

Defining and measuring Equanimity

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Many studies reveal the positive impact of mindfulness training on well-being and mental health. Several mechanisms have also been identified (Gu, Strauss, Bond, & Cavanagh, 2015). Equanimity, a balanced state of mind, is originally rooted in Buddhist theories as one of the Four Immeasurables. Recent development in Western psychology recognizes it as a promising central process involved in mindfulness-based meditation (e.g., Desbordes et al., 2015; see also Hadash, Segev, Tanay, Goldstein, & Bernstein, 2016). Despite these recent advances, relatively few studies have examined it empirically and it lacks measurement instruments. It thus remains crucial to develop such tools to better understand its functioning, its relationships with mindfulness and related constructs, but also to facilitate the treatment and prevention of health issues such as addictive behaviours. Indeed, the detrimental approach/avoidance reaction toward addictive stimuli or their absence (Grabovac, Lau, & Willett, 2011) could be diminished by more equanimity. Under this perspective, two studies have been conducted. The first study was a validation of an equanimity questionnaire, with a sample of 265 adults. Results of a factor analysis show two main factors: the first one could be described as an even-minded state of mind no matter the object or situation, which substantially overlap with emotional stability. The second one is hedonic independence, which corresponds to the absence of being mainly driven by desire toward pleasant objects/situations or to reject unpleasant ones. These two definitions of equanimity are both correlated to non-reactivity but lead to distinct psychological outcomes and differences in subjective evaluation of arousal caused by visual stimuli. Furthermore, only the second factor is significantly linked in the predicted direction to addictive behaviours. In order to complete our first results, we tested the effect of a 30-minute meditation practice on these two factors. Implications of these results for current definitions of equanimity and for both affective and cognitive processes will be discussed.