promotional materials; compares “external” and “internal” modes of discourse; and employs theoretical insights from linguistics, sociology, biomedical ethics, religious studies, and constitutional law.

Results: Mindfulness entered the American cultural mainstream as promoters (conscious of consumer tastes and Supreme Court rulings on religious establishment) marketed it as a “secularized” technique by replacing religious-sounding vocabulary, such as Buddhism and meditation, with scientific-sounding terms such as neuroplasticity and awareness. Buddhist teachings are nevertheless implicit in “secular” classes. When speaking to insiders, promoters refer to their strategy as “stealth Buddhism.” Commodification involves cultural appropriation and cultural imperialism: European-Americans extracting the mindfulness technique from the “cultural baggage” of Asian Buddhism and imposing it on “at-risk” African-Americans and Hispanic immigrants. Teachers may receive inadequate training to respond to spiritual emergencies. Commodification also changes how Buddhism is perceived and must be advertised.

Conclusion: It is ethically problematic (for reasons of informed consent and religious voluntarism)—rather than an exemplification of skillful speech—to market mindfulness as a wholly secular practice when promoters expect and hope that secular programs will instill religious ideas and increase participation in Buddhist classes.

Mindfulness-based interventions and psychotherapy - Title: Restricted Environmental Sensory Therapies, Mindfulness and Psychotherapy

Jeffrey J. Bruno

Pacific Psychological Care

Restricted Environmental Sensory Therapies (REST) offers new perspectives and tools for mental health workers and researchers. REST methods date back thousands of years. Most notably, yogi's described a stage prior to attaining deep meditation, termed "pratyahara," or sensory withdrawal. Restriction of sensory inputs, naturally shifts internal states of awareness and arousal. The use of mindfulness training, bi-lateral stimulation (EMDR), biofeedback instrumentation, and various restricted environmental sensory therapies, may all share common subcortical pathways. The role of thalamic-cortical feedback loops in mindfulness training, biofeedback and R.E.S.T. will be shared. New methods of psychotherapy are appearing, which effectively integrate sensory-based tools, which enhance an integral awareness of body, thoughts and speech.

The Mindful Ethic and the Spirit of Global Capitalism

Thomas Calobrisi

Graduate Theological Union - Institute of Buddhist Studies

Philosopher Slavoj Žižek has claimed that if the sociologist Max Weber were alive today he would have renamed his classic tome to 'The Buddhist Ethic and the Spirit of Global Capitalism;' while this is not incorrect, one modification is necessary. In this presentation it will be argued that it is rather the 'mindful ethic' which is the 'paradigmatic ideology of late capitalism' and that as such, not unlike the logic of the resistance to capitalism that is embodied in Leftist identity politics, it reinforces the Cartesian view of the mind and the subject which it seeks to mitigate.

A Pilot Study of the Effects of Mindfulness Techniques on Mind Wandering and MCAT Scores

Maureen Canellas

UC Denver School of Medicine

Studies have shown that underrepresented minorities in medicine (URM) are more likely to become physicians in community practices aimed toward serving the underserved, and thus help fill a historical deficit of physicians in underserved communities. Working alongside the MCAT Cooperative©, an MCAT preparatory course aimed toward underserved students, we are joining in their mission of producing more competitive URM applicants. We created a mindfulness course that will supplement their main curriculum, with the purpose of researching the potential role of mindfulness in MCAT preparation. We have implemented mindfulness sessions throughout the MCAT Cooperative© curriculum. These sessions include group and one-on-one training in mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR). While MBSR includes a wide array of techniques, our primary focus is to build our students' levels of present-centered awareness and to sharpen their refocusing and recentering skills. Throughout the MCAT course, participating students are provided with weekly meditation guidance and encouragement directly from their instructor. The two primary endpoints to be measured are student MCAT scores and overall levels of mind wandering. Practice MCAT scores will be recorded both before and after the mindfulness course, with those students who did not participate in the course becoming the control group. Levels of mind wandering will be assessed via the last 16 questions of the Dundee Stress State Questionnaire as compared to the control group. It is our hypothesis that this new implementation of MBSR techniques, based on a current literature review, into the curriculum will decrease mind wandering and increase MCAT scores.

From body to emotion regulation: a psychometric study

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Introduction

Consciousness of interoceptive states is seen as a main component of emotion regulation that encompasses bodily, cognitive and affective components (Gross 2002; Dennis 2010; Kerr et al. 2013). The aim of the present research was to study the relationship between interoception (based on body awareness of direct emotional signals) on the one hand, and introspective (emotional consciousness) and mindfulness skills on the other hand. The present data are part of a larger validation study of the French version of the Body Awareness Questionnaire.

Methods

198 (men = 17) French speaking participants (age $M=38.1$; $sd=11.74$) took part in this study and completed the following self-report questionnaires: Body Awareness Questionnaire (BAQ) (Shields et al. 1989) which assesses attention to normal non-emotive body processes, Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20) (Bagby et al. 1994) which assesses alexithymia based on three dimensions (difficulties in identifying and verbalizing emotions, and externally oriented thinking), and Five Facets Mindfulness Questionnaires (FFMQ) which assesses inter-individual trait skills that encompass observing, describing, acting with awareness, non-judging, and non-reaction to inner experience (Baer et al. 2006). Data were analyzed using correlations.

Results

As expected, we found a significant correlation between interoception (BAQ) and Mindfulness skills (FFMQ) ($r= .398$; $p <.001$), and difficulties in introspection (TAS-20) ($r= -.32$; $p <.001$).

Discussion

These results support the role of interoception in emotion processing and regulation. Regarding embodied theories of emotions (Niedenthal et al. 2009), this psychometric contribution supports the need for targeted therapeutic interventions on body awareness to improve emotion regulation.

Recovery from work: a comparison of the effects of meditation retreat programs and leisure holiday vacations in working European and American adults

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Intro: Recovery from work through respite and vacations is necessary to maintain well-being and health. Failure to adequately recover from work can lead to fatigue, psychosomatic complaints, and longer sick-leave. Vacations decrease emotional exhaustion and improve mood, however, with short-lived effects. Thus, activities enhancing the duration of vacation effects are of interest.

Methods: This study assessed the effects of meditation programs held at retreat centers in Europe and North America. Results from a survey measuring aspects of mindfulness, stress, and psychological well-being were completed by individuals (n=62) participating in a meditation retreat of 1-week or longer and compared to results from individuals on leisure vacations (n=59) of similar duration. Assessments were conducted 10 days prior to the meditation retreat/ vacation, as well as 10 days and 66 days after the retreat/ vacation. Mindfulness was assessed with the Five Factor Mindfulness Scale, and health and well-being variables were assessed through the Fatigue Assessment Scale, the Perceived Stress Scale, and the Recovery Experience Questionnaire.

Results: Variance analysis with repeated measures revealed that participation in a residential meditation retreat of 1-week or longer, with on average 5 hours of meditation per day, leads to significant stress reduction and increased mindfulness compared to leisure vacations. Specific trait mindfulness such as acting with awareness and applying non-judgmental acceptance towards thoughts and emotions continued to increase for participants two-months after the retreat.

Discussion: In addition to increases in trait mindfulness, and health and well-being, participants of the meditation retreats experienced more enduring improvements compared to vacation-goers.

Tibetan yoga improves quality of life of people with lung cancer and their caregivers

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Introduction: A cancer diagnosis and treatment negatively impacts the quality of life (QOL) of patients and caregivers to a similar degree. Lung cancer is associated with more debilitating sequelae than many cancers, with caregivers being particularly vulnerable to poor QOL. To address QOL concerns in both lung cancer patients and their caregivers, we conducted a feasibility trial of a dyadic mind-body intervention.

Methods: We examined a couple-based Tibetan Yoga (TYC) program of Tsa Lung (rtsa rlung) that included breathing exercises, gentle movements and a compassion-based meditation. Patient and caregiver attended 2-3 weekly classes (45-60 min.) together over the course of patients' radiotherapy treatment (5-6weeks).

Results: Ten patient-caregiver dyads completed the TYC program. Patients (mean age: 73 yrs., 62% male, 85% stage III) and caregivers (mean age: 65 yrs., 73% female, 85% spouses) completed a mean of 12 TY sessions (range: 6-15) and 95.5% of them rated the program as useful or very useful. Paired t-tests revealed a significant increase in spiritual well-being ($P=.03$; $d=1.12$) for patients and decrease in fatigue ($P=.03$; $d=.87$) and anxiety ($P=.04$; $d=.91$) for caregivers. Other differences not reaching significance but representing moderate or large effect sizes included benefit finding ($d=.71$), sleep disturbances ($d=.60$), and depressive symptoms ($d=.52$) for patients, and sleep disturbances ($d=.71$) and benefit finding ($d=.52$) for caregivers.

Conclusion: This couple-based mind-body program appears to be a safe, feasible, acceptable, and subjectively helpful for patients and their caregivers. Based on these promising preliminary findings, the next step is to conduct an RCT.

Meditation: theories and practices

Guo Cheen

The Compassion Network

The Avatamsaka Four Dharma Realms and the Shurangama Meditation of Listening Intersect in Chan

Seen as stages of practice, Chengguan's theory of the Four Dharma Realms and Guanyin's perfected meditation method via one's ears inevitably meet complementarily to enhance our understanding of Chan as a practice. More than mere philosophy, the teaching of the Four Dharma Realms requires both theory and practice. The Huayan descriptions of magnificent, dream-like states not only can be read as a philosophy but can be contemplated upon and experienced in Chan mindstates. With the Four Dharma Realms specifically, Chengguan provided specific contemplations such as that on true emptiness, the non-obstruction between phenomena and noumenon, pervasive embodiment, and others.

Where phenomena are dualistic, when contemplated upon through a singularity, a noumenon that is the same among the differences, awareness expands to non-obstruction between phenomena and noumenon. At some point phenomena and noumenon become one in perfect integration, or emptiness. And finally, the meditator enters the Dharma Realm of the mind that is simultaneously the greatest expanse, where emptiness extinguishes to become ineffable wondrousness. The Shurangama Sūtra's stages of meditation as Guanyin described in his realization of enlightenment complements the Four Dharma Realms precisely. The typical linear and two-dimensional portrayal of these stages of meditation offer us a glimpse of how a meditator moves from noticing dualistic sense objects to an investigation of the nature of the ear, to an awareness that ends in the emptiness of dualities, and finally to the extinction of that emptiness.

Comparative Effectiveness of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Usual Care for Chronic Low Back Pain: A Randomized Trial

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Abstract:

Introduction: This study evaluates the effectiveness of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) for as compared with group cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and usual care (UC) for chronic back pain.

Methods: 342 adults with moderate to severe chronic low back pain were randomized to 8 weekly sessions of CBT or MBSR or to continued UC. The co-primary outcomes were the percentages of participants with clinically meaningful (30%) improvement in function (Roland Disability Questionnaire - RDQ) and pain bothersomeness (0-10 scale) 26 weeks after randomization. Regression models using generalized estimating equations (GEE) and adjusting for age, sex, back pain duration, and baseline values of the outcome were used to estimate relative risk of 30% improvement at 26 weeks. Analyses followed an intent-to-treat approach.

Preliminary Results: 26-week outcome data were available for 278 participants (81%). The percentage of participants with clinically meaningful improvement in function was lower in the UC group (44%, 95% CI: 35%-55%) than in the MBSR (61%, 95% CI: 51%-72%) and CBT groups (61%, 95% CI: 51%-72%) ($p=0.04$ for omnibus test). The rate of clinically meaningful improvement in pain bothersomeness was also lower in the UC group (27%, 95% CI: 20%-36%) than in the MBSR (47%, 95% CI: 37%-58%) and CBT (46%, 95% CI: 37%-57%) groups ($p=0.008$ for omnibus test).

Conclusion: MBSR was found to be an effective treatment for chronic back pain at six month follow-up. The benefits of MBSR were equivalent to those for group CBT, a treatment previously found effective for chronic back pain.

Is There Upāya-Kauśalya (Skillful Means) in Promoting Mindfulness Without Ethics? The Listening Goes Both Ways

Kin Cheung

Temple University

With the growing popularity of mindfulness, vocal critics are concerned that promoting the bare-attention practice without an ethical basis merely patches up the surface symptoms of contemporary stress without addressing the systemic or institutional causes of dis-ease. One strand of response argues that there's an implicit, rather than an overt, ethical teaching coupled with mindfulness and this is skillful means to reach the widest audience possible in ways they are ready to accept. To this, critics protest the use of skillful means by anyone not a Buddha or advanced bodhisattva, and challenge the skill in supposedly inoculating bankers to a destructive form of capitalism or training snipers to kill mindfully. I argue that this debate is at an impasse because it considers only one aspect of upāya-kauśalya: whether or not unenlightened beings can best deliver a message acceptable to the contemporary Western audience. Emphasizing what the projected audience is ready to hear ignores listening to the audience in the first place. It's unclear what is the evidence for the assumption that the audience will reject explicit ethical teachings. I use examples from the Pali canon and the Lotus Sutra to illustrate both aspects of listening in the use of upāya-kauśalya, and suggest eliciting feedback on presenting mindfulness with ethics. The payoff is to seek empirical evidence for the degrees of acceptance or rejection of mindfulness coupled with ethics. The next questions are which of the varieties of secular or Buddhist ethics are most acceptable to which audiences.

Models of Health in Buddhist Meditation and the Scientific Study of Mindfulness-Practices

Kin Cheung

Temple University

The scientific study of mindfulness-practices examines if and how they can promote health, mental and somatic. The Buddha said that "health (*ārogya*) is the highest gain (*lābha*)." He is portrayed as a physician concerned with medicine and healing sentient beings from physical illness and soteriological dis-ease. Early proponents of the dialogue between Buddhism and science were mainly Buddhists (monastics, apologists) and scientists (psychologists). They propose that both dialogue partners can inform each other on health. Those trained as scientists, such as Ekman, Davidson, Ricard, and Wallace, argued for areas of convergence between the two on psychological health. Currently, Buddhologists have been more vocal in the dialogue between Buddhism and science. They question the notion of a dialogue, preferring to characterize the shifting relationship as an engagement, encounter, or a series of monologues. A central topic in this dialogue is research on mindfulness-practices. The contemporary mindfulness movement, which is constantly in flux, can be characterized as a product of the dialogue between Buddhism and science, more specifically, Buddhist modernism and Western psychology. In contrast to the aforementioned scientists, Buddhologists such as Sharf and Lindahl point out the ways in which Buddhism and mindfulness diverge on the meaning of health and well-being. Examining the convergences and divergences on health helps re/define the relationship between mindfulness and Buddhism, between science and Buddhism. If scientific research is a tool of observation and measurement, and researchers are interested in health, then investigating the multiple meanings of health should facilitate better observation and measurement.

Fostering Mindfulness in Sports Teams: A Pilot Study

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Mindfulness, the learned cognitive ability for being present in the moment (Kabat-Zinn, 1984), has gained traction in scientific literature as an effective means for improving individual factors as well as enhancing athletic performance. Knowledge that our abilities for non-judgmental perception of self and events are shaped by intrinsic and extrinsic factors is offset by little research has explored mindfulness training in sport teams. Cohesive sport teams are resilient in the face of challenges and remain united in pursuit of common goals. Experiential Learning (EL) is a sequence of team building activities directed at satisfying team members' needs and improving the team environment by promoting shared responsibility for novel contextual understandings (Rohnke & Butler, 1995). The purpose of this workshop is to share a pilot study employing the systematic application of mindfulness-based experiential learning (MBEL) activities within a structured team building program to foster mindfulness and enhance performance in a NCAA Division I volleyball team. The workshop will provide participants an overview of MBEL programming designed to nurture awareness, present moment being, and non-judgment within a team. By attending the workshop, participants will gain a better appreciation for how cultivating compassion for the self and others can nurture cohesion, foster leadership, and build trust within a group.

Decreased plasma oxytocin levels following three weeks of intensive, silent Vipassana practice

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Much of the extant research on contemplative practices has focused on the effects of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction programs in patient populations and on the effects of short-term meditation interventions involving concentration-focused practices on attention and cognitive control. Less is known about the effects of intensive retreat practice or about virtue-based practices, such as the Brahma Viharas. There is also little known about the ways in which meditation practices may illicit changes at the biological level, and how these may in turn contribute to behavioral changes. In this novel study design, participants of a one-month, silent, residential Vipassana retreat, which included daily Brahma Vihara practice, provided blood samples and self-reported psychological measures at the beginning of and three weeks into their retreat. Preliminary analyses indicate that participants showed a significant decrease in blood plasma levels of the hormone oxytocin, irrespective of gender, when compared to age-, gender-, and experience-matched controls living their daily lives. Because oxytocin is thought to be involved in processes such as empathy, social interaction, and pair bonding, one may expect that daily practice of the Brahma Viharas might promote increased oxytocin levels. However, this provocative result suggests that the reduced social interaction in the context of a silent retreat (no verbal communication, eye contact, or physical contact) might actually facilitate a decrease in peripheral oxytocin. In order to interpret this finding, further analyses will be conducted relating participants' oxytocin levels to their self-reported measures of psychological traits, including adult romantic attachment, anxiety, and psychological well-being. This work will contribute to our understanding of different practice contexts and may be important in understanding the effects of reintegrating into daily life after retreat.

Relational Dharma: Liberation through Higher Human Relatedness

Jeannine A. Davies

Violence and human conflict exist in a myriad of expressions and forms. Inherent within this fabric of human suffering is inevitable reciprocity. Our very existence is woven in and through our profoundly connected natures. This presentation will explore a transdisciplinary, relational, and feminine-inspired path that purposes a new kind of liberation concerned with human relationships, at both the personal and societal level. Relational Dharma re-envision the teachings of dependent arising into an intersubjective architecture that becomes accessible through the development of insight in relationships between people. Building upon the intention behind the Buddhist pāramīs, perfections or noble qualities that a Bodhisattva vows to develop, an intersubjective theme of “Higher human relatedness” (HHR) is formulated through seven criteria, inspired by an ancient Buddhist method called the fourfold defining device. This device was originally used to formally define dhammas (or dharmas), meaning ‘things, which bear their own intrinsic nature.’ These criteria form the underlying architecture for determining expressions of HHR within Relational Dharma. In addition, the formula provides a guide for the recognition of the nature of HHR within our relationships, so that these intersubjective structures can be evoked as a means to transcend habitual patterns of self-other harm and co-evolve our higher freedom. As these mutually liberating potentials are fostered, higher stages of human development may be actualized that go beyond ego and beyond the separate self. Thus, they provide a framework for elevating a new level of conscious and compassionate interaction with self and others and society.

Against One Method: Toward a Critical-Constructive Approach to the Adaptation and Implementation of Buddhist-based Contemplative Programs in America

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Emory University/Mind and Life Institute

Interest in secular, Buddhist-based contemplative programs has increased as a growing body of research suggests that such programs effectively enhance health and well-being. Much of the research to date has assessed the efficacy of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). More recently, compassion-based contemplative approaches, including Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) and Innate Compassion Training (ICT), have been developed and adapted for use in clinical, non-clinical, and educational settings.

MBSR, CBCT and ICT offer distinct methods for cultivating mindfulness and compassion designed to help participants deal with stress and suffering. The programs take inspiration from diverse Buddhist contemplative traditions that hinge on competing models of the nature of mind. They also variously position themselves as “secular” and “scientific” and claim some form of universal applicability. Such universal rhetorical strategies are effective tools insofar as they provide coherence and grant these programs access to various audiences. I argue, however, that these very rhetorical strategies also ignore important contextual factors key to the programs’ success, adaptability and sustainability, while also obscuring alternative healing methods and approaches that may be more effective for particular individuals or communities in particular settings.

This paper thus adopts a critical-constructivist approach to this growing field. It begins by deconstructing the universal rhetoric employed by these programs through an analysis of their theoretical and secular frames. It then considers potential reframes to the Buddhist debate and the discourses of the “secular” and suggests more context-sensitive and principle-driven approaches to the ongoing development, adaptation and implementation of contemplative-based programs in America.

