



“Mindfulness-based parenting interventions for mothers of infants and toddlers”

Day:	Time:	Track:
Wednesday 11th July 2018	10.45 am – 12.00 pm	Clinical applications

The quality of parenting, especially in the first few years, is of great importance for the development of the child. Parenting can be influenced negatively by mental health problems of the mother (for example post-partum depression, opioid use disorder, etc.), but also by high levels of parental stress that are associated with, for example, child behavioral problems. Mindfulness trainings have been shown to be effective interventions for people with mental health problems and symptoms of stress. There is also some evidence of the effectiveness for both parents and children of mindfulness-based parenting trainings, which have been adapted to the needs of parents with, for example, children with developmental or mental health problems. We hypothesize that for mothers of infants or toddlers with mental health problems or high parental stress, mindfulness-based parenting training can improve the quality of parenting and parental stress. The four studies that will be presented made use of longitudinal data with self-reported and/or observed outcomes to evaluate Mindful parenting interventions for mothers with mental health problems or high levels of parental stress. Two studies focus on the evaluation of the Mindful with your baby/toddler training for mothers with children aged 0-48 months, who experienced mental health problems or high levels of parental stress. The fourth study focuses on an online Mindful Parenting training for women with toddlers experiencing elevated levels of parental stress.



Symposium overview

- Presenter 1** **Eva Potharst** - Mindful with your Toddler: Feasibility and Effects of a Mindful Parenting Group Training for Mothers and their Toddlers
- Presenter 2** **Myrthe Boekhorst / Eva Potharst** - Mindful with your Toddler: An Online Mindful Parenting Training for Mothers with Toddlers
- Presenter 3** **Moniek Zeegers** - Improving parental sensitivity and mind-mindedness with a Mindful Parenting group training for mothers and their infants/toddlers
- Chair:** ***Eva Potharst***



Mindful with your Toddler: Feasibility and Effects of a Mindful Parenting Group Training for Mothers and their Toddlers

Eva Potharst¹, Moniek Zeegers², Susan Bögels^{1,2,3}

¹*UvA minds, academic outpatient (child and adolescent) treatment center of the University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands*

²*Research Institute of Child Development and Education, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands*

³*Department of Developmental Psychology, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands*

Background and objectives: The development of self-regulation in children is enabled by well attuned regulation by others at the beginning of life. This regulation is internalized step by step, in a process of alternating other- and self-regulation. When problems in regulation have arisen, early intervention and support for the mother-child dyad is important to reestablish a well-functioning co-regulation relationship, in which the child can learn to trust on the mother's availability and ability to support him in his regulation when he needs it. We hypothesize that for mothers who experience regulatory difficulties in the relationship with their toddler, mindfulness may be an effective intervention to support both her self-regulation and co-regulatory capacity, and support her child in the development of self-regulatory abilities.

Methods: Mother-toddler dyads with regulatory difficulties (n=17) participated in the 9-week Mindful with your toddler training in small groups of 3 to 6 mother-toddler dyads. During the training, mothers learned to be attentive to their own experience and their toddler's signals, use mindfulness in stressful situations, and be kind to themselves. Questionnaires on maternal and toddler outcomes were administered 8 weeks before, just before and immediately after training, and at 9-week follow-up.

Results: All but one mother and toddler completed treatment. Between waitlist and pre-test, there were no significant improvements. At post-test, there were significant improvements in mothers' psychopathology (small effect size), mindfulness (medium effect size) and in toddler dysregulation (small effect size). At follow-up, there were significant improvements in mothers' well-being, psychopathology, parenting stress, feeling confident as a parent, self-compassion (medium effect sizes), and maternal mindfulness (large effect sizes) as well as in toddler dysregulation (medium effect size).

Discussion and conclusion: The current study provides the first evidence supporting the idea that Mindful with your toddler is a promising intervention for mother-toddler dyads who experience regulatory difficulties.



