

Effects of Mindfulness on Psychological Health

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Abstract:

"Within the past few decades, there has been a surge of interest in the investigation of mindfulness as a psychological construct and as a form of clinical intervention. This article reviews the empirical literature on the effects of mindfulness on psychological health. We begin with a discussion of the construct of mindfulness, differences between Buddhist and Western psychological conceptualizations of mindfulness, and how mindfulness has been integrated into Western medicine and psychology, before reviewing three areas of empirical research: cross-sectional, co-relational research on the associations between mindfulness and various indicators of psychological health; intervention research on the effects of mindfulness-oriented interventions on psychological health; and laboratory-based, experimental research on the immediate effects of mindfulness inductions on emotional and behavioral functioning. We conclude that mindfulness brings about various positive psychological effects, including increased subjective well-being, reduced psychological symptoms and emotional reactivity, and improved behavioral regulation. The review ends with a discussion on mechanisms of change of mindfulness interventions and suggested directions for future research."

Keywords: Mindfulness, Health, Psychology, Emotions etc.

I. Introduction

Basics and Principles of Mindfulness

The act of focusing one's attention and awareness on the present moment without making any judgments about that moment is the practice known as mindfulness. The practice of mindfulness has been shown to lower levels of stress, raise levels of self-awareness, and improve general well-being.

The exercise of mindfulness enables us to put some space between ourselves and the responses we have, allowing us to deconstruct the reflexes that have become automatic for us. Individuals can build and deepen their mindfulness practice with the assistance of the essential guidelines that are included in the principles of mindfulness. These guiding principles offer a foundation for comprehending and practicing mindfulness on a day-to-day basis in one's life.

What are the Basic Principles of Mindfulness Related to Anxiety?

"The basic principles of mindfulness related to anxiety include focusing on the present moment, observing thoughts and feelings without judgment, accepting things as they are, and cultivating a non-reactive attitude towards stressors. Mindfulness also emphasizes the importance of self-compassion and self-care practices to manage anxiety." Let's enjoy reading the below lines:

"Inhale peace, exhale chaos. Embrace the present moment and let mindfulness be your guide."

"As mindfulness reveals beauty, within, find comfort in the gentle whispers of your breath amid the noise of life."

These lines are a gentle reminder to pause and focus on the present.

According to Kabat-Zinn, "Mindfulness is an awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally,"

Mindfulness refers to the discipline of bringing one's full attention and concentration to bear on the events and sensations that are occurring in the here and now, while at the same time cultivating an attitude of openness, inquiry, and acceptance. The condition of being mindful can be defined as an awareness that is both active and non-judgmental of the present moment. It entails paying attention to one's thoughts, feelings, physiological sensations, and the environment around one without getting caught up in judgments or getting distracted by other things.

Individuals typically gain a higher sense of self-awareness and a deeper connection to the present moment via the practice of mindfulness, which can be cultivated through a variety of approaches such as meditation, breathing exercises, and activities that focus attention on the current moment. Mindfulness increases our awareness of ourselves, others, and the world around us. Instead of thinking about what we are going to say next, we can take the time to appreciate the breathtaking view of the sunset or actually pay attention to what a friend has to say. The majority of people are finding that their lives are becoming increasingly hectic. Because of technological advancements, there is always something for us to do, and we rarely have the chance to simply "be." It's not uncommon to see people multitasking, whether it's texting while watching TV or checking their phone while strolling down the street. Although the introduction of new technologies has unquestionably ushered in a plethora of positive changes and improvements in our lives, it is also a potential source of stress and feelings of being overwhelmed. All of this has the potential to raise stress levels, but practicing mindfulness can help.

It rightly said, "When we practice Mindfulness, we learn to become aware of what is happening in the present moment, without judging or evaluating, which allows us to experience a greater connection with life, internally and externally."

Dr. Eric López Maya – Founder of the Mexican Institute of Mindfulness.

