



Mindfulness-based Intervention Pilot Study for Preschool Teachers

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Background

The current study seeks to address sobering statistics regarding teacher burnout and attrition from the profession by examining the effectiveness of a mindfulness-based intervention (MBI) designed to **provide strategies and skills for stress management and increasing general well-being of preschool teachers**. This project **explores the effectiveness of an MBI** developed by Flook et al. (2013) that was a modification of Kabat-Zinn’s MBSR program, but **modified to include key features of curiosity and awareness from a mindfulness theoretical framework**, using a sample of Nebraska preschool teachers.

Study Aims

1. Examine group differences (intervention, comparison) on teachers’ stress, mindfulness, burnout, well-being, and satisfaction.

Method

Sample

N = 28 (9 intervention, 19 comparison) Nebraska preschool teachers. The intervention teachers (N =9, 100% women, *M* age = 40.3 years) were 77.8% White/Caucasian, 11.1% Hispanic, and 11.1% Asian; 77.8% have a Bachelor’s degree and 22.2% have some college; 77.8% are Lead teachers and 22.2% are Assistant Teachers. For the comparison group (N = 19, *M* age =30.9 years), 84.2% were White/Caucasian, 5.3% were Black, 5.3% were Hispanic, and 5.3% were Asian; 47.4% had some college, 36.8% had a Bachelor’s degree, 10.5% had a Master’s degree, and 5.3% had only high school; 68.4% were Lead teachers and 31.6% were Teacher aides.

Intervention

8-week Mindfulness-based intervention focused on strategies and skills for stress management and for increasing general well-being. The weekly sessions (8 in total) lasted 2 hours (120 minutes). Each weekly session focused on Mindfulness principles and attitudinal foundations as a means of working with stress (see Table 1). Participants also participated in a day-long silent retreat. The intervention group completed weekly formal and informal practices at home for 20-45 minutes a day for 6 out of 7 days each week. . Members of both groups (intervention and comparison) completed surveys on mindfulness, levels of stress, feelings of burnout, satisfaction with life, and general well-being. These surveys are completed online at each of three time points: at the beginning the study, after completing the study, and 8 weeks after completing the study.

Measures

Distress. Teachers’ psychological distress was measured with the Symptom Checklist 90-R (SCL-90-R; Derogatis, 1994) .

Mindfulness. Two measures of teachers’ mindfulness were used. The Five-Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ; Baer et al., 2008), a pool of 39-items rated on a Likert-type-scale from five mindfulness questionnaires, and the Mindfulness in Teaching Scale (MTS; Frank, Jennings, & Greenberg, 2016), a five-item Likert-type scale used to rate mindfulness in the context of classroom interactions.

Methods Continued

Measures Continued

Burnout. The Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educator Survey (MBI-ES, Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) has 22-items with a Likert-type scale to rate frequency with which they experience feelings or attitudes of: emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, and depersonalization.

Well-being and Satisfaction. The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS; Stewart-Brown et al., 2011) was used to rate the frequency they’ve experienced each item over the previous two weeks. Items are summed to get a total well-being score; higher scores indicate higher well-being. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener , Emmons, Larson, & Griffin, 1985) was used to rate how much they agree with statements designed to measure general life satisfaction at a global level.

Preliminary Results

There were no significant group differences between the participants on their pre-test scores of distress, mindfulness, satisfaction with life, and general well-being. However, there was difference on their pre-test scores on the Maslach’s Burnout Inventory subscale of Depersonalization, $t(18.75) = -3.55, p = .002$.

As of now, a little less than half of the participants have completed the post-test survey (N = 12; 6 intervention, 6 comparison). Paired samples t-test were conducted comparing pre- and- post test scores for both groups. There were no differences for the comparison group. However, the intervention group increased on the MBI (ES) subscales of emotional exhaustion ($t(5) = 2.74, p = .04$) and personal accomplishment ($t(5) = 9.64, p = .00$), and decreased in reactivity on the FFMQ mindfulness subscale of nonreacting ($t(5) = -6.74, p = .001$).

One-way ANOVAs were conducted on all of the post-test measures. There were no significant group differences on any measures except for one subscale of the FFMQ: there was a significant group difference on the Acts with Awareness subscale, $F(1,10) = 14.77, p < .05$. Furthermore, planned contrasts revealed that the intervention group had higher scores of acting with awareness compared to the control group, $t(10) = 3.84, p < .05$.

As more participants complete the post-test survey, additional analyses will be run.

