Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) for Pain

Strategies to assist with pain management and increase coping

Eric Yelsa, Ph.D.
University of Utah Hospital
Pain Management Center
(801) 581-0746
Eric.Yelsa@hsc.utah.edu
Objectives: You will learn

- What is Mindfulness
- What is Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction
- The relationship between mindfulness and pain
- Attitudinal Foundations of Mindfulness Practice
- The Four Objects of Mindfulness
- Mindfulness and the single lane highway
- Mindfulness as applied to illness and pain
- Mindfulness in the real world
- Closing Summary and Comments
What is Mindfulness

- Mindfulness "is simply observing, watching, examining."
- You are not the judge but a scientist" Walpola Rahula
- Mindfulness means to be present, to be aware of what is going on". –Thich Nhat Hanh
- “Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; On purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally."Jon Kabat-Zinn
- Mindfulness is a state of active, open attention on the present. When you're mindful, you observe your thoughts and feelings from a distance, without judging them good or bad. Instead of letting your life pass you by, mindfulness means living in the moment and awakening to experience. Live in the Moment” Psychology Today

"I don't know how to define "mindfulness", but I know it when I see it" - Wynona Ryder, from the movie "Reality Bites"
Originally developed by Brahmans to memorized Vedic scriptures and recall large bodies of text. Helped to get into a “zone of clarity and presence, free of distractions”.

The Buddha adopted this Brahmanical usage, and used sati to for both ‘memory’ (of texts) and ‘presence of mind’ in meditation.

Modern teachings on mindfulness derived from vipassanavada doctrine, a practice of “dry insight” or observance of the changing phenomena of experience.

Contemporary Mindfulness is closely align with Vapassana or Insight Meditation Movement, and means to see things as they really are.
What Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)?

- Initially developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn from his doctoral work in molecular biology at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1971.

- MBSR was implemented into the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts in 1979.

- Initially based on an 8 week course group format integrating Vapassana Meditation principles as a means to assist those with chronic illness.

- MBSR does not differ its treatment approach between individuals with various illness or conditions.
The relationship of mindfulness and pain

- Pain is “An unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissues damage, or described in terms of such damage”- International Association for the Study of Pain

- “Pain is the physical sensation; suffering is how we choose to experience it”-Bhikku Bodhi

- MBSR attempts to separate the physical sensation of pain from the emotional suffering that often times accompanies it.
Attitudinal Foundations of Mindfulness Practice

- **Non-Judging**
  Refraining from categorizing or placing experiences into values such as “good” or “bad”

- **Patience**
  Allowing an experience to “unfold” from moment to moment as opposed to trying and force a specific type of experience

- **Beginner’s Mind**
  An attitude that allows for greater possibility experiencing moment to moment awareness of experience

- **Trust**
  Developing a basic trust in yourself and your feelings. Being able to honor your feelings and intuition

- **Non-Striving**
  Participating in something for the purpose of participation as opposed to attempting to gain something

- **Acceptance**
  The ability to see things as they are as opposed to how we would like them to be or “color” them to be

- **Letting Go**
  Having an attitude of non-attachment. Letting moments and experiences go from one moment to the next without the attempt to “bring back the good old days”
FOUR OBJECTS OF MINDFULNESS

Body
Breathing, body posture, heartbeat, parts of the body, etc..

Feeling
Sense impressions, pain, heaviness, tension, relaxation, etc…

State of Mind
Focused, distracted, preoccupation with mind states (anxiety, fear, etc…), etc…

Mental Concepts
Subjects in which the mind focuses its attention (health status, stressors, events, etc…)
Mindfulness

- Notice mind wandering
- Notice temporal nature of pain/emotion
- Notice how mind interprets significance of event
- Notice how mind is selective
- Open awareness of other body sensations besides pain
- Notice what mind chooses to focus on
Mindfulness and the single lane highway

- Notice something is on the highway
- As it gets closer notice what it is
- As it gets closer notice the details of it
- Notice how the ground rumbles as it gets close
- Notice the exhaust
- Notice the sound
- Notice how all this changes as it moves away into the distance

**Although it is your job to notice these things, it is never your job to flag down the car and drive away in it.**
Mindfulness in the world
Sample Treatment

- Guided Body Scan
- Generalization of mindfulness to the day to day/Imagery
- Unstructured focus/Bells
- Mindful walking
- Mindful Eating
- Incorporating family into mindfulness
Closing Summary and Comments

- Pain is more than a physical sensation
- To address cancer pain adequately one must also address associated psychological issues
- MBSR provides a means in which to address those issues in a comprehensive and compassionate manner.
Resources and References

Scientific Papers:


- Teasdale JD, Segal ZV, Williams JM, et al


- Ott MJ, Norris RL, Bauer-Wu SM


- Tacon AM, Caldera YM, Ronaghan C


- Matousek RH, Dobkin PL


Resources and References cont’d


Books:
“The relaxation response” by Herbert Benson

“Full catastrophe living: using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness”, by Jon Kabat-Zinn

Websites:
www.umassmed.edu/CFM/SP-programs
www.dharma.org
www.cancer.gov
www.cancer-pain.org
Enhancing mental health services to bone marrow transplant recipients through a mindfulness-based therapeutic - See more at: http://www.cancernetwork.com/oncology-nursing/mindfulness-meditation#sthash.XtlgDFCu.dpuf
MBSR and Cancer Treatment

- MBSR found to help with psychological functioning in breast cancer treatment

(Lauche R,
For More Information

Eric Yelsa, Ph.D.
Clinical Psychologist
University of Utah Pain Management Center
546 Chipeta Way, #220
Salt Lake City, Utah 84108
801-585-7246
Email Eric.Yelsa@hsc.utah.edu