

INTEGRATION OF MINDFULNESS-BASED PRACTICES IN A RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT SETTING

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Current Challenges in Residential Treatment

- Shorter lengths of stay
- Decreases in funding
- More residents with co-occurring issues including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress (PTSD)
- Increase in younger residents; many with attention deficit issues
- Finding innovative strategies to address challenges

The Therapeutic Community

- An environment that fosters trust, where new values can be formed, and where responsibility is developed by teaching people the ability to respond without impulsivity.
- Longer length of stay allows residents to identify the under-lying issues that contribute to their substance abuse and psychological difficulties
- Develop antidote messages and behavioral patterns which expand both mind and spirit

The Therapeutic Community

- “Community as Method” -George De Leon (2000)
- Whole person approach to treatment
- Emphasis on peer accountability and mutually supportive relationships
- Faculty serve dual roles as role models and counselors
- Community folds around the person, and changes to keep current and innovative

Amity Foundation Teaching and Therapeutic Community Mission Statement

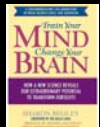
Amity Foundation is dedicated to the inclusion and habilitation of people marginalized by addiction, trauma, criminality, incarceration, poverty, racism, sexism, and violence.

Amity is committed to research, development, implementation, and dissemination of information regarding community building.

Remembrance, Resolution, Reconciliation, Restoration,
Renewal

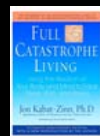


Searching for Solutions



We became interested neuroplasticity of the brain and applications of mindfulness practices which have shown efficacy in:

- managing symptoms of depression
- treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- coping with physical illness and chronic pain
- Prevention of relapse



Distress Tolerance and Relapse

- Distress tolerance is the ability to tolerate distress without impulsively or destructively reducing it
- Psychological stressors increase chance of relapse into substance use, depression, or other maladaptive behaviors
- Growing evidence supports relationship between increasing one's ability to tolerate distress and improved physical and psychological well-being.

Mindfulness: What is it?

“Mindfulness is a metacognitive state of awareness that emerges through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally to unfolding of experience moment by moment.”

~ J. Kabat-Zinn

- The fundamental elements of *mindful meditation* practices include:
 - Body focused attention
 - Shifting focus
 - Mindful movement
 - Mindfulness of everyday activities

Mindfulness: What is it?

- The goal of mindful practice is *mindful practice*
- Practice these things {wisdom, compassion, freedom} as if you already have them
- “Act as if you always had compassion and then you will find you always did.”

~ Bob Aitken Roshi



Mindfulness: What is it?

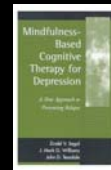
- “The first truth ... is that life is suffering. Avoidance of suffering leads to worse suffering.” ~Aitken, 1982, p.49
- Essential Components:
 - Self Compassion
 - Self Acceptance
 - Openness to Experience
 - Increased *present moment* awareness

Mindfulness: Inspiring Hope

- Teaching “radical acceptance” of:
 - Entirety of *Past* experiences
 - All aspects of the *Present Moment*
 - Realistic expectations of the *Future*
- Experience of:
 - Connection
 - Non-Judgment
 - Essential “goodness”
 - Essential “validity”



Training in MBCT: The Prescribed Course*



- Members of Amity Foundation faculty participated in an intensive training which provided the foundation for integration into our Therapeutic Community.
- The “prescribed” course is designed for outpatient settings where participants meet together as a class for eight (8) weekly two (2) hour sessions (16 contact hours)
- Main work is done at home--between classes-- “the practice”

*This is laid out in detail in Segal's book

Mindfulness at Amity's Circle Tree Ranch



Our Approach

- We remained faithful to the course content but modified the delivery.
- Instead of 8 two hour sessions spread over 8 weeks (16 contact hours), we:
- Designed five longer sessions spread over two and a half weeks (24 contact hours).

Our Approach

- A week before each class, at a community gathering an explanation of the course was given
- *Intent Forms* are distributed and residents are invited to apply
- Participation is limited to 12-14 at a time, with preference given to those who are nearing completion (90 days, 210 days generally)



Mindfulness and Engagement in the Treatment Process

- Our Hypothesis: Mindfulness Practices as a treatment intervention
 - Helps to develop present moment focus through mindfulness practice allowing individuals to fully engage in the treatment process
 - Facilitates awareness of inner resources, improving self-efficacy
 - Encourages the development of self-compassion, self-acceptance, openness to experience, empathy, and choice.

