

Effectiveness of mindfulness taster workshops for adults and primary school students through training non-professional ambassadors: A pilot study

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Background: Mindfulness is one of the most widely studied topics in the recent psychological field. Despite the effect of mindfulness in promoting mental health among adults, community access to mindfulness-based training is limited due to the scarcity of professional trainers in Hong Kong. Research efforts are warranted to ascertain if mindfulness-based training can be provided in a low-intensity approach (i.e., delivered by non-professionals supervised by professionals).

Methods: 61 ambassadors were recruited and invited to attend a series of mindfulness training. Trained ambassadors were invited to conduct either half-day mindfulness taster workshops for adults or 4-session mindfulness taster workshops for primary school students. For the half-day mindfulness taster workshops, 301 participants were recruited to complete a pre- and post-evaluation. For the 4-session mindfulness taster workshops, 108 primary school students, their parents, and teachers were invited to complete a pre-, post-, and 1-month follow-up evaluation for students who attended the workshops.

Results: Analysis of variance suggested a significant improvement in the facets of self-compassion and mindfulness among the ambassadors at post-training, with the effects maintained at 1-month follow-up. Moreover, paired t-tests indicated that the Chinese adults were found to have an overall significantly higher score of peace of mind, and state mindfulness, as well as lower score in tiredness and negative arousal after the workshop. Primary school students also showed significant improvement on emotional symptoms and peer relationship problems as rated by teachers.

Discussion: Results supported the feasibility of having non-professionals delivering mindfulness-based training in the community under the supervision of professionals. Given differential patterns in self-, parent- and teacher-ratings were noted in primary school students, further investigation is warranted to confirm the its effectiveness.