

A multi-faceted mindfulness program for healthcare workers in a large metropolitan health service is associated with positive personal change.

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Background:

Occupational stress is associated with adverse physical and psychological outcomes and is common among healthcare workers. Occupational stress in healthcare workers is reduced by staff making personal changes, including exercise and meditation, and organisations making structural changes, such as favourable rostering, appropriate workloads and offering staff support. Health services should facilitate these approaches to support the welfare of their staff.

Methods:

AlfredHealth is a major metropolitan health service employing over 8000 staff. Therapeutic Relaxation and Enhanced Awareness Training (TREAT) is a self-care program directed at improving staff wellbeing by enhancing self-awareness, self-compassion, resilience and engagement and is offered free to AlfredHealth staff. TREAT uses mindfulness meditation, gentle yoga movement, education and other self-care tools. TREAT is delivered through seven-week programs, one-off sessions supporting leadership and team events, brief focus sessions to prepare teams for ward rounding and a free mobile meditation app. The mobile app has guided mindfulness meditations focusing on health care situations. There are brief meditations for use in the work place without disrupting workflow or longer meditations to consolidate the TREAT program out of the work place. TREAT has been evaluated by anonymous surveys and by mobile app utilisation data.

Results:

1052 staff undertook TREAT between 2015 and 2017. Survey analysis showed 100% of respondents found TREAT to be beneficial in the workplace. 97% would like to participate in further sessions. The majority felt better able to cope with stress at work and also with handling conflict in the workplace. 93% believe that TREAT improved the experience of working for AlfredHealth and 93% believe that other health services should offer similar programs. 88% reported making changes in their approach to personal mental and physical wellbeing. The mobile app was released in January 2017. At July 2017 there were 3296 downloads, with 174 active weekly users of whom 78% are returning users.

The app survey results showed: 100% would recommend the app to others 95% reported improved well-being and 79% reported better coping at work.

Conclusion:

TREAT has high approval ratings from staff with significant levels of self-reported positive personal change.