



Meditation and Mindfulness

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Background

Mindfulness meditation is a type of meditation based on sensations and feelings within the moment. It is done without interpretation or judgement, and often involves breathing methods as well as guided imagery to calm the body and mind.

- The self-determination theory conveys that individuals have motivation to grow and change by three essential psychological needs, which are autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these needs are fulfilled, people experience a greater sense of motivation, well-being, and growth. Additionally, mindfulness focused therapy can improve symptoms including chronic pain and anxiety.
- Meditation, specifically, Loving Kindness Meditation (LKM), decreases the amount of social negativity in relationships (Uchino, Bert N., et al.)
- LKM comes from Buddhist beliefs, and focuses on using people as objects of attention to increase important feelings in romantic relationships such as love, care, and compassion.
- Many believe that meditation is key in feeling more connected to your body and the universe along with having better mood and better able to deal with stress (Uchino, Bert N., et al.)
- Mindful Based Interventions (MBI) are focused on teaching individuals how to incorporate mindfulness as a practice in their daily lives by setting the goal of meditating 6 days a week for at least 45 minutes.
 - For example, music therapy is the use of music to improve cognitive and emotional development.

Results

- Meditation practitioners score slightly higher on MAAS than non-meditators (although the sample size was small). Lifestyle and health behavior between meditators and non-meditators were not controlled in the preliminary study. The design doesn't allow the conclusion to be drawn that the differences in well-being are genuine results of meditative exercises. Session duration of meditation did not correlate significantly to mindfulness, but session duration and well-being outcomes did have significant correlations (Keune & Forintos).
- Overall it was found that those who had meditated experienced positive effects. "Specifically, engaging in meditation practice was associated with a participant's lower-than-usual (i.e., lower than the average) perceived stress and negative affect and a higher-than-usual positive affect to the extent that it was associated with the participant's higher-than-usual mindful responding" (Lacaille et. al). Those who had meditated for longer showed an even greater level of mindful responding to daily events which directly effected lower stress and more positive mood.
- For the LKM studies, the first week was centered on general meditation habits like posture or breathing, and self love. The second week focused on loved ones specifically, the following weeks focused on strangers, acquaintances, conflicted relationships and all living beings. Tests such as the Test of negative social exchanges, Interpersonal support evaluation list (ISEL), Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D), and Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) were taken before and after the study (Uchino, Bert N., et al.)

Variable	Social support	Social negativity	Depression	Life satisfaction
Social support	1.00			
Social negativity	-0.04 (p = 0.46)	1.00		
Depression	-0.05 (p = 0.45)	0.53 (p = 0.07)	1.00	
Life satisfaction	0.11 (p = 0.38)	-0.46 (p = 0.11)	-0.52 (p = 0.08)	1.00

Uchino, Bert N., et al.

Method

- The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale or the MAAS is a 15 item scale in which the participant ranks their answers to opinion based questions. A higher score on the MAAS signifies a higher degree of mindfulness. The highest correlation was reported between mindfulness and attentiveness (Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale) There were a total of 60 participants, specifically 15 males and 15 females in a group of meditators and nonmeditators (Keune & Forintos).
- For the pilot study about relationships and meditation; 9 participants, 4 men and 5 women with an average age of 30, 67% white, average yearly income varying from \$0 to \$40,000 and above, education levels varying from high school graduate, partial college, to college graduate participated.
- Each participant attended weekly one hour LKM workshops over six weeks led by an LKM meditation educator, and completed questionnaires before and after.
- The DMRS scale is used to measure the frequency of a participants mindfulness throughout the day. A similar scale is used for perceived stress where an individual is given a set of statements and ranked how they related to the sentence from a 1-10. The 10 Item International Positive and Negative Affect Schedule Short Form is also very similar where participants rank 1-10 how much they experienced positive or negative effect feelings (inspiration vs. hostility). There were a total of 117 participants enrolled in a program focused on mindful-based stress reduction.

Variable	Pre	Post	t	SE	p
Social support	2.16	2.28	4.38	0.02	0.001
Depression	33.67	29.78	1.96	1.98	0.042
Life satisfaction	4.50	4.76	0.92	0.28	0.19
Social negativity	1.20	0.97	2.06	0.12	0.037

Uchino, Bert N., et al.



Discussion

- There was a significant negative association between mindfulness and anxiety. Mindfulness training can reduce symptoms of anxiety (Keune & Forintos).
- For the data collected from the patients post pilot study, it can be inferred that there was a decrease in depression, social negativity, and an increase in life satisfaction (Uchino, Bert N., et al.)
 - The LKM practice had a positive effect on the subjects, as it decreased personal negative effects such as depression and increase personal positive effects like life satisfaction
 - The decrease in social negativity shows how loving oneself can project love onto others, as hostility, insensitivity, and ridicule was also seen to be decreased within the subjects relationships
 - The data suggests a strong link between practicing LKM and having healthy relationships
- The study strongly proves that incorporating meditating into an everyday routine will show positive outcomes within daily life and especially in mental health. "These findings lend support for the recommendation that for meditation practice to lead to sustained psychological well-being, at least for MBSR participants, it is important to maintain a regular (i.e., daily) meditation practice" (Lacaille et. al.)
- Music also serves as a medium for meditation. By listening to instrumental music and using it to ground yourself, there are added benefits such as emotional regulation and improved mental health.

References

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