II. Effects of Mindfulness on Psychological Health

The practice of mindfulness has been the subject of a significant amount of research, which has revealed that it has several beneficial impacts on a person's mental health. The following is a list of some of the most important benefits of practicing mindfulness on one's psychological well-being:

1	Reduce stress levels
2	More awareness of emotions
3	Management of Anxiety and depression
4	Cultivates a deep sense of self-awareness
5	Enhanced overall well-being and standard of living
6	Enhance focus, attention, and concentration
7	Increased self-esteem
8	Fostering kindness
9	Develop an attitude of gratitude
10	Emotional Regulations

III. Gaetan Pellerin's 4 Cs of Mindfulness:

Gaetan Pellerin is the author of a book all about mindful negotiation: "Mindful Negotiation: Becoming More Aware in the Moment, Conquering Your Ego and Getting Everyone What They Really Want." Gaetan took his fascination with understanding human behavior and drive and applied it to the negotiation process. He found that many negotiators focus on planning and strategy but underemphasize how emotion plays into negotiations.

C #1: Connection with ourselves

Breathe and focus on what's going on inside yourself. Are you tense? Angry? Afraid? Disappointed? C1 is about taking the first step to calm your mind so you can focus.

C #2: Curiosity

Choose to be curious about your inner experience. There is no objective or goal to solve what's happening other than to observe and be curious about how you're feeling.

"I feel like I'm going to explode."

"I feel like this is the end of the world."

In Gaetan's book, he shares some questions that can help you answer why you feel the way you are and who the emotion belongs to. Does it stem from something a parent said when you were young? Is it true that you have no power?

When Gaetan consults with a customer, he has them talk to him like they're talking to a customer or salesperson. They don't exhibit the same fear. People can deliver bad news or have a hard conversation with him because they aren't connected to the fear they'd face in the actual conversation. It helps them see how they can react in a situation where they're confident and fearless.

C #3: Compassion

Sometimes you may feel that you're not skilled or that you can't do something. You're judging yourself for whatever happens. When you do that, it's hard to move beyond what's there. If you struggle to communicate or speak in public, judging yourself won't help you improve. Compassion is a cornerstone of the process.

C #4: Change or Choice

If you're angry, can you decide to let it go? Can you decide that the procurement people in front of you want to intimidate you? Can you change your behavior? Can you be more in the moment? It's about moving your behavior away from your instinctual unconscious reactions. You may have to look your fear in the face and make a decision that feels uncomfortable, a choice that your ego wouldn't naturally make.

IV. Managing unexpected emotions in others

The best part of Gaetan's framework is that you can apply it yourself and others. So you can utilize it within a negotiation if your counterpart is displaying unexpected emotion. When someone is emotional, they either want to be seen or be heard. So you need to connect with compassion and be curious about their reaction.

If someone is having a conversation with you and they explode in anger, you can address it. "I see that you are angry at me; what's going on? If I upset you, I'm sorry because that was not my intent." Acknowledging that emotion is the entry way to a better conversation. People don't want to deal with their emotions, but if they don't, those emotions become the elephant in the room. You can't negotiate with persuasion when someone is emotional. It also helps you to detach from their reaction because it may not be your fault. But you need to understand what triggered them to get to that emotional response.

V. Mindfulness and Related Concepts

Mindfulness is frequently linked to and intertwined with a number of other philosophies, concepts, and methods of practice.

Mindfulness: Embracing the Present Moment. Let's dive into some key concepts that go hand in hand with the beautiful practice of mindfulness. Unlock the power of mindfulness with these essential key concepts. Here are some key concepts that are closely related to mindfulness:

1. Self-compassion
2. Meditation
3. Stress Management
4. Attitude of Gratitude
5. Therapy
6. Emotional Regulation
7. Body, Mind and Soul Connection

Sam J. Zizzi in Chapter 1 "Core Concepts of Mindfulness" mentioned Five core concepts of mindfulness. These are as follows:

- (a) present-focused awareness
- (b) An accepting or open attitude
- (c) A non-judging approach
- (d) Compassion for self and others
- (e) The energy of mindfulness.

Mindfulness is not an easy concept to define but can be best understood as the process of drawing novel distinctions. It does not matter whether what is noticed is important or trivial, as long as it is new to the viewer. Actively drawing these distinctions keeps us situated in the present. It also makes us more aware of the context and perspective of our actions than if we rely upon distinctions and categories drawn in the past. Under this latter situation, rules and routines are more likely to govern our behavior, irrespective of the current circumstances, and this can be construed as mindless behavior. (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000a: 1-2).

