

THE STRESS REDUCTION CLINIC MINDFULNESS-BASED STRESS REDUCTION TRAINING (MBSR) PROGRAM EVALUATION: 2010

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ABSTRACT: The Stress Reduction Clinic (SRC) offers the classic 8-Week MBSR Course. Results obtained with well-documented evaluation instruments are summarized and interpreted. Participants in courses over a 2-year period reported results similar to those in long-established MBSR programs: significant reductions in perceived stress, uniform increases in ability to cope with stress, reduction in the use of medication, reduction in the frequency and severity of pain, reduction in blood pressure, and more. This indicates that the SRC's program provides people facing major life challenges the same professional complement to medical care and therapy that has been the hallmark of established MBSR Programs for nearly three decades.

INTRODUCTION

The Stress Reduction Clinic (SRC) offers on-going MBSR programs to those in the greater Portland area and northwest Oregon. Since 2007 173 people have completed the course and traveled from as far as Salem to attend. This clinical evaluation summarizes the results we found in our 8-Week MBSR Courses for 2007 through 2009.

The primary intention of this evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of the SRC MBSR course. Another goal of the evaluation is to compare this SRC's course with the results reported by the MBSR Program at the Center for Mindfulness (CFM) at the University of Massachusetts Medical School and other well established programs. The CFM is the original home of MBSR Programs and the center for MBSR teacher training. MBSR Programs have been extensively documented.^{1,2}

HISTORY OF MBSR

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) has been on the cutting edge of mind-body and integrative medicine for three decades. Jon Kabat-Zinn conceived MBSR and has authored numerous books, articles and research papers about it.^{1,2}

MBSR represents the best in participatory medicine. Physicians and therapists referred most of the ten's of thousands of people who have taken the 8-Week Program and have often taken the Program themselves. The Program was initially offered at the UMass Medical Center as an adjunct to medical care for patients who could no longer be helped with medical treatment.

A cornerstone of the Program is its dedication to measuring outcomes with well-established evaluation instruments and publishing the results in scientific and medical journals. The result is an impressive library of evidence showing that MBSR Programs are consistently effective at helping participants face the most daunting challenges of life: chronic pain or illness, chronic anxiety or panic, gastrointestinal distress, cancer, high blood pressure, headaches, stress, fatigue, and more.^{1,2,3}

Program assessments time and again show that participants experience reduction in pain levels, lasting ability to cope with stress, lasting decreases in physical and psychological symptoms, greater ability to relax, and greater energy.

THE STRESS REDUCTION CLINIC'S PROGRAM

The SRC's 8-Week MBSR Program is closely modeled on the one at the CFM. Prospective participants are invited to an MBSR Orientation to experience some techniques used in the Program, to learn about the Program curriculum and to ask questions. Those wanting to enroll complete a 6 page application. The applications are reviewed and the MBSR teacher follows up with an interview of each applicant to verify that they are ready to enroll in the program.

The 8-Week Program involves 28 hours of classroom work and as many hours of homework. The curriculum includes learning a variety of formal mindfulness meditation practices, mindful movement (yoga), stress management practices, group educational activities, and assignments that ask participants to bring mindfulness to daily life.¹

METHODS OF PROGRAM EVALUATION

184 participants entered the SRC's 8-week course since 2007. They came from a variety of backgrounds, many with challenging medical or psychiatric conditions, and a common desire to learn how to face huge challenges in their lives: stress, illness, pain or more. Participants were asked to complete two simple evaluation instruments: a well documented perceived stress test (the PSS-10)⁴ and the MBSR Post-Program Assessment.⁵ These instruments have been used in assessments of the CFM's MBSR Programs⁵ and served to compare the SRC's results with these well-documented programs.

Another instrument, the Duke Health Profile⁶ was added in fall of 2009 as another method of evaluation.

The PSS-10 was taken two times; once before class the first day and second near the end of the 7th week of the Program. The Post-Program Assessment was completed during the last class of The PSS-10 and the Duke Health Profile were taken two times; once before class on the first day and second on the last day of the Program. The Post-Program Assessment was completed during the last class of the course.

RESULTS

Of 184 people who enrolled in the course 173 completed it. The PSS-10 scores showed that there was a significant decrease in perceived stress at the end of the 8-Week Program. The average decrease was 35% with the vast majority having reductions of 20% to 80%. (Figure 1)



Figure 1. Average Perceived Stress Scale, PSS-10, scores for Program participants the first day and on the last day, class 8. n=117

The Duke Profile found that participants' experience of general health increased 12% and anxiety/depression scores decreased 16%.

The Post-Program Assessment asked participants to elaborate on the degree to which their work in the course had changed their life (Figure 2). Nearly all participants reported that they could better cope with stress and reported feeling better and more hopeful. Over 60% reported that they were more active and felt they had more energy. Of those who took medication nearly 40% took less of it at the end of the Program. Over 65% of those who came to the program with pain reported that they were in pain less frequently and that it was less severe. Half of those with high blood pressure reported that it had decreased.

Participants were also asked to measure the change in attitudes and behaviors that were a direct result of participation in the Program. Every participant noted that they now were taking better care of themselves and were more confident they could improve their own health. Nearly every participant said they could better deal with anxiety and depression. Likewise, nearly everyone felt they could handle stress better and could more easily respond rather than react to stressful situations. Most said they were better at feeling assertive and more able to express their feelings in relationships.

One question in the Assessment asked participants to measure the importance of the Program for themselves on a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being very important. The average was 8.9.

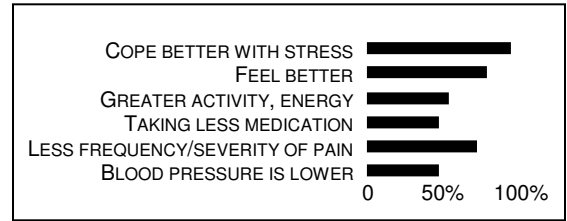


Figure 2. Participants responses on the Post-Program Assessment:percentage indicating each experience. n= 137

DISCUSSION

The tests and evaluations provide ongoing evidence of this remarkably effective methodology for coping with some of the biggest stresses people may encounter in life. The SRC's program would benefit from a greater array of tests and instrument to measure more directly some of the challenges participants bring to the course: chronic pain, mood disfunction, burnout, grief, medical symptoms. Courses could thereby be fine-tuned and modified to support particular groups more effectively.

This fine tuning could take the form of specialized MBSR-Based course for populations dealing with chronic pain, sleep problems and other challenges.

CONCLUSIONS

This clinical summary affirms MBSR's role as a very effective complement to medical care and therapy by tangibly and measurably supporting participants during some of the most challenging times of life. The results also affirm that the Stress Reduction Clinic's 8-Week courses support participants in a manner consistent with well-established MBSR Programs.

REFERENCES

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