

Improving self-compassion and relationship with food: Mindful-eating training in Mexican undergraduate students

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Mindfulness based programs are well established systematic approaches to increase awareness, nonjudgmental observation and acceptance of body sensations, cognitions and emotions. Also increase the ability to respond skillfully in stressful experiences and to choose adaptive behaviors. On the other hand, mindful-eating based programs encourage the ability to observe hunger, satiety cues and negative affect associated with overeating. In addition self-compassionate attitudes toward one-self can contribute to attenuate the tendency to overeat and to promote self-acceptance and self-kindness. All of these principles can be used to prevent disordered eating behaviors and promote positive attitudes toward one-self; however limited empirical work has been reported on health-promotion programs, furthermore, to date, no empirical trials have been reported on Mexican population. The purpose of this study was to assess the efficacy of a prevention mindfulness training program on female Mexican undergraduate students. Data was collected at three times point: baseline, completion of intervention (8 weeks) and 3- months follow up. Two hour group sessions included training in mindfulness meditation, mindful-yoga (emotion and body sensations awareness, non-judgmental attitude toward inner experience), mindful eating (intuitive eating, triggers to overeat: food craving and negative affect) and self-compassion (to reduce self-criticism and enhance self-kindness and equanimity). Twenty-two undergraduate students with body dissatisfaction were randomized to intervention (n=13) or a wait list control (n=9). In order to assess mindfulness, mindless-eating and self compassion in Mexican population self-report instruments were constructed or adapted and validated in a previous study phase. The mean age in the intervention group was 23 year (SD=2.4; range=20-28) and mean BMI=25.2 (SD=3.7) and wait list control was 23.1 (SD=4.3; range=18-32) and mean BMI=24.3 (SD=4.4). Results showed statistically differences between experimental and control group in measures of self-kindness (d=1.76), acceptance toward adversity (d=0.99), mindless eating (d=1.11), overeating behavior (d=1.8), eating and weight concerns (d=.84) and non-judgmental observation to inner experience (d=1.76). After the three months follow-up results were maintained in the intervention group. This study provides preliminary evidence that mindful- eating training can promote positive attitudes and behavior in Mexican undergraduate students.