Staying mindful: maintaining mindfulness practice following Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction training in people with chronic health conditions

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Alta Bates Summit Medical Center

Purpose: This study explores the ongoing experience of 10 participants with chronic disease or pain in utilizing mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) one year after completing the training course.

Background/Significance: Research studies conducted over the last two decades have found that MBSR can offer psychological as well as physical health benefits to people with a wide range of chronic physical illnesses, but few have examined the long-term benefits of mindfulness practice or the challenges of maintaining the practice over time. Therefore, this study is adding to the body of knowledge in understanding the “lived experience” of past MBSR participants. **Methods:** In depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 participants followed by thematic analysis of transcripts.

Results of Project/Research: 3 themes were identified: (1) confronting stress/managing illness (2) learning to be mindful, and (3) Paths to staying mindful. The participants in this study have described MBSR as a valuable tool for ongoing self-management of chronic illness or pain, which requires individualized application to enhance ongoing utilization.

Implications: The findings of this study have direct implications for health care providers, as they recommend techniques for self-healing. Understanding the challenges of ongoing mindfulness enables providers to offer guidance and support in facilitating adherence to this beneficial practice.

Listening Mothers: Supporting Mother-Infant Relationships through Mindfulness, Lovingkindness, and Self-Compassion

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We will present results from a small, randomized controlled trial (RCT) of an 8 week program for mother-infant dyads, Listening Mothers (LM). LM is focused on supporting healthy parent-child attachment and maternal adjustment across the transition to parenthood. Curriculum enhancements were made to LM to incorporate mindfulness, lovingkindness, and self-compassion practices specifically tailored for application to the experiences of parenting a young infant. In an initial pilot group, mothers reported a significant increase in self-compassion ($p < .05$) after LM participation. In the current RCT, first-time mothers were randomly assigned to wait-list control or LM conditions. Potential study participants were excluded if they had a formal meditation practice or long-term yoga practice. Focus group results suggest LM participants use contemplative practices in daily life to be more present with their children, to engage in self-care, and to avoid self-critical judgments. Participants also reported on the ways in which LM helped eased integration of their new roles as mothers into their lives and other relationships.

Contemplative Practices and Communication Dynamics: An Exploratory Study in relation to Well-being and Human Development

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Communication is an external manifestation of internal stimuli, whereas contemplative practice is prime sources which regulate emotions and strengthen thought process by developing a more focused mind and deepening inner peace. Since the beginning of civilization homo-sapiens were able to articulate their thoughts and feelings using self-devised symbols ranging from simple gestures to the present day technology driven complex world wide networks. Research attention has often been laid on the explicit dimensions of communication; consequently discourses on communication are largely confined to exterior aspects like means, modes and messages. The internal cognitive drives that generate and shape the physical communication patterns and behaviors are still largely a virgin domain that needs exploration. The emerging discipline of contemplative practices will open up a new and refreshing stream of communication research that may have a bearing on both theory and application of the science of communication and thus contribute to the well-being and human development. The paper basically examines the dynamics of the powerful synergy inherently interlinking the contemplative practices and the communication behavior for fulfillment of self and also well-being of society.

Lab interpersonal stressor induced heart rate changes nulled by compassion practice: a pilot study

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Interpersonal stress can occur when one encounters family, coworkers, or even strangers, and can lead to health issues over time. The two purposes of this study were to (a) create a laboratory stressor that simulates natural interpersonal stress and (b) develop and test a smartphone application (app) intervention to potentially reduce reactivity to interpersonal stress. Methods: Heart rate was recorded while 23 participants listened to audio presented narratives of either neutral storylines or participant-provided stories of real-life interpersonal stress. A subset (n=7) used a smartphone app with 'on the go' guided compassion exercises, and returned for a second visit. For visit one, a significant increase was found in heart rate for personal vs. neutral narratives (n=23: $t = -3.1$, $p < 0.01$, subset of 7: $t = -2.7$, $p < 0.05$). However for those using the app for 3 weeks, there was no difference upon the return visit ($t = -0.75$, $p = 0.48$). Discussion: For stressor validity, the increased heart rate suggests that the individualized stories may be a valid method to evoke a stress response, perhaps similar to "angry rumination" often implicated in stress-related mental and physical health issues. For the Compassion app intervention, very preliminary results of the absence of heart rate increases to stressful stories suggests that using this may be an effective way to reduce stress. This may occur by replacing angry rumination with caring, more sympathetic thoughts about the difficult individuals. We are currently collecting a larger sample size with an active control.

The Role of Mindfulness and Emotional Stability in Performance Monitoring

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A good performance monitoring involves detection of one's own errors, a high processing speed and stability in response time. For example, mindful individuals should be able to detect errors more easily, whereas emotional instable individuals have difficulties in stably responding during tasks over time. In addition to behavioral data, error negativity as event-related potential was recorded. In a Simon task, participants had to respond with the left or right hand according to different rules and they had to decide if their given response was correct or incorrect (error awareness). In addition to mindfulness and emotional stability as personality traits, the Figure Connection Test and a questionnaire on stress symptoms were assessed.

1. Dispositional approach: the relationship between mindfulness, emotional stability and behavioral data of performance monitoring, as reaction time variability and reaction time, and neural correlates of error monitoring during an error awareness task was analyzed.
2. Experimental approach: the effects of mindfulness were investigated by a smartphone-based mindfulness training and compared to a progressive muscle relaxation training.

Regarding the dispositional approach, controlling for emotional stability, participants with higher mindfulness showed a larger error negativity difference between detected and non-detected errors. Furthermore, mindfulness training leads to better performance in processing speed and reduction of stress symptoms. Thus, mindfulness showed positive effects on different aspects of performance monitoring and well-being.

A Randomized Clinical Trial of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) for Treatment-Resistant Depression

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Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) is an effective treatment for relapse prevention, yet it has not been examined as an intervention for treatment-resistant depression (TRD). Objective: We utilized a single-blind, RCT to determine the efficacy of MBCT as an augmentative treatment to standard pharmacotherapy treatment-as-usual (TAU) for adults diagnosed with TRD in comparison to an active comparator condition. Design: One hundred and seventy three adults with TRD were enrolled in the study, conducted at the University of California San Francisco. Participants were randomized into 8-week group treatment with either MBCT or the Health-Enhancement Program (HEP). Primary Outcome Measure: Upon completion of 8-week treatment, change in depressive symptoms was evaluated using the 17-item Hamilton Depression Rating Scale. Overall change in depression severity from pre-to post-treatment was measured by percent reduction in total scores, treatment response (scores \geq 50% decrease from baseline) and remission (post-treatment scores \leq 7). Results: Our findings showed that at the end of 8 weeks of treatment, a significantly greater number of patients achieved response in the MBCT condition (30.3%) than in the HEP condition (15.3%; $p = .03$ in multivariate model). The mean percent reduction in severity was also greater in the MBCT condition (36.6% versus 25.3%; $p = .01$ in the multivariate model). Although also favoring MBCT, no statistically significant differences were found for the rates of remission (22.4% versus 13.9%; $p = .15$). In these models, state anxiety, perceived stress, and the presence of a personality disorder were related to the response rate and percent reduction. We also evaluated fMRI changes associated with the two interventions.

Caring for the Caregivers Inside, a pilot mindfulness training for Juvenile Justice Officers

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Juvenile justice officers, (JJOs), have the difficult and important job of working closely with the most troubled youth who are in great need of rehabilitation and role modeling. JJOs annual trainings focus on how to respond to physical assault, identify gang tattoos, and accurately complete ever-changing documentation forms. But JJOs are not trained to identify or manage the emotional exhaustion and stress that arise from working with incarcerated youth. This report presents background literature and research through the development, delivery, and evaluation of a stress management training for JJOs to: Develop and Reconnect to Empathy And Meaning, (DREAM). DREAM was adapted from the evidenced based emotion regulation and mindfulness training, Cultivating Emotional Balance, and was shaped by baseline data collection on stressors, stress, empathy and motivation to meet the unique needs of JJOs struggling with burnout. In the baseline research, conducted through observation, focus groups and interviews, JJOs reported their principal stressors were work structure and hierarchy, feelings of cynicism and negativity, lack of communication and coworker-related stress. These stressors are largely interpersonal arising from challenges with coworkers, with higher-ups, with youth, as well as intrapersonal stressors from internal conflict, negative self-appraisal. In addition to stress management, the key goals of developing and delivering the DREAM training is to (re)connect workers to their core motivations and establish a sustainable empathy to avoid emotional exhaustion, strengthen compassion and foster opportunities for finding meaning through connection with youth.

The Alchemy Of Empathy, transforming stress in to meaning

Eve Ekman

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This paper describes a new theory for coping with burnout through cultivating meaning in human service work. This theory emerges from an integration of existent research literatures applied to an analysis of observational data from an understudied population of care providers: Juvenile justice officers (JJOs). Participant observation, focus groups and a pilot mindfulness training with JJOs revealed unanticipated group differences in experienced meaning and stress between two work sites. One work site's job role required higher levels of expected interpersonal interactions (empathy) with youth, this group reported less symptoms of stress and more feelings of common purpose and meaning in work. The link between stress, empathy and experienced meaning is further explored through an interdisciplinary review of literature on these topics. The literature draws from Viktor Frankl's classic theory of meaning, stress and coping research on meaning based coping, social neuroscience research on empathy and eastern contemplative practices of compassion. The intended contributions of this paper are: (1) exploring burnout among an important and understudied population through a new lens of meaning and empathy and (2) developing a theoretical framework for classic and contemporary research on empathy and meaning in work. The conclusions include considering compassion based interventions to support meaning in a previously ignored, and critically important, profession at an organizational and individual level.

Mindfulness Meditation with incarcerated youth: A randomized controlled trial informed by neuropsychosocial theories of adolescence

Michelle Evans-Chase

Rowan University

There is mounting evidence that the traumas disproportionately faced by incarcerated youth outside of custody are barriers to the healthy development of self-regulation, compounding their risk for poor social and developmental outcomes. To address this risk, a randomized controlled trial was conducted comparing the impact of Internet-based mindfulness meditation and guided relaxation on self-regulation in juvenile justice-involved youth. Multiple regression analysis was used to assess the differences between treatment and control groups on post-test scores, controlling for pretest scores, with age group included as a moderator in an interaction term with treatment group. Treatment youth in the oldest age group (age 19 to 23) scored significantly higher on interpersonal self-restraint at post-test than similarly aged youth in the control group. Differences were found in the interaction model, but not in the main effects model indicating that, had age been included as a control variable only, treatment effects would not have been found due to the increased variation of age groups analyzed together. These findings support (a) the use of Internet-based mindfulness meditation as a method of fostering the development of self-regulation in incarcerated youth, and (b) the use of age as a moderator in analyses of treatment effects when outcomes are self-regulatory in nature (i.e., delinquency).

Mindful Teaching in Early Childhood: Leading our Youngest Learners with "What Feels Best..."

Sarah Ferguson, Tori Weisberg

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We are in the beginning stages of designing an early childhood program at our school, an independent EC-12 school in Shaker Heights, Ohio, that creates an environment of honor, trust, and compassion through meditation and mindful teaching practices. The program seeks to honor the natural wisdom of young children and trusts them to know and do what is truly best without coercion or manipulation from the adult world. Our paper will discuss the research motivating our project, its implementation and our observations so far, obstacles and questions we are encountering, and plans for more formal research directions in the future.

Critical Integral Urban Education

David Forbes

Brooklyn College

This oral presentation critically questions the purpose of contemplative practices, in particular, mindfulness, in K-16 education within the current context of neo-liberal "reforms." Are there Buddhist aims, e.g. to reach enlightenment and awakening about ourselves/no selves, to radically challenge social dukkha, and to eliminate greed, ill-will, and delusion for everyone? Or is mindfulness an accommodationist technology for teachers and students to improve attention, reduce stress, and gain personal success and productivity within a consumer, corporate society? Does mindfulness serve as a way to provide full and healthy development for all? Or does it function as a form of social control and adjustment to the corporatization of public education (e.g. acceptance of high stakes testing, value-added teacher evaluation, and management and regulation of anger and other potentially subversive emotions)? If contemplative education needs to critically attend to and engage within actual social, political, moral, and cultural contexts, how do we forge a radical, integral, contemplative education that critically challenges the "pathology of normalcy" (Fromm) and does not succumb to technocracy, materialism, or spiritual by-passing? We will consider an integral approach that critically employs and contextualizes contemplative practices in education through models of self-development, self-awareness, healthy cultural values and relationships, and more socially equitable political and economic systems with the purpose of furthering human evolution.

Mindful Teaching and Learning: Contemplative Pedagogy in the University Setting (A Case Study)

Andrew O. Fort

Texas Christian University

Numerous universities throughout the country are exploring how contemplative studies can enhance liberal arts education and lead to more insight into and critical reflection about both self and culture(s) in their social and historical location. My paper covers this topic in two ways: first, I offer a brief history of the successful development of the Contemplative Studies initiative at my university (goals, organization, planning, events, participants, support), culminating in our first curricular offering this spring, a cross-disciplinary course co-taught by a religion and a dance professor. I then discuss some of the assumptions and theoretical underpinning for this initiative, indicating the value of contemplative pedagogy in academia. While traditional “third-person” study of contemplative traditions is fundamental, introducing one to profound and long-standing knowledge present in various cultures and texts, contemplative practice is also valuable for those in the liberal arts, enhancing understanding of self and other, thus the capacity for critical thinking.

Therapeutic Self-Care for patients with chronic pain: The effectiveness of a self-compassion intervention in a hospital setting

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Introduction: Chronic pain is a medical and psychological condition that creates high-cost to society and has debilitating effects on the physical, emotional and social wellbeing of individuals who experience it. Rates of chronic pain are reaching epidemic proportions, while treatments continue to show minimal to moderate success in effectively restoring functioning in this population. Recent research on mindfulness and acceptance-based treatments for chronic pain have shown promising results, and emerging data has implicated self-compassion as a potentially important factor in treatment outcomes.

Methods: The present study examined the effectiveness of a multimodal self-compassion intervention in chronic pain treatment. Patients participated in one of two treatment groups: Treatment-As-Usual (TAU), consisting of behavioral therapy, biofeedback, and physical therapy in an individual or group format, or Therapeutic Self-Care (TSC), a structured 12-week group intervention in which the TAU modalities are conducted with a specific focus on self-compassion.

Results: The preliminary results suggest that patients in both treatment groups experienced significant reductions in depression over the course of treatment, with only those in the Therapeutic Self-Care condition exhibiting decreased pain and significant improvement in self-compassion.

Discussion: To the authors' knowledge, this is the first study examining a multimodal self-compassion treatment for chronic pain. Results indicate that patients in the experimental self-compassion condition experienced equivalent or greater improvements in depression and pain than those who received traditional treatment. Importantly, the findings demonstrate that targeting self-compassion in chronic pain treatment can increase self-compassion, which is related to maintenance of self-care and better pain management.

Mindfulness Based Tinnitus Stress Reduction (MBTSR) Pilot Study: A Symptom Perception-Shift Program

Jennifer Gans

University of California, San Francisco / VA of Northern CA

This pilot study aims to investigate whether a novel mind-body intervention, Mindfulness Based Tinnitus Stress Reduction (MBTSR), may be a beneficial treatment for chronic tinnitus. Eight tinnitus patients who had previously received Tinnitus Counseling (standard of care) at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) Audiology Clinic participated in the MBTSR program. The program included eight weeks of group instruction on mindfulness practice, a one-day retreat, supplementary readings, and home-based practice using meditation CDs. Using a pre-post intervention design, mean differences (paired t-tests) were calculated. Benefits were measured by a reduction in clinical symptoms, if present, and a tinnitus symptom perception shift. Tinnitus symptom activity and discomfort as well as psychological outcomes were assessed by self-report questionnaires. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered. Results indicate that Effect Sizes, if supported by a larger study, may be clinically significant and demonstrate a substantial decrease for items measuring perceived annoyance and perception of handicap of tinnitus. Change scores on study measures all moved in the hypothesized direction, with the exception of negligible change found for the Acting with Awareness ($d = -.05$) factor of mindfulness. This pilot study provides preliminary evidence that an eight-week MBTSR program may be an effective intervention for treating chronic tinnitus and its co-morbid symptoms, and may help reduce depression and phobic anxiety while improving social functioning and overall mental health. These promising findings warrant further investigation with a randomized controlled trial.

Effects of the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction program on mind wandering: a randomized controlled trial

Alessandro Giannandrea, Luca Simione, Bianca Pescatori, Katie Ferrell, Marta Olivetti Belardinelli, Steven D. Hickman, Antonino Raffone
Sapienza University

This study investigates the effects of a Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction training on the occurrence of mind wandering episodes during a sustained attention to response test. “Thought probes” of attentional focus and meta-awareness were taken during the task. In order to assess the effect of the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction training on the mind wandering activity of the participants, we compared two experimental groups attending the training at different times. The analyses revealed a significant reduction in number of attentional lapses and an increase of self-reported scores of attentional focus after the mindfulness training. Moreover, regression analyses results are twofold: (i) participants of the mindfulness training gained better monitoring abilities on their attentional focus and (ii) the improvements in the awareness of their actions had a measurable effect on attentional lapses. These results shed further lights on the understanding of a theoretical connection between mind wandering and mindfulness, in particular in one of the major application of mindfulness, such as the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction training.

The effects of a mindfulness-based intervention on subjective and objective sleep in high and low stress mothers

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Emerging research suggests that mindfulness-based interventions (MBI) may hold promise for improving sleep; however, their effectiveness in chronically stressed individuals has not been tested. The goal of this study was to examine the effects of a MBI, specifically designed for a chronically stressed population, on sleep.

Seventy-four healthy, premenopausal mothers of either a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (i.e., high stress caregivers; n=37) or a typically developing child (i.e., low stress controls; n=37) enrolled in either a 12-week MBI (n=46) or a usual care control condition (n=28). At baseline and 3 months post-intervention participants completed questionnaires [Pittsburg Sleep Quality Index (PSQI), Insomnia Severity Index (ISI)] and 7-days of wrist actigraphy to assess subjective and objective sleep parameters.

Analysis revealed that compared to the usual care condition, those in the MBI group showed some improvement on subjective sleep measures (PSQI: $F(1,69)=2.83$, $p=0.10$ and ISI: $F(1,65)=3.74$, $p=0.06$) as well as an increase in total sleep time measured objectively by actigraphy ($F(1,22)=3.93$, $p=0.06$). MBI-related improvements in PSQI global sleep quality were significantly stronger in high stress caregivers compared to low stress controls ($F(1,69)=3.68$, $p=0.06$). Together these findings provide preliminary evidence that the mindfulness-based intervention has a favorable effect on subjective and objective measures of sleep, which may have important implications for high stress caregivers.

Threat vs. challenge mindset upon waking, cortisol awakening response, and effects of a mindfulness intervention

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We studied a sample of 166 healthy premenopausal women, half mothers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (caregivers), half of neurotypical children (controls).

We aimed to see how chronic stress might affect waking responses, both as psychological experience and in terms of HPA-axis activity measured as Cortisol Awakening Response (CAR). CAR was measured as area under the curve subtracting waking cortisol (AUCi) and controlling for waking time. Lastly, the group went through a 12-week mindfulness-based intervention.

We found that caregivers woke up with greater distress mindset like worrying about how things were going to go during their day and waking with feelings of stress, anxiousness and overwhelm ($t=3.20$, $p<.01$). And less of a positive mindset like feeling more in control, being on top of things, coping well, looking forward to the day, and waking with joy, gladness and happiness ($t=3.16$, $p<.01$). With respect to HPA-axis activity caregivers and controls did not differ on CAR ($t=.95$, $p=.34$). Positive responses were associated with lower CAR ($r = -.16$, $p= .04$), in particular participants who reported high levels of joy showed lower peaks in their morning wake response compared to those who reported low levels in joy ($t=2.02$, $p=.05$). Negative mindset responses were related to less cortisol recovery across the day ($r= -.15$, $p=.06$).

This finding is among the first linking positive emotional response at waking to ensuing adrenal response to waking. We will present findings on how the mindfulness-based intervention affected psychological and cortisol waking responses.

