

Integrating mindfulness in teaching the course 'Inter and intra personal development'

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Background and objectives

Mindfulness increases awareness, attention, concentration, academic performance and reduce stress for students. Mindfulness increases compassion and empathy; two qualities of a social worker. First year social work students pursue the course 'Inter and Intra Personal Development' to support their transition into higher education, create a generation of professionals who will practice continuous self-care, reduce occupation stress and burnout. Research objective was to determine the impact of teaching mindfulness in the course on student's academic performance, management of stress and enhance intra and inter personal skills.

Methods

A pre and post-test of Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) were administered. Students kept a daily journal of their experiences practicing mindfulness activities outside the classroom.

Results

Fifteen students with a mean age of 21 participated in the study. Journal entries reveal that mindfulness was a useful tool to support students grow in self-awareness, cultivate inter and intra personal skills, cope with personal and academic stressful situations. Students reported significant increases in three of the five Facets of Mindfulness Questionnaire and marginal decreases in two in the post test. The Perceived Stress Scale reveal marginal increase in stress levels at the end of the course. There was an insignificant increase in student's perception of their academic performance at post testing.

Discussion

Mindfulness is a useful tool to support students in growing in self-awareness, cultivate inter and intra personal skills, cope with personal and academic stressful situations as well as sleep. However, during the most stressful events of the semester, students demonstrate a paucity in application of mindfulness. This could have been due to the period in which the post tests were administered which was between the last day of class and two weeks thereafter which were assessment periods. Some students journal internal conflicts with the practice and their religion, while others developed a new relationship with the beaches.

Conclusion

Mindfulness is a useful tool for social work students to practice continuous self-care and manage stress. It is recommended that mindfulness be integrated into social work education to immunize them against the stress response in the profession.