R.A.I.N: A Four-Step Process for Using Mindfulness in Difficult Times

RAIN- A Practice of Radical Compassion

RAIN -Mindfulness practice at its finest! Developed by the incredible psychologist and meditation teacher, Tara Brach. This tool possesses the capacity to effectively navigate emotions and situations that are complex or arduous in nature. The acronym RAIN serves as a mnemonic device that facilitates the cultivation of mindfulness and compassion through a systematic approach consisting of four distinct steps i.e. Acknowledge the current situation, permit the experience to exist in its present state without alteration, Conduct a thorough and diligent investigation with curiosity and attentiveness and Cultivate a sense of self-compassion. Let's talk about the four steps of R.A.I.N. and embrace the present moment.

R.A.I.N:

Recognize: - recognizing the emotion without judgment and embracing the reality of this challenging emotion/situation.

Allow: -allow the emotions or sensations to manifest themselves without attempting to repress or alter them. It involves Cultivating an attitude of acceptance and non-resistance.

Investigate: - investigate emotions or thoughts with curiosity and kindness. Self-Reflection Time It's all about asking yourself those deep questions, diving into your emotions, uncovering their roots, and exploring the thoughts and beliefs that come along.

Nurture: - nurture yourself with self-compassion and self-care.

Mindfulness is not (necessarily) . . .

- *Calmness.* You can just as easily be mindful of your anxiety and tension as you can be mindful of your feelings of joy or relaxation. There is much to be learned by mindfully experiencing various states of suffering, and many authors would argue it is through this sort of mindful suffering that growth occurs.

- *Meditation.* Sitting still is a common way of helping to teach mindfulness, but it is not mindfulness, nor does it immediately improve mindfulness. What you do during meditation and how you experience sitting affect the outcomes. You can easily just “sit still” to escape your stressful life, and your mind can be aimlessly wandering during meditation or a yoga class. Observing these patterns of “avoidance” or “aimlessness” can be a path towards greater mindfulness but the exercise itself is not.

- *Passive.* The idea of *just sitting* and not *doing something* with every moment is uncomfortable to many in Western cultures trained to multi-task their lives into maximal productivity. Mindfulness, however, is far from passive (yet, it is gentle), and it is far from simple. Anyone who has tried to meditate, practice yoga, or just breathe can attest to the difficulty of focusing or channeling thoughts and emotions while being still. This process is quite active and requires effort to maintain and re-direct your attention from moment to moment.

- *Something else to achieve so your life will be better, something to master.*

Do more. Achieve more. Be more. These common mottos pervade modern life, yet they do little but create stress and a pervasive sense of dissatisfaction with our current existence and performance. The core of mindfulness is that everything you need is already available in the present moment if you tune in. There is nothing else to achieve besides that, and many other orientations or approaches will often create confusion and frustration in the student of mindfulness.

- *An escape from the pain of this world.* It is certainly a trap to believe that to practice mindfulness is to escape from your problems and suffering. The truth is somewhat the opposite: the point would be to use mindful awareness to experience and understand your pain and suffering from a different, even equanimous, perspective. Become curious and interested in your suffering; approach it, as opposed to avoiding it.

- *“Totally,” “completely,” or “fully” anything.* One of the issues in much of the writing in both academic and popular texts on mindfulness that send Mark and me around the bend is the pervasive use of *absolute* language. When we read absolute language (e.g., all, every, totally, completely, fully) in discussions of mindfulness, we know the statements are probably wrong, or, at least, misleading. Readers of mindfulness scripts or listeners to CDs are often gently instructed to “focus fully on the moment,” “become totally aware of your breath,” or “completely engage with your current emotions.” Well, folks, that isn’t going to happen.

To set up people with subtle demands and expectations that they should be able to “completely” or “totally” do anything is to also set them up for failure and disappointment, both of which are antithetical to the spirit of mindfulness and self-compassion.

For example, when instructing clients in mindful exercises, we often prepare them with something like this: “As you focus on your breath you will probably find that your mind wanders to other thoughts or sensations, and the focus on the breath is lost. That’s perfectly fine because that is what our brains do. They are messy, busy places that take us on walkabout all the time. As long as you keep coming back to the breath over and over again, even if it is just for a couple seconds before your brain takes you away again, you are doing just fine. And, in reality, there is no way to do this exercise wrong. Whatever happens is just more data for you to pay attention to.”