Mindfulness and Kitsch

Fabio Giommi

Associazione Italiana per la Mindfulness

One of the most dangerous and deceitful risk generated by the popularity of mindfulness is its spreading in the world in diluted, simplistic versions. These distorted versions are fostering misrepresented views about the nature of mindfulness, and can be summarized as the attitude suggesting a form of edifying moralism or the attitude suggesting a reassuring promise and a guarantee of individual wellbeing and improved performance. They are often blanded.

The edifying view prompts a "mindful life style" of pretended "mindful" thoughts, sentiments, attitudes, behaviours,...and invites people to cultivate a pose to "be good" according to the values of the mindfulness subculture, that is: non-judgmental, compassionate, accepting, ... This moralistic posture becomes the parody and the turning upside down of the original intention of mindfulness to "see things as they are".

The hedonistic view implicitly assures the removal of stress and an easily gained and sustained state of wellbeing, physical and mental, often jointed with improved performances; thus becoming, again, the reversal and the betrayal of the fundamental intention of mindfulness to "turn towards " suffering.

Both views share the same background motive: looking at mindfulness practice as a mean of psychological comfort and solace.

When these views and attitudes prevail and obscure its original intention, its Dhamma root, the mindfulness subculture becomes a supreme expression of kitsch.

"Kitsch " is a philosophical, psychological and sociological as well as aesthetical category, which seems very useful to understand and describe the current phenomena of the trivialization and commodification of mindfulness.

The Practice of Mindfulness in the Prison of Rome – Italy

Dario Doshin Girolami

Centro Zen L'Arco - Rome

As shown by a number of prison projects, especially in the United States (such as the San Quentin Zen Project), Mindfulness training is an effective way to help inmates deal with their feelings and develop self-awareness, “emotional intelligence”, self-compassion and acceptance.

Dario Doshin Girolami participated at the San Quentin Zen Project and has been trained at San Francisco Zen Center on how to lead a group of meditation in prison.

In collaboration with Professor Antonino Raffone and the Department of Psychology of the Sapienza University of Rome, Rev. Girolami developed the first Italian project on mindfulness meditation in Prison. For the past six years he has been guiding a meditation group of male inmates in the large Rebibbia prison of Rome.

The presentation will deal with that experience and will address how through insight mental practices prison residents learned to examine and transform the unhealthy thought and behavioral habit patterns that have governed their lives. These practices also helped to achieve an effective management of the stress due to the prison environment, the separation from family, and the anger that attends incarceration. Thanks to the regular practice of meditation, inmates grew to be less reactive to intense emotional states without resorting to the use of drugs or other chemical substances.

Remarkably, after several years of practice, many inmates shifted from Mindfulness practice to Zen practice and developed a serious interest in Dharma.

Challenges in Teaching Secular Compassion

Dent Gitche

University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Introduction

There is currently a great deal of secular and scientific interest in compassion, including evidence-based secular compassion cultivation programs. Two important secular programs have been developed at Stanford and Emory Universities. Each of these programs derives largely from the Mind Training (lo jong) tradition of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism. It is widely assumed that compassion is a good thing and that, by extension, such programs are therefore beneficial. However, much more systematic attention needs to be directed toward the specific challenges of teaching compassion from a secular perspective.

Results

Some of these challenges include: 1) providing teachers with the institutional support that they need to carry out this work, 2) providing students with supports necessary in the development of compassion (analogous to the "sangha" concept in Buddhism), 3) assessing the effectiveness of compassion training, 4) assessing possible risks of compassion training, 5) incorporating the "wisdom" aspects of compassion into secular programs, 6) facilitating the development of equanimity and gratitude in the absence of Buddhist concepts, 7) development of professional "best practices" and 8) operationalizing a secular understanding of suffering. Each of these challenges will be explored.

Discussion/Conclusion

Each of these challenges will be discussed with conceptual and experiential analysis, including feedback from students who have undergone secular Compassion Cultivation training.

Mindfulness for Posttraumatic Stress: Cultivating Acceptance and Decreasing Shame

Rachel E. Goldsmith, James I. Gerhart, Samantha A. Chesney, John W. Burns, Brigid Kleinman, Megan M. Hood

Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

Introduction: Traumatic experiences can influence the ways that people relate to the world around them, and also to their own emotions. Trauma survivors often perceive common stimuli as dangerous, blame themselves for their feelings, or distance themselves from emotions to avoid pain. Following trauma, these cognitive and emotional patterns often remain, and can contribute to depression and posttraumatic stress. Methods: Nine adult participants who reported trauma exposure as well as posttraumatic stress and/or depression attended 8 sessions of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). They also completed standardized measures of posttraumatic stress symptoms, depression, acceptance of emotional experiences, and shame-based trauma appraisals at pre-treatment, mid-treatment, and post-treatment. Results: Repeated measures analyses of variance demonstrated significant within-subjects differences ($p < .05$) for participants' levels of depression, posttraumatic stress, emotional acceptance, and shame-based trauma appraisals over the course of the MBSR sessions. In addition, the number of minutes of mindfulness practice per week that participants reported was associated with positive changes in their acceptance of emotional experiences ($r = .70, p < .05$). Discussion: These data demonstrate that trauma survivors' depressive and posttraumatic stress symptoms can improve following a mindfulness-based intervention. They also highlight the importance of reducing shame and cultivating acceptance of emotional experiences in trauma recovery. Practicing non-judgmental awareness for thoughts and feelings may help trauma survivors to recover from shame, depression, and posttraumatic stress.

Self-Talk: From Self-Criticism to Self-Compassion

Rachel E. Goldsmith

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Introduction: People often think that self-criticism is motivating and a normal part of having high standards, or have the misperception that self-compassion reflects laziness or indulgence. However, data show that being kinder and more encouraging towards oneself is positively associated with more motivation, likelihood of obtaining goals, and greater well-being, and that self-criticism is positively related to depression and anxiety. People who do want to reduce their self-criticism often criticize the criticism, a cycle that perpetuates self-criticism. Brief mindfulness interventions can provide participants with new ways to cultivate self-compassion, and can decrease the frequency and severity of self-criticism. Methods: Participants attended 4 sessions of “Self-Talk,” a psychoeducational group that cultivated practices to (1) observe different kinds of self-talk; (2) treat self-criticism with compassion; and (3) cultivate self-compassion and loving-kindness. Participants also completed the Forms of Self-Criticising/Attacking & Self-Reassuring Scale (Gilbert, Clark, Hempel, Miles, & Irons, 2004) before and after participating in the group. The group differed from other approaches to self-compassion training with respect to the amount of attention and care allocated towards self-criticism. Group members were encouraged to direct self-compassion towards self-critical voices without necessarily believing the content of the criticisms; to provide emotional care for the deeper needs beneath the criticism; and to provide compassion and understanding for themselves if they have internalized others’ criticism. Results: Participants reported benefits in addressing self-criticism compassionately. Their scores on the FSCRS indicated reductions in self-criticism and increases in self-reassurance. Conclusion: Treating self-criticism with mindful compassion can enhance self-encouragement and reduce self-criticism.

Mindfulness and Community Centered Legal Education: Cultivating Personal Transformation and Collective Liberation Inside and Outside the Classroom

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Occidental College

Mindfulness has emerged in higher education as an important pedagogical approach to connect students with new ways of thinking, listening, writing, and, more broadly, engaging in society. A dialogue has simultaneously flourished considering the significance of mindfulness within the legal profession. Noticeably absent from these discourses, however, are models of community-centered experiential courses where students explore mindfulness as a tool to dismantle systems of subordination. This paper describes the development and preliminary outcomes of a seminar and co-requisite community-based legal internship that seek to engage students in such praxis. Through three intersecting axes: mindfulness practice; legal scholarship focused on representation that seeks to serve clients from subordinated communities without reinforcing their subordination; and experiential community-centered learning, students are challenged to develop not only the knowledge to deconstruct issues of power, privilege, inequality, and subordination, but also the experience to create new structures promoting equality, collaborative relationships, community autonomy, and a more participatory democracy. By working as legal interns and mindfully reflecting on the privileged status inherent in being a lawyer before entering law school, students are also more effectively able to confront the reality that legal education often perpetuates systemic bias and subordination. Students enter law school more aware that transformation emerges from layered relationships with clients and communities. Qualitative data, collected across four cohorts, reveal how the integration of mindfulness, legal theory, and community-centered work can promote long-term transformative impacts where students no longer see themselves as simply working for social change, but rather mindful collaborators building the power of individuals and communities seeking to reverse legal, political, economic, and social subordination. As such, they connect to a larger movement, expanding the domains in which they can act, the tactics and strategies they can deploy, and the odds of ultimate, lasting success in changing society.

Cultivating Insight in Mindfulness Based Interventions: Clinical Implications of the Stages of Insight

Andrea Grabovac

University of British Columbia

Current mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) are based in large part on insight practices of the Theravada vipassana tradition. Given that some MBI participants experience phenomena that are in accordance with descriptions of progression along the stages of insight (SOI) as described in Theravada Buddhist texts, and that some of the stages can be associated with worsening of clinical symptoms, it is imperative that clinicians teaching MBIs be aware of the stages.

Method/Results: Specific examples of Theravadan practices and psychology adapted by MBIs will be outlined, such as the investigation of hedonic tone (pleasant, unpleasant and neutral). The similarities and differences in how the three characteristics (impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and not-self) are addressed in traditional insight practice versus the MBIs, and the relevance of this to progression along the SOI following MBI practice, will be discussed. An approach to recognizing the SOI, based on the Burmese Theravada tradition as taught by Mahasi Sayadaw, will be reviewed.

Discussion: Clinician's familiarity with the SOI will facilitate their recognition of, and management of, participants' progress along the stages of insight. Additionally, most MBI groups end with the exhortation to "keep practicing", and it is reasonable to expect that some participants may experience progression along the SOI after group completion. The ethical issues associated with clinicians prescribing an MBI treatment without familiarity with, and disclosure of, its potential side effects, as well as recommending continued practice after group completion without provision of monitoring for progression along SOI and associated potential risks, will be highlighted.

From Buddhist Roots to Clinical Shoots: Disambiguating Practice Instructions in the Mindfulness Based Interventions

Andrea Grabovac

University of British Columbia

Current mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) derive their core meditation practices from the Burmese Theravada vipassana tradition. These traditional Buddhist practices train a form of concentration known as momentary concentration, which involves focusing on a continually changing sequence of objects, while minimizing lapses of attention when switching focus between objects. Momentary concentration is also the preferred form of concentration to train in MBIs. However, many of the practice instructions in MBIs, as currently delivered, are ambiguous enough that participants may instead be training fixed concentration, which involves focusing attention on a single, fixed object. Furthermore, in the context of inexplicit practice instructions, some participants may not be consistently developing either form of concentration.

Method/Results: Momentary concentration is ideally suited to noticing physical sensations, thoughts and emotional states that arise in consciousness and to relate to these as impersonal processes that can be observed objectively rather than assumed to be aspects of self. The result is the development of a disidentified, decentered perspective, also termed metacognitive awareness, the development of which is a main goal of MBIs such as Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy.

Discussion: The clinical applications of the differences between momentary and fixed concentration will be highlighted. Examples of MBI body scan and sitting practice instructions that are focused on developing momentary concentration will be reviewed. By understanding the distinction between fixed and momentary concentration, MBI clinicians will be better able to provide clear practice instructions, and thereby more effectively achieve the goals appropriate to the MBI they are teaching.

How do Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Improve Mental Health and Wellbeing? A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Mediation Studies

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Given the extensive evidence base for the efficacy of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT), researchers have started to explore the mechanisms underlying their therapeutic effects on psychological outcomes, using methods of mediation analysis. No known studies have systematically reviewed and statistically integrated mediation studies in this field. The present study aimed to systematically review mediation studies in the literature on mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs), to identify potential psychological mechanisms underlying MBCT and MBSR's effects on psychological functioning and wellbeing, and evaluate the strength and consistency of evidence for each mechanism. For the identified mechanisms with sufficient evidence, quantitative synthesis using two-stage meta-analytic structural equation modelling (TSSEM) was used to examine whether these mechanisms mediate the impact of MBIs on clinical outcomes. This review identified strong, consistent evidence for cognitive and emotional reactivity, moderate and consistent evidence for mindfulness, rumination, and worry, and preliminary but insufficient evidence for self-compassion and psychological flexibility as mechanisms underlying MBIs. TSSEM demonstrated evidence for mindfulness, rumination and worry as significant mediators of the effects of MBIs on mental health outcomes. Most reviewed mediation studies have several key methodological shortcomings which preclude robust conclusions regarding mediation. However, they provide important groundwork on which future studies could build.

Mindfulness in the Crucible of Social Change and Sustainability Practices

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Once off her zafu or yoga mat, the seeker has to chop wood and carry water for the common good. To be sincere and relevant, mindfulness practices should then move from private to social practice, engage with social suffering, and help develop concrete solutions for social and environmental justice.

Sustainability is an expansive, collective transformation movement that tackles social, technological, environmental, economical and political (STEEP) issues. It combines principled democracy, restorative justice, positive peace, cultural, cognitive, psychological, and self transformation. As such, there seems to be a substantive and strategic affinity between sustainability and the mindfulness movement, for sustainability is and implies a different state of consciousness, and provides a useful test for mindfulness. In return, mindfulness may provide sustainability with both a theory and tool of social change.

Sustainability needs a structured theory of change that connects all levels of social action—the individual, organizations, and society— and also significantly assists praxis. Therefore, we first examine integrative reformism as a (possible) key contribution of the “mindfulness-in-business” literature to the definition and praxis of sustainability. It theorizes a natural convergence and continuum between inner and outer transformation, between right understanding and right acting. It connects self-realization with social engagement, organizational change, ethical business, and scenarios for a sustainable future. We then consider three critiques: intellectual-conceptual, operational, and strategic, which shape and may limit its use by various forms of STEEP sustainability. In conclusion, sustainability as radical reformism coupled with mindfulness may help define a better form of modernity.

Interest in On-line Mind-Body Skills (MBS) Training: Enrollment in a New Elective for Health Professionals

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The Ohio State University College of Medicine, The Center for Integrative Health and Wellness

Introduction: Mind-Body Skills Training for Resilience, Effectiveness, and Mindfulness (MB-STREAM) is a 12 module online interprofessional course designed to teach skills to enhance effectiveness with patients and improve personal coping. This study aimed to understand: a) the demand for such an online course; b) completion rates for modules on different topics; and c) impact on planned behavior changes.

Methods: We examined MB-STREAM registrations from May 1 – August 31, 2014, analyzing the percentage of registrants who engaged with one or more modules by September 30, 2014. We also reviewed written comments about planned behavior change, which were included as part of each module's standard evaluation.

Results: Within four months, 693 participants, representing physicians, nurses, social workers, counselors, psychologists, other health professionals and trainees registered for one or more modules. The two most popular were "Introduction to Stress, Resilience, and Relaxation Response" (N=688) and "Autogenic Training" (N=670). Half of registrants engaged with at least one of the twelve modules by August 31. Upon completion of "Introduction to Stress, Resilience, and Relaxation Response," 91% of participants who completed the post-module evaluation planned to make some change: 47% would use the techniques themselves and 41% would introduce the techniques to patients or others; 3% would do both.

Conclusion: Elective, online training in MBS is popular among diverse health professionals and leads to plans for personal and professional behavior change. Further studies are warranted to examine the long-term impacts of MB-STREAM on participants, its effect on burnout and resiliency, and its impact on patient care.

Cognitively-Based Compassion Training, Emory University

Timothy Harrison, Lobsang Tenzin Negi

Emory University

Developed in 2004 at Emory University by Lobsang Negi, PhD, Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) is a comprehensive approach to gradually cultivating a resilient and compassionate mind. CBCT progressively develops the core skills that promote a spontaneous caring response: attentional stability, emotional awareness, engaged self-care, decrease in bias toward others, and deepened appreciation of others. Presented in six modules, the secular program draws from Indo-Tibetan Buddhist contemplative practices and is adapted for people of any or no faith tradition. A typical course meets 8-12 weeks, 1.5 hours/week. Recordings support guided daily practice.

CBCT has been offered and researched with educators, children, nurses, medical students, breast cancer and suicide survivors, parents of autistic children, and at-risk adolescents. Peer-reviewed articles suggest that CBCT can increase empathic accuracy and related neural activity, improve the body's response to stress by reducing inflammation, and reduce social isolation, hopelessness, and depression. Research is underway with PTSD and HIV+ patients. The Atlanta Veterans Administration offers CBCT via the Wounded Warrior Project, and the Atlanta Public Schools offer CBCT via a multi-year federal innovation grant. In 2011, CBCT began an in-depth program to train instructors to teach with fidelity in research contexts, with 20 certified individuals so far. Affiliated CBCT programs are active at the University of Arizona - Tuscon and Life University and are planned at Albert Einstein Hospital (Sao Paolo, Brazil) and the University of Zaragosa (Spain).

Cognitively-Based Compassion Training is a unique and nuanced contemplative practice with the potential to increase well-being in contemporary society.

Body Maps of Attention: Phenomenal Markers for Two Varieties of Mindfulness

Glenn Hartelius

California Institute of Integral Studies

Mindfulness suffers from a lack of a satisfying consensus definition.

This definitional challenge may be simplified by recognizing that there

are at least two types of mindfulness: neo-traditional mindfulness,

exemplified by Kabat-Zinn's mindfulness-based stress reduction,

consists of a shifted state of consciousness inherently carrying qualities associated with mindfulness; cognitive-behavioral mindfulness, exemplified by acceptance and commitment therapy and dialectical behavioral therapy, is achieved more through a shift toward cognitive processes that reflect similar qualities. Other varieties of mindfulness exist within both Buddhist and cognitive-behavioral traditions, but these two may provide a starting point and a method for further articulation. The distinction between these two varieties of mindfulness is proposed based on analysis using somatic phenomenology, a state-specific approach to the study of body-located phenomenal markers of attention. In this context attention is described in terms of where it comes from, relative to the body, rather than in terms of where it is directed, and state of consciousness is defined as a change in how attention is located within the body. In cognitive-behavioral mindfulness, attention is seated in the head and is directed outward from that location; in neo-traditional mindfulness, attention is seated in the belly and is directed outward from there. These two types of mindfulness represent similar qualities taking place in two different states of consciousness, reflected by these two discrepant attentional postures.

Mindfulness-Based Group for Teens with Developmental Disabilities: “Calming Thoughts, Calming Minds”

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Introduction

Emerging body of research supports the effectiveness of mindfulness-based strategies in assisting people with mild developmental disabilities (DD) to develop good emotion regulation skills (Singh et al., 2006; Singh et al., 2011). In the present study, we were interested in delivering and evaluating a mindfulness-based group to adolescents with mild DD in order to effectively teach them emotion regulation skills. For these teens, mindfulness may be especially helpful as it can support them in acknowledging and processing feelings in a safe way, as well as teach them to be present and accepting of themselves and others, particularly as their bodies go through immense change.

Methods

A group of 8-10 adolescents with a diagnosis of a mild DD will be seen at Surrey Place Centre, an interdisciplinary agency in Toronto for people with DD. The group will begin in Spring 2015 and will run for 6 weeks. Parents will also be involved through on-going sessions to keep them informed as well as encourage them to practice the mindfulness skills with their child.

Both parents and teens will complete pre- and post-group measures to evaluate the effectiveness of the mindfulness group. In addition, emotional state check in will be conducted immediately before and after each group session.

Results

Results will be reported at the conference based on the group’s evaluative and qualitative evidence, which will be conducted in the Spring 2015.

Discussion/ Conclusion

This study will add to the mindfulness literature in general, and specifically to the effectiveness of mindfulness-based strategies for youth with DD.

