



Mindfulness-based Interventions for People with Chronic Pain

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It is well-known that Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is one of the treatment modalities for people suffering from chronic pain. It mainly aims at changing people's unhelpful beliefs and behavioral patterns so as to adopt a more helpful way of thinking and behavior, and to improve their general functioning and quality of life.

However, the negative views of pain experience may be so overwhelming that peoples often respond with distress and avoidance to their own negative experiences, such as the physical, cognitive, and emotional aspects of depression or anxiety. When peoples with chronic pain respond this way, their overall level of distress may increase, they may struggle to avoid their emotional experiences, and their daily functioning may decrease. The fear of negative experience itself may impact the emotional distress in chronic pain and that processes of acceptance, mindfulness, and values-based action may reduce this effect (McCracken & Keogh, 2009).

Mindfulness is a way of paying attention non-judgmentally to any or all experiences occurring at the present moment. Unlike CBT, mindfulness-based intervention makes no attempt to change the content of negative thinking, but to change the relationship between the person and his/her own thoughts, feelings as well as body sensations. Repeated practice in noticing, observing with interest and compassion, and decentering helps people to realize their thoughts, emotions and sensations are just thoughts, emotions and sensation that change from time to time, not "truth" or "me" . Thus, they are not being absorbed in the content of thoughts. This leads to breaking down of the old association between negative mood and negative thinking that normally triggered by chronic pain. Mindfulness helps people with chronic pain see the pain not equivalent to suffering but to notice the ongoing stream of internal and external stimuli as they arise and cultivate non-judgmental pain acceptance. People may have their own choice to choose whether to engage with or not to engage with those thoughts and emotions arise from their experiences.

Mindfulness interventions have been demonstrated to be beneficial for a number of psychological and physical conditions such as chronic pain, depression, anxiety, addictions and personality disorder (Baer, 2003). Jon Kabat-Zinn at the Center for Mindfulness, University of Massachusetts Medical School developed an eight-week programme called Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) in 1979, for populations with a wide range of chronic pain and stress-related disorders. Participants of MBSR demonstrated positive changes in brain function and immune response (Davidson et al., 2003). Zindel Segal, Mark Williams and John Teasdale developed the Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) based on Jon Kabat-Zinn's MBSR. MBCT was designed specifically to help people who suffer repeated bouts of depression. The UK *National Institute of Clinical Excellence* (NICE) has recently endorsed MBCT as an effective treatment for prevention of relapse.

Reference

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