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**Her Majesty’s Penitentiary  
 Mindfulness in Recovery (Addictions) Program**

**Memo: Program Evaluation**

In August and September 2019, the Mindfulness in Recovery twice-weekly program was presented to an initial group of six inmates with addictions ranging from 20 to 40 years of age in St. John’s, Newfoundland. While five participants attended the fifth session, just one completed the seventh and final 1.5-hour session. Two inmates were released, one was transferred, one was disciplined, and two dropped out due to lack of interest. Meetings with lawyers and the court also impeded attendance. The sessions were delivered via Zoom video conferencing from a location outside the prison.

The session themes were:

1. Introduction to mindfulness and awareness, and addictions
2. A new relationship with thoughts
3. The push & pull of craving, dealing with discomfort, and making friends with yourself
4. Triggers, emotions, and pausing
5. Making a mindful choice
6. Awareness and facing difficulties
7. Review of key elements of this series

The program included Mindfulness-Awareness meditation instruction, guidance, and practice; presentation on a theme; discussion in pairs and in the group, and Q&A.

Participants gave permission for their evaluation responses to be anonymously included in a report and to be used for promotional purposes.

**Quantitative Evaluation**

The inmate who completed the program was the only one who filled out both pre- and post-evaluations. His responses are ranked according to the greatest change in score, pre- to post.

1=Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Neither Agree, nor Disagree 4=Disagree 5=Strongly Disagree 0=Don’t Know. Higher numbers indicate a positive change.

Pre	Post	
1	4	I don’t have confidence in my ability to deal with the stressful things that happen to me.
1	4	I don’t know how to deal with my discomfort and sense of vulnerability.
1	4	Not being fully present in my immediate experience is normal for me.
1	4	I’m not grounded in my body.
1	2	It is normal for my mind to never stay in one place.
1	2	I keep thinking about my concerns for the future.
1	2	I have difficulty dealing with troubling emotions.

1	2	I don't feel equipped to deal with urges and cravings.
1	2	I feel like I have no control over my thoughts, moods, and feelings.
1	2	I get stuck with thoughts and feelings that trigger cravings and I don't know how to interrupt this pattern.
1	2	I don't know why I am so vulnerable to addictions.
3	4	I have difficulty accepting things as they are.
1	1	I'm usually unaware of what things or events trigger my cravings.
2	2	My thoughts are true.
2	2	Staying in the present hurts so much that I run away from what is unpleasant.
4	2	I don't believe that I can make a difference in my life.
2	1	I think over and over about things that have already happened.
25	42	

### Qualitative Evaluation

Inmate #1 responded to questions about...

*Mindfulness:*

- Helps you get through your problems and relax when you get stressed out.
- Helps clear your mind and lets you relax. So you don't stress out, and have a better outlook.

*Has it helped deal with urges and cravings?*

- Helps very good. Lets you clear your mind so it's not so hard to deal with things.

*How else has it been helpful with recovery?*

- Gives you a better outlook on everything.

*What is your #1 substance of choice?*

- Coke

*What did you learn about addiction?*

- That you have to take one day at a time and work through it.

*Do you have suggestions on how Mindfulness in Recovery can be improved?*

- No. I think that it should be offered more places because people could use this to help them.

*How many times per week have you been doing meditation practice?*

- 10

*Usually for how long?*

- Hour

### Anecdotes

Throughout the workshop series, participants shared the following comments:

- Inmate #1: [Mindfulness practice] kept me out of trouble this week. Without it, I would have ended up in the hole twice.
- #2: It helps me pay attention to my steps on the range.
- #3: One of the other participants told me that this is helping him on suicide watch.
- #4: I was very stressed (about a family matter), and it kept me from going to the hole.