

A study protocol for the randomised controlled trial: My Resilience in Adolescence (MYRIAD) Project

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Background and objectives :

Mindfulness-based approaches are effective at enhancing mental health in adults, but few trials have evaluated the impact of mindfulness training (MT) on adolescents. Furthermore, no trials have examined the mechanisms of MT in adolescents nor whether gender or age is a moderator of the effects of MT. This study has three primary aims: (i) To compare the effects of an eight-week curriculum of MT against an evidence-based Psycho-Education (Ps-Ed) control intervention using a portfolio of self-report measures of mental health and computer-based cognition tasks, (ii) to examine the potential mechanisms of MT by measuring adolescents' ability on measures of executive control across diverse cognitive domains and in a variety of social and emotional contexts before and after training, and finally (iii) to investigate the moderating effects of age, pubertal stage and gender on the effects of MT.

Methods:

The study is a randomised controlled trial. Four hundred and eighty participants aged 11-16 will be recruited across schools in the South-East of England over 24 months, starting in September 2016. Participants were randomised to either MT or a Ps-Ed training course, matched for length and engagement. Courses are delivered after school, on site. Participants are assessed pre- and post-intervention and then followed up two months later to evaluate maintenance of gains in performance across time in the short-term.

Results:

289 participants have been pre-assessed, assigned to condition, trained and post-assessed. Completed data collection (including T1 and T2) with further data analysis to explore the potential mechanisms and moderators of training in either mindfulness or Psycho-Education, will be fully operationalised by Summer 2019.

Discussion and conclusion:

The study will establish if MT is an effective method of enhancing the mental health of adolescents when compared to an active control condition and whether these enhancements occur in different areas, for example executive functions, self-esteem, academic and social skills. The study will also establish if the effects of MT are moderated by gender, age or pubertal stage.