



SOUTHWEST COUNSELING AND MINDFULNESS CENTER

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction – Wikipedia source

Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) is a program that incorporates mindfulness to assist people with pain and a range of conditions and life issues that were initially difficult to treat in a hospital setting. Developed at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in the 1970s by Professor Jon Kabat-Zinn, MBSR uses a combination of mindfulness meditation, body awareness, and yoga to help people become more mindful.

MBSR programs have been proposed for a wide variety of conditions including stress reduction. Clinical research studies have documented various physical and mental health benefits of mindfulness in different patient categories as well as in healthy adults and children. While MBSR has its roots in spiritual teachings, the program itself is secular.

History

In 1979 Kabat-Zinn founded the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts and nearly twenty years later the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine. Both these institutions supported the successful growth and implementation of MBSR into hospitals worldwide. Today close to 80% of medical schools offer some element of mindfulness training and research and education centers dedicated to mindfulness have proliferated.

Overview

MBSR has been described as "a group program that focuses upon the progressive acquisition of mindful-awareness. The MBSR program is an eight-week workshop taught by certified trainers that entails weekly group meetings (two-hour classes) and a one-day retreat (six-hour mindfulness practice) between sessions six and seven, homework (45 minutes daily), and instruction in three formal techniques: mindfulness meditation, body scanning and simple yoga postures. Body scanning is the first prolonged formal mindfulness technique taught during the first four weeks of the workshop, and entails quietly lying on one's back and focusing one's attention on various regions of the body, starting with the toes and moving up slowly to the top of the head.

According to Kabat-Zinn, mindfulness can be considered a universal human capacity that can foster clear thinking and openheartedness, and the goal of mindfulness is to maintain awareness moment by moment, disengaging oneself from strong attachment to beliefs, thoughts, or emotions, thereby developing a greater sense of emotional balance and well-being. Engaging in mindfulness prevents one from self-criticism, ruminating about the past, or worrying about the future.



SOUTHWEST COUNSELING AND MINDFULNESS CENTER

Extent of Practice

According to a 2014 article in *Time* magazine, mindfulness meditation is becoming popular among people who would not normally consider meditation. The curriculum started by Kabat-Zinn at University of Massachusetts Medical Center has produced nearly 1,000 certified MBSR instructors who are in nearly every state in the US and more than 30 countries. Corporations such as General Mills have made it available to their employees or set aside rooms for meditation. Democratic Congressman Tim Ryan published a book in 2012 titled *A Mindful Nation* and has helped organize regular group meditation periods on Capitol Hill.

Evaluation of Effectiveness

There are multiple domains where mindfulness interventions have been shown to improve outcomes. These include chronic pain, depression symptoms, anxiety, and in the treatment of drug addiction. In cancer patients, MBSR appears to bring about positive psychological outcomes, as well as favorable changes in biomarkers. Studies have also reported that MBSR training results in a smaller post-stress inflammatory response (which includes interleukin-6) and increased telomerase activity, and that MBSR may be effective for symptomatic relief in posttraumatic stress disorder. Further, MBSR may prevent or delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease.

Implications on the Brain

Effect of mindfulness on the brain has been studied using neuroimaging techniques, physiological measures and behavioral tests. Neuroimaging techniques suggest that mindfulness practices such as mindfulness meditation are associated with changes in the anterior cingulate cortex, insula, temporal-parietal junction, fronto-limbic network and default mode network structures. The default mode network of the brain has been suggested as a potential biomarker for monitoring the therapeutic benefits of meditation.