

Nursing Mindfully: A Mixed-Method Exploration of Student Nurses' Experience of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

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What is Mindfulness?

- A state of being; a way of life
- Originates in Buddhist Vipassana Tradition
- Living in the present moment
- Awareness of and attention to thoughts, feelings, actions; noticing & accepting, not judging
- ***“Mindfulness practice means that we commit fully in each moment to be present; inviting ourselves to interface with this moment in full awareness, with the intention to embody as best we can an orientation of calmness, mindfulness and equanimity right here and right now.” (Jon Kabat-Zinn)***

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

- Course in mindfulness practice
- Developed University of Massachusetts Medical Centre 70s/80s
- 8-week course, 2-2.5 hrs/wk, plus retreat day
- Techniques and concepts include:
 - Body scan
 - Mindful breathing
 - Mindful movement
 - Being present in the moment
 - Thoughts are not facts
 - Cultivation of compassion for self and others

Physiological Effects of Meditation

- Consistent neuroimaging studies show increased activity in dorsolateral prefrontal cortex
 - (Baerentsen 2001, Cresswell et al 2007, Farb et al 2007)
- Scans of experienced meditators show increased cortical thickness in same area
 - Lazar et al (2005)
- Increase in grey matter density in hippocampus and insular cortex
 - Holzel et al (2008)
- Increases in telomere length and telomerase activity
 - Hoge et al (2013), Schutte & Malouf (2014)



Being a Student Nurse

- Today, student nurses must manage:
 - Academic work
 - Finances
 - Relationships
 - Expectations
 - Transitions
 - Stress of clinical practice
- Universities should be providing students with opportunities for self-development, cultivation of resilience, and encouraging clarity of thought



Nursing Mindfully

- A mixed-method, exploratory study of student nurses' experiences of MBSR (n=30)
- All participants receive MBSR
- Data collection includes conducting focus groups and administering the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and the Sense of Coherence (SOC) questionnaires before and after the course
- Statistical testing of questionnaire responses
- Thematic analysis of focus group transcripts



Statistical Data: Phase I

- Recruited 93% of target (14 of 15)
- 4 participants (28%) left the study early
- Attrition rate similar to similar research
- Improvements in PSS scores (-2.6; n.s.)
- Improvements in SOC scores (+0.93, n.s.)



Focus Group Data: Emergent Themes

➤ Seeing Anew:

- **Sense of connection to life**
- “I take a lot of enjoyment out of life in general...I just feel more aware of everything I am doing...just getting out and doing things...goings for walks and things like that, things that I never did before...just feel a lot happier as a person...more fulfilled” – Chris
- “And things look different, although they're the same...things that you walk past every day, but then, it's like it's all been filmed in HD. And so I found that doing some mindfulness, and then doing some work, I found it a lot better for my productivity.” – Cat



Focus Group Data: Emergent Themes

➤ Seeing Anew:

- **Awareness of thought patterns**
- “I found that recognising my own behaviour, initially, really hard and it really hurt me cos I was like ‘why am I so horrible to myself all the time?’...and I think, previously, I was ignoring my body and constantly telling myself off in my head” – Anne
- “Yes, all that sensory information, you're bombarded with stuff, aren't you? And work, and the university. So I'm more selective now. Okay, I'm taking this into account, and I'm choosing, and paying much better attention to things.” - Steve



Focus Group Data: Emergent Themes

➤ Integrating Mindfulness:

- “And then I discovered that, actually, I can do anything and meditate, so I can do cooking and I can meditate - well, certain things I couldn't be mindful. And I understood why my husband loves cooking supper and listening to his radio, because he was sort of relaxing, rather than just dealing with all the squabbles and concerns.” - Babs
- “So I found, it was very demanding, time consuming, but I found my own way of doing this meditation, that I sort of adjusted the way, how it suited my lifestyle.” - Nev



Focus Group Data: Emergent Themes

➤ Influencing Student Experience

➤ Effects in clinical practice:

- “I’m more engaged...better at listening and responding” – Dee
- “I was on placement...in A&E...and on my first day they put me in resus and I’d never seen a cardiac arrest...and then we got the little phone call – it was a cardiac arrest, five minutes...I was like ‘right, I need to calm down’...I did a three-minute breathing technique and I was like ‘right bring myself together’...and then I was fine! ... I was absolutely fine! ... and the doctors were like ‘you handled that really well’” – Eve

➤ Effects in academic work:

- “I used them [the techniques] before the [Health Psychology & Behaviour Change] presentation...it chilled me out” - Chris
- “I find it quite useful to go back to the base-point of the assignment, like in the body scan, when I get lost” - Fee



Focus Group Data: Emergent Themes

➤ Experiencing the Course

➤ Sharing:

- “I think most people brought up things that they'd been struggling with and being able to see that other people had been struggling with it as well. So it was just nice as support really in terms of just for nurses, nursing students.” - Nev
- “It was nice that we came together at the end after doing a longer meditation and then we could feed back to each other and bounce ideas off each other.” - Steve



Focus Group Data: Emergent Themes

➤ Experiencing the Course

➤ Barriers & Practical Concerns:

- “It was still the time, the amount of commitment and time that you needed to do it. I could manage to come to the sessions but after the first week or two, I was really struggling to fit in doing the meditation.” – Eve
- “I think a better thing would be if the whole eight weeks was over either a block of uni or a block of placement, because it was the transition that was the problem.” - Steve

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Introducing...

Student/Participant/Co-Presenter...

Natalie Fisher



Continuation of Study

- Phase II is concluding in next couple of weeks
- Final analysis & write-up
- Initiative to weave principles of mindfulness into curriculum under development
- Any future collaborators for a multi-site pilot??



Finishing on a Thought



“It is far more important to know what sort of person
a disease has, than what sort of disease a person
has”

Hippocrates