Mindfulness under (re) construction and ‘not so secular’ psychotherapy

Ira Helderman

Vanderbilt University

Though often described as a “new, popular fad,” the psychotherapeutic use of mindfulness is decades old. With many years past since Jon Kabat-Zinn inaugurated his Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program in 1979, popular mindfulness-based treatment modalities like Marsha Linehan’s Dialectical Behavior Therapy now hold multiple generations of adherents. Buddhologists and cultural critics express concern about Kabat-Zinn and Linehan’s explicitly stated intentions to design biomedical techniques of “Zen but without the Buddhism.” They bemoan the secularization of mindfulness as the “silent takeover of religion.” Often ignored is that these criticisms are not only made on a rarified scholarly plane hovering context-free above the microscope. Figures like Kabat-Zinn and Linehan have offered surprising answers to scholarly interrogation for many years now and have even expressed their own concerns about deracination. Writing from my dual vantage point as both religious studies scholar and practicing psychotherapist, I explore how clinicians’ maneuvers generate new reconstructions of mindfulness and its relationship to the categories “religion” and “secular,” “medicine” and “science.”

Aligning Time Consciousness and Ontological Principles of Tai Chi within Organizational Strategic Decision-Making

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There are necessary co-positing components of consciousness that influence the propensity of futuring within strategic decision-making. Incorporating the heuristic aspects of the unseen, intangible and unheard principles of time, space and matter that are necessary for a balanced flow within tai chi movements can serve as a body-mind technique that can present a more objective process for strategic decision-making. Utilizing primordial aspects of flow and directionality, the systemic phenomena reveals sound practices to exercise for a rooted and continual progressive mission.

Using quantum ontological storytelling and symbolic decision-making techniques, this paper and presentation addresses structural components of dynamic capabilities and invariants within strategic process. Focusing on the anomalies of strategic theory and summarizing structural components to flow within tai chi, this paper will reveal the systemic phenomena of rooting business practices ontologically and internally within an organization.

The results provide a decision-making method that provides the balance of both internal and external concerns of competitive advantage. It reveals where the conflict over outcomes associated with dynamic theories within interdisciplinary pedagogy can be minimized through implementing an internal integrated process within dynamic external variants.

Mindfulness and Education within the Neoliberal Paradigm

Funie Hsu

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This paper examines the growing trend of integrating mindfulness programs and practices within American schools. As educational practitioners and scholars have found (Meiklejohn, et al, 2012; Hyland, 2009), mindfulness contains seeds of possibility for student learning and mindfulness programs in schools represent a potential for educational change. Though often touted for their efficacy in increasing students' social emotional learning and transforming student behavior in the classroom, I argue that popular mindfulness education programs must be understood within the larger context of neoliberalism and neoliberal educational reforms. By providing a critical analysis of three mindfulness programs in California Bay Area schools alongside the dominance of neoliberal educational reforms, such as the federal No Child Left Behind mandate, and the staggering economic inequalities in the region, I demonstrate that the prevalent mode of integrating mindfulness in schools promotes a passivity towards the social-economic conditions of injustice. Of primary focus in this work is an attention to race and how privilege and inequality are enacted through mindfulness educational programs, especially in low-income urban schools. This paper concludes by reaffirming the potential for mindfulness in schools by calling for programs to critically examine oppression and inequality and to take as a central focus the promotion of social justice.

Transactional effects of mindfulness practice for families living with Autism Spectrum Disorder and challenging behaviours

*Yoon-Suk Hwang, Patrick Kearney
Australian Catholic University*

Recent intervention studies have presented the successful application of mindfulness meditation practice for individuals with Developmental Disability (DD), including Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), as evidenced by reductions in their behavioural (e.g., Singh et al., 2013), psychological (e.g., Spek, van Ham, & Nyklicek, 2013) and physical (e.g., Singh, Lancioni, Myers, et al., 2014) issues. The growth in the applications of mindfulness intervention has encouraged a reappraisal of the fundamentals of mindfulness practice to ensure that the theoretical and practical foundations have been properly established to support any future expansion of the field of mindfulness studies (e.g., Gethin, 2011; Grossman, 2012; Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011).

Responding to this call, we conducted a two-staged mindfulness intervention, training six mothers in mindfulness meditation based on our understanding of the Buddha's concept of sati found in the collections of early Buddhist teachings (Stage 1), and a subsequent parent-implemented child mindfulness intervention (Stage 2). The goals of the Stage 1 intervention were to train mothers in mindfulness practice to a level of fluency in their everyday lives and train them to become mindfulness meditation teachers for their own children. The central goal of the Stage 2 intervention was to train children with ASD in mindfulness to the degree they could use mindfulness meditation to manage their own challenging behaviours. The findings of this two-staged mindfulness intervention highlighted both direct and transactional effects of mindfulness practice. We will discuss the implications of future mindfulness intervention studies for individuals living with disability, including the importance and challenges of practice engagement.

The Mindful Engagement Support Model for Caregivers of Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

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Little Lotus Therapy & Consulting*

Introduction: Person-centered care is the most prevalent model of general service provision to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In recent years, the model has become ossified and services are often institutionalized in favor of the needs of service providers and the care staff. The Mindful Engagement Support Model provides an alternative system of care that not only meets funding agency requirements, but also provides services that are truly person-centered.

Method: For mindful engagement, staff receive training in Samatha and Vipassana meditation, and are required to develop a personal meditation practice, for about 20 minutes a day. In addition, they receive two full days of training in mindful engagement which focuses on general guidelines for caregiving and includes mindful listening, mindful communication, mindful pause, mindful pace, mindful handling, mindful eating, compassion and attitude, among others. In advanced courses, they receive training in the four immeasurables (i.e., Brahmavihars: loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity) and other meditations to deepen the practice of the caregivers for personal transformation. The trainers utilize various skillful means to present the general standards of practice for the model, which include videos of caregivers with clients, anecdotes and stories to supplement didactic teaching, instructional games, and activities that are enjoyable to staff, illustrate concepts and encourage engagement.

Discussion: Staff trained with a personal practice of meditation and training in mindful engagement develop present moment awareness, cultivate upaya (skillful means) so that they can use intuitive awareness to support the individuals they serve in the best and most appropriate way. Staff are mindfully engaged with an individual when they are fully aware of what is happening in the present moment, bring to mind past experiences that bear on what is happening in the present moment, and discriminate between skillful and unskillful actions necessary to enhance the quality of life of that individual. With disciplined personal meditation practice, staff can embody right mindfulness and create opportunities for the individual to engage in meaningful activities and experience an improved quality of life.

Promoting Teachers' Well-Being and Improving Classroom Quality: A Randomized Controlled Trial of CARE for Teachers

Patricia Jennings, Joshua L. Brown, Jennifer L. Frank, Sebrina Doyle, Regin Tanler, Damira Rasheed, Anna DeWeese, Anthony DeMauro, Mark T. Greenberg
University of Virginia

CARE for Teachers is a mindfulness-based professional development program designed to reduce stress, promote social and emotional competence and improve classroom learning environments. We evaluated the efficacy of CARE for K-5 teachers, classrooms, and students using a 3-level (students, teachers, schools) multi-site cluster randomized trial.

The sample consisted of 36 highly diverse urban elementary schools, 226 teachers and 5036 students. Teachers were randomized within schools to CARE or wait-list control groups. Data were collected over three waves: pre- and post-intervention, and 6 month follow-up. At each wave, teachers completed a battery of self-report measures to assess efficacy, mindfulness, time urgency, distress tolerance and distress. Teachers also reported on their students' engagement, achievement, behavior, and relationship quality, and classrooms were observed and coded using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS).

HLM was used to estimate treatment impacts (CARE versus professional development as usual) on teacher and classroom proximal outcomes and student level outcomes. Preliminary analyses (HLM with no covariates except baseline scores) showed that CARE had significant direct positive effects on mindfulness ($d = .26, p = .03$) and time urgency ($d = .24, p = .027$). A positive trend was found for distress ($d = .20, p = .09$). No effects were found for distress tolerance or efficacy. CARE had significant direct positive effects on several dimensions of the CLASS: Positive Climate ($d = .18, p = .02$) and Productivity ($d = .22, p = .01$).

Bringing home the Brahma Viharas; advanced mindfulness program designed and evaluated for participants previously attending an MBSR program and suffering from mental fatigue after acquired brain injury or stroke.

Birgitta Johansson, Helena Bjuhr
Gothenburg University

- Introduction

Significant improvement in both mental fatigue and processing speed after the completion of the MBSR program among persons suffering from mental fatigue after TBI or stroke have been reported in a previous study by us. Elements of kindness and compassion were seen as being nourishing and a new way of relating to difficulties. An advanced program based on cultivating inner attitudes and mind states; known in the Buddhist teachings as the Brahma Viharas, was created. Emphasis on cultivating wise speech was important throughout the program, inspired by Insight Dialogue training. This study evaluated effects of this advanced program.

- Methods

Fourteen participants who had completed our previous MBSR program attended the advanced with eight monthly group meetings, and was concluded with an all-day retreat.

- Results

The positive effects after the MBSR program maintained after the advanced program. The comments after the advanced program indicated a deepened understanding of mindfulness practice. The insight dialogue helped participants develop new ways of talking and listening, experienced to be less demanding on energy levels. The participants expressed a greater sense of coherence, were able to experience more of gratefulness, contentedness, joy, satisfaction with life, and decreased feelings of helplessness and despair and greater acceptance of oneself and others.

- Conclusion

The results of this work demonstrate that a broadening and cultivation of other important factors for wellbeing in the Buddhist tradition, beside the cultivation of mindfulness, may be a therapeutic method well-suited to subjects suffering from mental fatigue after a brain injury.

Application of emWave biofeedback device: Using technology to increase mindfulness

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In spite of the numerous benefits of mindfulness for psychological well-being, it has been largely foreign to the Western world. With the popularization of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (Kabat-Zinn, 1982), mindfulness was introduced into the mainstream psychology, yet the general population may know about it as an abstract idea rather than practice it on a regular basis as it is becoming increasingly difficult to be mindful in a modern society where everything competes for our attention. Is it possible to use technology, a common source of distraction, to help us sit still in silence and pay attention to our thoughts? The current ongoing study attempts to investigate the effects of a biofeedback emWave software created by HeartMath as a training device and as a measurement tool providing the users with the information about their heart rate variability (HRV), which is an indirect indicator of their relaxed yet alert attention to their thoughts. Our participants attended three 30-minute sessions once a week during which they practiced mindfulness. They were also encouraged to be attentive to their thoughts and breathing outside of the sessions. In addition to the data from the emWave presented as a percentage of coherent physiological states, mindfulness was measured by the pre- and post-instrument the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ; Baer et al., 2006). Based on the preliminary data from 19 participants, we conclude that our sessions resulted in higher mindfulness and led to other positive psychological outcomes.

Mindfulness and Compassion Meditation in the Treatment of Trauma and PTSD: Controlled Clinical Trials and fMRI Neuroimaging Studies with OEF/OIF Combat Veterans

*Anthony King, Israel Liberzon, Todd Favorite
University of Michigan Medical School*

Introduction: Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is common (lifetime prevalence ~8%) and often associated with debilitating suffering, devastating effects on families, and high costs to society. PTSD symptoms affect ~20% of US military veterans deployed to Afghanistan (OEF) and Iraq (OIF). Mindfulness meditation has long been proposed for PTSD, but until recently there have been few published studies. We performed a trial of Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (an eight week group therapy) adapted for combat PTSD at a VA PTSD clinic (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23596092>), and found MBCT was acceptable and engaging to PTSD patients, and led to clinically significant improvement in PTSD symptoms and self-blame cognitions.

Methods: In a federally-funded controlled clinical trial (<https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT01347749>), we developed a 16-week PTSD group therapy for OEF/OIF veterans (“Mindfulness-based Exposure Therapy”, MBET), incorporating mindfulness, loving-kindness, and self-compassion meditation, and in vivo exposure (to avoided activities, non-trauma focused), and compared to a standard 16-week group PTSD therapy (PCGT). Pre-post neuroimaging (3Tesla fMRI) with emotion activation paradigms and resting-state functional connectivity (rsFC) in flexible-ANOVA (group x time interaction).

Results: MBET had significantly better retention than PCGT and clinically significant improvement in PTSD symptoms using “gold-standard” measures. MBET (compared to PCGT) showed increased activity in dorsal medial prefrontal cortex (dmPFC), and increased default-mode network (DMN) functional connectivity with executive / attention regions (dorsolateral PFC, dorsal ACC).

Discussion: These findings provide further evidence mindfulness and compassion meditation are acceptable to combat veterans with PTSD, and lead to improvement in PTSD symptoms and changes in functional emotional neurocircuitry and resting-state connectivity patterns.

Remote emotional memory for depictions of human suffering following an intensive meditation intervention

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Meditation training is presumed to influence individuals' emotional engagement to suffering in others. Though evidence is accumulating for the beneficial consequences of growth in compassion, little is known regarding how training may alter primary cognitive representations of compassion-eliciting stimuli. To address this question, we assessed individuals' remote incidental memory for emotional images viewed both before and after three months of intensive training in focused-attention (shamatha) meditation and ancillary practice in techniques centered on generating benevolent aspirations for oneself and others. Physiological patterns at encoding suggest that training selectively enhanced stimulus orienting (cardiac deceleration) to suffering-, but not fear-relevant, stimuli. At retrieval, participants were able to successfully discriminate old from new images more than six years following initial exposure, and showed preferential remembering of suffering-relevant stimuli, as assessed via speeded response during a free-viewing interval. We argue that intensive training operates to strengthen motive system responses to depictions of suffering, leading to extended and elaborated processing, as evident in behavioral and phenomenological outcomes at very long retention intervals.

Evaluation of a Mindfulness-based Classroom Program for Social-Emotional Resilience in Youth

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University of Arizona*

Introduction. Stress and anxiety in youth increase vulnerability for mental and physical health problems in adulthood. Mindfulness-based classroom programs teach self-regulation and social-emotional skills that promote resilience. Mindfulness Matters! (MM!) is a classroom-based, teacher-led mindfulness curriculum for grades 3 through 6. An open trial of MM! was conducted to evaluate feasibility, acceptability and effectiveness using quantitative and qualitative methods.

Methods. Participants included 2 teachers and 30 children (ages 7–11) from two Southern California school districts. The program developer (RS) trained the teachers in the MM! curriculum over 6 weeks in the summer. During the academic year, the teachers led afterschool sessions lasting 45 minutes twice per week for twelve weeks. Outcomes were assessed through behavioral assessments, feasibility statistics, and qualitative feedback from the teachers, parents, and children.

Results. Participant attendance, teacher-reported adherence to the manualized curriculum, and qualitative feedback indicate that MM! was both acceptable and feasible to implement. Outcome measures revealed an increase in mindfulness and decreases in anger management problems and emotional lability from pre to post MM!.

Conclusion. The results from the current pilot study suggest that MM! is a promising program for the development of social-emotional and behavioral skills in elementary school-aged children. Future replication should consist of a randomized-control trial including waitlist and active control groups as well as an objective measure of teacher adherence to the MM! curriculum.

Becoming Fully Present in Your Body: Analyzing Professional Performativity and Mindfulness as Affective Investment in Post-Industrial Work

Ilmari Kortelainen, Jaana Parviainen
University of Tampere

Introduction

The great popularity of mindfulness-based stress reduction has led to mindfulness becoming an industry for global companies, one covering many kinds of embodied skills and areas of professional competence (see Purser 2012; Stanley 2012). The paper introduces concepts of mindfulness discourse employed in mindfulness-focused training – especially ‘being present’, as a new labour concept that describes a certain kind of performativity, moral order, and set of ideals of the working body in late capitalism. The interest here is in understanding the nature of the working body’s performativity as the embodied enactment of professions in the everyday organisational context. This may be highly beneficial in analysis of employees’ styles of performing, whether deliberate or non-deliberate.

Methods

Drawing on performance theories, critical management studies, and the philosophy of the body, the a qualitative study examined mindfulness-based interventions as a part of working life. Even if performance studies offers fruitful insights for discussion of mindfulness at work, its theoretical discussion lacks more sophisticated tools through which to understand the body in mindfulness contexts. The research material consisted of textual and pictorial material from Web sites of companies offering mindfulness programmes for information-technology-associated industries.

Results

The findings suggest that presence as a special manifestation of embodied mood can be modified via mindfulness-oriented practices. Using Lawrence Grossberg’s (1992) terminology, one could conceptualise mindfulness training as an ‘affective investment’ in the workplace.

Conclusion

As an affective investment, mindfulness training in workplaces has turned meditation into capital that can be developed, sold, and consumed.

Beginner's Mind: Introducing the Psychology of Meditation within Graduate-Level Clinical Training

Jean Kristeller

Palo Alto University

The objective of this talk will be to provide a brief overview and share approaches to teaching the fundamentals of meditation-based programs at the graduate level of education. Although meditative practices are rapidly gaining attention for their effectiveness as clinical intervention components, they are still rarely being taught within the curriculum of professional clinical training programs. For the last 15 years, I have been teaching a graduate-level course on the Psychology of Meditation for doctoral and master-level students in clinical and counseling psychology, covering a range of meditative traditions, including mantra-based, passage-based, and mindfulness-based approaches. The course covers the history, traditional and contemporary theory, related research, practice elements and clinical application of each tradition, including mantra-based, passage meditation, general mindfulness practice, and mindfulness-based intervention approaches. This presentation will provide a brief overview of the structure of the course, types of reading materials, and required practice components. Practice experience begins with mantra-based meditation, moves to breath and open awareness mindfulness practice, and integrates guided meditation practice as appropriate. Journaling/monitoring assignments assist students in focusing on different aspects of their experience, and in anticipating possible clinical issues that might arise.

Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness Training (MB-EAT): An Overview of Theory, Practice and Research Evidence

Jean Kristeller

Indiana State University

Mindfulness approaches to treating overeating and obesity offer substantial promise, as supported to date in three completed NIH research trials (Kristeller, Sheets, & Wolever, 2013; Kristeller & Wolever, 2011; Daubenmier et al., 2011). This talk will provide a brief overview of the conceptual background, research evidence, and treatment components of Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness Training (MB-EAT), a mindfulness meditation-based intervention used effectively with individuals with compulsive eating problems, significant weight issues, and diabetes. Our research to date suggests that individuals can bring compulsive overeating under control, improve emotional regulation related to eating, and decrease weight, and that improvement across a range of variables is associated directly with amount of mindfulness meditation practice. MB-EAT has been used with comparable effects in mildly to morbidly obese individuals, and for those with Type II diabetes. The implications of this approach for the value of focused mindfulness practice will be addressed, along with the challenges of providing meditation-based treatments to novice populations.

Spirituality and Contemplative Practice: How Do They Relate?

Jean Kristeller, Doug Oman
Indiana State University

Virtually all contemporary contemplative practices have emerged from religious and spiritual traditions. Yet as the extension of these practices to therapeutic settings grows, the effort to secularize and avoid spiritual themes is common. Paradoxically, the psychology of religion has, in the last decade, rapidly expanded research on spirituality as a psychological construct, important for many individuals, independent of religious belief.

This panel will address a number of related questions. How do we define and measure spirituality? How does meditation practice engage spiritual well-being? And how may this heighten or moderate other effects of meditative practice? Jean Kristeller will raise questions and share perspectives drawing on her research on the psychology of spiritual experience, within the context of cancer care, alcohol use, and mindfulness meditation, addressing how spirituality may be a universal human capacity, often deepened through contemplative practice. Doug Oman will offer cross-cultural perspectives on contemplative practice from several eastern and western traditions, noting the roles that spiritual goals, spiritual models/exemplars, and spiritual words or imagery in meditation have played in different methods. Jane Ferguson Flout, working within the Christian Centering Prayer tradition, will reflect on the healing effects of Centering Prayer including its impact on relationship-with-God coping styles. Arife Ellen Hammerle will explore the mystical wisdom of Sufism as guided by Love, the embodied consciousness at presence of heart. Implications will be suggested for research, and for engaging spiritual experience with sensitivity in introducing meditation even in secular settings. Time for audience participation and discussion will be included.

