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Mindfulness in Recovery 7-Month Follow-Up Report

The background to this report is that nine participants enrolled in the Mindfulness in Recovery workshop series in May 2013. They met for two-hour weekly sessions over five weeks and attended a full-day intensive (total of 17 hours). Six participants completed the series. The program was developed by Andrew Safer, Mindfulness Instructor, and co-facilitated with Michele Pike, BSW, RSW, Mental Health and Addictions Services, Eastern Health.

Five participants attended the seven-month follow-up session on January 18, 2014. They granted permission for their evaluation comments to be anonymously included in a report.

Dr. Martha Traverso-Yeppez, a professor and researcher at the Division of Community Health and Humanities, Faculty of Medicine, Memorial University, co-developed the evaluation form with Andrew Safer, and oversaw the evaluation process for the original five-week series.

Quantitative Evaluation

Participants assigned numbers ranging between 1 and 5 for a total of 17 statements based on a Likert scale, with Strongly Disagree = 1 and Strongly Agree = 5. Sample statements include: "I keep projecting my concerns for the future"; "I don't usually know what to do to bear with my discomfort and sense of vulnerability"; and "I'm usually unaware of which things or events trigger my cravings."

The following table summarizes the totals at the beginning of the workshop series, and at the 7-month follow-up.

Participants	Pre	Post	7-Month Follow-Up
#1	40	53	64
#2	30	58	61
#3	41	50	57
#4	38	60	64
#5	38	38	52
#6	43	51	N/A
Average Score	38.3	51.7	59.6

The difference between pre-test and post-test (6 participants) = +35%
The difference between post-test and follow-up (5 participants) = +15%
The difference between pre-test and 7-month follow-up (5 participants) = +59%.

Qualitative Evaluation

1. How has the Mindfulness in Recovery group benefited you?

a) In terms of sobriety / recovery from addictions

#1: I am learning to stay in the present by staying with the craving and meditating on most days in the morning. I am learning to avoid judging my thoughts and starving the craving by not allowing storylines to take over.

#2: Has helped me learn to stay in the present, pause before I act, control my ruminating and negative preoccupation, helped me to find a quiet peaceful place within. Empathizing with others helps me fight the negative thinking, concentrating on the positive makes me feel better, happier.

#3: For some reason, I don't think the group has helped greatly with my substance abuse/addictions. The group taught me how to live.

#4: Everything is doable. New tools. See reality. Working on acceptance. Love me and others more. I am OK, no matter what.

#5: It allowed me to isolate the urge to use, see it for what it is, dispute it, and move on. This is very powerful because it is a direct way of dealing with urges that reaffirms my reasons for quitting every time. The affirmation comes in the disputing. It is a direct way as opposed to distracting oneself or avoiding "triggers" or praying for a higher power to remove a 'mental obsession'.

b) If you care to, please compare your level of substance use / engagement in addictive behavior:

Participant	Before	After
#1	The summer before it was often 1-2 times per week	Very rare—occasional slip—once a month or once every couple of weeks
#2	No comment	Not as much: more controlled
#3	Out of control	Mild to non-existent (pot, Advil)
#4	90 / 100 (gave in to urges 90% of the time)	50 / 100 (gave in to urges 50% of the time)
#5	Sporadic use	Totally abstinent

2. How has the workshop series benefited you generally in your life?

#1: Allowed me to understand the inner workings of my mind and to stay in the moment more. It is taking a lot of practice, but the workshop series is helping me to be more aware as opposed to drifting and allowing my thoughts to control me. I feel less anxious as a result of meditation.

#2: I can see now where consumerism/materialism really drove my addiction. As I become more aware, I can see an improvement: do I need it or want it? Really like the idea of simplifying my life and appreciating what I do have—I can have a good life, in spite of my family problems. I can help them more by getting strong/well and really living the life I've been given.

#3: The workshop series has set me on a new way of living. Addiction is a disease of the soul; the series has taught me how to live with uncertainty and change.

#4: Refer to above.

#5. It gave me the proper attitude—one of openness, courage, and non-judgmentalism—to relax and become aware of thoughts and feelings. Becoming aware is the first step to changing, re-directing.

3. Frequency and length of mindfulness meditation sessions

Participant	Frequency	Length of Sessions
#1	3-5 times / week	20 min.
#2	daily	20-30 min.
#3	6 times / week	15-20 min.
#4	7 times / week	5 min.—random throughout the day
#5	1 time / week	10 min.