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**“ANXIETY, STRESS & MINDFULNESS”
EVALUATION REPORT**

January 9, 2020

Attention: Mr. John Abbott
CEO, Canadian Mental Health Association-Newfoundland and Labrador

Between September and December 2019, youth (18-25) and adults (25+) participated in two 12-week “Anxiety, Stress & Mindfulness” workshop series delivered by Andrew Safer of Safer Mindfulness. This program was offered through a partnership with Canadian Mental Health Association-Newfoundland and Labrador (CMHA-NL) and Safer Mindfulness, with funding from the Department of Health and Community Services. The Zoom video conferencing platform enabled people to participate from any location in the Province where there was Internet access. Participants connected to the weekly 1.5-hour evening sessions from home. They agreed to keep personal comments and participants’ names confidential. A youth worker was present during the sessions in the 18-25 group to provide support, if needed.

An evaluation with both quantitative and qualitative measures (see pages 12, 13) was administered during the first and last sessions, allowing comparisons pre to post. Participants provided consent to incorporate their comments anonymously into a report and in “Anxiety, Stress and Mindfulness” promotional materials. Pre and post evaluations were matched for 16 participants in the two groups. Six post evaluations could not be matched to pre evaluations, and these responses are included in the “Post Only” qualitative section below.

Participants

The plan was to have one 18 to 25 year-old group, and one 25+. As in the Spring with the “Mindfulness in Recovery” series, it was proving challenging to find enough 18 to 25-year olds to make a group. There was, however, a substantial waiting list for the 25+ group, so we filled the 18 to 25 (Wednesday) group from the waiting list. Thirty-four people registered for this group; 18 attended either the first or second session; and three months later, 10 attended the last session, four of whom were youth. Thirteen participants were significantly involved (attended at least four sessions). Nine people who started with the 18-25 (Wednesday) group were youth, and nine were over 25.

In the 25+ group (Thursday), 36 registered; 22 attended the first or second session; 8 completed the series; and 19 were significantly involved. Nineteen participants from both groups who attended at least 8 sessions are receiving Certificates of Completion.

People participated in the weekly sessions from the following locations:

St. John's and surrounding areas	Elsewhere in the Province
St. John's	Brigus
Portugal Cove	Port aux Basques
Conception Bay South	Stephenville
Torbay	Stephenville Crossing
Paradise	Islington
Mt. Pearl	
Flatrock	
Bauline	

People living in these locations registered, but did not attend:

Rocky Harbour
Gander
Kippens
Bay Roberts
Doyles
Corner Brook

Program

The “Anxiety, Stress & Mindfulness” program consisted of 12 1.5-hour weekly sessions. Included were instruction and guidance in various mindfulness practices, Q&A, presentation on a theme, and discussion in pairs and in the group. Andrew Safer’s book, *Anxiety, Stress & Mindfulness: A Do-It-Yourself Guide to Wellness*, was provided to each participant. Chapters were assigned to be read in between the sessions. In addition, links to articles and videos on the current topic were provided weekly by email. The weekly session topics were:

1. You Can’t Do It Wrong (Mindfulness-Awareness Meditation)
2. Getting to Know Anxiety Instead of Running Away From It
3. Where the Rubber Meets the Road: Mindfulness-Awareness Practice
4. Turning Our Habits on End
5. Birthright of Goodness
6. Treating Ourselves and Others with Kindness
7. Digital Distraction: Mindfulness Meets the Internet
8. Mindfulness in Everyday Life
9. Stress: Exploring Thoughts and Beliefs
10. Self-Centeredness and the Big Picture
11. “Me” Is the Culprit
12. Fear and Fearlessness: Facing What Is

Participants were encouraged to develop a home mindfulness practice, and to engage in various mindfulness-in-everyday-life activities.

Quantitative Evaluation

The Evaluation Form (quantitative and qualitative) was co-developed by Martha Traverso-Yepez, PhD, a professor and researcher at the Division of Community Health at Memorial University, and Andrew Safer, mindfulness instructor and trainer. Debbie Wiseman, Consultant, Iceberg Advantage, developed the web-based evaluation form and displayed the data from the completed forms in tables.

Participants indicated their agreement / disagreement with 16 statements using this scale:
1=Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Neither Agree, nor Disagree 4=Disagree 5=Strongly Disagree 0=Don't Know

Listed below are the statements with at least a 10% average score change. Referring to unique identifiers ("personal code"), pre and post evaluations could be matched for 16 participants in both groups. Several participants who were involved through the series who were not able to attend the last session were invited to complete the post evaluation.

Note: A higher score pre to post indicates greater mindfulness.