Measuring Mindful Responding in Daily Life: Validation of the Mindful Responding Scale (MRS)². Formal and Informal Mindfulness Practice as Processes of Change in the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Program

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McGill University*

An important presumed process of change in mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) is the extent to which participants apply mindfulness skills learned during training in their daily lives. To date, no study has been able to directly test this hypothesis, partly due to the lack of validated measures of mindful responding that can be repeatedly administered in daily life as one progresses through an MBI. The purpose of this study was to develop such a measure, named the Mindful Responding Scale (MRS), and to provide its initial psychometric properties. Seventy-six participants, who took part in a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, completed the MRS daily, throughout the program, as well as measures of perceived stress, negative affect, and positive affect. Using multilevel analyses, we examined various indices of reliability and validity of the MRS as a measure that can adequately assess mindful responding. The findings indicate that the MRS is a reliable measure at bot

h between- and within-person levels of analysis. Importantly, MRS scores were shown to steadily increase throughout the MBSR program, and this increase was associated with a reduction in perceived stress and negative affect, and an increase in positive affect. Limitations and future directions are discussed. Overall, this preliminary investigation supports the validity of the MRS as a brief measure of daily mindful responding.

Home-based Mindfulness Meditation Training for Patients with Lung Cancer: Effects on Worry, Insomnia, and Dyspnea Symptoms

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Michigan State University*

Introduction: Lung Cancer, the leading global cause of cancer death, is characterized by high symptom burden. Patients undergoing treatment may experience worry, dyspnea (breathing difficulties), and insomnia, a distressing symptom triad influenced by cognitive factors. Mindfulness-based therapies, incorporating meditation training and gentle yoga practices, target self-regulation of cognitively mediated symptoms. The study examined preliminary efficacy of a home-based mindfulness therapy for effects on dyspnea, worry, and insomnia outcomes.

Methods: 40 patients with lung cancer [mean age: 66.2±9.4 years; sex: 27(67.5%) females, 13(32.5%) males; disease stage: III, 10(25%); IV, 30(75%)] receiving radiation and/or chemotherapy were randomized to receive six weekly mindfulness therapy sessions (N=20) or the attention control condition (N=20). Outcomes were measured at baseline, post intervention and at 11 weeks with cancer-specific/general worry scales, the Pittsburgh sleep inventory, and the cancer dyspnea scale. Analysis included group comparisons at weeks 8 and 11 using linear mixed effects models and estimation of the effect sizes (Cohen's d) for average group differences over time.

Results: 32 patients completed the study (16 intervention, 16 control, 20% attrition). The intervention group had significant improvement in cancer-related worry ($p=.02$, effect size=0.85), overall dyspnea ($p=.02$, effect size=.96) with breathing effort/discomfort subscale gains. Sleep quality ($p=.22$, effect size = .45) showed clinically significant improvement.

Discussion/Conclusion: Cancer-related worry and dyspnea may improve from mindfulness-based practices during medical treatment. If benefits are demonstrated with larger scale research, vulnerable lung cancer patients may gain access to a scientifically sound supportive intervention for cancer-related worry and dyspnea management.

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The Line Between Psychology and Buddhism – Where are Mindfulness-based Interventions?

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Private Practice

Both MBIs (mindfulness-based psychological interventions derived from MBSR) and Buddhism assuage suffering and promote well-being. But they seem to be engaged today in somewhat of a turf war. Are MBIs a robust form of Buddhadharma stripped of cultural accretions, “universal dharma”, a natural evolution of Buddhism in a world enlightened by science? Or are they simply pop-psychological, feel-better techniques, highly truncated and secularized dharma posing (often surreptitiously) as actual dharma and maybe even threatening the real thing, whatever that is?

To help sort out these clashing visions, we propose a non-reductionist, unifying schema for Western clinical psychology and Buddhism, a precise, asymmetric, functional analogy that fully respects and leverages both sides. In this model (based on trauma psychology and relatively unmodernized Mahayana Buddhism, but applicable generally) the two realms are clearly distinct in assumptions, theory, goals and methods, but also remarkably parallel. In fact, the parallels often overshadow the differences and feed the confusion. Factors that both connect and delineate the two sides of the model include: the stance on death, the nature of suffering and relief, and the notion of self.

We situate MBIs in this model and cast new light on questions in the controversy such as: whether Buddhism’s cycle of life, death and rebirth is merely a dispensable, unscientific artifact or serves an essential role; the place for enlightenment in psychology and modern Buddhadharma, considering how few practitioners actually come near or even accept it; how to reconcile “self” in psychology with “no self” in Buddhism.

The Rhetoric of Nonconceptuality and the Role of Analysis in Mindfulness and Meditation

Jared Lindahl

Brown University

As Buddhist meditation practices have been transmitted and translated from their traditional contexts to the modern secular domains of scientific research and clinical psychology, many of the normative dimensions of the tradition have been deemphasized. Because of the close connection between analytical, investigative meditation practices and normative projects within the Buddhist tradition, the modern study of and appropriation of Buddhist meditation practices have tended to downplay these analytical elements in favor of a rhetoric of nonconceptuality and direct experience, even positing that virtues like wisdom, compassion, and ethical behavior are intrinsically present in this state. This paper aims to critically evaluate how the rhetoric of nonconceptuality has been adopted and transformed by the science of meditation and its clinical applications. What are the assumptions behind and the limitations of defining meditation in terms of a bare experiencing that requires a reduction in or transcending of thinking? What are the implications in studying and promoting an approach to meditation that is unable to take into account the various ways in which Buddhists have insisted that right view, wise discrimination, and analytical meditation are essential both for contemplative practice and for ethical behavior? In answering these questions, this paper aims to illuminate the existing tension between traditional Buddhist meditation and secular modernist applications of meditation practices in order to clarify why certain elements of the tradition have been favored over others and to ask what might be lost to our understanding of contemplative practices as a consequence.

Two Theoretical Approaches to Mindfulness: Evaluating the Merits and Deficiencies of the “Discovery” Model and the “Developmental” Model

Jared Lindahl

Brown University

The broader field of “Mindfulness” is currently fraught with tensions and debates concerning whether mindfulness should be conceived of as a practice, state, or trait; whether or not mindfulness is inherently ethical; whether or not mindfulness is a universal mental faculty; and whether or not mindfulness is intrinsically linked to Buddhist soteriology. Such central questions, which are both shaping and dividing the field, bear significant resemblance to longstanding debates on the nature of contemplative development and experience. This paper evaluates some current controversies in the field of Mindfulness through the lens of a developmental model on the one hand, and a discovery model on the other. While the developmental approach to understanding mindfulness has a gradualist structure that is compatible with our contemporary science of neuroplasticity and skill acquisition, it also implies a cultural relativism that is often perceived as unsettling. By contrast, proponents of a discovery model attempt to ground mindfulness in an innate human goodness, and often present a suddenist version of contemplative development. However, unpacking the discovery model in the context of contemporary Mindfulness also illuminates how some of its tacit assumptions pose challenges for the empirical study of mindfulness in clinical psychology and neuroscience. This paper attempts to clarify what is at stake in each of these models of mindfulness by comparing the two approaches to the constructivist-innatist debates concerning religious experience and to the gradualist-suddenist debates in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition concerning the relationship between contemplative practices and a resultant state of “non-conceptual wisdom.”

Examining racial/ethnic differences in a mindfulness-based weight loss intervention

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Introduction

Racial and ethnic minorities are disproportionately affected by the obesity epidemic in the U.S. and have suboptimal outcomes in traditional weight loss interventions. Evidence suggests that integrating mindfulness with weight loss strategies improves outcomes but little is known about whether this combined approach can reduce disparities. We examined racial/ethnic differences in participation and outcomes in weight loss interventions with and without mindfulness.

Methods

We analyzed data from the Supporting Health by Improving Nutrition and Exercise Trial, an RCT comparing a 5.5-month mindfulness-based weight loss intervention with a diet and exercise control. We assessed racial/ethnic differences in adherence based on attendance and food and exercise records; retention; and weight change at 6, 12, and 18 months. To maintain adequate sample sizes, we aggregated non-White participants.

Results

Participants (n=194) were 59% White and 41% non-White. Across interventions, compared with Whites, non-Whites had significantly less retention and weight loss at 12 and 18 months, but did not differ in attendance or adherence. In the control group, non-Whites were twice as likely to drop out (40.9% vs. 20.0%, $p=0.04$) and lost less weight at 18 months (-0.33kg vs. -5.02kg, $p < 0.01$). In contrast, the mindfulness intervention group had no significant racial differences in retention or weight loss.

Discussion

A mindfulness-based intervention for weight loss may minimize racial/ethnic differences in retention and weight loss maintenance compared to a diet and exercise control. Further research is warranted on mindfulness-based obesity interventions to address disparities among underrepresented minorities.

Meditation-induced plasticity of meta-cognitive functions

Peter Malinowski

Liverpool John Moores University

INTRODUCTION: An ever-growing number of studies demonstrate the benefits of meditation-based interventions in clinical and non-clinical contexts. For the field to advance it will be essential to go beyond showing clinical effectiveness and to develop an evidence-based understanding of the underlying psychological, physiological and neural processes. Towards this end we are investigating the functional and neural plasticity of meta-cognitive functions, essential components of meditation practices based on Buddhist principles of mind training. Our initial focus is on mindful breath-awareness practice because it is the starting point for many forms of mind training and encompasses core principles present also in other meditation practices.

METHODS: In several randomised controlled group studies with “meditation naïve beginners” we measured changes in behavioural performance (response times, accuracy) and underlying neurophysiological processes (electroencephalographic measures such as event-related potentials) on a range of standard cognitive psychology paradigms that measure different aspects of meta-cognitive functions.

RESULTS: We found significant improvements in behavioural and neural markers of meta-cognitive processes after periods ranging from three to sixteen weeks and also for older age groups.

DISCUSSION: These results confirm the relevance of meta-cognitive functions for meditation practices of Buddhist origin. Although this research is still in its infancy these early results are exciting and provide the basis for longer-term investigations. As mindful breath-awareness meditation constitutes the backbone of many other forms of meditation practice a precise description of the related functional and neural plasticity is poised to become an important reference point for more varied (or advanced) forms of meditation practice.

Eudaimonia and mindfulness: a historical and anthropological perspective

Francis Mckay

University of Chicago

Mindfulness has been said to cultivate well-being, and not just any kind, but that most important kind: eudaimonia. Yet, the term eudaimonia comes not from the Buddhist tradition, but from ancient Greece, and most notable from Aristotle, who gave the West the most frequently cited theory of eudaimonia. Aristotelean views of eudaimonia have been a reference point in Western views of happiness throughout the ancient world, christendom and modern period. But what is eudaimonia exactly, and how did mindfulness become representative of a eudaimonic theory of well-being? That is, how did an ancient Greek term become a reference point for Buddhist practice? Are there any differences between the Aristotelian and Buddhist notions of eudaimonia, and if so, what are they? And what evidence is there that mindfulness does indeed promote eudaimonia? For this talk, I will answer those questions by offering a history of eudaimonia in the West, showing how it became retranslated in the late 20th century through the lens of Buddhist virtue ethics. Key to this argument will be a distinction between two different virtues and thus paths to eudaimonic well-being: reason in the Aristotelian tradition and compassion in the Buddhist tradition. I will conclude with some reflections, based on my own observations conducting anthropological research on mindfulness in the US for the past 2 years, on the therapeutic efficacy of living a virtuous life, and in what ways mindfulness can be considered a eudaimonic practice.

Tonglen Meditation's Effects on Compassion and Self-Compassion in Novice Meditators

Daphna McKnight, Amy Demyan
University of the West

Growing evidence correlates higher levels of compassion with multiple benefits, including increased psychological wellbeing and reduced negative affect. Compassion is proving malleable and can be voluntarily increased; however, few proven compassion-development techniques exist. This research explores whether tonglen meditation, a thousand-year-old Tibetan Buddhist compassion practice, can increase compassion in novice meditators with little instruction and short amounts of practice.

Changes in self-compassion and compassion for others were measured using a within subjects repeated-measures design. In this preliminary effectiveness investigation, participants ($n = 53$) were given ten minutes of instruction; after which, they participated in an 18-minute guided tonglen meditation, practiced "on-the-spot" tonglen for 30-seconds twice a day for six days, then concluded with 18-minutes of guided tonglen.

Paired-samples t-tests were conducted to compare participant's self-reported levels of compassion (Compassion Scale [CS] [Pommier, 2011]) and self-compassion (Self-Compassion Scale [SCS] [Neff, 2003]). Each measure is comprised of six subscales. A Bonferroni correction was used, resulting in significant differences across all six SCS subscales, with Self-judgment, Isolation, and Over-identified subscales showing significance of $p \leq .001$, and Self-kindness at $p = .004$. CS results, though trending up, could not be determined due to a ceiling effect.

Qualitative data added an additional dimension to understanding the statistical outcomes. Results were very encouraging for this preliminary investigation of tonglen. Tonglen may offer the public, especially those in high "compassion-fatigue" occupations, a realistic technique to increase compassion and garner associated benefits.

What are you aware of right now? How do you relate to it?

Assessing bodily awareness in mindfulness

Wolf Mehling

University of California, San Francisco

Introduction: As a neuroscientist put it: “Mindfulness starts with the body”. The Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program includes body scan, mindful breathing, and yoga asanas. Research has suggested that the body awareness component (proprioceptive and interoceptive awareness) is a key element for its health benefits. Evidence for this claim would have to rely on validated measures for bodily awareness. This paper is an update on NIH-supported development, application and validation of one such (self-report) instrument, the Multi-dimensional Assessment of Interoceptive Awareness (MAIA), assessing eight aspects of bodily awareness: Noticing, Distraction, Worry, Attention-Regulation, Emotional-Awareness, Self-Regulation, Body-Listening, Trusting.

Methods: Narrative review of international studies (published and unpublished) that applied the MAIA reporting descriptive, cross-sectional and longitudinal data that shed new light on the complex interplay of bodily awareness, mindful versus anxious attention, emotions, and physical and psychological health.

Results: The MAIA has been translated into 10 foreign languages. The heart beat detection task (interoceptive accuracy) is unrelated to interoceptive awareness by self-report using the MAIA. Longitudinal studies of MBSR, Body-Based Presence Training and mind-body exercises show differential changes in MAIA scale scores, particularly for Self-Regulation by attention to bodily sensations. Whether these changes mediate the effects on health outcomes is awaiting results from analyses currently underway.

Discussion: Despite a few shortcomings, the MAIA is being internationally applied in mind-body research and appears to be able to measure changes in bodily awareness and attitudes towards the body that result from mindfulness-related interventions and contemplative practice.

No Oneness in Mindfulness: The Varieties of Mindful Experience

Nathan Jishin Michon

Graduate Theological Union

Despite the vast array of growing evidence for the various benefits and critiques of mindfulness, this paper asks, “What mindfulness is actually good for what benefit and what forms should be taken with caution at what times?” Within the various Buddhist schools, there are hundreds of different forms of mindfulness practice. It is a great boon to our collective understanding that more scientific studies are being done, but this talk challenges future studies to take further steps in defining and delineating the practices that referred to within such studies.

The talk will begin with a variety of definitions of mindfulness provided within Buddhist texts, examples of how the Buddha delineated between “right mindfulness” and “wrong mindfulness,” and how different aspects or forms of the practice are recommended for different conditions.

The talk will then provide examples of contemporary ways in which the term mindfulness is used within popular literature and scientific studies. It will demonstrate that there is a lack of clarity to the actual mental phenomena taking place in much of this modern literature. It will show many of the discrepancies in reports over the benefits or lack thereof can be pointed to such lack of clarity in terminology for the practices.

The talk concludes with recommendations for ways in which future discussions of mindfulness can improve to produce more accurate information and, thus, be of greater aid to people’s well-being.

Fostering Kindness, Compassion, Empathy, and Gratitude through Mindfulness in Preschool Classrooms

Hee Jung Min

University of Wisconsin, Madison

Mindfulness, an activity to relax body and mind with the awareness of the present moment, has been used for educators and students to develop self-regulation and prosocial behavior and achieve wellbeing in schools. Most research on mindfulness targets particular teachers or students using certain curriculum in short durations and in certain spaces (i.e., 30 minutes a week for eight weeks in a lab). Failure to illustrate pedagogical practices occurring in the classroom settings limits the ability of educators and researchers to recognize the pedagogical relevance of mindfulness. Using a case study method, this study explores how preschool teachers incorporate mindfulness to foster students' kindness, compassion, empathy, and gratitude in classroom settings. Five preschool teachers who employed mindfulness were observed in their classrooms throughout the school day once a week during a semester. Four semi-structured interviews with the teachers were simultaneously conducted. Artifacts, photographs, and classroom daily sheets were additionally collected. With a constant comparison analysis, various artifacts improvised to teach kindness were identified. Teachers and students' language practices were revealed as a critical factor in mindfulness education. Students' prosocial behaviors, conflict resolutions, and improved interactions with peers and teachers' own stress reduction and better interactions with students were identified. This study will provide practical examples of how preschool teachers fostered students' kindness, compassion, empathy, and gratitude using mindfulness in order to achieve students' well-being and how their teaching of mindfulness created a safe and peaceful classroom. I prefer a paper presentation to provide exemplary pedagogical activities of the teachers.

Meditation: theories and practices

*Stuart Moody, President. Green Sangha
Green Sangha*

Moving Into Stillness: A Somatic Approach to Meditation

INTRODUCTION

According to the Yoga Sutra, the essence of yoga is the mind settling into silence. Yet many of our students report that this is not easy. Indeed, some teachers (e.g., Easwaran 1991) warn that learning to meditate is difficult, and urge new students to persist, as the fruits are well worth the effort. Among Vipassana practitioners, the “monkey mind” is commonly mentioned by individuals who wish their minds would settle down in meditation.

Other schools, however, seem to minimize the disruptive effect of mental activity during meditation. Swami Satchidananda, founder of Integral Yoga, spoke of meditation as “easefulness.” Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the founder of Transcendental Meditation, structured an entire teaching sequence to ensure ease of meditation for every practitioner.

METHODS

The somatic approach to movement re-education developed by Thomas Hanna (1988) provides organizing principles, grounded in mind-body sciences, that can be applied to facilitate meditation. The simplicity and intimacy of somatic movement at once captures the attention and turns that attention inward. The inclusion of slow and deliberate relaxation engages executive control, while allowing the mind to let go of that control, leading into stillness.

DISCUSSION

Using somatic principles of movement and awareness, we will explore a few of the somatic exercises described in Moody (2011) that at once relax and awaken the body, leading gracefully into stillness. We will discuss how the somatic approach may contribute to the success of many types of meditation.

Mindfulness and compassion in context and society

Stuart Moody

Green Sangha

Contemplative Practices, Pro-Social Behavior, and Rehabilitation

INTRODUCTION

Much of the research on mind-body practices of relaxation and awareness has focused on benefits to the individual such as stress reduction, improved health, and enhanced cognitive functioning. Reports of practitioners support the logic that such results – decreased tension, better health, and more attentiveness – should lead to a kinder, friendlier approach to the world.

FINDINGS

Early research on Transcendental Meditation (TM) found attitude changes in the predicted direction, including increased capacity for intimacy among young adults and decreased hostility in prison inmates. Recent research on compassion training has begun to assess actual behavior, finding higher levels of compassionate response to strangers.

One fascinating issue is the degree of overlap and difference in the effects of different contemplative practices. Omar and colleagues (2008) for example, found equivalent outcomes in reduced stress and increased forgiveness in college students who learned either Mindful Meditation or Easwaran's Eight-Point Program.

DISCUSSION

In the light of these findings, I will describe two program evaluations that I conducted in correctional settings, one on TM in 1991 and the other on Somatic Yoga in 2014. Both found similar degrees of anxiety reduction. Do these approaches, emphasizing psychophysiological exercises, have equivalent effects on actual behaviors such as compassionate response or criminal recidivism? Given the high proportion of the population in US prisons, the need for further research on the potential of specific contemplative practices to improve social relations is great.

Effects of Caregiver Training in Mindfulness-Based Positive Behavior Support on Caregivers and Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Rachel E. Myers, Nirbhay N. Singh
Kennesaw State University

Introduction: Caregivers (i.e., paid staff) often have to manage the aggressive behavior of some individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities that reside in community group homes. Although they are usually taught to implement formal behavioral interventions, research suggests that staff often engage in improvised practices in lieu of implementing labor-intensive behavioral plans. Some of these practices result in the caregivers being injured, having to take time off work, becoming highly stressed, and eventually having to find alternative employment.

