

CREATING A POSITIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE THROUGH MINDFULNESS TRAINING

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BACKGROUND

Creating a workplace environment/culture that provides a positive working experience for midwives can be challenging in an era of increasing demand on an over-stretched service.

Midwives report having little control over their time or space at work, and there is evidence that some attempt to manage their resulting stress levels by reducing their workload to a series of tasks, while neglecting the provision of emotional support to the women in their care.

INTERVENTION

46 maternity staff at the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust attended one of three 8-week Mindfulness courses based on Mark Williams' and Danny Penman's book 'Finding Peace in a Frantic World'. The course aimed to improve the workplace culture by supporting staff to manage stress and anxiety, and increasing resilience and self-compassion. Participants were a mix of hospital (30%) community (30%) and research (9%) midwives, maternity support workers (18%), student midwives (9%), doctors (2%) and lecturers (2%). 43 participants completed the course.

EVALUATION

Participating staff were invited to complete a follow-up questionnaire 4-6 months after attending the mindfulness course, with a response rate of 53% (n=23). Qualitative interviews were conducted with 9 of the midwife participants.

MINDFULNESS

'the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, with compassion, and open-hearted curiosity. Through cultivating mindful awareness, we discover how to live in the present moment rather than brooding about the past or worrying about the future.'

Oxford Mindfulness Centre, 2016

Sustained impact of mindfulness course – responses to the questionnaire (n=23)

Table 1. Impact of mindfulness course

Please rate how you feel participating in the mindfulness course impacted on you	Not relevant n (%)	Negative impact n (%)	No impact n (%)	Positive impact n (%)	Total n
Stress	1 (4.35)	0 (0.00)	3 (13.04)	19 (82.61)	23
Anxiety	3 (13.04)	0 (0.00)	4 (18.18)	15 (68.18)	22
Depression	9 (42.86)	0 (0.00)	6 (28.57)	6 (28.57)	21
Resilience	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	7 (30.43)	16 (69.57)	23
Self-Compassion	1 (4.35)	0 (0.00)	5 (21.74)	17 (73.91)	23
Mindfulness	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (8.70)	21 (91.30)	23

Table 2. Perceived benefits of mindfulness course

Do you feel participating in the mindfulness course has been of benefit to...	Yes n (%)	No n (%)	Total n
Your home life	20 (86.96)	3 (13.04)	23
Your work life	21 (91.30)	2 (8.70)	23
The culture of your workplace	13 (59.09)	9 (40.91)	22

Changes midwives perceived in workplace culture – responses from the qualitative interviews (n=9)

Positivity

I think it creates an environment where you can be positive (Sophie)

I used to come in and think 'oh for heaven's sake, another day... and just feel really tired before I'd even started (Ellie)

Re-connecting

It sort of does make you kind of think back to sometimes why you're doing the job, what you really like about it (Gill)

Coping

I will still take myself off when it's really really busy. Rather than take myself off into the drug room and cry, I might just go in and focus on my breathing (Sophie)

De-escalating

I can now step back and see when other people are being reactionary, whereas before I might have seen that as a completely personal attack on me. And now I try and step back and think 'well no, I can see why she's feeling that way, and perhaps we should suggest tackling this a different way' (Rebecca)

Supporting

We're looking after other people, we have to look after ourselves and each other (Nadia)

Awareness

I mean you do run around with blinkers on. You, you focus on your own work, so being aware of your surroundings and what's going on is definitely beneficial (Jade)

Ripple effect

I mean there's always going to be stresses in life and in the job that we do, but certainly being able to manage it better, even if it's just for one person, it just – the knock on effect it would then have for everybody else as well... because obviously one person comes into contact with so many other people (Ellie)

Better care

Women are going to be happier, because there's gonna be more midwives happy in their role, and I think if we're happy it does reflect on, not only the care we give, but the way that care's received (Rebecca)

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