

Circle Round the Bell: Therapeutic Recreation Mindfulness Programming with Youth in a
Residential Treatment Facility

by

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Mindfulness training is recognized as an effective intervention technique for promoting physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing. In youth residential treatment facilities, youth who experience severe and persistent emotional and psychiatric difficulties participate in long-term therapeutic programming focused on their achievement of treatment goals, often related to coping skills and other life skills development. The purpose of this project was to create a manual for therapeutic recreation specialists working with youth in residential treatment facilities to use for learning to implement mindfulness-based intervention techniques during therapeutic recreation programs with youth. For this project, literature related to best practices for facilitating mindfulness interventions as well as literature which supports the theoretical foundations for "therapeutic recreation mindfulness programming" were reviewed. Information for the manual was also gathered during one year of field trials implementing therapeutic recreation mindfulness programs with youth 7 to 17 years old at Stillwater Residential Treatment Facility (RTF) in upstate New York. During the trial period, youth residents newly admitted to the RTF participated in an "Initial Mindfulness Familiarity Assessment" designed to assess a youth's familiarity with the concept of mindfulness and to introduce youth to basic methods for practicing mindfulness. During their residency at the RTF, youth were given opportunities to participate in various "mindfulness practice sessions" as well as general lessons on mindfulness during weekly scheduled therapeutic recreation programs. Observations and feedback gathered during the trial period as well as interviews of youth residents and staff at the RTF, demonstrated that youth in the RTF willingly and frequently participated in mindfulness-based activities; did develop awareness and skills related to the concept and practice of mindfulness; independently incorporated principles of mindfulness practice into their daily lives; and did utilize mindfulness techniques to help them attain specific treatment plan goals and objectives. The resulting manual contains background information on Stillwater RTF as well as sections explaining the definition of mindfulness, the benefits associated with mindfulness practice and theory that supports the use of mindfulness in therapeutic recreation. Also, directions for facilitating a "mindfulness familiarity assessment" and basic instructions for implementing "mindfulness practice sessions" with youth during therapeutic recreation programming, in a residential treatment facility setting are included in the project manual.

Preface and Acknowledgements

From the beginning, the function of this project has been to bring attention to the need for mindfulness within therapeutic recreation practice and programming. In this project you will find the evidence and theory that supports the necessary incorporation of mindfulness-based principles and practice within the field of therapeutic recreation. Best practices for implementing mindfulness interventions with youth are also presented. The finished product of this project is a manual to be used by therapeutic recreation specialists for implementing therapeutic recreation mindfulness programs with youth in residential treatment facilities.

I am grateful to all the staff, residents and families I have worked with and continue to work with at Stillwater Residential Treatment Facility. Thanks for your honesty, trust, interest, attention and participation. This project is for all of us. Thank you to Colleen Hood for agreeing to be on my review committee and for acknowledging the importance of mindfulness in therapeutic recreation. I am very grateful and excited for your feedback. Thank you to Lynn Anderson for being the best project advisor ever and for being so incredibly encouraging, understanding, helpful and to the point. Huge thanks to Charlie Dorsey, for providing me with all the opportunities, friendship and advice a brother could possibly give. I am so happy to know you. Lastly, I would like to express deep thanks to all my friends and family, my wife to be Jennifer, my three uniquely sweet kitties and my canine pal Super Buddy for understanding all of my personal dilemmas with completing this project. Thanks be.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

As clinical interventions based on training in mindfulness skills become increasingly popular (Baer, 2003), studies demonstrating the application of mindfulness-based interventions within therapeutic recreation (TR) have yet to flourish. In the Leisure and Well-Being Model (LWM) developed by Hood and Carruthers (2007), the concept of *mindful leisure* is presented as an enhanced leisure experience that is a valuable component of TR service delivery and which contributes to well-being and the development of resources. As mindfulness is arguably an important aspect of leisure and recreation and as studies continue to demonstrate a wide range of health benefits associated with mindfulness practice, the potential role of mindfulness skills training in TR should more thoroughly be considered.

Mindfulness can be defined in terms of being a skill and a practice (Bishop, Lau, Shapiro, Carlson, Anderson, Carmody et al., 2004), “a way of being, rather than doing” (Kong, 2009, p. 122), as “non-conceptual awareness” (Gunaratana, 2002, p. 140) and also as a form of meditation (Ihnen & Flynn, 2008). Conceptually, the experience of mindfulness can simply be thought of as nonjudgmental present moment awareness. Jon Kabat-Zinn, an expert in mindfulness practice, defines it as “paying attention in a

particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and nonjudgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4). In the wake of current mindfulness research, neuroscientists have come to defining mindfulness as “a mental mode characterized by full attention to present-moment experience without judgment, elaboration, or emotional reactivity” (Jha et al, 2010). For children, mindfulness has simply been defined as paying attention with kindness (innerkids, 2010).

As a clinical intervention strategy, mindfulness-based interventions have successfully been used with youth and adults as a complimentary form of treatment for a wide range of health conditions including chronic stress and pain, anxiety, depression, ADHD, bipolar, borderline personality disorders, eating disorders, post-traumatic stress, addiction, and psychosis. The most popular and thoroughly studied among these interventions is Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) developed in 1979 by John Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center's Stress Reduction Clinic (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Other interventions incorporating training in mindfulness skills are Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) (Baer, 2003). According to Miller and colleagues (1995), intensive, time-limited, cognitive/behavioral therapies such as those listed above are proving to be significantly more cost effective than traditional medical and psychiatric interventions.

Mindfulness practice has been described as a process, which leads to personal "emancipation from obsessions" (Gunaratana, 2002, p. 37). According to Hemingway

(1999), the ultimate role of leisure is the emancipation of human potential which happens through processes of inquiry and reflection, ultimately increasing one's capacity for moving beyond what is oppressive and destructive within the "social given". In the LWM, *mindful leisure* is defined as "leisure experience that facilitates nonjudgmental full engagement and conscious awareness of one's unfolding present experiences with a simultaneous disengagement from concerns about daily life, the past, or the future" (Hood & Carruthers, 2007, p. 315). Mindful leisure is considered a valuable component of TR service provision in which two major components are defined: (a) to increase the value of leisure in building resources, creating positive emotion, and cultivating one's potential, and (b) to provide psycho-educational interventions that facilitate resource development (Hood & Carruthers, 2007). Interestingly however, a recent database search of therapeutic recreation articles (<http://www.recreationtherapy.com/rt-articles/addrbook.cgi>, 2010) shows no articles with "mindfulness" or "mindful" in the title suggesting that the study of mindfulness in the field of therapeutic recreation is underdeveloped or not in existence.

Statement of Problem/Program Purpose

Based on current literature in therapeutic recreation, there appears to be a lack of awareness in the field related to the clinical use and effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions as well as the potential for incorporating mindfulness-based practices within therapeutic recreation programs. As the Leisure and Well-Being Model

identifies mindful leisure as a valuable component in the process of TR service delivery, it fails to identify methods for facilitating mindful leisure experience or for introducing the concept and practice of mindfulness in therapeutic recreation programs in general.

The function of this project is to increase awareness related to the potential for incorporating mindfulness in TR practice and to develop a functional program manual for therapeutic recreation specialists to use for implementing mindfulness-based programs in TR practice with youth in residential treatment facilities.

Goals for Project Development

Goal 1: To develop a functional program manual for therapeutic recreation specialists to use for implementing therapeutic recreation mindfulness programming with youth in a residential treatment facility (RTF) setting.

Objective 1A: To complete a literature review of studies focused on the effects of and best practices for implementing mindfulness-based clinical interventions.

Objective 1B: To collect data related to youth participation in therapeutic recreation mindfulness programs at a residential treatment facility.

Goals for Participants in the Program

Goal 1: Youth will become familiar with the concept and practice of mindfulness.

Objective 1A: Youth will complete a mindfulness familiarity assessment.

Objective 1B: Youth will actively participate in therapeutic recreation mindfulness program activities.

Objective 1C: Youth will be able to express an appropriate idea or definition of the concept of mindfulness.

Objective 1D: Youth will be able to describe and demonstrate at least one method for practicing mindfulness.

Objective 1E: Youth will practice mindfulness independently during their free time at least one time per day.

Assumptions

Various assumptions were made while undertaking this project. First, it was assumed that therapeutic recreation programs are suitable programs for teaching and facilitating mindfulness. Second, that the majority of youth in an RTF setting have the developmental capacity to learn and use mindfulness through leisure. Third, therapeutic recreation specialists working with youth in an RTF will understand and value the potential role of mindfulness skills training in their field of work. And fourth, the profession of therapeutic recreation as a whole will understand and value mindfulness practice within the field of therapeutic recreation.

Delimitations

The program manual developed as part of this project is specifically directed toward therapeutic recreation mindfulness programming with youth in placement at a residential treatment facility such as Stillwater RTF in upstate New York. The mindfulness practice sessions presented within the program manual are generalized for youth 7 to 18 years of age and have been selected based on their applicability to the given population and also for their ease of facilitation so as to be facilitated by persons inexperienced with formal mindfulness practice. During field trials of therapeutic recreation mindfulness programs and activities with youth in the RTF, participation was encouraged but was strictly voluntary. Therefore, those youth who did participate in the mindfulness programming may have been predisposed to be accepting of the idea and practice of mindfulness. However, even if youth consistently chose not to participate in specific mindfulness programming, opportunities did exist to inform these youth about the concept and practice of mindfulness either by word of mouth or by their direct observation of mindfulness activities and programming.

Limitations

Field testing for this study was conducted at one residential treatment facility in upstate New York. Data collection was an ongoing process which happened through observations, informal interviews, and verbal feedback from participants and staff during group debriefs and also during one-to-one interactions. Participant progress toward the objectives previously listed was based on the observations of this writer and was not systematically documented except when the objectives of the mindfulness program were the same or similar as actual treatment plan objectives for the youth resident at the participating agency.

Definition of Terms

(1) *Functional Intervention* --Services that help reduce functional limitations that prevent the individual from increasing leisure-related awareness, knowledge, skills, abilities, and involvement (Peterson & Stumbo, 2004).

(2) *Leisure* -- Living in relative freedom from the external compulsive forces of one's culture and physical environment so as to be able to act from internally compelling love in ways that are personally pleasing, intuitively worthwhile and that provide a basis for faith (Godbey, 2008). Leisure is defined by the main variables of perceived autonomy or freedom of choice and intrinsic motivations that reflects behaviors that are enjoyable (Peterson & Stumbo, 2004).

(3) *Leisure Education* -- A broad category of services that focuses on the development and acquisition of various leisure-related skills, attitudes, and knowledge (Peterson & Stumbo, 2004). According to Wilkins and Murphy (2000), "the goal of leisure education is to facilitate, early and long, the desire and ability for people to create for themselves experiences that grow out of and enhance their sense of freedom, self-determination, competence, and enjoyment" (p. 2).

(4) *Meditation*--The intentional self-regulation of attention that is used for self-inquiry (Hageman, J.H., 2008, Part 3, p. 374). Kabat-Zinn (2005) describes meditation as "a way of being appropriate to the circumstances one finds oneself in, in any and every moment" (p. 59) and that it's "not about trying to get anywhere else. It is allowing yourself to be exactly where you are and as you are, and for the world to be exactly as it is in this moment as well" (p. 61).

(5) *Mindfulness* -- Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally (Kabat-Zinn, 1994); In their proposal of an operational definition of mindfulness, Bishop and colleagues (2004, p. 234) describe mindfulness as "a process of regulating attention in order to bring a quality of nonelaborative awareness to current experience and a quality of relating to one's experience within an orientation of curiosity, experiential openness, and acceptance."

(6) *Mindful Awareness Practices (MAP's)* -- a term used to distinguish practices such as various forms of meditation, yoga, tai chi and other mindfulness based practices which focus on the capacity "to be aware of awareness" (Siegel, 2008).

(7) *Mindful Leisure* -- Leisure experience that facilitates nonjudgmental full engagement and conscious awareness of one's unfolding present experiences with a simultaneous disengagement from concerns about daily life, the past, or the future (Hood & Carruthers, 2007).

(8) *Recreation Participation Programs*-- opportunities for participants to select and engage in organized activities and leisure opportunities with others through a structured delivery system (Peterson & Stumbo, 2004).

(9) *Therapeutic Recreation*—“The purposeful and careful facilitation of quality leisure experiences and the development of personal and environmental strengths, which lead to greater well-being for people who, due to illness, disability, or other life circumstances, need individualized assistance to achieve their goals and dreams” (Anderson & Hevne, in press).

(10) *Well-being* -- A state of successful, satisfying, and productive engagement with one's life and the realization of one's full physical, cognitive, and social-emotional potential (Hood and Carruthers, 2007).

(9) *Wellness*-- "A personal, positive, and proactive approach to health that emphasizes individual responsibility for well-being through the practice of

health-promoting lifestyle behaviors. High levels of wellness for the individual is an integrated method of functioning that is oriented toward maximizing the individual's potential within the environment in which she or he is functioning" (Peterson & Stumbo, 2004).