Method: We provided a 7-day intensive Mindfulness-Based Positive Behavior Support (MBPBS) training to caregivers from community group homes. Using a quasi-experimental design, we compared the pre- and post-MBPBS training effects on caregiver variables (i.e., use of verbal redirection, physical restraint, stress levels and turnover), individuals' behaviors (i.e., staff and peer injuries), and an administrative outcome (i.e., benefit-cost analyses).

Results: When compared to pre-MBPBS training, the results showed statistically significant reductions in caregiver variables and in the individuals' behaviors. That is, following MBPBS training, caregivers used significantly less verbal redirection and physical restraints, and staff stress and staff turnover was considerably reduced. The frequency of injury to caregivers and peers caused by the individuals was significantly reduced. A benefit-cost analysis showed substantial financial savings due to staff participation in the MBPBS program.

Discussion: This study provides further proof of concept for the effectiveness of MBPBS training for caregivers, and strengthens the call for training staff in mindfulness meditation.

Mindfulness Compassion and Wisdom

Geetesh Nirban

University of Delhi and Northern Arizona University

Compassion in Hinduism: Analyses from the Perspective of the Mahābhārata

The paper proposes to discuss the concept of compassion in Hinduism in the context of the epic Mahābhārata and its contemporary significance. The overarching theme of this gigantic work is war. On deeper analyses, it emerges as a textbook on values/righteousness (dharma) which need to be cultivated according to the need of the time, place and circumstance. With emphasis on certain episodes such as “Dhārmic Hunter” (Vana Parva) and “Bhagavad Gītā” (Bhīṣma Parva), the study will focus on how ‘compassion’ evolves as a noticeable value in the form of ‘ruthless compassion’ which is based on the categorical distinction between non-violence (ahiṃsā) and non-cruelty (ānṛśaṃsya) in the epic. The text glorifies the three Hindu values of dama (self-restraint), dayā (compassion) and dāna (charity) but morally justifies the tempered cruelties/injuries for the sake of justice and well-being in society.

The narratives in the epic are ancient in origin but they have a significant moral message and guidance for the present day, which bears a close resemblance to the world of Mahābhārata. Through the retellings of the select narratives, the proposed paper will explicate how non-violence (ahiṃsā) is not possible for all individuals in every situation but non-cruelty (ānṛśaṃsya) can be practiced practically. It prepares a person to develop a creed of compassion. The virtues of compassion and justice always remain intertwined. They require simultaneous cultivation. The paper highlights the importance of creating mindfulness about ‘ruthless compassion’ as a necessary value too.

Passage Mindfulness Fosters Compassion: A Randomized Trial of a Holistic Mindfulness Intervention

Doug Oman

University of California

Introduction: Mindfulness is sometimes viewed as a primarily Buddhist-derived practice. We conceptualize mindfulness in a larger context, acknowledging analogues across diverse spiritual/religious traditions. Buddhist texts are used to distinguish holistic conceptions of mindfulness from depleted but popular forms of mindfulness. To illustrate effects on compassion from holistic mindfulness interventions, we examine the Passage Mindfulness (PM) program (Easwaran, 1978/2008), which fosters holistic, wisdom-based mindfulness in part through meditation with self-chosen compassion-centered texts drawn from diverse traditions, such as the Buddha's Discourse on Good Will and the Prayer of Saint Francis.

Methods: Physicians, nurses, chaplains, and other health professionals were randomly allocated to Passage Mindfulness (n=28) or a wait-list (n=31). Pretest, post-test, 8- and 19-week follow-up data were gathered on six measures of prosocial qualities.

Results: Favorable PM treatment effects ($p < 0.05$) were found on four compassion-related measures (compassionate love, $d = 0.49$, Fetzer/NIA, 1999; altruistic actions, $d = 0.33$; empathic perspective-taking, $d = 0.42$; forgiveness of others, $d = 0.61$). Treatment adherence and/or stress reduction mediated PM treatment effects on most compassion-related measures; which in turn mediated gains in professional caregiving self-efficacy.

Discussion/Conclusion: Holistic mindfulness interventions show both empirical and theoretical promise for boosting compassion. We argue for recognizing/exploring synergies between present-moment components of mindfulness and other facets of spiritual traditions, and for being more mindful of how diverse traditions of contemplative practice beyond Buddhism support/incorporate analogues mindfulness, with implications for respect for diversity in clinical practice.

Meditation Coursework to Better Respect Cultural/Religious Diversity: A Mini-Course for Health Professionals

Doug Oman

University of California, Berkeley

Introduction: Respect for religious diversity is mandated by ethical codes of many health professions. Furthermore, US publicly funded education must respect First Amendment prohibitions on “respecting an establishment of religion.” Modernized mindfulness practices as taught to patients, students, and corporate employees are usually presented as religiously neutral. However, published literature on modernized mindfulness rarely if ever explicitly examines the tenability of the neutrality assumption, or systematically examines related ethical issues. In effect, most professional literature tacitly assumes that modernized mindfulness is a “one size fits all” solution, a perspective contradicted by evidence of discomfort among religious communities and individuals, and evidence that individuals prefer different types of meditation (e.g., Burke, 2012). These represent serious gaps in how modern secular professions employ meditation.

Methods: To constructively address these conceptual/ethical gaps, the author developed a short module for health professionals to practice and study meditation and its relation health-related in a manner that is respectful of religious/spiritual diversity, providing students with readings and opportunities to reflect on related ethical and legal issues, and challenges of conveying meditation professionally in ways that respect religious and spiritual diversity.

Results: The module is being piloted on Public Health students at UC Berkeley. Evidence on effectiveness and student reactions will be reported.

Discussion/Conclusion: We are not aware of any other course modules designed for this purpose. Others might adapt it in ways that build on its strengths to explicitly address issues of cultural and religious diversity in teaching meditation in secular settings.

Complementary and alternative medicine on post-treatment cancer-related fatigue in cancer patients

Christina Painton

Alliant International University, San Diego

Cancer-related fatigue (CRF), a severe physiological and psychological exhaustion, is a common symptom among cancer patients. To supplement medical treatments, physical exercise programs and Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction have been found effective to increase cognitive functioning, reduce fatigue, and lessen arousal around stressors in cancer patients. This study investigates a Summer Adventure Course (SAC) designed for CRF patients, incorporating mindfulness, walking-based exercise, and education modules consisting of basic nutrition, sound therapy, mindful eating, sexuality and intimacy, Healing Touch and acupuncture, and self-compassion. The current study aims to examine the SAC's efficacy in combating CRF and its related symptoms, such as depression and anxiety. Participants comprised of adult cancer patients who are fluent in English or Spanish and recently concluded adjuvant treatment. They completed a 6-week group SAC and were measured on depression and anxiety (Depression Anxiety Scale), self-compassion (Self-Compassion Short Scale), fatigue (Functional Assessment of Chronic Illness Therapy) and mindfulness (Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale). Preliminary analyses suggest improvements in depression, anxiety, and fatigue symptoms from beginning to end of the SAC. This study is examining a newly designed multimodal, mindfulness and exercise-based intervention specifically for post-adjuvant treatment cancer patients experiencing CRF. Findings reveal that SAC patients experienced significant reductions in depression, anxiety, and fatigue symptoms from start to finish of course participation. The study illustrates effectiveness of mindfulness training and simple walking exercise in reducing CRF and related symptoms facilitating an overall improvement in quality of life.

Mindful of What? Restoring the Ontological Dimension to Mindfulness

Jack Petranker

Mangalam Research Center for Buddhist Languages

The mindfulness movement is commonly charged with leaving the ethical dimension of Buddhist teachings out of account. But little attention has been paid to its disregard for the wisdom/cognitive dimension of the Dharma. Contemporary mindfulness practice defers or sets aside what the tradition found most important in the Buddha's realization: that he saw things 'as they are'. While there is great value in experiencing whatever arises, what if we fundamentally misunderstand what arises, or fail to explore the presuppositions that frame our understanding of 'experience'? How far can such a mindfulness take us?

Current trends in mindfulness proceed on the largely unexamined assumption that experiencing more fully will lead to greater insight. But simply relying on immediate experience makes it difficult to acknowledge the interpretive structures we use to make sense of experience. In particular, it misses the possibility that we can challenge our ontological commitments, a central theme in Mahayana Buddhism.

This paper examines the possibility for a more expansive mindfulness, one that questions the 'what' of what arises instead of simply observing it. Such a challenge to our ontological commitments does not depend on adopting any fixed ontology. Rather it proceeds along a path of open inquiry, wholly consistent with the secular trend in current mindfulness approaches. Yet it holds out the promise to restore to mindfulness practice a missing dimension of depth.

What the Center Holds: Mindfulness in a Field Perspective

Jack Petranker

Mangalam Research Center for Buddhist Languages

In his well-known prophetic poem, 'The Second Coming', Yeats wrote: "Things fall apart/the center cannot hold." Many see this as a brilliant evocation of where we stand as a culture. The current mindfulness boom could be seen as one response, born of the desire to restore a sense of order to our lives. As the mind falls still and we center ourselves in the immediacy of present-moment experience, we may simultaneously reconnect with our own center, our own values. Still, to center ourselves in the point-instant of the moment may purchase stability at a price—a narrowing down, a closing off. Plotinus wrote that God is a sphere whose center is everywhere (and periphery nowhere). Can we learn anything from conceiving of the center in this very different way?

In this paper, I present a model for reconceiving what the center holds, drawn from the innovative work of Tibetan lama Tarthang Tulku. In this model, experience is centered in the field of all possibilities, and we inhabit the reach and range of the entire field. No human capacity—to perceive and think, remember and imagine, reason and relate, feel and communicate—is excluded. Each contributes to the whole. Open to the field, we are not bound to any single point of focus, single moment in time, or fixed form of understanding. In the field, the center may hold more than we imagine, and mindfulness may open in unexpected ways.

Integral Mindfulness, Wisdom Society, and Collective Sentience: an exploration into the next stage of human consciousness

George Pór

Community Intelligence

This contribution to the “Mindfulness & Compassion” conference is focused on where the moral compass of integral mindfulness points. Being integrally mindful is about taking mindfulness off the meditation cushion and infusing all dimensions of our life with it; not only the life of you and me, but also of collective entities, such as organizations, networks, nations.

If wisdom is “a discerning mental factor that clearly comprehends the causes, conditions, effects, and implications of experiential process, content, behavior...” as Ron Purser suggests (Purser, 2014) then cultivating it at collective scales is a vital condition to our species’ evolution to the next level of consciousness. That is a requisite for passing our evolutionary test to a planetary society guided by collective wisdom. Only then we will be capable to meet our intertwining global crises caused by the pathological aspect of the previous stages of consciousness and their corresponding social structures.

Collective sentience builds on the Buddhist concept of sentience (characterized by matter, sensation, perception, mental formations and consciousness) and turns it into an attribute of groups and collective entities at any scale. Humanity will become sentient when it develops collective sensing and meaning-making organs, collective intelligence and consciousness, which make it capable to care for the well-being and evolution of the species itself, its habitat, both the whole each part of it. All for the Whole, the Whole for all.

Mindfulness and Dharma: insights from cognitive, affective and computational neurosciences

Antonino Raffone

Sapienza University of Rome

The last years have seen an intensification of debates about crucial relationships and differences between secular mindfulness and Buddhist (Dharma) approaches. Keeping into account the influential definition of mindfulness proposed by Jon Kabat-Zinn, relevant findings and models in cognitive and affective neurosciences, as well as neurocomputational modelling investigations (simulations) of plausible cortical mechanisms of attention and consciousness in meditation, I will emphasize multiple factors supporting mindfulness meditation practice, in line with the Eightfold Path / Right Mindfulness approach. I will thus stress the importance of cultivating Dharma-based understanding (wisdom) and ethics to enhance critically the efficiency of executive brain networks working in mindfulness meditation, in combination with enhancing sustained attention, attentional control and cognitive monitoring functions. In particular, it will be argued that practice of mindfulness meditation in a Dharma context enhances flexibility of the operations of consciousness and mental programs, and reduces interference of negative mental states on the executive functions regulating the intentional and non-judgmental attributes of mindfulness according to Kabat-Zinn.

If I Only Had the Nerve: Mindfulness and Courage in Psychotherapy: Implications and Applications (oral presentation)

Donna Rockwell

Michigan School of Professional Psychology

Introduction: Applications of mindfulness in the training of clinical psychologists, and other healthcare professions; and, even more globally, its wide-ranging influence in the client/patient "treatment plan," have been recognized recently as highly valuable pedagogic as well as clinical interventions.

Methods: In a phenomenological mixed-method design, students' self-perceptions of well-being, self-care, and interpersonal presence in the therapy room, as well as mindfulness and interpersonal reactivity were measured. The sample consisted of three consecutive cohorts of third year clinical psychology doctoral students: 2008 (n=15), 2009 (n=20), 2010 (n=22) in a non-elective course: Mindfulness & Psychotherapy. The 10-week, 2-hour class included mindfulness theory and practices, sitting and walking meditation, in-class journal writing, paper assignments, and lecture/discussion.

Results: Students' self-reports include:

"I cannot imagine doing effective therapy without mindfulness in general and my regular practice in particular. I am far more present, less reactive, able to experience deeply while still maintaining that 'evenly hovering awareness.'"

"Mindfulness practice has enabled me some room to examine my thoughts and feelings. When in session with a client who is struggling, I often do take five minutes to just center us in our chairs, and focus on our breathing."

"Mindfulness allows me to be a flexible psychotherapist, tolerating various client affects and other challenging aspects of psychotherapy."

Discussion/Conclusion:

The application of mindfulness in clinical psychology training can cultivate heightened therapist awareness and presence in the therapy room. The implications for effectiveness in psychotherapy are clearly delineated in reports of increased attunement and empathy in the therapeutic encounter.

Nine Insights from the Field: Contemplative Practices in University Classrooms

Nico Roenpagel
Private Practice

Introduction:

The integration of contemplative approaches into various education contexts has received growing attention over the recent years. An increasing number of both quantitative and qualitative studies suggest psychological, social, and academic benefits of bringing contemplative practices into formal education environments.

Methods:

This paper draws on five years of experimenting with diverse contemplative methods in a university classroom with thirty prospective visual art high school teachers. The beginning of each class was dedicated to different exercises, such as mindful breathing, reflective writing, yoga poses, visualization, or group interaction. Students' written mid-term, end-of-term, and oral feedback provided qualitative material about their experiences of the contemplative exercises.

Results:

Overall, the large majority of students appreciated the opportunity of a structured "mindful arriving." Based on student observation, feedback, and self-reflection, this paper presents nine preliminary insights helpful for successfully integrating contemplative approaches into university settings: (1) diversity of methods, (2) secular rather than esoteric language, (3) ability to reference relevant research, (4) voluntary participation, (5) confidence, (6) consistency, (7) feedback opportunities, (8) link to classroom content, and (9) conversations with colleagues.

Discussion/Conclusion:

The meaningful integration of contemplative practices into university settings is uniquely contextual and essentially delicate. The paper concludes with some thoughts on whether contemplative approaches in classrooms may contribute toward a university culture of greater student resilience and compassion.

Space to Slow Down: Art Museums and Contemplative Presence

Nico Roenpagel
Private Practice

Introduction:

The everyday experiences of teenagers in the early 21st century appear to be increasingly shaped by acceleration, multitasking and enscreenment. Arguably, both formal education and popular culture environments rarely offer spaces for teenagers to slow down.

Methods:

The argument presented in this paper is grounded in qualitative data from a case study completed in Sydney, Australia. In-depth one-on-one interviews were conducted with 12 participants covering three groups of educators significant for understanding teenagers' experiences in art museums: art museum educators, high school visual art teachers, and prospective visual art teachers studying at university.

Results:

The data revealed that most of the participants observed a decreased ability among current teenagers to concentrate; in turn, participants proposed an engagement with artworks as relevant for practicing focused inquiry. For example, art museum educators described art museums as places of slowing down—referring to a state of heightened presence and concentration, fruitful for immersive experiences, and for potentially opening to spiritual questions.

Discussion/Conclusion:

While art museums emerge as potential environments conducive for experiences of slowing down and contemplative presence, it is crucial to discuss how art museums can actively endorse this capacity without merely joining the popular mindfulness wave.

Mindfulness, attention and conscious/unconscious processes

Helen Rosen, Katharine Bertolet

Won Institute

The strength of classical psychoanalysis is its insight into the depth of the unconscious mind and its willingness to try and access that level of motivation as it manifests in day-to-day life. Yet, the ability to see the unconscious in action, to learn about thoughts and feelings that have been banished from awareness, is an almost impossible task. In addition to our own internal resistance, we live in an age in which personal reflection and internal exploration is less appealing than the achievement of worldly status and financial success. Meditation, a 2500 year-old practice that is growing in prominence at this time, promotes a non-judgmental attitude and letting go of conscious control. These aspects of sitting are conducive to the arising of unconscious thoughts and feelings, and may be instrumental in promoting awareness of the unconscious. The ability to sit with thoughts and feelings, without taking action, increases one's ability to tolerate unpleasant affect. With an increase in tolerance for unpleasant affect there also arises a greater ability to examine why one feels and behaves in certain ways. This paper examines the intersection of meditation and psychoanalysis and how meditation, with its emphasis on noticing process, can assist the psychoanalytic process of discovering unconscious content.

Finding Unique Places for Mindfulness and Compassion in the University Setting

Jenny Rowett

University of New Brunswick

This presentation is grounded in the experience of teaching adapted forms of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and meditation to university students over the past six years. Formats have included psycho-educational groups and workshops, and for credit course offerings at the undergraduate and graduate levels in the Faculty of Education and at Renaissance College, at the University of New Brunswick. Over the past two years, a unique stand alone course, The Foundations of Mindfulness, was created and offered. This fourth year leadership elective attracts students from numerous faculties and all levels: Undergraduate, Master, PhD, and Alumni. Informal surveys with open-ended questions and semi-structured focus groups have been utilized to collect student feedback regarding course structure and content, measures of learning, and instructional methods. Additionally, the 24 item short form of the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (Bohlmeijer, et al., 2011) and the 26 item

Self-Compassion Scale (Neff, 2003) were used as pre and post measures of students' mindfulness and self-compassion outcomes over the duration of the course. The structure, content, benefits and challenges of instructing this highly experiential course will be discussed.

Presentation Learning Objectives:

1. Development and progression of mindfulness-based education in various settings at UNB.
2. Discussion of content and experiential practice of the Foundations of Mindfulness course at the University of New Brunswick.
3. Review of students' feedback

Relational Clinical Psychology through a Tibetan Buddhist Lens

Deborah Rozelle, David J. Lewis
Private Practice

The Tibetan Mahayana/Vajrayana tradition elevates embodied compassion to equal status with insight, and is therefore potentially an ideal Buddhist partner for modern clinical psychology, where there is a growing trend toward the relational and somatic. Unlike Theravada and Zen, however, Tibetan Buddhism has experienced no prior modernization through contact with the West. It is therefore deeply rooted in a zeitgeist apparently incongruent with today's dominant scientific materialism, despite the efforts of The Mind and Life Institute and a few other organizations, and this has impeded its acceptance in Western clinical psychology.

To overcome this barrier, we use a non-reductionist methodology for connecting psychology and the full spectrum of Mahayana/Vajrayana Buddhism, a conscientious modernization, as it were. This methodology accepts both sides on their own terms and relates them by a detailed functional analogy, which maps the personal and psychological to the universal and transcendent. So the analogy is asymmetric in specific, identifiable ways.

Clinical areas we will explore with this model include attachment theory, separation-individuation, trauma therapy, and family systems models. We correlate them to the "method" side of Tibetan Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism, which includes compassion, intention and embodiment.

For example, Mahayana Buddhist refuge practice, often downplayed in Western Buddhism, serves the same functional role as intention, security and trust in psychological attachment theory, namely the protection from fear and base of confidence crucial to inner and relational development. For another, internal family systems' "parts of self" function as a personal, intrapsychic analog of a Vajrayana mandala.

