

Editorial: Mindfulness Practices

Mindfulness is considered the ability to be aware in the present moment without judgement or assessment. Jon Kabat-Zinn, the seminal researcher on mindfulness says, "Mindfulness is cultivated by assuming the stance of impartial witness to your own experience." Mindfulness meditation is a meditative practice that can utilize a number of techniques to cultivate awareness, these techniques include but are not limited to breath control, visualization and body scan. Mindfulness techniques are commonly included during a yoga practice to further enhance the participants' awareness of the mind-body connection, for pain management in individuals suffering from illness, in women enduring the pain and physical exertion of child birth, and in athletics where extreme physical performance is the norm.

Research suggests that mindfulness meditation techniques are productive for those suffering from anxiety, depression, eating disorders, or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and for the improvement of cognitive functioning. Emerging scientific literature further suggests that mindfulness meditation is a productive method for improving self-awareness, that may in turn enhance the self-regulation of health-enhancing behaviors. The data suggest that mindfulness meditation is associated with the improvement of health-related behaviors such as exercise adherence and the ingestion of fruits and vegetables, while mindful eating practices are also correlated with optimal body mass index.

This thematic issue on mindfulness further expands the conversation surrounding the utility of mindfulness in a number of critical health-related areas:

In "Exploring Mindfulness Techniques in Physical Therapy to Address Motor Skill" Zipp and Bryan discuss the concept that mindfulness-based therapies can be used to complement current physical therapy interventions when working with patients who need to re-learn a motor skill.

Marshall presents "Exercise and Mindfulness-Based-Stress Reduction; A Multidimensional Approach Towards Cancer Survivorship" in which he discusses the benefits of mindfulness meditation techniques with cancer survivors to combat the many challenges they face, including experiencing depression, anxiety, fear, and pain, and loss of function during and after treatment.

A mixed methods research study titled "Mindfulness and Nutrition in College Aged Students" reveals that a semester-long nutrition class resulted in an improved awareness of eating practices, which then promoted positive changes in eating behaviors in a group of predominantly African American and Hispanic/Latino college aged students.

Marger, Hicklin and Garner investigate the effects of Bikram yoga, which is a specific series of yoga postures performed in extreme heat, on body composition, blood pressure and sleep patterns. Their research suggests that Bikram yoga can have a significant positive effect on the time that it takes to fall asleep.

Substance abuse resulting in addiction has reached epidemic proportions in many parts of the world. In their article, Swarna Weerasinghe and Shaun Bartone present a non-pharmacological theoretical framework they have

developed to manage addiction and recovery that includes a mindfulness-infused three-pronged approach involving a yoga practice, a silent meditation practice, and self-reflection.

Employing mindfulness practices during disease or injury recovery and while in pursuit of optimal health behaviors, can enhance well-being by promoting a non-judgmental connection between the mind (awareness) and the body. Harnessing the power of the mind through mindfulness-oriented experiences may be well utilized while in pursuit of health and wellness overall.

[1] Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living*, 1990, Bantam Dell, New York, New York, pg 33.

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