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews literature on the benefits and best practices associated with mindfulness training in clinical interventions as well as the theoretical relationships between mindfulness, leisure and therapeutic recreation practice. The purpose of this chapter is to support the premise that mindfulness is a useful skill and practice that can and should be applied to therapeutic recreation practice and programming, especially with youth. The purpose is also to provide the theoretical and empirical foundation for a mindfulness program in therapeutic recreation, as well as ensure that practices infused in the proposed program reflect accurate transfer of theory to practice. The following sections are included: (1) Need for mindfulness in TR; (2) defining mindfulness; (3) mindfulness training as a clinical intervention; (4) best practices for facilitating mindfulness with children and adolescents; (5) mindfulness and the leisure and well-being model; (5) the “emancipation of human potential” through leisure and mindfulness; and, (6) summary.

Need for Mindfulness in TR

As discussed in Chapter One, clinical interventions based on training in mindfulness skills are becoming increasingly popular (Baer, 2003). Yet, studies demonstrating the application of mindfulness-based interventions within therapeutic recreation (TR) have yet to flourish. In the Leisure and Well-Being Model (LWM) developed by Hood and Carruthers (2007), the concept of *mindful leisure* is presented as an enhanced leisure experience that is a valuable component of TR service delivery and which contributes to well-being and the development of resources. As mindfulness is arguably an important aspect of leisure and recreation and as studies continue to demonstrate a wide range of health benefits associated with mindfulness practice, the potential role of mindfulness skills training in TR should be more thoroughly considered.

Defining Mindfulness

The concept of mindfulness can be thought of in various, unique ways. In a meditative context, the term is often associated with the experiential or experimental cultivation of nonjudgmental present moment awareness or, “non-conceptual awareness” (Gunaratana, 2002, p. 140). Further investigation of the concept of mindfulness would also reveal descriptions based on various traditions of formal and informal mindfulness meditation practices such as Buddhism, Taoism and other Eastern meditative traditions. However, beyond its links to Buddhism or any other traditional or culturally specific practices, the concept of mindfulness is recognized as a natural

capacity of the human mind which can be skillfully developed through practice (Bishop, Lau, Shapiro, Carlson, Anderson, Carmody, et al., 2004).

As a practice, mindfulness can be thought of as a kind of mental training. A widely used definition which reflects the purposeful practice of mindfulness is that of long time practitioner and expert in the field, Jon Kabat-Zinn who, defines mindfulness as: "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and nonjudgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4). An operational definition of mindfulness proposed by Bishop and colleagues (2004) describes mindfulness as "a process of regulating attention in order to bring a quality of non-elaborative awareness to current experience and a quality of relating to one's experience within an orientation of curiosity, experiential openness, and acceptance" (p. 234).

The model of mindfulness proposed by Bishop and colleagues consists of two parts. The first part of this model, *self-regulation of attention*, addresses one's ability to bring awareness to present moment experience and regulate the focus of their attention. This may include awareness of thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations (Bishop et al., 2004). Skills which would support self-regulation of attention include "*sustained attention*," which helps to maintain awareness of current experience, and "*switching*," which facilitates the ability to change one's focus of attention from one object to another (such as from one's stream of thoughts back to the breath) (Bishop et al., 2004). The second component of the operational definition of mindfulness, *orientation toward experience*, involves acceptance and a personal commitment to an

attitude of curiosity about one's internal experiences in such a way that "all thoughts, feelings, and sensations that arise are initially seen as relevant and therefore subject to observation" (Bishop et al., 2004, p. 233).

To further describe the attitudinal component of mindfulness, Daniel Siegel, scientist, psychiatrist, educator and leader in the field of mental health, uses the acronym "COAL." COAL stands for curiosity, openness, acceptance, and love (Siegel, 2008, Part 1). In cultivating such qualities of mind it is important to remember however that the intention of mindfulness practice should not be directed toward producing a particular state of being such as relaxation, neither should one be absorbed in trying to change one's feelings (Bishop et al, 2004). Similarly, mindfulness can be thought of as "a way of being, rather than doing" (Kong, 2009, p. 122) and in its most simplest form can be described as "paying attention with kindness" (Innerkids, 2009).

Mindfulness Training as a Clinical Intervention

In a conceptual and empirical review of mindfulness as a clinical intervention, Baer (2003) states that, "in the current empirical literature, clinical interventions based on training in mindfulness skills are described with increasing frequency, and their popularity appears to be growing rapidly" (p. 125). In modern psychology, mindfulness is being used as "an approach for increasing awareness and responding skillfully to mental processes that contribute to emotional distress and maladaptive behavior" (Bishop, et al., 2004, p. 230).

The first mindfulness-based clinical intervention was Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) developed in 1979 by Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts. Initially developed as a resource for medical patients who were "falling through the cracks" of the health care system, MBSR includes training in formal and informal mindfulness meditation techniques designed to reduce stress and improve health (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). MBSR has demonstrated long term beneficial effects in the treatment of people diagnosed with anxiety disorders (Miller, Fletcher & Kabat-Zinn, 1995). Among other benefits, MBSR has also demonstrated positive effects on brain and immune function (Davidson, Kabat-Zinn, Schumacher, Rosenkranz, Muller, Santorelli, et al., 2003). In a randomized clinical trial focused on MBSR for the treatment of adolescent psychiatric outpatients, Biegel and colleagues (2009) found that, compared to treatment-as-usual control participants, those attending MBSR self-reported reduced symptoms of anxiety, depression, and somatic distress, and increased self-esteem and sleep quality. Also, participants in MBSR showed higher percentages of diagnostic improvement and significant increases in global assessment of functioning scores compared to controls (Biegel, Brown, Shapiro & Schubert, 2009).

Traditionally, MBSR is structured as an 8-to10-week intervention designed for groups of up to 30 participants meeting weekly for 2-2.5 hours for instruction, practice and discussion of mindfulness meditation skills. Around the sixth week of the program an all-day (7-8 hour) intensive mindfulness practice session occurs (Baer, 2003).

Mindfulness meditation skills taught include body scan, sitting meditation, mindful

hatha yoga and informal practices focused on maintaining mindfulness during everyday activities such as walking, standing, breathing, and eating (Baer, 2003).

During the MBSR program, participants are instructed to practice learned mindfulness skills for at least 45 minutes a day, six days a week (Baer, 2003).

Audiotapes are often used as a resource for mindfulness practice early on in the program and practice without tapes is encouraged after a few weeks (Baer, 2003).

Research has demonstrated that MBSR can "help reduce subjective states of suffering and improve immune function, accelerate rates of healing, and nurture interpersonal relationships and an overall sense of well-being" (Davidson et al., 2003 as cited by Siegel, 2008, part 1). Consequently, MBSR programs are now widespread and are being implemented in a variety of settings, with diverse populations including inner city residents, homeless, medical patients, doctors, students, athletes and even lawyers (Kabat-Zinn, 2005).

Another clinical intervention, incorporating training in mindfulness skills is Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) (Baer, 2003). Developed by Drs. Zindel Segal, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale, and largely based on the MBSR program of John Kabat-Zinn, MBCT has demonstrated effectiveness in treating relapse/recurrence in depressed patients with three or more previous episodes (Teasdale, Segal, Williams, Ridgeway, Soulsby, & Lau, 2000; Ma & Teasdale, 2004) and has also shown promise as a potential treatment for reducing internalizing and externalizing symptoms in children (Lee, Semple, Rosa, & Miller, 2008). According to Baer (2003), "MBCT is designed to

prevent depressive relapse by teaching formerly depressed individuals to observe their thoughts and feelings non-judgmentally, and to view them simply as mental events that come and go, rather than as aspects of themselves, or as necessarily accurate reflections of reality" (p. 127).

Other interventions that incorporate basic principles of mindfulness in their approach to therapy include Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) (Baer, 2003). Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) is a form of cognitive-behavioral therapy most often used with people diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). DBT has demonstrated effectiveness in reducing suicidal behavior, hospitalization, and treatment dropout and improving interpersonal functioning and anger management in people with BPD (Swenson, Sanderson, Dulit, & Linehan, 2001). Based on a dialectical worldview, which establishes reality as an interplay of opposing forces, DBT focuses on the dialectic relationship between acceptance and change (Baer, 2003). Also according to Baer (2003), "clients are encouraged to accept themselves, their histories, and their current situations exactly as they are, while working intensively to change their behaviors and environments in order to build a better life" (p. 127). Accordingly, DBT uses mindfulness training to develop one's capacity for synthesizing acceptance and change (Baer, 2003). However, unlike MBSR, DBT does not call for a specific time frame of steady mindfulness practice. Instead, various mindfulness techniques are introduced to clients and goals for mindfulness practice are determined by clients and their therapists (Baer, 2003).

In Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), clients are helped to reduce “*experiential avoidance*,” which is the tendency to avoid unpleasant thoughts and feelings (Biglan, Hayes, & Pistorello, 2008). According to Biglan (2008) and colleagues, there is considerable empirical evidence indicating that humans who tend to avoid unpleasant thoughts and feelings are prone to a variety of psychological and behavioral problems. Similar to mindfulness training, in ACT clients are encouraged to observe thoughts and feelings as they arise "without judging, evaluating, or attempting to change or avoid them" (Baer, 2003, p. 128), while at the same time acknowledging their capacity to change their behavior in a way that will improve their life.

Beyond the above mentioned intervention techniques, various other mind-body exercises, which often include components of mindfulness, continue to be researched and developed. In one study, it was found that mindfulness assessment scores increased in 166 college students who had participated in 15 weeks of movement based classes including either Pilates, Tai Chi Chuan or GYROKINESIS (Caldwell, Harrison, Adams, Quin, & Greeson, 2010). In another study, men and women starting with a clinically low health assessment showed improved health through compound mind-body therapies such as body movement and breath therapy, guided imagery, chakra experiencing, and mindfulness meditation (Fernros, Furhoff, & Wandell, 2008). In yet another study, long-term effects of Basic Body Awareness Therapy in psychiatric outpatient care yielded improved body awareness, improved attitude to the body, fewer symptoms, and improved self-efficacy (Gyllensten, Ekdahl, & Hanson, 2008). Also, in the search for complimentary interventions for breast cancer patients, a mindfulness-

based exercise program was piloted and showed promising results (Tacon & Macomb, 2009).

It is not only important that just patients practice mindfulness for wellbeing. In one study, it was found that individuals who received care from caregivers trained in mindfulness showed increased levels of happiness compared to individuals not receiving care from mindfulness trained caregivers (Singh, Lancioni, Winton, Wahler, Singh, & Sage, 2003). Also, in an article on the theory and practice of “mindful social work,” Birnbaum and Birnbaum (2008) acknowledge mindfulness as “a central practice to expand consciousness for the purpose of self-observation” which can lead to the “facilitation of individual change in clients’ internal and external worlds” as well as positive changes in therapists, the profession of social work and the world at large.

In summary, there is a growing body of evidence demonstrating the effectiveness and potential of mindfulness training and practice in various medical and psychiatric interventions. Also, many intensive, time-limited cognitive/behavioral therapies, such as those conducive to the incorporation of mindfulness practice, are significantly more cost effective than traditional medical and psychiatric interventions (Miller et al., 1995).

Best Practices for Facilitating Mindfulness with Children and Adolescents

Current studies demonstrate the feasibility and effectiveness of using mindfulness-based interventions with children and adolescent populations. In a feasibility study for conducting mindfulness meditation training with adults and children with ADHD, it was found that the majority of participants finished the entire training and also reported high levels of satisfaction with the training (Zylowska, Ackerman, Yang, Futrell, Horton, Hale, et al., 2007). In another pilot study testing feasibility, acceptability, and helpfulness of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) with children with anxiety and depressive disorders, Lee and colleagues (2008) reported high attendance rate and positive ratings on program evaluations.

Increasingly, studies are emerging that highlight best practices for facilitating mindfulness interventions with children and adolescents. One study, focusing on mindfulness training with children with anxiety, suggests including an orientation session during which children are introduced to the meaning and practice of mindfulness and the rules and expectations regarding appropriate behavior during meditation (Semple, Reid, & Miller, 2005). During the orientation session, Semple and colleagues (2005) also found that children preferred that rules be made explicit (e.g., raising your hand to speak, no talking during the meditations). It is also recommended that, when introducing mindfulness practices to children, it is important to plan for successful first experiences by keeping exercises simple (Hooker & Fodor, 2008) and a shorter length of time than what is typical for adults (Semple et al., 2005).

When planning a mindfulness program with children, Hooker (2008) recommends to begin with activities that focus attention on "concrete" objects in the surrounding environment (e.g., sounds, smells, tastes, touch, visual objects, physical sensation of breathing), and then gradually moving on to exercises which bring attention to mental activity and the practice of meditation. Also, it has been found that incorporating components that are extraneous to the effectiveness of mindfulness, such as developing a "cool" name for the activities, may help children remain engaged in mindfulness practices (Semple et al., 2005).

In the treatment of adolescent psychiatric outpatients 14 to 18 years old, Biegel and colleagues (2009) found success by adapting traditional MBSR exercises to the lifestyles of their teenage population. For example, participants in this teen version of MBSR completed weekly mindfulness practice diaries and were given a workbook and audio CD with guided meditations to help facilitate at-home practice (Biegel et al., 2009). In another study, MBSR exercises were effectively taught in combination with Tai Chi to children in a public school setting. Two facilitators were used to help "contain" the class and to also encourage other staff to participate along with the children (Wall, 2005).

