

Mindfulness as a self-assessment tool

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Classic mindfulness concentrates on giving participants instruction to focus on the present moment, observe thoughts, emotions and body sensations in a non-attentive and non-judgemental way. The participant is encouraged not to attach to the observations. This technique has proven effective but it remains a challenge to engage participants outside the clinical population that are goal orientated and value the cognitive processes highly. To improve engagement and attendance specifically in this group the self-assessment screening tool has been developed. The goal of this tool is to use observations from the mindfulness meditation as feedback to inform the participant. Where for example in Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction and Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy participants are guided to let go of the thoughts and emotions treating them as a mental process or body sensations. The tool utilises a short five minutes breathing meditation setting to observe emotions, thoughts and body sensations in order to become aware of present internal processes. After meditation participant records the observations and analyses them together with the facilitator. Psycho-education (i.e. Neuropsychology, theory of habits and work effectiveness) are used to empower the participant to be able to treat observed emotions as a key to understanding the informative content of emotions, body sensations and thought. This approach links Mindfulness with Evolutionary Psychology which approaches emotions and thought as ways to communicate with the environment.

The self-assessment screening tool was developed as a direct response to feedback gathered during two years of mindfulness training of professionals working in a demanding corporate environment. Certain mindfulness exercises were observed to trigger a powerful response and improve engagement, attendance and self-awareness dramatically. These exercises form the basis for the developed tool. This tool can inspire academic research bridging clinical theory and evidence based practice.