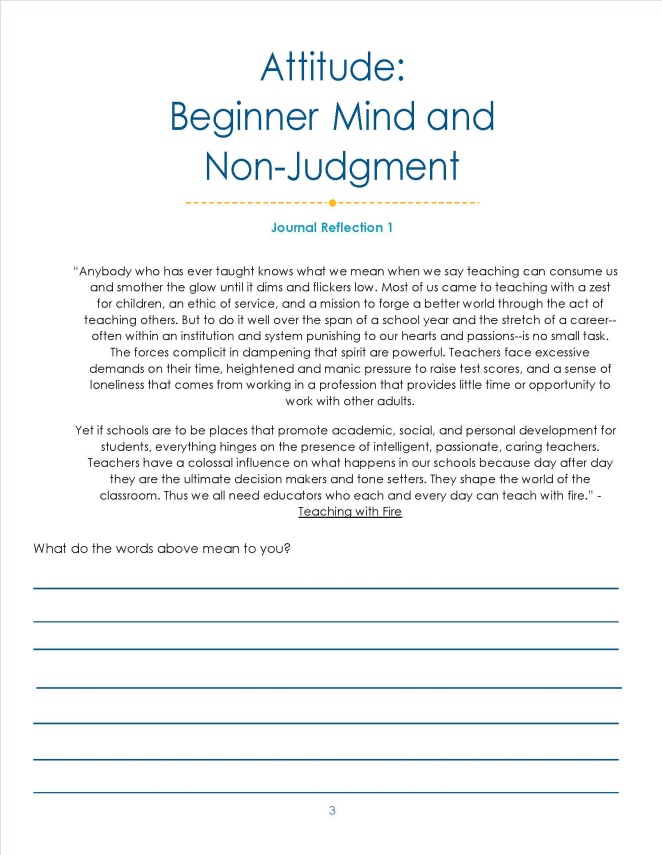

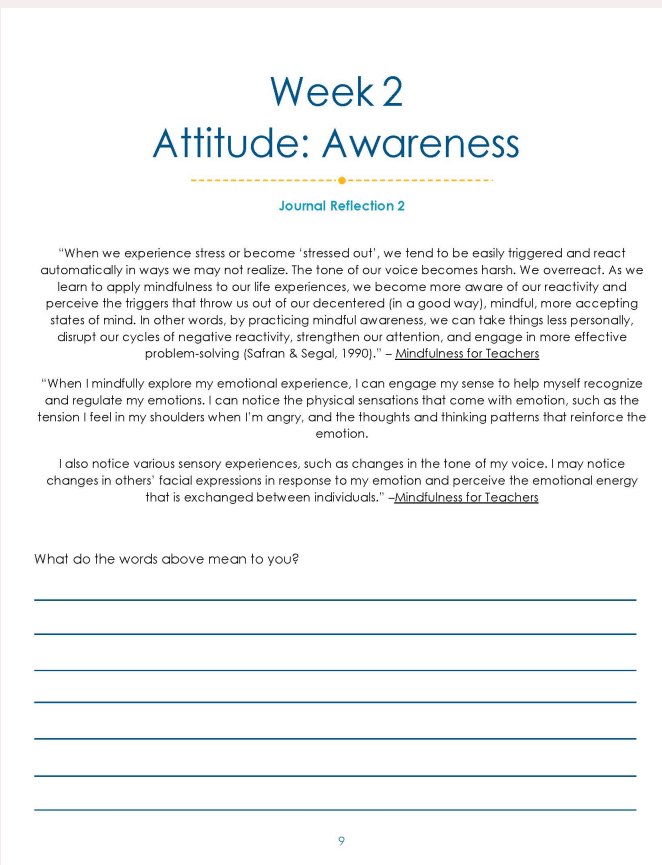
Comments from Preschool Teachers After Completing the 8-Week Mindfulness-Based Intervention

“This class has made a really big difference in my life. I feel like I’m really learning to not let emotions steal my joy and calm! It’s a beautiful way to work through stress and I wouldn’t know how to do this without you.” –intervention participant

Tables

Table 1

Example of Weekly Session Content

Session	Content
<div>Week 1</div> <div></div> <div></div>	Theme: There is more right with you than wrong with you, no matter the challenges you face. Attitude: Beginner’s Mind and Non-Judgment Activities and Practices: •Introduction to meditation practice •Participant introduction •Reflection •Interconnectedness meditation •What do we know about acute and chronic stress? •What is mindfulness and why might we use it as a strategy to help manage the stress we experience? •Introduction to breathing practice •Introduction to Loving Kindness Practice School/Home Practice: Formal practice •10 minutes of guided breathing meditation Informal practice •Stating the words of a Loving Kindness Practice
<div>Week 2</div> <div></div>	Theme: Perception and creative responding Attitude: Awareness Activities and Practices: •Drop-in Practice •Guided meditation •Reflection •Dead Bug practice (mindful body movement) •Perception activity •Awareness/Hi activity School/Home Practice: •Nine Dots activity •Formal Practice

Discussion and Next Steps

- Preschool teachers who participated in MBI enjoyed the guided meditations, all but 1 teacher liked the yoga.
- Participants wanted to have way to continue a community of preschool teachers practicing mindfulness.
- Participants of MBI who had younger children missed more sessions. Future MBI programs with preschool teachers may want to offer child care to help with retention.
- Recruiting participants for the comparison group was a challenge as many wanted to participate in the MBI program.
- Participants in both groups will complete the online survey a final time at the 8-week follow up.