When teaching MBSR to an adolescent population, Biegel and colleagues (2009) sought the experience of two master's-degree-level MBSR instructors to facilitate the intervention, as the actual process for becoming certified as an MBSR instructor is rigorous and lengthy. At the same time, Wall (2005) mentions that in order to facilitate

mindfulness-based interventions, mastery of mindfulness training may be less a requirement than a working command of the skills practiced. Ultimately, however, the more familiar the practitioner is with the concept and practice of mindfulness, the more effective the programming will be. As Siegel (2007) mentions, "the attunement of the teacher with students creates the grounding for them to become mindful" (p. 263).

Mindfulness and the Leisure and Well-Being Model in TR

Developed by Hood and Carruthers (2007), the Leisure and Well-Being Model (LWM) is a service delivery model oriented toward the practice of therapeutic recreation (TR) in which well-being is the intended outcome of service. As defined by Hood and Carruthers (2007), well-being is "a state of successful, satisfying, and productive engagement with one's life and the realization of one's full physical, cognitive, and social-emotional potential" (p. 301). According to Hood and Carruthers (2007), the LWM is "grounded in the literature of psychology, strengths-based practice, leisure theory, and human development" (p. 299).

Implemented in the practice of TR, the LWM focuses on "clients strengths rather than merely limitations; the centrality of positive emotion in creating a life of meaning; and the key role of leisure experiences in creating positive emotion and building resources" (Hood & Carruthers, 2007, p. 299). Accordingly, the LWM defines the two major components of TR to be: (a) to increase the value of leisure in building resources, creating positive emotion, and cultivating one's potential, and (b) to provide psycho-

educational interventions that facilitate resource development (Hood & Carruthers, 2007). Ultimately, the LWM provides the profession of TR with a theory for practice that focuses on the clients ability to development resources and strengths for a better future (Hood & Carruthers, 2007).

One aspect of TR service delivery included in the LWM, which is believed to enhance leisure experience, build resources, and contribute to wellbeing, is "*mindful leisure*". As defined by Hood and Carruthers (2007), mindful leisure is "leisure experience that facilitates nonjudgmental full engagement and conscious awareness of one's unfolding present experiences with a simultaneous disengagement from concerns about daily life, the past, or the future" (p. 315). To support the significance of disengagement and engagement in effecting leisure experience, Kleiber (1999) is cited as suggesting that it may be difficult to fully engage in leisure experiences if one is unable to step away from daily preoccupations (Hood & Carruthers, 2007).

Hood and Carruthers (2007) suggest that, "interventions designed to enhance mindful leisure should focus both on the capacity to deal effectively with daily life distractions and hassles, and the capacity to be present fully in leisure experiences" (p. 315). The communication and transfer of such skills is the core function of mindfulness training, in which formal and informal mindfulness techniques such as those used in MBSR and other mindfulness- based interventions (Miller, Fletcher, & Kabat-Zinn, 1995).

The “Emancipation of Human Potential” through Leisure and Mindfulness

In "Critique and Emancipation: Toward a Critical Theory of Leisure," Hemingway (1999) criticizes various paradigms of social inquiry to argue that the state of theory in the field of leisure studies has been underdeveloped. Hemingway describes leisure as a multidimensional phenomenon, which transects diverse aspects of our social and individual being and therefore requires a transdisciplinary approach for its study. As Hemingway argues for a critical theory of leisure, he also mentions that various theoretical frameworks are still needed to explore the multidimensionality of leisure. Hemingway states that it is of significant importance, and some may say moral importance, that all research and forms of inquiry be united in the fundamental goal of emancipation of human capacities (Hemingway, 1999).

According to Hemingway, the ultimate function of leisure is the emancipation of human potential, which happens through processes of inquiry and reflection, which ultimately increases one's capacity for moving beyond what is oppressive and destructive within the "social given" (p. 504). Similarly, mindfulness practice can be considered a form of self-inquiry, which in modern psychology has been adopted as "an approach for increasing awareness and responding skillfully to mental processes that contribute to emotional distress and maladaptive behavior" (Bishop et al., 2004, p. 230). Given the central focus of self-inquiry in Hemingway's argument for emancipation through leisure and in mindfulness training, it is conceivable that mindfulness practice

may have significant implications for overcoming inter- and intra-personal barriers to leisure.

Conceptually, leisure and mindfulness are similar in the way that each refers to a unique experience that is often associated with a sense of freedom, self-determination, and even love. This similarity is apparent when comparing definitions of leisure and mindfulness. For instance, Geoffrey Godbey, an expert in the field of leisure studies, defines leisure as, “living in relative freedom from the external compulsive forces of one’s culture and physical environment so as to be able to act from internally compelling love in ways that are personally pleasing, intuitively worthwhile, and provide a basis for faith” (Godbey, 2008, p. 14). Meanwhile, mindfulness meditation is considered to be “an act of love and...sanity” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 23) which as Gunaratana describes it, leads to personal "emancipation from obsessions" (Gunaratana, 2002, p. 37).

Mindfulness practices are included in a wide variety of human activities and in clinical practice focus on the capacity "to be aware of awareness" (Siegel, 2008, p. 69, Part 1). Some activities, such as meditation, yoga, tai chi, and qigong, have developed over literally thousands of years with the intention of educating practitioners on how to focus their minds in specific ways on moment-to-moment experience (Siegel, 2008, Part 1). According to Hart (2004), contemplative practices such as journaling, poetry, guided imagery, and meditation also support analytic thinking in the classroom and have the potential to enhance the educational experience. In TR, the incorporation of such

activities may serve to enhance participant learning related to leisure education, recreation participation and life skills development in general.

Summary

In summary, there is substantial evidence supporting the use of mindfulness practice in clinical, medical, and psychiatric interventions. However, there have been no published empirical studies on the use of mindfulness-based interventions in clinical TR practice. Based on the current literature supporting the benefits of mindfulness-based interventions, it is reasonable to assume that such interventions could enhance the effects of TR practice on functional interventions, leisure education and recreation participation. In the Leisure and Well-Being Model (Hood & Carruthers, 2007), the concept of *mindful leisure* is introduced as a form of leisure that contributes to the strengthening of resources, which ultimately enhance overall leisure experience and promote well-being. The need for greater information dissemination in the field of TR in relation to the concept and practice of mindfulness, as well as the practical application of mindfulness training in TR programming and practice, is great. This project addressed that need, and in doing so, hopefully improves TR practice, and in turn, the well-being of participants utilizing our services.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This project focuses on the development of a mindfulness-based therapeutic recreation program and its accompanying manual titled “Circle ‘Round the Bell: Therapeutic Recreation Mindfulness Programming with Youth in a Residential Treatment Facility.” The development of the program and manual is based on an in-depth literature review of studies related to mindfulness and therapeutic recreation, as well as experience gathered while conducting field work focused on the implementation of therapeutic recreation mindfulness programs with youth in a residential treatment facility.

This project is important to the field of TR as it brings attention to the potential role of mindfulness training in TR practice and programming. Also, the project aims to identify best practices associated with the facilitation of mindfulness-based practices within TR programs with youth in a residential treatment facility setting. Mindfulness is a natural human capacity and resource, which can be skillfully developed among participants in TR programs, as well as therapeutic recreation specialists themselves to promote wellbeing.

Project Description

The purpose of this project was: 1) to increase awareness of the potential use of mindfulness training in TR practice and programming and, 2) to develop a comprehensive yet practical program manual for therapeutic recreation specialists to use when implementing TR mindfulness programs with youth in residential treatment facilities. To accomplish this, two main objectives were established: 1) the completion of an in-depth literature review of studies related to this project; and, 2) the completion of field work and data collection directly focused on the implementation of TR mindfulness programming with youth in residential treatment facility.

In the creation of the program manual itself, theoretical foundations for the inclusion of mindfulness in therapeutic recreation have been explored as well as best practices for implementing mindfulness-based interventions with youth. Many of the mindfulness-based activities that have been included in the program manual were adapted from a leading mindfulness-based intervention program, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). Activities such as mindfulness of breathing, mindful eating, mindful walking, mindful stretching and the body scan are included in the manual. Various other mindfulness practices found in the supporting literature have also been included in the program manual. Ultimately, the content and style of the manual has been created in such a way that it should be highly applicable and fitting for the use by TR specialists working with youth in a residential treatment facility.

Goals for Project Development

Goal 1: To develop a functional program manual for therapeutic recreation specialists to use for implementing therapeutic recreation mindfulness programming with youth in a residential treatment facility (RTF) setting.

Objective 1A: To complete an in-depth literature review of studies focused on the effects of and best practices for implementing mindfulness-based clinical interventions.

Objective 1B: To collect data related to youth participation in therapeutic recreation mindfulness programs at a residential treatment facility.

Goals for Program Participants

Goal 1: Youth will become familiar with the concept and practice of mindfulness.

Objective 1A: Youth will complete a mindfulness familiarity assessment.

Objective 1B: Youth will actively participate in therapeutic recreation mindfulness program activities.

Objective 1C: Youth will be able to express an accurate idea or definition of the concept of mindfulness.

Objective 1D: Youth will be able to describe and demonstrate at least one method for practicing mindfulness.

Objective 1E: Youth will practice mindfulness independently during their free time at least one time per day.

Background of Participating Agency

The mission of Stillwater Residential Treatment Facility is to provide children who experience psychiatric and emotional difficulties with intensive mental health services and comprehensive residential care. At Stillwater, children and their families receive the treatment and support they need to heal and find hope for a better future.

Stillwater Residential Treatment Facility is a non-profit organization licensed by the New York State Office of Mental Health and accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations. Founded in June of 1992 as Children's Home RTF, Inc., its mission is providing mental health services to children 7-17 years old who would otherwise be placed in psychiatric hospitals. In 2008 the name Stillwater RTF was adopted to better reflect the compassionate level of care provided by the agency. Located near the town of Greene N.Y. in rural Chenango County, Stillwater RTF currently serves boys and girls ages 7 to 18 who experience serious and persistent emotional and psychiatric problems requiring intensive treatment. The average length of stay for residents at Stillwater RTF is around one year.

Stillwater RTF provides comprehensive and compassionate care focused on a child's and family's strengths. Its multi-disciplinary team of professionals provides:

psychiatric care, licensed clinical social work care, health and wellness, therapeutic recreation, educational services, tasks & skills development, social and life skills training. Among the many resources available at Stillwater RTF are over 30 acres of pristine woods with a 2-mile long hiking trail, a pond for fishing, a Wilderness Adventure Program including high and low ropes courses, an organic garden, nearby parks and a rural location providing access to diverse outdoor recreation opportunities.

Target Population

The following program was developed in a residential treatment facility serving 18 youth, ages 7 to 17, with severe psychiatric and emotional disorders. Gender composition was typically an equal number of boys and girls. Many of the residents at Stillwater have histories of neglect or abuse (physical, sexual, emotional). Most residents have at least one psychiatric diagnosis while some have a combination or mixture of diagnoses. Common diagnoses of youth at Stillwater include, but are not limited to, post-traumatic stress disorder, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder, personality disorders, mood disorders, delusional disorders, and schizo-affective disorder or schizophrenia.

The agency itself consists of approximately 60 staff members that together provide a full range of clinical supports. Another important aspect to consider with this population is their experience with adventure-based programming and the Behavior Modification through Adventure (BMTA) model of behavior management, which is

implemented at Stillwater. Through the BMTA process, residents and staff are equally supported and encouraged to follow six guiding principles of behavior in order to create a safe and supportive environment. The six principles are: Be Safe; Be Here; Set Goals; Let Go and Move On; and Care for Self and Others. Also, through the BMTA process, participants are supported in choosing the level to which they feel comfortable participating in certain programs and activities. In BMTA, this philosophy is called “challenge by choice.”

The BMTA model is mentioned here because it plays a significant role in shaping the Stillwater community and may have an effect on the way residents and staff, participate in and perceive mindfulness-based programs and activities.

Project Procedures

After reviewing the literature on best practices related to the implementation and facilitation of mindfulness-based interventions, including best practices with children, it was determined that for the purpose of this project it would be best to include a combination of mindfulness programming techniques found within many of the programs and interventions reviewed. As many of these interventions have been modeled after Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), and as MBSR is without a doubt the most intensive, widely used, and researched mindfulness program worldwide, many of the activities present in the MBSR curriculum such as mindfulness of breathing,

mindful eating, mindful walking, mindful stretching and the body scan practice have been used in the development of this project.

To select specific activities and best practices for the program manual, a variety of mindfulness-based practices and activities were facilitated by the researcher in various contexts during therapeutic recreation programming at Stillwater RTF. Based on the observations of the researcher as well as feedback given by residents and staff related to TR Mindfulness programming, a variety of TR mindfulness practice sessions were chosen for this manual.

The design of the program manual presented in Chapter 4 was modeled after the *Peer Assisted Inclusion in Recreation (P.A.I.R) Program* (Anderson et al., 2004). All activity sessions presented within the program manual are designed to contribute to the original goals and objectives of the program, which are to teach the concept and practice of mindfulness to participants in Therapeutic Recreation Mindfulness programs. The manual was reviewed by project committee members Dr. Lynn Anderson, Dr. Colleen Hood, and Charlie Dorsey, all of whom are certified therapeutic recreation specialists.

