Why Mindfulness Matters... 
And How to Introduce it to Teens 

Danella Hafeman, M.D. Ph.D.
Outline

► What is mindfulness?
► Science vs. Hype: What is the evidence?
► How do we engage children and adolescents in mindfulness activities?
What is mindfulness?

“Paying attention in the present moment...”

“... on purpose...”

“... in a non-judgmental way.”

(Kabat-Zinn, 1997)
Mindfulness: The Fly
Mindfulness Meditation Training Interventions

- 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)
- 8-week Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)
- Others: Brief experimental trainings (e.g., three 25-minute guided mindfulness meditation exercises); Integrative Body-Mind Training (IBMT), etc.
- Component of DBT and ACT
Interventions for Children and Adolescents

- MBCT for Children and Adolescents (MBCT-C)
- MBSR for Stressed Teens
- Mindfulness in Schools Program, Mindful Schools Project, etc.
- DBT for adolescents with bipolar disorder
- ACT for adolescents
Outline

- What is mindfulness?
- Science vs. Hype: What is the evidence?
- How do we engage children and adolescents in mindfulness activities?
MINDFULNESS RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS BY YEAR, 1980 - 2013

Source: D.S. Black (2014)
Effects of Mindfulness: Meta-Analysis

Khoury et al., 2013: 209 studies
Mindfulness Training RCTs for Health

- **HIV/AIDS**: mindfulness training slows HIV-progression in stressed HIV+ adults (Creswell et al., 2009; Seyed Alinaghi et al., 2012)

- **Depression**: reduces depression relapse in at-risk individuals (Teasdale et al., 2000; Segal et al., 2010)

- **Stress in Youth**: reduces anxiety, emotional lability, depression, and PTSD symptoms in children and adolescents (Biegel et al., 2009; Semple et al., 2010; Sibinga et al., 2015)

- **Drug Abuse**: reduces drug relapse and heavy drinking in substance abusing individuals at 12-month follow-up (Bowen et al., 2014)

- **Medical Symptoms**: accelerates skin clearing in psoriasis patients (Kabat-Zinn et al., 1998)
Mindfulness

How does mindfulness get under the skin to influence health?

Health: Improved Health and Disease Outcomes
Mindfulness

Decreased Reactivity to Stressful Stimuli

Health: Improved Health and Disease Outcomes
Mindfulness skills (attention + acceptance) are critical components for stress regulation and resilience.

Effects will be observed in high-stress populations for which stress is known to affect the onset or exacerbation of disease-pathogenic processes.
MBCT and Stress Reactivity

- N=52 adults with partially-remitted depression
- Randomized to 8-week MBCT course vs. wait-list control
- Pre- and post-intervention: Trier Social Stress Test (TSST)

(Britton et al., 2012)
Stress Reactivity After MBCT vs. Control

(Britton et al., 2012)
Similar results after a 3-Day Laboratory Mindfulness Training

- N=66 Attention Training with CMU undergraduates
- 3 consecutive days of guided 25-minute mindfulness meditation vs. analytic (poetry) attention training
  - Participants were similarly engaged in training tasks
- Day 3, participants complete Trier Social Stress Test (TSST)

(Creswell et al., 2014)
Mindfulness training and dispositional mindfulness buffers psychological stress reactivity

(Creswell et al., 2014)
How does this help?

- Learning to focus attention
- Accepting whatever is here now with curiosity and kindness

Stressful Stimuli

- ↓Rumination/worry: tools to get off the hamster wheel
- Respond vs. React: lengthen the fuse
Outline

► What is mindfulness?
► Science vs. Hype: What is the evidence?
► How do we engage children and adolescents in mindfulness activities?
How to Adapt for Kids/Teens

- Make it relevant
- Making it Concrete
- Shorter Practices with Catchy Names
- Practical Exercises to use when Stressed
- Engaging the Senses
- Choose your own adventure
Making it Relevant

- What are they struggling with most?
  - True with adults too… but with kids, need to sell it a bit more

- Use video clips to illustrate
Kung Fu Panda
Internal Hijackers
Making it Concrete

- CLAP 1-2-3
- Spotlight of attention
- Puppy Mind
- Finger breathing
- Rumination
Attention is like a puppy

- It wanders around, sniffing aimlessly
- It doesn’t stay where you want it to
- It brings back things you didn’t ask for
- It makes messes
Puppy Mind
Finger breathing

1. In
2. Out
3. In
4. Out
5. In

Mindfulness in Schools Project, b
This is called ‘rumination’
Shorter Practices with Catchy Names

Adults
- 45 minute body scan
- 10 minute breathing meditation
- 30 minute silent meditation

Kids
- 10 minute “beditation”
- 5-10 minute FOFBOC (Feet on Floor, Bum on Chair)
- 2 minute breathing meditation (7/11)
- 1 minute “breath counting”
Practical exercises for stress

.b
FOFOBOC
7/11
Stop
Feel your feet
Feel your breathing
Be
FOFBOC
Feet on Floor, Bum on Chair
MiSP: FOFBOC Video
What to do:

7/11
Engaging the Senses

- Mindful eating (chocolate, sour gummy worm)
- Essential oils or scents
- Texture, smell, appearance of a natural object
As important as the actual practice...

- Reflection: Encouraging noticing
- No right or wrong answers
- Separating out raw experience from judgement
- Not judging the judgement
How to adapt this practically

- Refer patients to a mindfulness group
- Use brief grounding exercises (e.g. FOFBOC, .b)
- Refer patients to “beditation” recording for difficulty sleeping
- Use it yourself: e.g. before/during a difficult clinical encounter, etc.
Take-home Messages

- Mindfulness is simply being present with whatever is happening now
- Practicing mindfulness can improve response to stressful situations
- With adaptations, mindfulness can be accessible and useful to teens
Acknowledgements

Mentors:
Tina Goldstein
David Creswell
Carol Greco

Funding:
Klingenstein Foundation Fellowship
T32 for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Research (PI: David Brent)

Misc:
Department of Psychiatry
Mindfulness in Schools Program