

The Effectiveness of Mindfulness Meditation Module for College Freshman Who Have Aged Out of Foster Care

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This study assessed the effects of a 4-week mindfulness intervention on perceived stress, mindfulness and sleep quality among college students from foster care. Thirty-five foster care alumni enrolled at a 4-year university (n=16 experimental, n=19 control). Participants were assigned to one of two freshman seminars in Fall 2016. Using a cross-over study design, participants were assessed three times: pretest; first follow-up (after section 1 received the intervention) and second follow-up (after section 2 received the intervention). Post-intervention focus groups were conducted with each section. The intervention resulted in significant short-term reductions in perceived stress and sleep problems. Focus group results reveal additional insights on how interventions can be tailored to the needs of this population. Brief mindfulness interventions offer promise for college students with histories in foster care. However, any new intervention offered to “foster care alumni” is delivered in the context of a larger array of supportive services and resource gaps that are common to the unique and intensive needs of this population. In addition to group instruction, it may be helpful to offer more didactics, structure and individual support as points of contact between the formal training classes. Because so many of these young adults have experienced varying degrees of trauma, it is also critical to pay attention and make support services available if students struggle with any negative memories, as well as any unpleasant thoughts, emotions and sensations that may surface during mindfulness practice. At the core of mindfulness practice is the idea that one stays present to all content and experience without judgment and this includes experiences that may be received as positive, negative or neutral. Mindfulness interventions taught to individuals with a history of trauma give particular emphasis to building a felt sense of safety (imagined or felt) and affirming choice of participation, in part (where to focus attention) or whole (when to stop the practice).