Role of the Project Agency

Stillwater RTF played an instrumental role in the completion of this project. First, Stillwater RTF functioned as an internship site, which provided opportunities for the researcher to gain experience facilitating therapeutic recreation mindfulness programs. Upon employment as a therapeutic recreation specialist at Stillwater RTF, the agency continued to offer support for implementing therapeutic recreation mindfulness programs either by allowing the researcher to include mindfulness-based treatment methods as part of the therapeutic recreation interventions for individual treatment plans, by inviting the researcher to present on mindfulness related topics at general staff meetings, by including mindfulness-based activities during staff teambuilding programs and other agency wide programs and through funding this researcher's participation in an international scientific conference dedicated to mindfulness research. In general, the staff at Stillwater RTF, including administrative, clinical, residential, educational, and staff from other departments, were very supportive of this researcher's interest in promoting mindfulness within the agency and especially within therapeutic recreation programs in general.

Evaluation Plan

Evaluation of the therapeutic recreation mindfulness programming conducted with youth at Stillwater RTF happened through group debriefs of weekly program sessions, ongoing observations made by the researcher, daily feedback presented by

youth residents and staff, as well as through interviews of youth and staff conducted by the researcher following one year and half of field work. Program evaluation also happened during supervision meetings including the researcher and the Therapeutic Recreation Coordinator at Stillwater RTF.

During group debriefs following therapeutic recreation mindfulness programs at Stillwater, the researcher facilitating the programs asked questions related to participants' perceptions of mindfulness and their participation in the mindfulness-based activities which were part of the program. Verbal feedback from participants was a major mechanism driving the development of this project. Observations were also made of participants before, during and after participation in therapeutic recreation mindfulness programs. Key observations that contributed to this project were observed changes in mood and social behavior.

Interviews conducted with youth and staff at Stillwater RTF, were recorded using a portable audio recording device in order to capture the complete responses those interviewed. During the interviews, youth and staff were offered a printed out definition of mindfulness to aid their memory of the concept. Youth were asked a total of five questions including: Do you ever practice mindfulness during your free time, and if so how? When do you feel that you are the most mindful? What do you like about mindfulness? Is there anything you don't like about mindfulness or that you find difficult about mindfulness practice? and is there anything else you would like to say about mindfulness?

Staff interviewed included the Program Manager who was also the former Therapeutic Recreation Coordinator, the Clinical Director and the Executive Director at Stillwater RTF. Each staff was asked the following question: Are you supportive of mindfulness-based programming at Stillwater RTF? Following this question, each staff was also asked various questions related to their position at Stillwater and their perceptions regarding the mindfulness-based programming that had been implemented at the agency by this researcher and their perceptions about mindfulness in general. Data from the interviews is included in Chapter 4 of this project.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

Introduction

Presented in this section are the complete contents of a program manual intended for use by therapeutic recreation specialists implementing therapeutic recreation mindfulness programs with youth in a residential treatment facility. The contents of the following manual have been chosen based on a literature review of studies related to best practices for the implementation of mindfulness-based interventions as well as theoretical foundations for the incorporation of mindfulness within therapeutic recreation programming and practice. The following manual is presented in the exact fashion and format that it would be received in a public, nonacademic setting and for the purpose of this chapter, includes a section at the end dedicated to the evaluation results of the program.

Circle 'Round the Bell



Therapeutic Recreation Mindfulness
Programming with Youth in a Residential
Treatment Facility.

By Brandon Cruz

SUNY Cortland

Winter 2011

Welcome!

This manual is for therapeutic recreation specialists working with youth in a residential treatment facility setting who are interested in incorporating mindfulness-based lessons and activities into their programming with youth. This manual is also designed to introduce the reader to the concept and practice of mindfulness as well as various methods for infusing mindfulness-based practices into everyday therapeutic recreation programming for those youth living in a residential treatment facility.

On the next page you will find a brief guided mindfulness meditation that you can read and practice during your leisure, if you are interested. Following the mindfulness meditation is a table of contents that will clearly guide you to the various sections found within this manual.

Best wishes on your mindful journey!



Sample Mindfulness Meditation

Instructions: Read the following paragraphs slowly, pausing at the end of each sentence. Take at least 15 to 30 seconds to practice the exercise associated with each sentence, before moving on to the next.

To begin, find a comfortable place to sit down and take a minute or two to simply stop what you are doing. Gradually, bring your attention to the feeling of your body in the present moment. Continuing slowly, notice the physical sensation of your breathing. Notice all the various sounds you hear around you. Notice the touch of the clothing against your skin and the feeling of your feet on the ground. Notice the physical sensations in your hands, the smell of the air before your nose, and the sense of taste on your tongue. Let all that you are aware of with your senses be exactly as it already is in this moment, without judging or trying to change anything.

Notice that your whole body is feeling sensations. Also, notice any emotions you may be experiencing in the moment. Next, be aware that you are thinking thoughts and notice how these thoughts come and go like clouds passing in a blue sky, without you having to do anything. Continue to simply be aware, not resisting anything, not encouraging anything and letting go of any desire for things to be different than exactly as they are for you, in the present moment.

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Overview of Stillwater Residential Treatment Facility

Mission Statement of Stillwater RTF

Stillwater Residential Treatment Facility (RTF) provides children and adolescents who experience psychiatric and emotional difficulties with intensive mental health services and comprehensive residential care. At Stillwater, youth and their families receive the treatment and support they need to heal and find hope for a better future.

Values and Beliefs of Stillwater RTF

At Stillwater RTF, healing and hope are realized through the meaningful relationships that take place between agency staff, the children and their families. In 2005, Stillwater adopted the Behavior Management Through Adventure (BMTA) model of behavior modification developed by Project Adventure. In BMTA, the six principles of: Be Here, Be Safe, Set Goals, Be Honest, Let Go and Move On and Care for Self and Others are practiced by staff and residents with the intention of creating a safe environment and a “full value” based community.

Brief Description of Stillwater RTF

Stillwater Residential Treatment Facility is a non-profit organization licensed by the New York State Office of Mental Health and accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations. Located in the peaceful rolling hills of central New York, Stillwater RTF serves boys and girls ages 7 to 18 who experience serious and persistent emotional and psychiatric problems requiring intensive treatment. Youth are referred to the program through the New York State Office of Mental Health Pre-Admission Certification Committee and referrals come from a 21-county area in New York State. At capacity, the RTF provides residency and treatment for a total of 18 youth at a time.

Visit Stillwater RTF and you will meet a talented and caring team of professionals dedicated to the well being of its youth residents.



Introduction to Mindfulness

What is Mindfulness?

“A mental mode characterized by full attention to present-moment experience without judgment, elaboration, or emotional reactivity” (Jha et al, 2010).

“A process of regulating attention in order to bring a quality of nonelaborative awareness to current experience and a quality of relating to one’s experience within an orientation of curiosity, experiential openness, and acceptance” (Bishop et al, 2004).

Mindfulness can most simply be defined as “nonjudgmental, present moment awareness.” However, to actually experience mindfulness takes practice. In the RTF, mindfulness as a practice can be defined as: paying attention in the present moment, using the senses, with a kind, accepting or nonjudgmental attitude.

When working with children, mindfulness practice is best approached through awareness of the five senses, and with continued practice, mindfulness can be applied to thoughts, emotions and other more subtle experiences. Essentially, mindfulness practice is a form of mental training, which is undertaken with the purpose of developing awareness and acceptance of oneself and one’s circumstances in the present moment. Also, mindfulness, or mindful awareness, is considered to be a skill, which can be developed through practice (Bishop et al, 2004).

The origins of mindfulness are directly linked to Buddhist meditation practice. However, due to its universal nature, mindfulness practice is considered to be a secular activity, which is now recognized within many cultures. As a way of living, mindfulness is a tool for being more aware of and in harmony with one's present circumstances. In the RTF, mindfulness can be used both by staff and residents as a skillful means for responding more appropriately to challenges and difficult experiences.

The Benefits of Mindfulness

The benefits associated with regular mindfulness practice are numerous and, in one way or another, are directly related to wellbeing. In regards to everyday human experience, mindfulness training is beneficial in the ways that continued mindfulness practice promotes curiosity, flexibility of mind, compassion towards self and others, decreased reactivity, focused attention, and direct awareness of life in the present moment.

Clinically, mindfulness-based interventions are successfully and increasingly being used in treatments for a wide range of health conditions including but not limited to chronic pain, depressive disorders, anxiety disorders, ADHD, PTSD, bipolar, borderline personality, eating disorders, addiction and psychosis (Didonna, 2009). Also, mindfulness meditation has shown to enhance immune system and brain functioning (Davidson, Kabat-Zinn, Schumacher, Rosenkranz, Muller, Santorelli, et al., 2003) and in general, is believed to promote neural plasticity, the ability of the brain's physical structure to change (Siegel, 2007).

In therapeutic recreation, *mindful leisure* is considered to be an enhanced leisure experience that is a valuable component of therapeutic recreation service delivery and which contributes to wellbeing and the development of resources (Hood & Caruthers, 2007). In regards to "therapeutic relationship" and care giving in general, it was found in one study that care givers who received training in mindfulness meditation contributed to increased signs of happiness among their clients (Singh, Lancioni, Winton, Wahler, Singh & Sage, 2003).

In a residential treatment facility (RTF), mindfulness-based programming contributes to the transdisciplinary approach of the treatment team. For youth, mindfulness practice can be introduced as an intrinsic method for accomplishing treatment plan objectives. In therapeutic recreation programming, inclusion of mindfulness-based activities and practice sessions will provide youth with opportunities to learn to independently practice mindfulness and also, to apply mindfulness to everyday life situations. Mindfulness practiced at the beginning of therapeutic recreation programs can also help prepare youth for interacting with other members of the group in appropriate and respectful ways.

Therapeutic Recreation with Mindfulness

Theory for Therapeutic Recreation Mindfulness Programming and Practice

Whatever you are doing, ask yourself, "what is the state of my mind?" -Dali Lama

The National Therapeutic Recreation Society declares in its "code of ethics" that the purpose of therapeutic recreation is, "to facilitate leisure, recreation and play for persons with physical, mental, emotional or social limitations in order to promote their health and wellbeing." As mindfulness practice is considered to be a practice which promotes health and wellbeing, and which can be directly applied and incorporated within all life activities, therapeutic recreation specialists should understand the potential for mindfulness to transform and enhance everyday therapeutic recreation programming.

According to Hemingway (1999), the ultimate function of leisure is the emancipation of human potential, which happens through processes of inquiry and reflection, which ultimately increases one's capacity for moving beyond what is oppressive and destructive within the "social given". Similarly, mindfulness practice

in its deepest sense is considered a form of self-inquiry, which in modern psychology has been adopted as “an approach for increasing awareness and responding skillfully to mental processes that contribute to emotional distress and maladaptive behavior” (Bishop et al, 2004, p. 230). Accordingly, mindfulness practice may have significant implications for overcoming inter- and intra-personal barriers to leisure.

Conceptually, leisure and mindfulness are similar in the way that each refers to a unique experience that is often associated with a sense of freedom, self-determination and even love. This is apparent when comparing definitions of leisure and mindfulness. For instance, Geoffrey Godbey, an expert in the field of leisure studies, defines leisure as, “living in relative freedom from the external compulsive forces of one’s culture and physical environment so as to be able to act from internally compelling love in ways that are personally pleasing, intuitively worthwhile, and provide a basis for faith” (Godbey, 2008, p. 14). Meanwhile, mindfulness meditation is considered to be “an act of love and...sanity” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994) which leads to personal "emancipation from obsessions" (Gunaratana, 2002, p. 37).

Due to the personal benefits associated with mindfulness practice and the similarity between the concepts of mindfulness and leisure, it should be the responsibility of therapeutic recreation specialists to experiment with ways in which mindfulness practice can be incorporated into daily therapeutic recreation programming and practice.

Therapeutic Recreation

Mindfulness Programming

Purpose

The purpose of therapeutic recreation mindfulness programming is to intentionally and systematically introduce the concept and practice of mindfulness to participants in therapeutic recreation programs in a way that progressively facilitates the participants' ability to practice mindfulness as a means for coping with chronically and situationally difficult experiences.

Goals

- To increase participants' awareness of the concept and practice of mindfulness.
- To increase participants' awareness of the documented benefits of mindfulness practice.
- To teach participants skills and techniques used for developing personal mindfulness practice.
- To increase participants' awareness of the relationship between mindfulness, leisure, recreation, and lifestyle.

- To promote mindfulness practice during everyday leisure activities.
- To enhance the therapeutic relationship between TR Specialist and youth resident.
- To promote mindfulness within an organization or agency.

Outcomes

- Participants will be able to express an accurate definition of mindfulness.
- Participants will recognize mindfulness as a skill that they can develop.
- Participants will incorporate mindfulness into their coping skill practice.
- Participants will practice mindfulness on their own.
- Participants will be able to express personal benefits associated with their own practice of mindfulness.