Mindful with your Toddler: An Online Mindful Parenting Training for Mothers with Toddlers

Myrthe Boekhorst

Tilburg University, Tilburg, Netherlands

Introduction: Mindful parenting (MP) can support parents with stress-regulation as well as finding a balance of attentiveness towards both their child and themselves. Research has shown that MP positively affects parenting and can effectively decrease parental stress. MP allows parents to efficiently cope with stressful family- and parental situations, allowing for improvement in both family interrelationships and child behavior. We hypothesize that an online MP training for mothers with a toddler will be an effective intervention that will help in improving parental stress and over-reactivity, child's behavioural problems (aggressive behaviour and emotional reactivity) and MP will additionally positively influence mothers in terms of mindful parenting and levels of self-compassion.

Method: In this study, a randomized, wait-list controlled design is used among 60 mothers with 3-year old toddlers with moderate to high levels of parental stress, who have been participating in the HAPPY-study since their pregnancy. Participants are allocated to an immediate-intervention condition or a waitlist-control condition. The intervention is an 8-week online MP training in which mothers are offered mindfulness meditation, mindful parenting exercises, and readings about mindful parenting. The total study duration is 20 weeks for all participants. For the immediate-intervention group this consists of a pre-test assessment, intervention, post-test-assessment, follow-up period, and follow-up assessment. For the waitlist-control group, a waitlist assessment, waitlist period, pre-test assessment, intervention and post-test assessment is assigned. Assessments for mothers include questionnaires measuring parental stress, over-reactivity, mindful parenting, self-compassion, and child behavioural problems, and the post-test assessment also included a training evaluation questionnaire. Fathers fill out a questionnaire measuring child behavioural problems. Data collection will be complete in June 2018.

Results: The current study is still ongoing. Preliminary analyses including 14 participants show that mothers score the training with an average of 7.7/10. Only 15% reported to have completed the training. Nevertheless, all women reported that the weeks they completed were either very or somewhat useful to them.

Discussion: Feasibility, acceptability, and effectiveness of the online Mindful with your toddler training will be discussed.



Improving parental sensitivity and mind-mindedness with a Mindful Parenting group training for mothers and their infants/toddlers

Moniek Zeegers¹, Eva Potharst², Susan Bögels¹, Irena Veringa¹, Cristina Colonna¹

¹*University of Amsterdam, Research Institute of Child Development and Education, Amsterdam, Netherlands*

²*UvA Minds Academisch behandelcentrum, amsterdam, Netherlands*

Background and objectives: In the present ongoing study we examine the efficacy of the Mindful with your Baby / Toddler training in terms of observational changes in the mother-child relationship. The training is developed for mothers with mental health problems who have a child in the age of 0 to 4 years. The training aims to reduce parental stress and to change parents' negative and stress-inducing perceptions of themselves and their infant. During the eight-week-training, mothers practice mindfulness in sessions with and without the presence of their infant. In the child sessions mothers practice with observing their child with full attention and without judgment. We hypothesize that the training improves mothers' sensitivity, acceptance, and mind-mindedness. The latter refers to caregivers' tendency to treat the child as an autonomous (mental) agent, by the means of referring to the child's thoughts and feelings. We also hypothesize that the training would reduce maternal parenting stress.

Methods: So far, 36 mothers followed the training with their baby (n = 22) or toddler (n = 14) and participated in a baseline assessment (eight weeks before the training), a pretest (one week before the training) and a posttest (directly after the training). Mothers filled out questionnaires on parenting stress and home visits were conducted to record 10-minute mother-infant play interactions. Sensitivity and acceptance were observed during the play interactions with the Ainsworth scales and mind-mindedness by coding the amount of appropriate or non-attuned mind-related comments that mothers produced during the play interactions.

Results: Preliminary analyses including 36 mother-infant dyads showed that mothers reported less stress after the training. They also showed less rejection of the infant's cues and produced less non-attuned mind-related comments. No significant differences were found in mothers' appropriate mind-related comments and sensitivity from pretest to posttest. There were no changes in maternal reports and behavior from baseline to pretest, suggesting that the intervention underlies the observed changes from pre- to posttest.

Discussion: The results suggest that the Mindful with your Baby/Toddler training is a promising intervention that helps to reduce stress in new mothers and improves mothers' accurate reading of their infant's mind states.