Mindfulness and Acceptance-based interventions (MABIs) for weight loss and reduction of impulsive eating in obese individuals: A systematic review and meta-analysis

Alexis Ruffault, Sébastien Czernichow, Margot Ferrand, Nelly Erichot, Martin Hagger, Emilie Boujut, Cécile Flahault
Université Paris Descartes

Background: According to the French national study on obesity and overweight, obese adult prevalence is up to 15% (vs. 32.3% overweight). The World Health Organization estimates that obesity is the result of two major behaviours: dietary habits and exercise. Most obese patients are impulsive eaters, and have a lack of physical activity (PA). A growing interest is given to mindfulness- and acceptance-based interventions (MABIs) for healthy behaviours such as exercise and dietary habits among obese individuals.

Objectives: The aim of this review was to systematically assess and meta-analyse the effectiveness of MABIs on weight loss and impulsive eating among obese individuals.

Methods: PubMed/MEDLINE, PsycINFO, PubPsych, and Science Direct were searched through April 2014. Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) of mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) or acceptance-based interventions (ABIs) for obese individuals were included. Main outcomes were BMI and impulsiveness towards food.

Results: For weight-related outcomes, 9 studies with a total of 516 participants; and for impulsive eating outcomes, 5 studies with a total of 319 participants were included. Standardized mean differences (SMDs) showed no evidence of the effects of MABIs on weight loss, and evidence for the efficacy of MABIs in the reduction of impulsive eating (SMD = 1.09; 95% CI: -0.57 to 1.62; $P < 0.001$).

Conclusion: MBIs should be preferred as a support therapy in obese patients with disordered eating. Long-term effects of an increase in day-to-day awareness of thoughts and emotions occurring in the present moment, could introduce a reduction in BMI among obese patients with disordered eating.

You Want to Teach What? Mindfulness & Compassion in the College Classroom

Monica Sanford

University of the West

Given the demonstrated benefits of both mindfulness and compassion practices, why wouldn't we teach them to college students, particularly incoming freshmen? Yet administrators, department chairs, and faculty struggle to integrate these elements into the curriculum, particularly in courses not otherwise designated as 'contemplative studies,' such as writing, information literacy, and history. After all, how can one grade a student for self-compassion? How can one assess improved attentional focus as a learning outcome?

This paper places in conversation two important and growing bodies of literature in higher education: contemplative studies curriculum and pedagogy, particularly mindfulness and compassion-based practices, and academic assessment practices that measure learning outcomes, ensure program quality, and meet accreditation requirements. Mindfulness and compassion can be measured, it argues, not as absolute values, but as learning outcomes qualitatively demonstrated in the 'artifacts' (e.g. papers, tests, presentations) of students.

Moreover, in order to receive the attention and funding necessary to increase the presence of such practices in the curriculum, they must be measured and their efficacy as pedagogy thoroughly established to both tight-fisted administrators and skeptical accrediting agencies. not only at small "Buddhist-friendly" schools, but at large, established teaching and research universities as well. This is our chance to introduce mindfulness and compassion to a whole new generation of college students. Learning the simple language of accreditation and a few helpful assessment methods can help faculty do so by legitimating these practices early in their adoption.

Cultivating Compassion and Wisdom in the classroom

Janine Schipper

Northern Arizona University

"The human heart is basically very compassionate, but without wisdom, compassion will not work. Wisdom is the openness that lets us see what is essential and most effective."

~Venerable Khandro Rinpoche

This presentation looks at ways that our teaching methods may cultivate wisdom and compassion and offer alternatives to Western expert-model and information-based teaching traditions. I will share how I draw on specific teaching methods, including: mindfulness practices, collective wisdom projects, community building, and teaching with vulnerability— to cultivate compassion and wisdom in the classroom.

Some of the questions raised are:

What do teaching and learning look like...

- when we cultivate compassion within ourselves?
- when we draw on wisdom traditions that offer insight into interconnectedness, non-self, and collective suffering?
- when wisdom and compassion are balanced with each other?

Finally, this presentation draws on 20 years of teaching experiences to help illustrate the possibilities and challenges involved when one prioritizes teaching with compassion from a place of wisdom.

Enhancing well-being in the workplace: The mediating role of Mindfulness for stress reduction and satisfaction with life

*Rebecca Shankland, Strub, Lionel/Boissicat, Natacha/Steiler, Dominique
Grenoble École de Management*

Introduction

Up to now, few studies have been carried out on Mindfulness Based Interventions (MBIs) in the workplace compared to a control group using qualitative and quantitative methods. The aim of the present study was to assess the feasibility of an MBI in the workplace and its effectiveness in terms of stress reduction and enhanced well-being.

Methods

Participants (29 Mindfulness group and 30 controls) were recruited from two large French companies. They completed self-report questionnaires pre and post-intervention and 3 months after end of intervention: Perceived Stress Scale and Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (dependent variables), and Five Facets Mindfulness Questionnaire (mediating variable). They also answered open-ended questions about their practice and the perceived usefulness and benefits in the workplace.

Results

Relative to the control group, Mindfulness-trained participants experienced reduced perceived stress, and increased subjective and psychological well-being. Both dependent variables were mediated by increased Mindfulness. Participants also reported various perceived benefits from Mindfulness practice such as enhanced attentional competencies and greater levels of relationship management at work. They reported greater use of short or integrated Mindfulness practices.

Discussions/conclusion

Results underline the possible benefits of MBIs in workplace contexts in terms of well-being, performance and relationship management. The reported ease of short formal or integrated Mindfulness practices in the workplace is an essential component of these results as it may indicate a potential for long-term integration of Mindfulness at work.

Adverse Experiences in a Randomized Trial of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, and Usual Care for Chronic Low Back Pain

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Group Health Research Institute*

Introduction: Our trial comparing Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) to group cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and usual care (UC) for chronic back pain collected data on adverse experiences (AEs). We compared AEs in MBSR to AEs in the yoga arm of our recently published trial.

Methods: Among 342 adults with moderate to severe chronic low back pain in the trial, 229 were randomized to 8 weekly sessions of CBT (n=113) or MBSR (116) (with n=115 to continued UC). AEs were collected from class reports, telephone reports and questions on the 4, 8 and 26 week follow-up interviews. Frequencies of adverse events were compared using the Fisher Exact Test.

Results: No moderate or severe AEs were observed. Among 103 participants attending MBSR classes, 32 (31%) reported a mild AE “at least possibly” due to MBSR (23 were related to yoga, 6 to discomfort during body scans, 2 idiopathic and one concerning conflict with religious beliefs). Only 11 of 100 CBT participants reported an AE at least possibly due to CBT (MBSR vs CBT $p=0.005$). Ten were increased pain from progressive muscle relaxation and the other was guilt over “not practicing enough outside of class”. Roughly twice as many AEs were reported by MBSR attendees versus yoga only attendees in our previous trial (14.9% for yoga vs. 31% for MBSR) ($p=0.017$).

Discussion/Conclusion: MBSR is relative safe but AEs associated with the yoga component are common and potentially preventable by more attention to suitable postures.

A Clinical Study of a Meditation Class in Cardiac Pulmonary Rehabilitation

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Saybrook University

Exercise, a healthy diet, smoking cessation, and stress management are essential for primary and secondary prevention of cardiovascular disease (CVD). Positive lifestyle modifications such as these reduce cardiovascular risk and decrease CVD mortality. Negative psychosocial factors also promote atherosclerosis and increase the risk of coronary heart disease (CHD). Yoga and Tai Chi are widely combined in cardiac pulmonary rehabilitation (CPR) programs as psychosocial interventions in the United States. However, mindfulness and meditation are still in the "trial" stages and not yet fully integrated into CPR programs.

This two-year clinical study utilized meditation and guided imagery in a weekly mindfulness-based class at a San Diego CPR program from June 2013 to May 2015. Classes were one-half hour in duration and 153 people participated. Class structure included music-induced silent meditation, participant "check-in," introduction of a stress management technique (SMT), and participants sharing their experiences of the SMT with the group.

This presentation will analyze and summarize archived reports presented to the CPR center by the researcher/instructor. Additionally, semi-structured interviews focusing on the participants' lived experience will be conducted. Participants who attended more than four classes will be invited to interview, and data will be gathered on participants' experiences, awareness of change, and benefits of meditation. Findings from the reports and interviews will be presented and implications for the future use of meditation and guided imagery in CPR programs will be discussed.

Meditation: theories and practices

Venerable Hin Hung Sik, Bonnie Wu

The University of Hong Kong

The Theoretical Foundation and Operational Model of the Awareness Training Program, A novel Mahayana Buddhist Teaching based Psycho-educational Intervention

- Introduction

In recent years, many scientists have integrated Buddhist practices into their psycho-social intervention models and related researches with much success. However, many of these models have incorporated only section(s) of the whole Buddhist path while ignoring the theoretical foundation of the Buddhist model of suffering and eliminating suffering.

- Theoretical Foundation and Operational Model

The objective of the “Awareness Training Program” (ATP) is to enhance participant’s stress management skills and ability to handle psychological suffering. Instead of using the Buddhist classical pathological model of suffering – the Four Noble Truths, this program would incorporate the salutogenesis model to promote participants’ level of compassion and wisdom. It is a Mahayana Buddhist Teaching based psycho-educational intervention that incorporates the Three Kinds of Knowing (i.e. wisdom consisting of learning, wisdom produced by thinking, wisdom realized by practice) as its pedagogical structure. ATP consists of six weekly workshops with one weekend retreat. It attempts to enhance participants’ sense of cosmological coherence, stress management skills and ability to develop a sense of meaning through the development and practice of compassion and wisdom.

- Discussion/Conclusion

Initial result of a randomized control trial of the program has shown that ATP can be effective in helping participants to enhance their ability to handle stress.

Mindful Engagement Modifies Reciprocal Caregiver and Client Interactions

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Medical College of Georgia

Introduction: There are various models of training that focus on skills caregivers need to have in order to provide programmatic services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Behavioral skills training is the most ubiquitous model because it enables caregivers to not only manage challenging behaviors, but also teach the clients new skills. Mindful Engagement Support model provides a viable alternative to the behavioral model by emphasizing the transformational skills caregivers can obtain via disciplined meditation practice. **Method:** In this study, we analyzed the nature of staff and client interactions before and after staff training in this model. In particular, we recorded the behavior of staff and clients prior to and following training in mindful engagement and coded the frequency of staff-client engagement. Then, taking those intervals in which there was staff-client engagement, we recorded the frequency of learning and leisure interactions. Finally, taking those intervals in which there was learning and leisure interactions, we recorded the frequency of challenging (problem) behaviors that followed task demands during those interactions.

Results: When compared to pre-training, our results showed that mindful engagement training significantly (1) increased general staff-client engagement, (2) increased engagement in learning and leisure activities, and (3) decreased the frequency of behavioral challenges (problems) during both learning and leisure engagement.

Discussion: The data suggest that mindful engagement training is not only effective in positively changing staff behavior, but also in enhancing the quality of life of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Mindfulness Based Family Intervention

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Centrum voor Mindfulness Texel

The Mindfulness Based Family Intervention was introduced by Mirjam Spijker and Milena Hilstra, mother and daughter, in 2011. Mirjam works as a clinical psychologist and is trained as mindfulness trainer, Milena is trained as a mindfulness trainer for children and adolescents.

The Mindfulness Based Family Intervention is a unique training for parents and children from 2-20 years old. The families are trained in a group setting during a weekend. Both parents and their children are trained together as EQUAL participants.

Since 2011 Mirjam and Milena have trained over 60 families in more than 15 trainings. Participants learn the basics of mindfulness and share their (first) mindfulness experience in the group through inquiries led by the trainers and learn to implement the Mindfulness principals in their daily (stressful) life. The programs contains 5 themes: 'Fresh view', 'Confidence', 'Mildness and Patience', 'Letting go and Acceptance', 'Heartfulness and Compassion'.

Measures are done before, after and 3 months after the training through semi-structured interviews send by email. Both parents, adolescents and children name the long term applicability in their daily life and the usefulness of the learned exercises on stressful moments.

An oral presentation with film fragments and a published workbook (2012, BBNC) is available and contains the positive elements from the training: training in self-regulation, positive family interaction (open your senses; tune in; name with compassion in the here and now; setting boundaries) and Compassion.

At the moment the MBFI will be implemented in a multidisciplinary pilot project for Obese children and their families.

The Framework of Buddhist Compassion Training

Julia Stenzel

McGill University

Tibetan Buddhism employs two methods for developing compassion: one uses affection and gratitude for the mother as the starting point; the other is based on a reflection on the equality of all beings; and both join with the practice of exchanging self and other in order to cultivate compassion. These methods are part of a larger soteriological framework which has the purpose of supporting and sustaining practitioners when they take steps towards radical selflessness and compassion. A compassion training outside the framework of Mahayana ethics is unthinkable in Tibetan Buddhism. The faith in karma, the Buddha, and his path are believed to offer a space of confidence in which individuals may be able to loosen self-cherishing, and cultivate genuine compassion. In a world where secular compassion training becomes more popular than traditional Buddhist forms, the question arises of how such a sustaining framework can be replaced in ways that fulfill a similar purpose. In order to answer this question, we need to understand the purpose and importance of such a framework. This paper will attempt to examine the soteriological context in which Tibetan Buddhists are supposed to practice compassion. Based on foundational texts on compassion training, namely *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, by Śāntideva, and its commentaries, as well as the gradual path text *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation* by Gampopa, it will argue that certain dispositions, such as confidence in basic sanity, a sense of renunciation, resilience, loving kindness, and commitment, are indispensable for compassion practice.

Effects of a Mindfulness-Based Intervention on entrepreneur women's mental health and self-efficacy: A pilot study

Lionel Strub, Rebecca Shankland, Natacha Boissicat, Raffy Duymedjian, Dominique Steiler, Pierre-Yves Sanséau, Isabelle Né
Grenoble École de Management

Introduction

Entrepreneurs' stress and burnout haven't been well documented. In the same way, few interventions have focused on this specific population, while Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) have mainly targeted employees. Therefore, the aim of the present pilot study was to assess the feasibility of an adapted MBI and its efficacy for a population of entrepreneur women reporting high levels of stress and associated symptoms.

Method

Twelve women were recruited by an entrepreneur women's organization, 8 of which volunteered to follow the MBI (4 participants remained as control group). They all completed the following measures: perceived stress (PSS-14), anxiety and depression (HAD), burnout (MBIGS), general self-efficacy (GSE), mindfulness (MAAS) and self-compassion (SCS) pre and post-program.

Results

Relative to the control group, mindfulness training participants experienced a reduction in perceived stress, anxiety and depression symptoms and showed increased self-efficacy and an improvement in some dimensions of self-compassion (self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness). The increase in self-reported mindfulness and self-compassion was linked to positive changes in self-efficacy and to a decrease in perceived stress, anxiety and depression. Moreover, practice time was positively correlated with these same scores.

Conclusion/discussion

Results underlined the feasibility and efficacy of a Mindfulness-Based Intervention for entrepreneur women. In spite of some limitations (reduced sample size, no follow-up measures and non-randomized trial), the skills and attitudes developed by the program may be considered as promising in terms of mental health and for the company.

Does mindfulness enhance persistence and success in behavioural change?

Hana Sysalova, Derrick Watson, Nick Chater
University of Warwick

The process of any behavioural change can be difficult: when previously habitual behaviours are stopped, new behaviours can initially seem aversive and ineffective until they themselves become habitual. Could being mindful make this transition easier? We aimed to investigate, in a controlled experimental context, whether people who are more mindful would display a higher degree of persistence with behaviour change and achieve better outcomes.

Methods

Participants repeatedly completed a visual task using a chosen keypress: either habitual, where the keys mapped to responses in the natural way, or novel, where the mapping was initially more difficult (as shown in a separate experiment). The novel keypress mapping would ultimately yield higher payoffs but obtaining these payoffs required persistence through initial failures. Dispositional mindfulness was measured with the MAAS scale.

Results

The mindfulness score significantly correlated in a positive direction with the proportion of the novel mapping choices as well as the number of novel mapping trials completed successfully.

Discussion/Conclusions

The results suggest mindfulness could enhance the transition period of behavioural change by increasing flexibility to switch from the habitual to new behaviour and by sustaining attention to achieve desired outcomes. Mindfulness practice could be valuable in dealing with the transition period; and this could be explored with the new paradigm. The effects of being mindful on persistence with behavioural change might be generalizable to various contexts.

Effects of Guided Meditation on Agitation in Adults with Traumatic Brain Injury

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One of the characteristics of adults with traumatic brain injury (TBI) is increased states of agitation. These states of agitation are often associated with high levels of distraction, wandering and aggression towards others and the environment. Although guided meditations are a commonly used technique for reducing stress and have been used with a number of different clinical populations, they have not been extensively studied with adults with TBI. This paper will present the results of a preliminary study using guided meditations with adults with TBI. Using a multiple baseline design six adults with TBI were randomly exposed to five short (less than 10 minutes) audio recorded guided meditations daily during the period of intervention. These adults were specifically identified by program staff as having significant levels of agitated behavior. The meditations employed were chosen from those readily available on line. All participants provided informed consent before being exposed to the intervention. Study participants were brought individually to a quiet room with a researcher present. The researcher then played the randomly selected guided meditation. Several clinical measures of agitation were used daily to assess the effects of this intervention. Results of this study have important implications for the treatment of agitation in adults with TBI as well as providing a foundation for further research in this area.

Yoga practice effects on behavioral self-control in cigarette smokers

Laura Carim Todd, Barry S. Oken, Suzanne H. Mitchell
Oregon Health & Science University

Introduction

Low self-control is a contributing factor in addictive behaviors such as cigarette smoking. It is possible that yoga, through breath and mind-body awareness, will help regain control over one's behavior and increase the likelihood of successful smoking cessation. Under the hypothesis that the practice of yoga increases self-control, this study analyzes self-control after yoga practice in a sample of abstinent nicotine dependent smokers.

Methods

A 3-arm randomized controlled design compares yoga (YG) to exercise (EX), and to a health and wellness education program (HW). The intervention programs consist of 30-minute video recordings supplied to participants for home use and during laboratory visits. Procedures and study materials are approved by the Oregon Health & Science University Research Review Board (IRB#10373).

Outcome measures

The primary outcome is a behavioral measure of self-control in the form of latency to smoking during an abstinence reinforcement task. Impulsivity, response inhibition, personality traits, and smoking behavior are assessed. Follow-up at 4-weeks examines intervention continuity and smoking.

Results

Differences in latency to smoking and number of puffs between groups are analyzed to determine if the YG intervention is effective in increasing self-control as compared to the EX and/or HW interventions.

Discussion

This mechanistic study will inform larger randomized controlled trials investigating the efficacy of yoga-based treatments for smoking addiction, as well as other disorders in which low self-control is a contributing factor.

Funding

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Mindfulness in the working life

Massimo Tomassini

University of Roma

The paper will deal with several aspects of an on-going research project aimed at exploring the issue of mindfulness in the working life (MiWL). Such project is aimed at analyzing attitudes, personal strategies, values and feelings regarding the working life of people for whom - at different levels of motivation and experience - mindfulness is the engine of stabilized forms of personal practice and represents a permanent source of existential inspiration.

In a first section the paper will present the project's theoretical framework. Differently from the at present widespread neuroscience-based approaches to mindfulness (in particular those under the heading of Corporate Mindfulness), such theoretical framework is based on phenomenological, sociological and Buddhist approaches. From this viewpoint, the brain and the nervous system are seen as nested in body and environment from the outset and their functions are included within specific social and cultural environments. The paper will mainly deal with the relationships between the "mental" and the "social" dimensions of the working life, trying to illustrate the complex role of mindfulness, also including its relational and ethical aspects.

In a second section the empirical part of the research project is presented. It is based on interviews to about 20 long- or middle-course meditators, within both the Zen (Thich Nhath Han) and the Vipassana (Forest Monks) traditions. Such interviews are aimed at producing significant "stories of mindfulness", which represent how the familiarity with mindfulness practice may facilitate aspects typical of the working life (e.g. difficulties about work contents, solution of organizational conflicts) and - more than this - contribute to overcoming the most common experience of dukkha at work along a wider path towards liberation.