Initial Mindfulness Familiarity Assessment

Introduction

The purpose of the Initial Mindfulness Familiarity Assessment (IMFA) is two-fold: 1) to assess a new youth resident's familiarity with the concept of mindfulness; and, 2) to provide an explanation of the concept of mindfulness as well as a brief introduction to the practice of mindfulness. The IMFA should be conducted during the Initial Therapeutic Recreation Assessment. Also, information gathered during the IMFA should be included in the documentation of the Initial Therapeutic Recreation Assessment.

Conducting the Initial Mindfulness Familiarity Assessment

The process for conducting the IMFA is similar to conducting a leisure assessment. First, the therapeutic recreation specialist must answer the following question:

Is the new youth resident able to express or give an example of the meaning of the word "mindfulness"?

After documenting the resident's response, the therapeutic recreation specialist should then provide an appropriate definition of the word mindfulness based on the age and cognitive ability of the new resident. (Note: Based on best

practices for teaching mindfulness to children, mindfulness should be defined in terms of being aware or paying attention using the five senses.) A sample definition might be:

Paying attention in the present moment, using our five senses, with a kind, accepting, or nonjudgmental attitude.

Following a brief explanation of the concept of mindfulness, the therapeutic recreation specialist should then facilitate an introductory level mindfulness practice. This should be done while sitting in a chair in a relatively quiet location.

Facilitation Technique:

Ask the resident to sit up straight, put their hands on their belly and feel their breathing. Next, direct the resident in paying attention to each of their five senses, one at a time. While doing so, ask the resident to notice what they are aware of, in the present moment, using each of their senses, while practicing being kind, accepting or nonjudgmental of what they are aware of with their senses.

Documentation:

Documentation of the IMFA can be done through the creation of specific IMFA documents or can be included in the documentation of the Initial Therapeutic Recreation Assessment in sections related to “leisure awareness,” “leisure skills” or simply in the overall therapeutic recreation assessment synopsis. An example of how this could be written up is.

Example: Resident is able to express the meaning of mindfulness. Resident expressed that mindfulness is... (fill in the blank). Resident is also familiar with ways to practice mindfulness. Resident currently practices mindfulness while playing guitar, eating, walking, etc.

Introduction to Mindfulness Practice Sessions

“From the perspective of meditation, every state is a special state, every moment a special moment” -Jon Kabat-Zinn

The following mindfulness practice sessions are designed to engage youth in simple activities in which they will be introduced to various methods and techniques for practicing mindfulness. It is intended that through their participation in these practice sessions, youth will develop skills for independently practicing mindfulness on their own time.

Sessions are meant to be implemented by the therapeutic recreation specialist during regular therapeutic recreation programming and can be facilitated during small or large group programs or on a one-to-one basis. Each session includes the following:

- a brief description of the session
- learning objectives for youth participating in each session
- resources needed to facilitate each session
- time required” for facilitating each session
- facilitation technique
- debrief recommendations for each session

In traditional mindfulness meditation practice, the sound of a meditation bell or Tibetan style “singing bowl” is used as a tool to accompany practice, gently reminding practitioners of their intention to be mindful. In the RTF, the sound of the bell or bowl provides the same function. A meditation bell or singing bowl is a necessary resource for the therapeutic recreation specialist facilitating the following practice sessions. Remember, facilitating mindfulness practice is an art that requires practice, and developing one’s own personal mindfulness practice is the key to being an effective mindfulness facilitator.

Session 1: Ten Mindful Jumping Jacks

Brief Description

Ten Mindful Jumping Jacks is a fun warm up activity to do before engaging in regular physical activities. The purpose of this activity is to promote greater mind-body awareness and to demonstrate how mindfulness practice can be applied to any physical activity.

Objectives

- Participants will be able to describe and demonstrate the practice of “ten mindful jumping jacks.”
- Participants will be able to express how mindfulness can be practiced during physical exercise.

Resources Needed

Enough open space for the group to form a circle and for individuals to do jumping jacks. Participants should be dressed appropriately for doing physical activity. A meditation bell can be used at facilitator’s discretion to help set the tone for mindfulness practice.

Time Required

5 to 10 minutes depending on group size and amount of discussion.

Facilitation Technique

Gather participants in a circle and revisit the definition of mindfulness as a group. Invite the bell as you see fit. Before beginning, guide participants in bringing their attention to their bodies in the present moment. Remind participants to allow themselves to relax their bodies from head to toes. Next, begin facilitation of “ten mindful jumping jacks”.

Directions:

- 1.** Ask participants to begin by standing feet together with arms and shoulders relaxed, hands resting at their sides. Next, demonstrate the practice of mindful jumping jacks.
- 2.** On the first jump, when the feet separate and the arms swing up, the tips of the index finger and thumb on the right hand must directly make contact with the tips of the index finger and thumb on the left hand, above the head.
- 3.** On the second jump, feet come back together at the same time as the arms and hands swing down, slapping at the sides of the body.
- 4.** Facilitator sets the pace for Ten Mindful Jumping Jacks, allowing enough time for each participant to complete each step involved. Once jumping jacks are finished, gently guide participants in bringing their attention to the physical

sensations of their body and their breathing in the present moment, with a “mindful attitude.”

Debrief

Invite participants to reflect back on their experience participating in this activity. Some questions you may want to ask are:

- Who liked this activity, and why or why not?
- Was it easy to do, and why or why not?
- How did you feel while doing this activity?
- What other things did you notice about yourself while doing this activity?
- How could other activities be done with mindfulness?

To conclude the debrief, ask if anyone has any other feedback, questions, comments or concerns about what the group has just done or talked about.

Session 2: Mindful Stretching

Brief Description

“Mindful stretching” is simply stretching with mindfulness. This particular session provides a general introduction in how to apply the principles of mindfulness practice to any stretching routine. During the practice of “mindful stretching,” participants are reminded by the facilitator to focus their attention on the physical movements involved in performing each stretch as well as the feeling of the body stretching in the present moment. A variation of this activity could be “mindful share a stretch” in which, each participant is invited to choose and lead their own stretch.

Objectives

- Participants will be able to demonstrate the practice of mindful stretching.
- Participants will be able to express benefits associated with the practice of mindful stretching.

Resources Needed

Enough open space for the group to form a circle and for individuals to perform stretches. Participants should be dressed appropriately for doing physical activity. A meditation bell can be used at facilitator’s discretion to help set the tone for mindfulness practice.

Time Required

10 to 15 minutes depending on group size.

Facilitation Technique

Gather participants in a circle and, as a group, revisit the definition of mindfulness. Before beginning to stretch, guide participants in bringing their attention to their bodies in the present moment. Remind participants to allow themselves to relax their bodies from head to toe. Begin your preferred stretching routine with the intention of practicing mindfulness during each stretch. Throughout the stretching routine, remind participants to bring their attention to the physical movements of each stretch as well as the feeling in the body associated with each stretch. Stretching should be done slowly and comfortably while reminding participants to not stretch beyond their limits.

Debrief

Check in with participants about their experience of mindful stretching. Ask them:

- What were some things you noticed while practicing mindful stretching?
- Was it fun? Why or why not?
- Was it easy? Why or why not?
- Why it might be good or important to practice mindful stretching?

Invite a participant to explain what mindful stretching is. Ask for feedback from participants, or if anyone has any questions, comments or concerns about this activity.

Session 3: Mindful Stopping

Brief Description

Mindful Stopping is a skill which involves the practice of stopping one's actions and mindfully bringing one's attention to the physical sensations of their own body in the present moment. In the RTF, mindful stopping can be used as a skill by youth and staff for responding appropriately to daily events.

Objectives

- Participants will be able to demonstrate the practice of mindful stopping.
- Participants will be able to express benefits associated with the practice of mindful stopping.

Resources Needed

A quiet and comfortable place free from major distraction. A meditation bell can be used at facilitator's discretion to help set the tone for mindfulness practice.

Time Required

5 to 10 minutes depending on group size.

Facilitation Technique

Gather participants in a circle and, as a group, revisit the definition of mindfulness. Briefly discuss the importance of being able to stop our actions in the moment. Relate the practice of stopping to behaviors, sports, recreation and life in general. Now, give directions and facilitate practice.

Directions:

1. First, visualize a stop sign or gently say to yourself, “stop.”
2. Now, gently bring your attention to your awareness of your physical body as it is in the moment.
3. Using your attention, scan your body from the tips of the toes to the top of the head, mindfully noticing any physical sensations you are aware of along the way.
4. End the practice by bringing your attention to the physical sensation of your breathing in the present moment with mindfulness.

Debrief

Invite participants to reflect back on their experience participating in this activity. Some questions you may want to ask are:

- How did you like mindful stopping? What was easy or difficult about it?
- How did you feel while doing this activity?

- How do you think you could use “mindful stopping” to benefit you? Could “mindful stopping” be used as a coping skill?
- Ask participants if they can repeat out loud the steps involved for practicing “mindful stopping.”

To conclude the debrief, ask if anyone has any other feedback, questions, comments or concerns about what the group has just done or talked about.

Session 4: Mindfulness of Sounds

Brief Description

Tuning in to the sounds of a particular place at any particular time is a good way to bring one's attention into the present moment. In this session, participants will practice noticing the sound of a meditation bell as well as sounds in their environment with a "mindful attitude." A mindful attitude can be described as a kind, curious, accepting, open or nonjudgmental kind of attitude.

Objectives

- Participants will be able to describe how sounds can be used for mindfulness practice.

Resources Needed

A quiet and comfortable place free from major distractions. A meditation bell or singing bowl is required for part of this activity and can also be used at facilitator's discretion to help set the tone for mindfulness practice.

Time Required

10 to 15 minutes depending on group size and amount of discussion.

Facilitation Technique

Gather participants in a circle and, as a group, revisit the definition of mindfulness. As a group, briefly discuss the different ways in how we all may experience certain sounds, including music. Have bell or singing bowl ready for the last part of this session. This session can be facilitated with participants sitting, standing or lying down. Now, give directions and facilitate practice.

Directions:

1. Invite participants to bring their attention to all the various sounds they can hear in the present moment, with a “mindful attitude.” Allow the group approximately 15 to 30 seconds to do this.
2. One by one, call on participants to identify at least two different sounds they are hearing in the present moment. Encourage participants to try to recognize or notice sounds that have not all ready been mentioned. Remind participants to try and notice sounds that are loud, soft, near or far away.
3. After everyone has had a turn, bring out the bell or singing bowl. (Note: Children often find the bell and singing bowl particularly interesting, fun, and pleasant sounding. They may often want to use both and may need guidance doing so.)

4. Instruct participants to listen to the sound of the bell or bowl as you ring it and to raise their hand when they no longer hear the sound. Repeat one or two times.

Debrief

Invite participants to reflect back on their experience participating in this activity. Some questions you may want to ask are:

- How did you feel when you were noticing the sounds around you with a “mindful attitude”?
- What did you notice about yourself while you were participating in this activity?
- In what ways do the sounds of the RTF affect people here? How does each of us contribute to the sounds at the RTF?

To conclude the debrief, ask if anyone has any other feedback, questions, comments or concerns about what the group has just done or talked about.

Session 5: Mindfulness of Breathing

Brief Description

Mindfulness of breathing is a skill and practice, which involves paying attention to the action, motion or physical sensation of one's own breathing in the present moment, with a "mindful attitude." Mindfulness of breathing is one of the most important skills to learn in mindfulness practice. It is important mainly because breathing is an automatic, life supporting function of the body and the way in which we breathe can have a significant effect on how we feel in any given moment.

In this session, participants will be guided in paying attention to the physical sensations of their breathing in the present moment with a "mindful attitude." Participants will also be introduced to the practice of "abdominal breathing."

Objectives

- Participants will be able to describe and demonstrate the practice of "mindfulness of breathing."
- Participants will be able to demonstrate the practice of "abdominal breathing."

Resources Needed

A quiet and comfortable space free from major distraction. A timer on a watch can be used to set aside a specific amount of time for practice. Also, the meditation bell or singing bowl can be used at facilitator's discretion to help set the tone for mindfulness practice.

Time Required

10 to 15 minutes depending on the size of the group, desired length of practice, and amount of discussion.

Facilitation Technique

Gather participants in a circle and, as a group, revisit the definition of mindfulness. As a group, briefly discuss the importance of breathing in recreation and life in general. Introduce participants to the practice of "abdominal breathing" which simply involves breathing air in through the nose, deep into the belly, and exhaling back out through the nose. Practice abdominal breathing for a few seconds.

Next, introduce "mindfulness of breathing" as a practice of paying attention to the physical sensation of one's breathing in the present moment with a "mindful attitude." The physical sensation could be the rising and falling of one's belly or chest or, the sensation of the air passing through the nostrils, lips, mouth or throat

with each consecutive in breath and out breath. When facilitating this practice for the first time, it is recommended that participants be sitting down. Now give directions and facilitate practice.

Directions:

1. Invite participants to sit up straight and put their hands on their belly, with one hand overlapping the other.
2. Guide participants in focusing their attention on the physical sensation of their breathing in the present moment with a “mindful attitude.”
3. Encourage participants to breath naturally.
4. Now, using your watch, set a timer for one minute of practice and instruct the group that you will all be attempting to practice “mindfulness of breathing” for one minute.
5. To help the participants keep their attention with their breathing, recommend that they count each breath, for example: “Inhaling one, exhaling one, inhaling two, exhaling two” etc.
6. Remind participants that if they notice their mind is wandering, that this is okay and just to gently bring their attention back to their breathing as needed.
7. Now, begin one minute of practice.
8. End session with debrief.

