

Influence of Brief Mindfulness Training on Parents' Anxiety and Depression

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Background and objectives

Parental mental health has an important role in childrearing. Third-wave parenting interventions, including mindfulness training, may improve parental and child adjustment in families that have children with developmental disabilities (Whittingham, 2014). The goal of this study was to investigate whether a brief mindfulness training program would have a positive influence on parents' mental health or parental behaviors.

Methods

A total of 10 mothers who had infants or elementary school children were recruited. The intervention was conducted in a small group format, which included two or three people and consisted of eight weekly 2-hour sessions. Participants were guaranteed anonymity and the protection of personal information, and they provided written consent for their voluntary participation.

Participants completed the Five Facet Mindful Parenting Questionnaire (FFMPQ; Mizusaki et al., 2015), as well as the Parenting Scale (PS; Arnold et al., 1993) and Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HAD; Zigmond, 1983). In this study, we developed a new parental training program that has components of behavioral parent training (BPT) and mindfulness training (MT). In the MT phase, participants practiced several mindfulness exercises (ex. breathing exercises, loving-kindness meditation) in the sessions. Participants also practiced three minutes breathing as homework.

Results

A total of nine participants completed the program. Repeated t-tests were conducted to compare pre- and post-treatment scores. FFMPQ scores increased from pre-treatment (M = 78.29, SD = 9.53) to post-treatment (M = 90.43, SD = 7.11, $p < .05$), whereas PS scores decreased from pre- (M = 3.71, SD = 0.58) to post-treatment (M = 3.13, SD = 0.48, $p < .05$). HAD scores also decreased, especially scores regarding anxiety, from pre-treatment (anxiety: M = 6.13, SD = 3.35, depression: M = 10.13, SD = 3.83) to post-treatment (anxiety: M = 3.50, SD = 2.33, $p < .01$, depression: M = 7.25, SD = 3.19, $p < .10$).

Discussion and conclusion

After the intervention, parental mindfulness, their mental health, and parental behavior improved. These improvements were observed even though participants practiced only three minutes of breathing exercises as homework a few times a week.