Quiet Ego Contemplation: A Brief Intervention to Strengthen a Compassionate Self-Identity

Heidi A. Wayment

Northern Arizona University

The paper will deal with several aspects of an on-going research project aimed at exploring the issue of mindfulness in the working life (MiWL). Such project is aimed at analyzing attitudes, personal strategies, values and feelings regarding the working life of people for whom - at different levels of motivation and experience - mindfulness is the engine of stabilized forms of personal practice and represents a permanent source of existential inspiration.

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A randomized, controlled clinical trial: The effects of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy on chronic insomnia among Chinese patients in the community

Samuel Yeung-shan Wong

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) is a developed therapeutic approach for mental health problems although large randomized control trials have not been conducted among patients with chronic primary insomnia in primary care. This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of MBCT for insomnia versus a psycho-education control (PEC) for insomnia in treating those with chronic primary insomnia in primary care.

This was a single-blinded, randomized, controlled trial. Eligible Chinese subjects (aged ≥ 18 years) with diagnosed chronic insomnia were randomly assigned to MBCT group (intervention) and PEC group (active control) with planned follow up for six months post intervention. Primary outcome was changes in the score of 7-item Insomnia Severity Index (ISI). Paired t-test was used to examine between-group differences in ISI. Analysis was performed by intention-to-treat.

We recruited 216 subjects with an average age of 56.05 years (SD 9.39 years) with 77.0% being female. At baseline, there was no significant difference between MBCT group [N=110] and PEC group [N=106] in age, gender and ISI scores (17.67 for PEC and 17.94 for MBCT). At eight-week (immediately post intervention), there was a statistically significant difference with respect to decrease in ISI scores between the MBCT group (-4.26, SD 3.87) and the PEC group (-2.81, SD 4.08) ($p=0.041$).

This study suggested that MBCT program may be an effective treatment option for primary insomnia in primary care although longer follow-up is needed to evaluate the sustainability of effects.

Efficacy of a Mahayana Buddhist Teaching Based Psycho-educational Intervention, Awareness Training Program, on stress management among middle-aged working people in Hong Kong: A Randomized Controlled Trial

Bonnie (Wai Yan) Wu, Ven. Sik Hin Hung
The University of Hong Kong

Introduction: Awareness Training Program (ATP) is a novel Mahayana Buddhist Teaching based psycho-educational intervention that is designed to help people to deal with stress. ATP consists of 6 weekly workshops and 1 weekend retreat. This research is the first randomized controlled trial (RCT) aiming at testing the efficacy of ATP.

Methods: Participants were recruited through radio broadcasting and university-wide promotion. 122 middle-aged working participants (mean age=46, SD=8.08) were randomly assigned to ATP or waitlist control. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), Nonattachment Scale (NAS), Orientation to Life Questionnaire (SOC-13) and General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) were assessed at baseline, post intervention, and 3-month follow-up.

Results: While analyzing the preliminary results by using two-way mixed analysis of variance, significant group by time interaction effects were found in all measures. Compared with the waitlist control group, ATP group demonstrated significant reduction in their levels of perceived stress ($P<0.001$) and showed significant improvements in their levels of nonattachment ($P<0.001$), sense of coherence ($P=0.003$), psychological wellbeing ($P<0.001$).

Conclusions: These preliminary results indicate that ATP can be an efficacious intervention for the middle-aged people with stress.

POSTERS

Factors Associated with Engagement in Mindfulness

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University of Sussex

Objectives: There is growing evidence suggesting that mindfulness has positive consequences for psychological health in both clinical and non-clinical populations. Apart from positive consequences to health, a key indicator of effectiveness and acceptability of psychological interventions is participant engagement. Crane and Williams (2010) suggested that those who disengage from mindfulness may benefit from it the most. Despite the clinical relevance of the high attrition rates, research on factors associated with engagement in mindfulness interventions is at its infancy. In order to increase engagement in mindfulness interventions, it is crucial to identify the factors associated with engagement.

Method: One hundred and twenty six participants were given access to a 14-day mindfulness-based self-help interventions. Measures of mindfulness, rumination, worry and positive beliefs about rumination and worry were administered before the intervention and physical and psychological engagement questionnaires were administered after the intervention.

Results: Results revealed that maladaptive coping styles such as, rumination and worry accounted for both physical and psychological disengagement from mindfulness. It was also found that physical and psychological engagement in mindfulness had a significant small positive correlations indicating that formal practice and involvement in mindfulness are separate constructs.

Conclusions: Findings suggest that coping styles such as, rumination and worry are associated with disengagement from the intervention. These findings pave the way for future research optimizing engagement levels in mindfulness-based self-help interventions.

Self-compassion as a Resilience factor for Mid-life Women

Lydia Brown
University of Melbourne

Introduction: Women are socially and genetically programmed to care for others, and yet they often struggle to extend compassion towards themselves during times of potential difficulty such as the menopause. This study developed two structural equation models to investigate how psychological aspects of menopause and self-compassion contribute to women's well-being at mid-life.

Methods: Cross-sectional study based on self-report questionnaires from 206 Australian women aged 40–60, currently experiencing hot flushes.

Results: Self-compassion was the strongest predictor of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being indices (β range: .20–.39), followed by beliefs about control over menopause (β range: .16–.20) and hot flush interference ratings (β range: .17–.26). As found previously, self-compassion also weakened the association between hot flush frequency and reported daily interference ratings.

Conclusion: Self-compassion not only weakens the burden of hot flushes to enhance daily life functioning during the menopause transition, but it also contributes to well-being, happiness and purpose in life during the menopause years. Self-compassion may be a beneficial intervention target to support women as they transition through the midlife years.

Effects of the Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction Program on Mind-Wandering: A Randomized Controlled Trial

Alessandro Giannandrea
Sapienza University

This study investigates the effects of a Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction training on the occurrence of mind wandering episodes during a sustained attention to response test. “Thought probes” of attentional focus and meta-awareness were taken during the task. In order to assess the effect of the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction training on the mind wandering activity of the participants, we compared two experimental groups attending the training at different times. The analyses revealed a significant reduction in number of attentional lapses and an increase of self-reported scores of attentional focus after the mindfulness training. Moreover, regression analyses results are twofold: (i) participants of the mindfulness training gained better monitoring abilities on their attentional focus and (ii) the improvements in the awareness of their actions had a measurable effect on attentional lapses. These results shed further lights on the understanding of a theoretical connection between mind wandering and mindfulness, in particular in one of the major application of mindfulness, such as the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction training.

Measuring Compassion: The Perceived Compassion Scale

Dent Gitchel

University of Arkansas at Little Rock

INTRODUCTION

A self-report scale measuring perceived compassion, in its embodied and functional aspects, will be presented, including some preliminary psychometric validation results. There has been some debate as to whether compassion can be measured through self-report. Neff's Self-Compassion Scale, is possibly the most widely used instrument, and operationalizes compassion in terms of mindfulness, common humanity, and self-kindness. Others (e.g., Gilbert) do not think that compassion can be measured directly. Gilbert, instead, measures fear of compassion in both giving and receiving and toward oneself.

METHODS

This scale attempts to measure compassion as a multidimensional construct based on a secular interpretation of Mahayana Buddhist principles. Some of the relevant dimensions include awareness of suffering in its various levels (e.g., physical, psychological, and spiritual discomfort), equanimity, compassion self-efficacy, and compassion outcome expectations. Items were developed and reviewed by a team of "experts" and are currently being surveyed in community samples.

RESULTS

This scale attempts to give a comprehensive secular operationalization of both compassion and suffering that is able to measure across a continuum.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

Psychometric challenges and limitations of measuring compassion will also be discussed. It is assumed that Compassion is a multidimensional construct. It is also assumed that Compassion manifests on a continuum and that valid measurement instruments of the construct must be able to measure across the continuum. Insights from item response theory (IRT) and differential item functioning (DIF), from the fold of measurement, will be utilized in the discussion as will Indo-Tibetan perspectives on dependent co-arising.

The influence of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction and Karate training on emotional wellbeing and cognitive performance in older adults

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University of Regensburg*

Former studies have shown that mindfulness training can improve psychological wellbeing in young adults (e.g. Roberts-Wolfe, Sacchet, Hasting, Roth, & Britton, 2012). The goal of this intervention study was to investigate the influence of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) training in comparison to Karate training on emotional wellbeing and cognitive performance in older adults with a mean age of 63.5 years (age range: 52-81). The experimental design incorporated three different groups, a MBSR group (N=23), a Karate Group (N=15) and a waiting-control group (N=17). Before and after the 8-week training period, the following emotional wellbeing parameters were measured: Life orientation, stress, mental state, anxiety, depression and health. For the evaluation of cognitive performance cognitive processing speed, working memory, spatial processing and attention were measured. Both trainings resulted in some significant improvements from pre- to post-testing in measures of emotional wellbeing and cognitive performance: Participants of the MBSR training showed a minor increase in lack of social approval and felt more rested, calmer and less restless than the other two groups. Participants in the Karate group reported a higher improvement in the mental summary score of the short form of the health survey (SF-12) and in the cognitive processing speed than the other two groups. The missing positive effect of MBSR on cognitive performance in older adults has to be investigated further.

Mindfulness and self-compassion as predictors of humor styles in US and Russia

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Mindfulness and self-compassion are increasingly coming into mainstream psychological research in the Western world as they correlate with and predict various aspects of mental health and positivity. However, little is known about their relationship to another construct that is also associated with well-being, that is, humor. The unique contribution of the present study is in exploring whether mindfulness, as measured by the Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS; Brown & Ryan, 2003) and self-compassion, as measured by the Self-Compassion Scale-Short Form (SCS-SF; Raes, Pommier, Neff, & Van Gucht, 2011) would predict the types of humor use and whether this prediction will be the same across the cultures. 90 US and 106 Russian college students responded to a survey consisting of three measures: MAAS, SCS-SF, and the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ; Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003). Our findings suggest that mindfulness and self-compassion can serve as predictors of humor styles, that is, more mindful and self-compassionate participants tend to use more adaptive humor styles and less maladaptive styles, yet the contribution of these two variables to the variance in humor styles depend on the culture. Additionally, the study found cross-cultural differences and similarities in mindfulness, self-compassion, and humor use, as well as demonstrated the applicability of the translated scales to the Russian sample.

From Neuroscience to More Peaceable World

Bette Kiernan
Private Practice

Global violence may be increased by “we” against “they” attitudes in the Bible and the Koran. Individuals more easily show compassion toward those closest family and social circles. The major narratives in sacred texts are the same. By pointing original family connections between warring groups, potential for compassionate exchange may increase and encourage reconciliation within the human family. A new story, through focus upon commonly held ethical heroes and positive spiritual values in the Bible and the Koran may provide a stepping-stone to a more peaceable planet. A social order based upon compassionate direction, rather than cruelty, needs to be encouraged. The actions of our shared ancestors need be reevaluated—their worthwhile behaviors consciously used as role models for healing a troubled world. Currently, shared endeavors such as Palestinian and Israeli orchestras, comedy groups, children’s camps, and women’s gatherings further support close circle relationships. Encouragement for movements toward reconciliation enables expansive peace building. The century’s long family discord of the families of Abraham may once again re-align through shared efforts to manage contemporary threats of global warming. Should rapid climatic changes impact the jointly inhabited regions of Israelis and Arabs, perhaps sharing may evolve as global warming becomes new “enemy”. Those with shared interest in compassion and neuroscience teachings are called to feed the “good wolf” in outer world relationships as well as within the inner world. New pathways may then widen for social transformation and the healing of ancient conflicts.

Brief Mindfulness Induction Increases Pro-Environmental and Pro-Social Behavior

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University of California, Santa Barbara

Previous research has demonstrated that brief mindfulness inductions can enhance attention and other cognitive skills, but few studies have examined the effects of such a short and relatively simple practice in the social and environmental domains. Even fewer studies attempt to directly relate pro-social behaviors to mindfulness practice devoid of any explicit instructions to cultivate compassion. In our study, we examined the impact of a brief mindfulness induction on pro-social and pro-environmental behaviors. Undergraduate subjects (N=40) were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. Subjects either underwent a 10 minute mindfulness of breathing induction in which they were instructed to merely follow the breath or read a filler article for the same length of time on human respiration. Subjects in the mindfulness condition were more likely to exhibit greater environmental mindfulness (recycling) than control subjects. A greater proportion of mindfulness subjects were also willing to come back to the lab to help the researcher after being told that their data file had been lost relative to controls, suggesting an increased tendency toward pro-social helping behaviors. Relative to controls, the mindfulness induction decreased the tendency to place recyclable paper in the trash [$t(38)=2.147$, $p<.001$], increased recycling behavior [$t(38)=1.378$, $p=.011$], and increased willingness to help another with no direct benefit to oneself [$t(38)=1.125$, $p=.026$]. These findings suggest that even a brief mindfulness induction can contribute to pro-environmental and pro-social behavior, paving the way for future research on environmental and social mindfulness.

What About “Mindfulness” in the Mindfulness-Based Interventions?

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Since the time of the Beatles, the Eastern mysticism appears to have been part of the perennially evolving faddish phenomena in the West. However, there is nothing “mystical” or metaphysical about the practice. To be sure, Buddhist meditation in particular is based on the experiential and phenomenological “education” system first taught by a pragmatic human teacher, now referred to as the Buddha, 2600 years ago. In this paper, I will discuss a few of the findings from research conducted on the therapeutic effects of psychotherapy programs that incorporate Buddhist-based meditation techniques, commonly referred to as “mindfulness-based” treatment, on various physical symptoms and illnesses. Specifically, the focus will be on the treatment of chronic pain, depression, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which have been reported to respond well to the mindfulness training. One aim of this paper, then, is to demonstrate the documented effectiveness, as well as limitations, of such techniques as employed by contemporary psychotherapy. My central claim, however, is that “mindfulness” may not be a multivalent “cure for all” as it is often “advertised” to be. In other words, it is only one essential part of the complex and comprehensive training system of the mind taught by the Buddha; and as such, by itself, it is incomplete in helping individuals to truly free themselves from their dis-eases. Calling any practice “Buddhist-based,” then, requires a critical attention to the other indispensable portions of the educational enterprise, such as observance of the precepts.

Meditation training modulates empathetic physiological resonance without interfering with the ability to correctly identify the emotional state of others

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Empathetic responding depends on the ability to accurately read the emotional states of others, and is typically promoted by greater physiological coherence between observers and target individuals. One of the goals of meditation training is to increase compassionate and empathetic responding in practitioners. Here, participants in an intensive meditation retreat and a group of wait-list control participants were assessed on their degree of accuracy in reading another person's ongoing emotional state while their physiological measurements (cardiac rate, finger pulse amplitude, skin conductance) were recorded. Participants watched films depicting the marital interactions of different couples and were asked to continuously rate how one of the individuals in the interaction was feeling using a rating dial ranging from "extremely positive" to "extremely negative". The task was performed at both the beginning and end of a three-month meditation retreat to examine the role of meditation training on emotional responding. Retreatants practiced focused-attention techniques as well as ancillary practices centered on generating benevolent aspirations for others daily during the retreat. Behavioral ratings and physiological responses were compared to the ratings and physiological responses of the target individual in the film clips. Preliminary results suggest that after meditation training, retreat participants had less physiological linkage, though they maintained the ability to correctly identify the emotional state of the target individuals. Thus, it is possible that meditation practice may allow one to notice and reflect on the emotional state of another without becoming overly aroused or simply mimicking the emotional state of the other.

Relationships between mindfulness and the uses of humor styles in the U. S. and Jordan

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In today's world people use humor and mindfulness to cope with everyday situations and the difficulties that accompany them. However, the impact that culture has on these processes is not well understood. The aim of this study was to ascertain if there were any cross-cultural differences or similarities in the relationships of mindfulness and humor styles between participants in the U.S. and Jordan. This study attempted to explore if mindfulness, represented by the Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS; Brown & Ryan, 2003), would be associated with types of humor style, adaptive or maladaptive, that the participants would use in their everyday lives. Adaptive humor styles, affiliative and self-enhancing, are considered to be beneficial for one's own overall psychological well-being and maintaining positive relationships. In contrast the maladaptive styles, aggressive and self-defeating, are considered to be harmful to this well-being and possibly destructive for relationships. 90 U.S. and 124 Jordanian participants responded to questionnaires with two measures: MAAS and the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ; Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003). In the U.S. sample mindfulness showed positive correlations with the adaptive humor styles, whereas showing negative correlations with the maladaptive humor styles. However in the Jordanian sample, mindfulness only negatively correlated with the self-defeating humor style. Future research should explore the reasons for these cultural differences in relationships between mindfulness and humor styles. The equivalency of the Arabic translations of the two measures should be further tested on larger samples of Jordanian participants.

Mindfulness as Mitigating Influence on the Fundamental Attribution Error

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This research extends the growing body of work on how mindfulness reduces cognitive biases by investigating its effect on the fundamental attribution error (FAE; Ross, 1977). The FAE is the tendency to draw inferences about individuals' enduring dispositions based on behaviors that can alternatively be explained by the context (Gilbert & Malone, 1995). Mindfulness disrupts automatic mental operations (Kang, Gruber, & Gray, 2013; Lilies & Hayes, 2007; Kang, Gray, & Dovidio, 2013), reduces specific biases (Kiken & Shook, 2011; Hafenbrack, Kinias, & Barsade, 2014; Lueke & Gibson, 2014) and may enable individuals to process internal and external stimuli without distortion (Vago & Silbersweig, 2012). Trait mindfulness in 325 participants was measured with the Mindful Attention and Awareness Scale (Brown & Ryan, 2003) and the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (Baer et al., 2006). The participants then read a controversial speech by a CEO on the benefits of child labor and were randomly assigned to a speech condition (adapted from Jones & Harris, 1967). In the free (scripted) condition, they were told that the speech was freely written by the CEO (tightly scripted by a Board of Directors). They were then asked to rate the extent to which the CEO's speech could be explained by the situation as opposed to his disposition, and to rate the his warmth. The more similar the ratings between speech conditions, the more severe the FAE. Controlling for age, gender, affect and child labor attitudes, we find that acting with awareness and mindful observing reduce the FAE.

Here Now - The flavor of understanding Leadership - the spiritual way

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Many a times, in our lives we selectively interpret and understand based on the what and how ignoring the why. If we view mindfulness in the same breadth then several versions that emerge about it: it's a mental state; a skill; a technique; a trait etc. According to David S. Black, "mindfulness" originally was associated with esoteric beliefs and religion, and "a capacity attainable only by certain people" scientific researchers have translated the term into measurable terms, providing a valid operational definition of mindfulness. In this paper, we elaborate the 'why', explain the fundamental approach of capacity and capability which impacts individual self, leaders and organizations and the base of all this is mindfulness.

Savoring and Dampening Positive Emotions: The Impact of Emotion Regulation Strategies on Well-Being and the Self

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Savoring is a strategy that can be utilized to maintain and amplify one's positive emotional experience. This emotion regulation strategy often uses mindfulness by deliberately directing attention to the pleasant experience at the moment. Savoring has been positively associated with present extraversion, happiness, optimism, and self-esteem as well as less neuroticism, depression, and hopelessness. Conversely, individuals can dampen their positive emotional experiences, which decreases positive affect and is also associated with rumination, depression, and physiological symptoms. Although previous research has shown that positive emotion regulation strategies can impact global well-being—with savoring improving well-being while dampening being detrimental—little is known about the implications of these coping strategies on distinct positive emotions. Our study examines the correlation between participants' (N = 85) reports of savoring and dampening with seven positive emotions:

ns: joy, contentment, pride, love, compassion, amusement, and awe. Individuals who tend to savor their positive experiences reported more joy, compassion, and amusement. We also found that individuals who tend to dampen their positive emotional experiences reported less pride and contentment, which are evaluative emotions closely linked to our self-concept. This poster will discuss how these results contribute to our understanding of the benefits of taking in the good by savoring the present moment, and the consequences of dampening positive emotions to our sense of self.