Debrief

Invite participants to reflect back on their experience participating in this activity. Some questions you may want to ask are:

- Was practicing “mindfulness of breathing” easy or hard and why?
- How did you feel while doing this activity?
- What did you notice about your breathing? What other things did you notice about yourself while participating in this activity?
- Do you think “mindfulness of breathing” practice could be used as a coping skill? Why or why not?

To conclude the debrief, ask if anyone has any other feedback, questions, comments or concerns about what the group has just done or talked about.

Session 6: Mindful Eating

Brief Description

Mindful eating is a popular practice, which involves focusing one's attention on the process and sensations of eating food slowly, bite by bite, in each moment. Youth often enjoy mindful eating because it involves food, and because it can be challenging and interesting to purposefully engage all five senses while eating. In this session, participants will learn the general principles and basic methods for practicing mindful eating. Once having completed this session, youth can be reminded to practice mindful eating during snacks and meal times.

Objectives

- Participants will be able to describe and demonstrate the practice of “mindful eating” on their own.

- Participants will practice “mindful eating” on their own.

Resources Needed

A quiet and comfortable space free from major distraction. A timer on a watch can be used to set aside a specific amount of time for practice. Also, the meditation bell or singing bowl can be used at facilitator's discretion to help set the

tone for mindfulness practice. For the purpose of this session raisins are used however, any natural bite size pieces of food will do.

Time Required

10 to 15 minutes depending on the size of the group, desired length of practice and amount of discussion.

Facilitation Technique

Gather participants in an area where everyone can be seated. As a group, revisit the definition of mindfulness and slowly, begin to introduce the practice of mindful eating which at this point can be explained as “paying attention to your food while slowly eating eat it.” When ready, give directions and facilitate practice.

Directions:

1. Invite participants to sit up straight and bring their attention to their body, in the present moment, with a “mindful attitude.”
2. Hand out raisins, placing one raisin in the hand of each participant. Give instructions not to eat the raisin yet.
3. Guide participants in observing the raisin in their hand, like it's the first time they have ever seen a raisin, noticing the details of the raisin, its shape, color and texture.

4. Notice the raisin with your sense of touch. Notice the texture of its surface using your fingers.
5. Bring the raisin to your nose and notice its fragrance.
6. Next, invite participants to bring the raisin up to their mouth slowly, deliberately paying attention to the movement of the arm as they bring the raisin up to their mouth.
7. Continue to guide the group in a relaxed and patient manner in experiencing the feeling, sound and taste of the raisin in the mouth before chewing it, while taking the first bite, while chewing it and at the time of swallowing it.
8. At various intervals, while facilitating the mindful eating practice, ask the group to notice any thoughts they are having about the raisin such as, the thought of wanting to eat it.

Debrief

Invite participants to reflect back on their experience participating in this activity. Some questions you may want to ask are:

- What did you like about his activity?
- How did you feel while doing this activity?
- Was it easy keeping your attention with your food while eating it? Why or why not?

- What did you notice about the way you eat? Was it hard eating slowly?

To conclude the debrief, ask if anyone has any other feedback, questions, comments or concerns about what the group has just done or talked about.

Session 7: Mindful Walking

Brief Description

Mindful walking is the practice of focusing one's attention on the action of walking, including the purposeful making of each step, the mechanical motion of the legs during each step, and the physical sensation felt in the legs and feet while stepping. As walking is a common everyday activity, there exists many opportunities throughout the day for youth to practice walking mindfully. The basic techniques for facilitating mindful walking can be applied to any movement-based activities such as, using a wheelchair, riding a bike, skateboarding, snowshoeing, etc.

Objectives

- Participants will be able to describe and demonstrate the practice of “mindful walking.”
- Participants will express feelings related to the practice of “mindful walking.”

Resources Needed

An open area with enough room for walking and that is free from major distractions. A timer on a watch can be used to set aside a specific amount of time for practice. Also, the meditation bell or singing bowl can be used at facilitator's

discretion to help set the tone for mindfulness practice. If weather permits, this is a nice activity to do outdoors.

Time Required

10 to 15 minutes depending on the size of the group, desired length of practice and amount of discussion.

Facilitation Technique

Gather participants in an area where there is room enough for freely walking around. As a group, revisit the definition of mindfulness and slowly introduce the practice of “mindful walking.” At this point mindful walking can be described as “paying attention to and noticing the feeling of your walking, step by step, while walking slowly.” When ready, give directions and facilitate practice.

Directions:

1. Invite participants to bring their attention to their body while standing and to simply notice what it feels like to be standing. Relax the shoulders and waist and notice the feeling of the feet on the ground.
2. Shift weight from one foot to the other and notice what this feels like.
3. Begin walking in a slow and deliberate manner, paying attention to each step. If slowing down is a foreign concept to some of your participants, recommend and demonstrate walking in “slow motion.”

4. Notice the physical sensations in the legs and feet while walking.
5. To help participants keep their attention with each step; recommend that they say to themselves silently, “lifting, moving, placing” while lifting, moving and placing each foot.
6. Remind participants that if they notice their mind is wandering to gently bring their attention back to the feeling of their walking in the moment.
7. Continue to facilitate the practice of mindful walking.

Debrief

Invite participants to reflect back on their experience participating in this activity. Some questions you may want to ask are:

- How did you feel while doing this activity?
- What did you like about mindful walking?
- What did you notice about how you walk?
- What part of your walking was easy to focus on?
- What did you notice about yourself while practicing mindful walking (sensations, feelings, thoughts)?

Remind the group the mindful walking can be practiced any time and that nobody even needs to know that they are doing it. To conclude the debrief, ask if anyone

has any other feedback, questions, comments or concerns about what the group has just done or talked about.

Session 8: Body Scan with Friendly Wishes

Brief Description

The “body scan with friendly wishes” is a mindfulness practice which involves the concentrated shifting of one’s attention to various locations of the body while mindfully noticing the physical sensations that are present in each area. After scanning the body, participants are then guided in sending “friendly wishes” to themselves and others. This is a great “cool down” activity, which can also help promote relaxation. (Note: With individuals who have experienced trauma related to their body it is recommended that the Body Scan be approached in a way that is sensitive and appropriate for your participants. This might mean circumnavigating certain areas of the body during the guided meditation.)

Objectives

- Participants will be able to describe and demonstrate the practice of the “body scan”
- Participants will express feelings related to their participation in the “body scan with friendly wishes” practice session.

Resources Needed

A quiet and comfortable space free from major distraction; padded floor mats such as yoga mats, exercise mats or sleeping pads; a CD player with relaxing music; a timer on a watch can be used to set aside a specific amount of time for practice. Also, the meditation bell or singing bowl can be used at facilitator's discretion to help set the tone for mindfulness practice. With younger children, stuffed animals can be used to rest on the belly, to help bring attention in a kind way to the rising and falling of the belly when breathing.

Time Required

10 to 20 minutes depending on group size and amount of discussion.

Facilitation Technique

Gather participants and, as a group, revisit the definitions of mindfulness. When ready to introduce the body scan practice, invite participants to choose a mat on which to lie down. Facilitating the body scan practice is like facilitating a guided meditation in which the facilitator guides the participant with an appropriate tone of voice in deliberately bringing their attention to specific locations of the physical body. When ready, give directions and facilitate practice.

Directions:

1. Play relaxation or concentration music at a soft volume.

2. Instruct participants to lie down on their mats, lying on their backs. At this point, hand out stuffed animals and instruct participants to gently place or hold the stuffed animal on their belly.
3. Guide the group in bringing their attention to the feeling of their body lying down on the mat, with a “mindful attitude.” Again, a mindful attitude can be described as a kind, curious, accepting, open or nonjudgmental kind of attitude.
4. Invite participants to relax their bodies on the mat and to tune in to the physical sensation of their breathing. This could be the rising and falling of the stuffed animal on their belly or the sensation of the breath at the nose or mouth.
5. Next, guide participants in bringing their attention to the feeling of their toes, noticing the physical sensations present within the toes.
6. From the toes, gently guide the participants in a narrative fashion, in bringing their attention (in the following order), to the feeling present at the feet, ankles, lower legs, knees, upper legs, waist, belly, lower back, upper back, chest, shoulders, upper arms, lower arms, wrists, tips of each finger, back up the arms to the shoulders, base of the neck, back of the head and top of the head. Make sure to pause at each location of the body allowing participants to rest their attention in each area for a brief time. The entire body scan should last no longer than 5 or 10 minutes.

7. End the body scan by guiding the participants' attention back to the feeling of their breathing. Allow at least one minute to be aware of the breath.
8. Next, begin the "friendly wishes" part of this activity by guiding the group in thinking, imagining and sending friendly thoughts and/or wishes to any person, animal, place or thing that they want, including themselves. To further stimulate the imagination you could ask participants to imagine these friendly wishes as flying or floating with wings to their respected destination.
9. Continue guiding the group in visualizing and feeling the friendly wishes process, remembering to pause at times to allow participants to experience this activity for themselves, without interruption.
10. End practice with sounding of the bell and a gentle transition to the debrief.

Debrief

Invite participants to reflect back on their experience participating in this activity. Some questions you may want to ask are:

- How did you feel while doing this activity?
- What was it like doing the body scan?
- What were some things you noticed about yourself?
- What was it like sending friendly wishes?

Remind the group that the “body scan” is a practice that they can do anytime and that they don't have to be lying down to do it. Ask for any other feedback or comments.

Session 9: Eye Color Acceptance Activity

Brief Description

In this activity participants are given the opportunity to acknowledge each other's differences in an accepting way. This is a great activity to begin group therapeutic recreation programs as it promotes interconnectedness between participants and calls attention to how individuals can relate to each other with mindfulness.

Objectives

- Participants will express the value of acceptance.

Resources Needed

A quiet and comfortable space free from major distraction and large enough for the group to form a circle. A timer on a watch can be used to set aside a specific amount of time for practice. Also, the meditation bell or singing bowl can be used at facilitator's discretion to help set the tone for mindfulness practice.

Time Required

10 to 15 minutes depending on group size and amount of discussion.

Facilitation Technique

Gather participants in a circle and, as a group, revisit the definition of mindfulness. Give special mention to the meaning and practice of acceptance in mindfulness practice as well as the implications for mindfulness practice during leisure with others. You can also begin by asking the group specific questions related to what it means to accept others as well as be accepted by others. Next, explain the directions for this activity.

Directions:

1. Starting with one person in the circle (for demonstration purposes, it is appropriate if the facilitator starts), look to the person on your right or left, and make eye contact.
2. Next, take a moment to notice that person's eye color.
3. Now, say to this person, "Hello (insert name), I notice your eyes are the color (insert eye color)." If needed, remind participants to use appropriate and respectful language when describing the other's eye color.
4. After saying the person's eye color, finish by saying "and I accept you as you are."
5. In return, the person whose eye color was just noticed say's back, "thank you (insert name), I accept you too."
6. Continue in this manner all the way around the circle, finishing with the person who started.

Debrief

Invite participants to reflect back on their experience participating in this activity. Some questions you may want to ask are:

- What did it feel like to look someone in the eyes or to be looked in the eyes?
Why?
- How did it feel to accept someone as they are and to be accepted as you are?
- What did you notice about yourself while doing this activity?

To conclude the debrief, ask if anyone has any other feedback, questions, comments or concerns about what the group has just done or talked about.

Session 10:

“I Spy” Something in Common Activity

Brief Description

Mindfulness is a friendly and accepting practice. In this activity, participants will be challenged to notice things that they have in common with each other. Participants will then form groups with those whom they have something in common.. The result of this activity should be that in the end, all participants are standing together in one group.

Objective

- Participants will identify mindfulness as a friendly practice.
- Participants will be able to express commonalities between themselves and the other participants.

Resources Needed

A quiet and comfortable space free from major distractions. A timer on a watch can be used to set aside a specific amount of time for practice. Also, the

meditation bell or singing bowl can be used at facilitator's discretion to help set the tone for mindfulness practice.

Time Required

10 to 15 minutes depending on group size and amount of discussion.

Facilitation Technique

Gather participants in a circle and, as a group, revisit the definition of mindfulness. Ask participants if they have heard of the game "I Spy." Explain to participants that this activity is a different version of the original game. Now, give directions and facilitate the activity.

Directions:

1. Instruct participants to begin "spying" with their eyes, looking for things they might have in common with the other participants.
2. Randomly choose one person in the group and direct that person to select another participant that they see they have something in common with and to go stand next to that person, forming a group of two.
3. Next, randomly select another individual and direct them to do the same as the first person, forming another group of two.

4. Continue in this way until every person is paired up with one other. If there is an uneven number of participants, ask the last solitary person to stand next to one of the groups they “spy” something in common with.
5. After everyone is in a group of at least two, randomly select one of the groups to join another group they “spy” something in common with.
6. Now, continue in this way until all participants are eventually in the same group.

Debrief

Invite participants to reflect back on their experience participating in this activity. Some questions you may want to ask are:

- Who liked this activity and why or why not?
- How did you feel while doing this activity?
- Who thought that eventually we all would be standing together? What are some things we all have in common?
- Did anyone feel that they might get left out? If so, how did it feel?
- How was this activity related to mindfulness practice?