The Science behind Mindfulness Meditation:

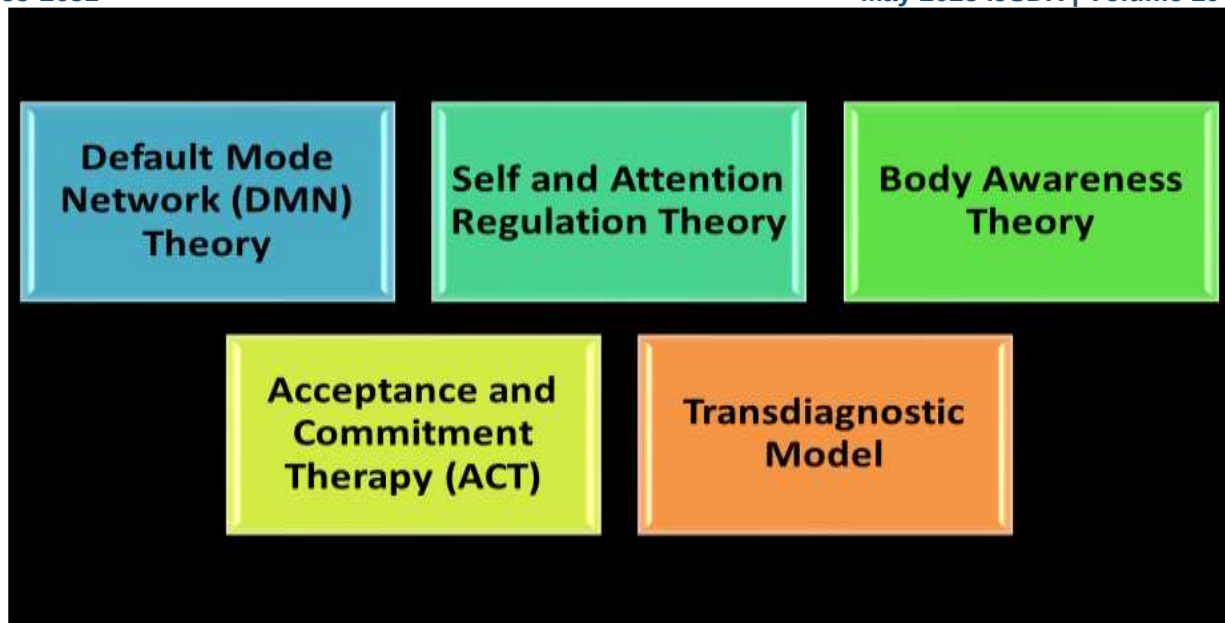
Embracing Mindfulness

The concept of mindfulness is simply captivating! From its underlying mechanisms to its incredible effects, there are countless theories and frameworks that aim to unravel its beauty.

Exploring Theories of Mindfulness

Here are some prominent theories that will blow your mind!

Theories of Mindfulness



Description of Theories

Default Mode Network (DMN) Theory

The functioning of the default mode network (DMN), which is a network of brain areas that are active during mind-wandering and self-referential thinking, is said to be changed by the practice of mindfulness, according to this idea. This may contribute to improved emotional regulation and decreased mind-wandering.

Self and Attention Regulation Theory

This theory indicates that consistent engagement in mindfulness exercises enhances the capacity to detach from intrusive thoughts and emotions, resulting in enhanced cognitive regulation, self-regulation, and concentration. The ability to engage in self-regulation enables individuals to effectively manage their responses to both internal and external experiences, resulting in a reduction of stress and an improvement in overall well-being.

Body Awareness Theory

It appears that cultivating mindfulness via practice leads to increased interoceptive awareness. Interception is the capacity to sense sensations occurring within one's own body.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

It suggests that mindfulness can help individuals become more psychologically flexible by assisting people in observing their experiences and accepting them without making value judgments about them.

Transdiagnostic Model

According to this theory, treatments that are centered on the practice of mindfulness offer far-reaching benefits, the consequences of which can be seen in a wide range of psychiatric conditions and symptoms. It suggests that practicing mindfulness can address common underlying processes such as cognitive reactivity, mood control, and self-compassion.

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