

# **Ethical challenges in organizations: Complexities of developing mindfulness programs for leaders and executive trainers**

Frank Musten<sup>5</sup>, Lynette Monteiro<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*UBC Department of Psychiatry, Vancouver, Canada*

<sup>2</sup>*University of San Diego Mindfulness-based Professional Training Institute, San Diego, United States*

<sup>3</sup>*Ottawa Mindfulness Clinic, Director of Professional Training, Ottawa, Canada*

<sup>4</sup>*Mindfulness Integrated Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Institute, North American Chapter, Vancouver, Canada*

<sup>5</sup>*Ottawa Mindfulness Clinic, Director of Programming, Ottawa, Canada*

## **Background**

The teacher-training program at the Ottawa Mindfulness Clinic includes trainees who intend to offer mindfulness-based programs (MBPs) in organizations. Ethical challenges include doing no harm, which requires awareness of potential vulnerabilities of participants, fostering well-being, a core ethic of MBPs which may not be congruent with organizational practices, and ensuring outcome fidelity. These ethical challenges can be met through affirmed assent, cultivating congruence with personal values, and ensuring fidelity to the intended outcome by assessing if the skills acquired promote well-being.

## **Methods**

This paper describes an MBP offered in an organization that endorsed the ethical intent of cultivating wellbeing. Because of organizational requirements, the sample was split, however, all participants received the same curriculum. The first group attended four two-hour weekly sessions. The second group attended six ninety-minute sessions. Interested staff attended information sessions to ensure awareness of possible adverse reactions to MBPs. Practice-based evidence protocols were used to ensure the intent to foster well-being was being met. The Maslach Burnout Inventory, Emotional Exhaustion Scale measured well-being in both programs. The Psychological Capital (PC) scale, a more direct measure of well-being, was included in the six-week program. Qualitative data were collected to determine what behavioural changes were associated with participation.

## **Results**

Seventeen participants from the four-week and nine from the six-week program completed assessments. Three reported difficult experiences, which were successfully addressed. Decreased emotional exhaustion was demonstrated for seven (41%) of the four-week program participants, and eight (89%) in the six-week program. Within the six-week program, all participants reported increases in the hope, resiliency, and optimism subscales of the PC scale, and eight (89%) reported increases in the effectiveness subscale. Qualitative data suggest that participants are engaging in behaviours consistent with maintaining well-being.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

Results suggest that trainees can be supported to explicitly attend to ethical concerns when providing an MBP within an organization. In this example, the well-being of participants improved and the potential for adverse effects was successfully mitigated. Attending to these concerns should be a competency assessed in trainees, particularly in the complex environment of an organizational setting.