To conclude the debrief, ask if anyone has any other feedback, questions, comments or concerns about what the group has just done or talked about.

The 45 Minute Therapeutic Recreation “Mindfulness Adventure” Program

Brief Description

Mindfulness practice can be considered an adventure in getting to know and learning to accept one’s whole self, including one’s present circumstances in any moment. In the following program, participants will explore the connection between mindfulness practice and the concept of adventure. This action-packed program offers one example of how mindfulness practice can be seamlessly incorporated into any full-length, therapeutic recreation program. A collection of activities from the “Mindfulness Practice Sessions” section of this manual will be incorporated and used in this program.

Objectives

- Participants will be able to verbalize similarities or differences between the concept and practice of mindfulness and adventure.

Resources Needed

A comfortable space free from major distraction, preferably a gymnasium or open outdoors location such as a field. A timer on a watch can be used to set aside a

specific amount of time for practice. Also, the meditation bell or singing bowl can be used at facilitator's discretion to help set the tone for mindfulness practice.

Time Required

45 minutes to 1 hour, depending on group size, amount of discussion and behavior of the group.

Facilitation Technique

For ease of facilitation, this program has been broken down into three parts: the "Beginning," "Middle" and "Ending." The "Beginning" part consists of warm-up activities and an introduction to the rest of the program. The "Middle" part consists of directions for one adventure-based activity with instructions for "infusing" mindfulness. The "Ending" part of the program consists of a mindfulness-based "cool down" activity followed by a group debrief.

Directions for the "Beginning:"

- ❖ Begin this program with two laps around the gym or field.
- ❖ Next, instruct the group to form a circle and begin to facilitate "ten mindful jumping jacks" followed by a group "mindful stretching" routine.
- ❖ After finishing the stretching routine, explore as a group the meaning of the word "adventure," having prepared, as the facilitator, some general definitions and examples of adventure.

- ❖ Next, explain to the group that they are about to embark on an adventure and to help them succeed in this adventure, they will need to practice being mindful.
- ❖ The “beginning” part of the program should take no longer than 10 to 15 minutes to complete. When ready, transition to the “Middle” part of this program.

Directions for the “Middle:”

- ❖ In the middle part of the program, the group will be introduced to the adventure-based activity that they will be invited to engage in. Any adventure-based activity can be used for this part of the program. Adventure-based activities generally involve a novel mixture of risk, problem solving and team building. A major component of adventure-based programming philosophy is the principle of “challenge by choice” in which participants are allowed to choose the level at which they feel comfortable participating in any given activity. For the purpose of this program, the adventure activity will be a game called “Wolf Pack.”
- ❖ Resources needed for Wolf Pack are: one, medium sized foam or inflatable ball, a meditation bell, and a playing field approximately 30 x 80 feet per group of 10. Allow at least 20 to 25 minutes for play of the game.
- ❖ Before beginning the game, remind participants to do their best to play with a “mindful attitude.” Also, remind participants of options they have for

coping with difficult situations that may arise during play such as taking time away, talking with staff or deep breathing.

Facilitating “Wolf Pack” Adventure-Based Activity

1. One person is randomly chosen to start play as the “lonely wolf.” The mission of the “lonely wolf” is to create a wolf pack. This is accomplished by throwing the ball at the other players to tag them. Every player that is tagged by the ball must join the wolf pack started by the “lonely wolf” and then work together as a team in tagging the other players.
2. This mission of the other players not in the wolf pack is to avoid being hit by the ball.
3. The last person standing wins the opportunity to be the “lonely wolf” in the next round.

“Wolf Pack” Rules:

1. Facilitator is the referee and there is no arguing with the referee.
2. All throws must be below the shoulders.
3. When holding the ball you must stop and stay where you are.
4. To move the ball around the playing field you must throw it, roll it, or pass it.

5. Each time a new player is hit by the ball, the facilitator will ring the meditation bell. At this point the entire wolf pack must circle up, put their hands on the ball and howl together like wolves.
6. All players must stay within the set boundaries of the playing field.

Directions for the “Ending:”

At the end of an appropriate number of rounds of play, finish the game and transition participants into a mindfulness-based cool down or relaxation activity. This could be a variation of “mindful walking,” the “body scan with friendly wishes” or any other mindfulness-based relaxation activity.

Debrief

Invite participants to reflect back on their experience participating in this program. Some questions you may want to ask are:

- How were people practicing being mindful during this game? Was it easy being mindful while playing this game? Why or why not?
- What was it like hearing the meditation bell while playing the game?
- In what way was this game an adventure? In what way is practicing mindfulness an adventure?

To conclude the debrief, ask if anyone has any other feedback, questions, comments or concerns about what the group has just done or talked about.

Keeping with the Practice

Comfortability and familiarity with mindfulness takes practice, and with the demands and distractions of every day life, ones personal practice of mindfulness may seem to ebb and flow. This is true for the therapeutic recreation specialist as well as youth learning to practice mindfulness in the RTF. And, even though mindfulness may be a skill like any other which is promoted within the RTF, its practice should never be forced, mainly because the use of force would likely produce strain, which would contradict the therapeutic purpose of the practice. Keeping this in mind, even overuse of the word “mindfulness,” especially with youth who may all ready be sensitive toward or even annoyed by the idea, should be monitored and managed appropriately.

To reduce the potential for “mindfulness burnout” among youth in the RTF, new and creative ways for facilitating mindfulness indirectly, such as by using a leisure-centered approach or using other words beside mindfulness to describe the experience should be casually implemented. And remember, the best way to promote mindfulness is to simply be mindful your self.

Mindfulness Resources

Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society

University of Massachusetts Medical School

55 Lake Avenue North Worcester, MA 01655

Phone: 508-856-2656

Fax: 508-856-1977

Email: mindfulness@umassmed.edu

www.umassmed.edu/cfm/tny/index.aspx

Mindful Awareness Research Center (MARC) at UCLA

UCLA Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior

760 Westwood Plaza, Rm. 47-444 Box 951759

Los Angeles, CA 90095-1759

Tel: (310) 206-7503 Fax: (310) 206-4446

Email: marcinfo@ucla.edu

www.marc.ucla.edu/

Mindful Schools

1944 Embarcadero

East Oakland, CA 94606

(510) 535-6746, **mindfulschools.org**

Websites

innerkids.org

Innerkids Foundation website and online community of professionals and people interested in teaching mindfulness to children.

emindful.com

Interactive on line learning website dedicated to evidence based mind body wellness.

yogainmyschool.com

Website dedicated to sharing information and resources related to teaching yoga to kids.

Recommended Readings

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full catastrophe living: using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. New York, New York: Bantam Dell.

The handbook for participants in the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program developed by the author, John Kabat-Zinn, this book details the background of the program and also gives specific information related to the mindfulness exercises found within the program.

Gunaratana, B. H. (2002). *Mindfulness in plain English. updated and expanded edition*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications.

A widely recommended book for those interested in learning about the fundamental concepts and practices of mindfulness as well as the history and tradition associated with mindfulness.

Ihnen, A. & Flynn, C. (2008). *The complete idiot's guide to mindfulness: a contemplative approach to living in the moment*. New York: Penguin Group.

The name speaks for itself. This is a great book for those completely new to the concept and practice mindfulness. It is thorough, easy to read, and is highly recommended!

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Program Evaluation Results

Results from Youth Interviews

When asked if they practiced mindfulness during their free time, seven out of sixteen youth interviewed responded “yes,” and four responded “sometimes.” Of those who responded positively, four said that they practice “mindful eating”, two said they practice “mindful walking,” another two said they practice “deep breathing” and one youth said he practiced “mindful jumping jacks” and “mindful sitting,” all of these practices being included and taught from the program manual. This data suggests that youth do practice mindfulness during their free time and will sometimes practice the same particular mindfulness techniques taught through the program manual.

Mindful Leisure

Youth who responded positively to practicing mindfulness during their free time often also related their mindfulness practice to activities they do for fun or during their leisure. For instance, one youth mentioned: “I go for a mindful walk with staff or I do mindful sledding.” To further elaborate on how he practiced mindful sledding, this youth replied: “I’m aware of when I’m gonna hit the jump and I’m aware of the bottom of the sled so it don’t get stuck.” Similarly another youth expressed that he practices mindfulness when: “I practice tubing at home.”

Continuing with the theme of mindfulness during leisure activities, another youth expressed that he sometimes practices mindfulness “when I play the guitar.”

Other responses were: *“like when I’m eating and when I’m like alone in my room, listening to music, I’ll lay down on my bed and just sit there and concentrate on the music and what’s going on in my room.”* Another youth stated; *“I meditate, I do a walk, I do lots of stuff.”* When asked how he meditates, his answer was, *“I put one leg like this, one leg above the other leg, I put my hands on my lap, I close my eyes and pay attention in my head or focus on something that I hear.”* Another youth expressed: *“I think I do it in my free time, I’m just not noticing it.”*

Further continuing with the mindfulness in leisure theme, when asked the question, “When do you feel most mindful?” youth responses included *“reading,” “doing quiet time,” “spending time by myself,” “practicing one thing,” “playing games,” “skateboarding,” “drawing,” “listening to music,” “playing guitar,”* and *“when doing a bow drill (primitive fire starting), cause it takes patience and concentration.”* The most frequent answer to this question was *“mindful eating,”* which can also be considered a leisure activity. Other responses included: *“during school,” “while on dorm,” “during groups,”* and *“when I’m with Mr. Cruz (the researcher) and when we play a game together. It makes me feel non-stressed and it makes me feel happy.”* This final response suggests the importance of how a relationship can help in facilitating mindfulness. The youth who experienced mindfulness during skateboarding also said he felt mindful *“when I’m doing an olley (a particular skateboarding trick) because: “I focus where my feet are at.”*

The preceding data suggest that youth were familiar with the concept of mindfulness, acknowledged that they were practicing mindfulness during their free time, and often associated mindfulness with leisure experiences and activities. Also, youth who expressed having difficulty with mindfulness related their difficulties to distracting environments, difficulty sitting still, and the thought of mindfulness practice requiring effort.

Results from Staff Interviews

Three staff members from Stillwater RTF were interviewed regarding their perceptions of mindfulness and the therapeutic recreation mindfulness programming implemented at the facility by the researcher. The three staff interviewed included the Program Manager (who is the former Therapeutic Recreation Coordinator and a current CTRS), Clinical Director, and Executive Director. General themes that emerged from these interviews were: (1) staff have observed the positive effects of mindfulness-based programming on the youth; (2) staff are accepting and appreciative of the concept and practice of mindfulness; and, (3) mindfulness-based programming fits well with the goals of the Stillwater community.

Positive Effects of Mindfulness on Youth

When discussing the noticeable effects of mindfulness-based programming on the youth residents at Stillwater, all staff interviewed stated that they are hearing the youth talk about it and even practice it on their own. The Clinical Director stated, *“a number of the kids have mentioned it and they talk about it and they do the practices on*

their own". The Executive Director also stated that she "*hears the kids talk about it (mindfulness.)*" The Program Manager stated:

It's amazing to hear the kids talk about it and use the language, like at least half of the kids here, if you were to ask them what mindfulness is they would be able to tell you what it is, things like treating others with kindness, not judging others, being...present moment awareness...I mean that's 8 year old kids, 9 year old kids.

Beyond simply hearing the youth talk about mindfulness, the staff interviewed also noticed various ways in which mindfulness-based programs have helped the residents. First, was the mention by each staff interviewed of how mindfulness-based programs have helped the residents to "*calm down*" or "*slow down*." The Executive Director expressed that she sees mindfulness being "*such a good way for the kids to calm themselves to experience the moment, to be present in the moment*". When speaking about how mindfulness helps the residents during group programs, the Program Manager explained that mindfulness "*helps with getting people to come in and calm down, slow down, have an experience and then bring them back to together and calm down, slow down.*"

Second, the Program Manager specifically discussed how mindfulness is being adopted by the residents as a "*coping skill*" and that the development of coping skills is what the program is constantly seeking to transfer to the residents. He stated, "*that's where I see mindfulness being very helpful...giving these guys a concrete skill, coping*

skill, that they can then take from here and carry through life.” The Program Manager also stated:

‘d say that at least 50% of our kids have latched onto mindfulness and are using it, which is big...I see a core group of kids, who have really just craved it, do well with it, and I think that is an awesome place to be.

It appears that staff perceive youth at Stillwater have become familiar with the concept and practice of mindfulness and many of them are utilizing it as a coping skill.

Staff Acceptance and Appreciation of Mindfulness

In regards to the theme of staff acceptance and appreciation of mindfulness, the Clinical Director stated that she has seen both clinical and non-clinical staff *“showing a real openness and appreciation for mindfulness.”* According to the Clinical Director, staff members show this appreciation through their usage of the practice. When speaking to the importance of clinical staff becoming familiar with the concept and practice of mindfulness, the Clinical Director stated, *“I think it’s good for themselves as clinicians professionally and also personally. To be able to utilize it in therapies, in the clinical sessions with kids and those are good skills that can be reinforced in the therapy.....when you’ve done (mindfulness) training with the staff, even non-clinical staff have mentioned that it has been helpful for themselves.”* The Program Manager stated,

They were skeptical at first, but many can now be seen using it themselves. I've seen staff doing it individually, that is slowing themselves down. They are using the language of mindfulness in their practice and carrying mindfulness practices into their therapy session.