Amity Foundation Circle Tree Ranch

- After developing our approach for the implementation of a MBCT course in a residential setting we:
 - Piloted the course at Amity Foundation's Circle Tree Ranch campus, a Teaching and Therapeutic Community located in Tucson, Arizona
 - Considered this beautiful, peaceful and inspirational setting ideal setting for the development of Mindfulness skills



Mindfulness Practice

- Helps participants turn toward, rather than away from physical pain, trauma, other areas of difficulty.
- Shifts relationship to painful experience providing freedom in attitude and action
- Different from most cognitive therapy in that it encourages accepting thoughts, sensations, etc. rather than training to ignore, or substitute



What we've done

- Between April 2008 and April 2009 we have conducted eight (8) full courses; and three one day "reunions" which included participants who remained in residence following the course.
- A total of 99 participants enrolled in the classes.
- 94 completed; 3 dropped, 2 left Amity early due to personal/family issues



Participant Demographics

- 59% Caucasian
- 22% Native American
- 14% Hispanic
- 5% African American

**Above reflects population distribution at Amity's Circle Tree Ranch at present.*

- Ages ranged from 19 to 57 (mean 33.7 years)
- 59% female and 41% male (one course by design was all women)



Course Enhancements

- Participants used encounter groups to resolve conflict, and talking circles to explore grief and trauma issues
- Increased opportunity for movement--yoga, mindful walking.
- We added a special Sweat Lodge* for class participants and they talked about using mindfulness during Sweat Lodge Ceremony
- Outing on final day--- mindful eating/mindful walking/mindful movement in nearby mountains and local park

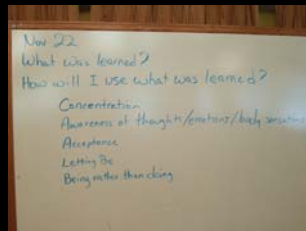
**In Native American culture, the sacred Sweat Lodge Purification Ceremony is a traditional way of cleansing body, mind, and spirit.*



Post-Course Questionnaire

- Participants were asked how the Mindfulness class enhanced their experience while in treatment.*
- * Mean rating (scale of 1-10) was 8.26--highly relevant. (note low drop out rate)
- During follow-up sessions, all participants reported they were continuing some form of mindfulness practice and that they had incorporated the skills into their daily lives.
- This demonstrates the “portability” of mindfulness practices as participants transition to the larger community.

What have we learned?



- Participants report how they have been able to take what they have learned/experienced in the mindfulness class into activities:
 - Increased self-disclosure in groups
 - Ability to control or appropriately express anger
 - Being 'more present' for activities.

What have we learned?

- With participants who have suffered trauma and abuse and tend to blame themselves, we observed an increase in the expression of compassion towards self.
- Because the class (& practice) is non-confrontational and non-judgmental, participants were more willing to talk about deeply personal issues in a much shorter period of time.



What have we learned?

- We have gotten feedback from residents who had not participated in the mindfulness course that they note remarkable and positive changes in those who had participated including:
 - Calmer, easier to talk to, increased ability to appropriately express emotion
 - More 'present', less reactive, really listen



Our Impressions

- We have been surprised at the remarkable change in demeanor/behavior/attitude over a very short period of time in the majority of those who have participated in the classes.
- We have observed a significant reduction in observable symptoms associated with co-occurring disorders including depression, anxiety, and PTSD.
- Many participants suffer from chronic pain or other serious health problems report significant progress in dealing with these situations.

Our Impressions



- The MBCT book makes it clear that the course is designed for those in remission from depression.
- We have included many residents who are dual-diagnosed and clearly struggling--but who have wanted to participate and who have reported significant personal benefit from their participation.
- The residential setting provides considerably more support than the normal out-patient regimen.

Mindful Community?



- One of the things we did not think about when we started was the potential effect on our community when over 50% of residents and staff had completed mindfulness training.
- Residents report a calmer, more tolerant and accepting attitude amongst all at Amity's Circle Tree Ranch.
- We continue to train our Faculty and Staff members in Mindfulness Practices

Professional Development



- Mindfulness practices foster improved empathic attitudes among Amity's Circle Tree Ranch Practitioners.
- Amity faculty and staff who have participated report an increase in self-care and decrease in the tendency to take on others' negative emotions.
- Self-care trickles down to improve the quality of other relationships, reducing "burn-out".

Conclusion



- For over 50 years Therapeutic Communities have had a "tradition of change and innovation" while retaining the basic tenet of "community as method."
- The synthesis of the Mindfulness practices with other treatment methods provide a promising intervention to increase distress tolerance and reduce relapse.
- We encourage other providers to incorporate mindfulness practices in your treatment setting.

Let us know how it works out for you!

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