The cool thing was watching staff begin to speak the language and then begin to incorporate it into their interactions with the kids and I'm seeing it...I have seen mind shifts...which shows a support and acceptance for it.

Overall, what was most expressed by the three staff interviewed was that they believed that mindfulness-based programming was indeed a good companion for the RTF. First, when asked if they supported mindfulness-based programming at the RTF, all three staff reported “yes.” From a more global perspective, at a recent New York State Office of Mental Health conference, the Program Manager recounted various sessions related to mindfulness-based programming and from that drew the conclusion that *“the whole field almost seems like its shifting and looking at mindfulness as an important tool.”* And, because Stillwater has been utilizing mindfulness-based practices, he believes *“we’re on the leading front of that”*.

Second, the staff members interviewed noted how mindfulness can be applied to various programs throughout the agency. When talking about mindfulness-based programming facilitated by the researcher, the Clinical Director stated, *“you bring it into to things that are not even classified as a mindful program which shows how useful it can be and how wide spread it can be used.....if the kids are learning them [mindfulness*

skills] with the Rec. Therapist they can then be brought back into the therapy office and practiced there and then also practiced on the dorms”.

Perhaps most notable, the Program Manager expressed that mindfulness was being brought into the residents’ *“therapies as a modality, putting it specifically into the treatment plans.”* Also noted by the Program Manager was that mindfulness is *“more than just something that you do with the kids, but something as a community that we need to do more with both ourselves and with the kids. And I think that’s the big picture..... mindfulness-based activities were used in team building days with staff, staff trainings, in large group activities, and on dorm.”*

Fit with Facility Goals and Culture

In regards to the compatibility of mindfulness-based programming with the Stillwater RTF program in general, the Executive Director stated *“I think it fits in well with sort of all the things we’re trying to do and the direction we want to go to create an environment that is accepting, nurturing and authentic. Mindfulness to me is so authentic.”* Lastly, responding to the impact of mindfulness programming on the agency at large, the Clinical Director stated: *“I think our program is better because of it.”*

In summary, based on the results of these staff interviews, mindfulness-based programming was an appropriate intervention technique used at Stillwater RTF, both residents and staff have been observed using mindfulness, and mindfulness-based programming has been utilized throughout the Stillwater community, in therapy sessions, on dorm and in staff trainings and teambuilding events. The introduction of

mindfulness to the therapeutic recreation program at Stillwater has created a ripple effect throughout the entire agency in which the usefulness and value of mindfulness practice was experienced throughout the entire therapeutic community.

Tangible Outcomes

Tangible or observable outcomes associated with the implementation of therapeutic recreation mindfulness programming at Stillwater RTF include the following:

- The incorporation of mindfulness based treatment objectives and methods within individual treatment plans of residents;
- Mindfulness based programming being facilitated by the therapeutic recreation specialist in classrooms during education programming;
- Mindfulness being promoted by residential staff on the dorms;
- Therapeutic recreation specialist incorporating mindfulness training into general staff trainings and teambuilding activities; and
- The therapeutic recreation specialist receiving financial support from the agency for attending an international scientific conference on mindfulness.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Procedures

Based on a literature review of best practices related to mindfulness-based interventions, a variety of mindfulness-based activities were implemented at a residential treatment facility (RTF) with youth ages seven to seventeen during regular therapeutic recreation (TR) programming. Feedback was gathered through group debriefs following TR mindfulness programs as well as through observation and interviews of youth participants and staff. After pilot testing, a manual was written titled “Therapeutic Recreation Mindfulness Programming with Youth in a Residential Treatment Facility” which provided best practices for infusing the concept and practice of mindfulness during TR programs with this population in this setting. Included in the manual are the following sections: Table of Contents; Overview of Stillwater RTF; What is Mindfulness; The Benefits of Mindfulness; Theory Base for Therapeutic Recreation Mindfulness Programming; Therapeutic Recreation Mindfulness Programming Purpose, Goals and Outcomes; Initial Mindfulness Familiarity Assessment; Introduction to Mindfulness Practice Sessions; The 45 Minute Therapeutic Recreation “Mindful Adventure” Program; Keeping with the Practice; Resources; and References.

Project Outcome

A program and accompanying manual were developed titled, "Circle 'Round the Bell: Therapeutic Recreation Mindfulness Programming with Youth in a Residential Treatment Facility." This particular manual introduces concepts, suggests best practices and describes methods for implementing therapeutic recreation mindfulness programs with youth in a residential treatment facility. Through a process of evaluation including group debriefs, interviews, clinical observation, and participant feedback related to participation in mindfulness-based activities and programs, as well as feedback from my fellow colleagues and committee members, the most useful and appropriate information was selected for the program manual. Project outcomes were as follows:

Objective 1A: Youth will complete a mindfulness familiarity assessment.

Outcome: All youth residing at Stillwater RTF during the field trial of this project actively participated in and completed the Initial Mindfulness Familiarity Assessment.

Objective 1B: Youth will actively participate in therapeutic recreation mindfulness program activities.

Outcome: Nearly all youth at Stillwater RTF willingly participated in mindfulness-based therapeutic recreation activities at one time or another during their treatment. At least fifty percent of youth actively participated in mindfulness-based activities on a regular basis.

Objective 1C: Youth will be able to express an appropriate idea or definition of the concept of mindfulness.

Outcome: Youth at Stillwater RTF were able to express an appropriate idea or definition of the concept of mindfulness after completing the Initial Mindfulness Familiarity Assessment and after participating in weekly therapeutic recreation mindfulness based programs and activities.

Objective 1D: Youth will be able to describe and demonstrate at least one method for practicing mindfulness.

Outcome: Youth at Stillwater RTF were able to describe and/or demonstrate at least one method for practicing mindfulness after completing the Initial Mindfulness Familiarity Assessment and after participating in weekly therapeutic recreation mindfulness based programs and activities.

Objective 1E: Youth will practice mindfulness independently during their free time at least one time per day.

Outcome: Of the sixteen youth interviewed at the end of the field trial period, seven responded with the answer “yes” and four with the answer “sometimes” when asked if they practice mindfulness during their free time. During the length of the field trial period, the researcher witnessed youth either practicing or talking about mindfulness during their free time. Also, staff reports also suggested that some youth were practicing mindfulness during their free time

and by the end of the field trial, mindfulness practice methods had been included in the treatment plans of at least five different youth.

Also, based on observations of the researcher, as well as verbal feedback from youth residents and staff, when expressing feelings related to their participation in mindfulness program activities, youth participants often expressed that they felt happy, relaxed, and calm during and after participation in such programs. Often, youth continued to express desire for participating in such activities especially mindful eating, mindful walking, mindful stretching and mindfulness-infused leisure activities such as mindful dodge ball or kickball. On some occasions, interest for participating in such activities was directly related to receiving an incentive in the form of attractive buttons or badges that could be earned after participating in numerous mindfulness activities including mindful eating, mindful walking, mindful stretching/yoga and mindful journaling.

Youth participants also expressed understanding and interest in how their mindfulness practice could be used for coping and responding to difficult situations. Some youth expressed understanding of how having a nonjudgmental attitude could help them be less annoyed by things happening around them such as “annoying,” “bothering,” or “instigative” behaviors of their peers which are often a trigger for youth going into crisis. Also, based on the observations of the researcher, after participating in mindfulness activities, youth would often demonstrate increased attempts at pro-social behaviors such as general friendliness and kindness during the rest of the program.

When evaluating results from interviews conducted with youth residents at Stillwater RTF as well as certain staff, various themes emerged. For instance, among youth who said that they practiced mindfulness during their free time, all most all of these youth mentioned that they practiced mindfulness and also felt the most mindful while engaging in specific leisure activities such as “reading,” “listening to music,” “playing guitar,” “drawing,” “skateboarding,” “sledding,” or spending time by themselves. Many of the same youth expressed that they also practice specific mindfulness practices taught during therapeutic recreation programs such as “mindful eating,” “mindful walking,” “sitting mindfulness,” “mindfully listening to sounds” and “mindfulness of breathing.”

Results from interviews with the Clinical Director, Program Manager, and Executive Director of Stillwater RTF regarding their perceptions of the mindfulness programming confirmed understanding and awareness of the benefits of mindfulness, need for mindfulness, and support for mindfulness-based programming within Stillwater RTF.

Conclusions

Based upon the outcomes and within the limitations of the project, certain conclusions can be drawn related to the incorporation of mindfulness education and training within therapeutic recreation. First, learning related to the concept and practice of mindfulness can easily be facilitated during TR programs with youth in an RTF setting. Second, and most significantly, youth who had participated in the project, when

practicing mindfulness during their free time, either did so by practicing specific mindfulness exercises learned during therapeutic recreation mindfulness programming or more often, described their mindfulness practice in the context of practicing being mindful while independently engaging in leisure-based activities that they personally enjoy.

Based on this information it can be concluded that leisure activities provide prime opportunities for youth to learn about the concept of mindfulness and also further develop their own personal mindfulness practice. Since mindfulness training is becoming increasingly recognized as a practice which promotes well being and, as *mindful leisure* is also recognized as a valuable component of TR service delivery which contributes to well-being and the development of resources (Hood & Carruthers, 2007), the findings from this project suggest that mindfulness is an applicable concept and practice which should be included in general therapeutic recreation philosophy and practice.

Discussion and Implications

Mindfulness is an “internal resource” and a natural human capacity which, for many, can be cultivated and developed through practice. Clinical interventions emphasizing mindfulness skills training continue to demonstrate therapeutic effectiveness with diverse populations in diverse settings. When mindfulness-based programming techniques were included in therapeutic recreation practice in a residential treatment facility for youth, overall improvements in TR practice and

participant experience were noticed, providing support for the use of therapeutic recreation mindfulness-based programming. Also, considering the complexity of circumstances related to the emotional and psychiatric difficulties experienced by the given population, as well as the environmental characteristics of the given RTF setting, therapeutic recreation mindfulness programming would likely be applicable and successful in other settings with other populations.

Mindfulness is being increasingly viewed within medicine, health care, and society as a beneficial practice and way of being (Langer, 2009 ; Lyubomirsky,2008). In contemporary health science, mindfulness is becoming recognized as a universal method and evidence based intervention technique for increasing and sustaining physical, psychological, emotional and social wellbeing. Accordingly, best practices for implementing mindfulness-based interventions continue to develop. As it was observed that leisure-based programs can help facilitate mindfulness, therapeutic recreation specialists are excellent candidates for teaching and facilitating mindfulness through leisure-based, therapeutic recreation mindfulness programs.

Recommendations

To further develop the philosophy and practice of therapeutic recreation mindfulness programming, Therapeutic recreation professionals can first begin by developing their own experiential understanding of the concept and practice of mindfulness. Recommended methods for doing so include reading books and other literature on mindfulness practice, beginning a personal mindfulness meditation

practice, enrolling in mindfulness-based exercise classes in your community (such as mindful yoga or tai chi), or through participating in mindfulness trainings or workshops offered by a growing number of organizations dedicated to teaching mindfulness. Participation in the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program, which is offered in many cities across the U.S. and the world, is highly recommended as a way to develop one's own practice and to experience a more clinical application of mindfulness. Also, to further deepen one's experience of mindfulness, one could participate in an extended, multi-day, mindfulness meditation retreat, commonly offered by many retreat centers.

Based on the work of this project, it is recommended that when introducing the concept and practice of mindfulness to children, it is appropriate to begin with lessons and activities which emphasize use of the five senses, to be aware of "concrete" sensory inputs from the environment as well as the physical sensations of the body. Also, when implementing mindfulness-based activities with youth in general, it is helpful to use a leisure-centered approach in fun, leisure-based activities to provide the framework in which youth learn to apply and practice the principles of mindfulness. In addition, being familiar with contemporary youth culture, and the specific cultural background of the individual participants, will contribute to greater relevance and application of TR mindfulness programming.

When working with youth living in a RTF who are challenged by severe emotional and psychiatric difficulties, special considerations apply to facilitating mindfulness-based

programs. First, it is important to be thoroughly familiar with the mental health background and current needs of each individual, as well as specific symptoms and behaviors, in order to most simply and sensitively approach the topic and practice of mindfulness. Second, it is critical to be aware of any history of trauma or abuse experienced by an individual so as not to abruptly bring awareness to memories, images or other sensations associated with such events. In general, when planning and implementing TR mindfulness programs with youth in an RTF, the TR specialist should always consult with members of the clinical department and treatment team, as well as the family of the individual when possible, in order to be safe and appropriate when introducing mindfulness to any resident.

Ultimately, increased experimentation with ways in which to facilitate and incorporate mindfulness-based activities and practice within TR programs with diverse populations and in diverse settings is recommended in order to further develop best practices for TR mindfulness programming. Also, more in depth research should be conducted to more thoroughly investigate the relationship between mindfulness, leisure, recreation, and well-being. Research should focus on the potential role that mindfulness will play in the clinical practice of therapeutic recreation and the emancipation of human potential in general.

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