Evaluation Statement	Pre Intervention Means	Post Intervention Means	Difference in Means	Percent Change
I get stuck with the storylines that can make me feel anxious and I don't know how to pause or interrupt this pattern.	2.6	3.9	1.3	33.3%
I feel like I have no control over my thoughts, moods, and feelings.	2.3	3.4	1.1	32.4%
I don't believe that I can make a difference in my life.	1.9	2.8	0.9	32.1%
This pattern of not being fully present in my immediate experience is normal for me.	3.1	4.3	1.2	27.9%
I think over and over about things that have already happened.	3.2	4.3	1.1	25.6%
I often don't feel grounded in my body.	2.7	3.6	0.9	25.0%

I have difficulty accepting things as they are.	2.7	3.5	0.8	22.9%
I don't have confidence in my ability to deal with the stressful things that happen to me.	2.6	3.3	0.7	21.2%
When I start thinking about something that concerns me, I can't get it out of my mind.	3.4	4.3	0.9	20.9%
I always have the feeling that there is something I should be doing to get rid of my troubling emotions.	3.1	3.9	0.8	20.5%
My storylines keep the everyday stress rolling and pull me out of the present moment.	3.2	4	0.8	20.0%
I keep projecting my concerns for the future.	3.4	4.2	0.8	19.0%
My mind never stays in one place and keeps jumping from one thought to the next.	3.1	3.8	0.7	18.4%
I don't usually know what to do to bear with my discomfort and sense of vulnerability.	2.9	3.5	0.6	17.1%
I'm not usually aware of what things or events trigger my anxiety.	2.4	2.8	0.4	14.3%
I have difficulty dealing with troubling emotions.	3.4	3.9	0.5	12.8%
Staying in the present hurts so much that I prefer to run away	2.6	2.9	0.3	10.3%

from what is unpleasant.				
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Evaluation Scores Per Participant, Pre to Post

Participant	Pre Mean	Post Mean	Difference	Percent Change
1	3.35	4.29	0.94	21.9%
2	4.00	4.29	0.29	6.8%
3	2.94	3.88	0.94	24.2%
4	2.82	3.00	0.18	5.9%
5	2.41	3.94	1.53	38.8%
6	3.47	3.82	0.35	9.2%
7	2.76	3.82	1.06	27.7%
8	3.06	3.35	0.29	8.8%
9	2.35	4.18	1.82	43.7%
10	2.24	4.53	2.29	50.6%
11	2.71	2.82	0.12	4.2%
12	4.29	4.35	0.06	1.4%
13	1.88	3.18	1.29	40.7%
14	2.24	2.41	0.18	7.3%
15	2.76	3.41	0.65	19.0%
16	2.29	3.24	0.94	29.1%
Average for all participants	2.85	3.66	0.81	21.2%

Qualitative Evaluation

The qualitative evaluation is page two of the exit evaluation. Julie Huntington, B.Sc., and B.Ed., transcribed these sections.

Twenty-two participants' responses are reflected in the tables below: 16 from the evaluations that could be matched pre to post (above), and six that were completed at the end of the program that could not be matched to pre evaluations ("post only").

Qualitative Evaluation

1. *What are some of the main points about "mindfulness" that resonate for you and your everyday life? (21 participants)*

Focus on one thing at a time
The idea of just being, and doing, in the present moment, being able to separate from my thoughts and recognizing them as such, and task switching and busyness create more chaos.
Being present and the fullness that it can bring to life, I look forward to being able to pause with non-judgment always prior to a response, using mindfulness in all activities of daily life so as to slow down and appreciate all aspects...the small things in life seems to often be very important.
Being present.
I have tried other methods to "be in the now", but this actually works for me.
The reminder to step back and look at what is happening in a more non-judgmental way, the importance of interrupting internal stories, letting the current breath or item dissolve, and paying more attention to the gap to create space and clarity.
Being aware of my surroundings and staying in the moment, not being fixated on the past.
The main thing is simply the acceptance that I exist in the present moment and only the present moment -- worrying about the past or the future is bound to happen, but that worry is a state of mind you can set aside for a while and instead just be aware of the world around you as it is.
Appreciation for things around me. Try and forgive mean people.
The ability and practice to be able to pull myself out of detrimental thought spirals. I have been having trouble with this in the last few years, and the ability to take control and redirect my consciousness towards the immediate, tangible and non-judgmental present is something that strongly resonates with me. And being able to appreciate the moments that would otherwise be missed.
That our thoughts are not reality, they are simply thoughts.
Being able to stop my thoughts and getting grounded.
By being in the moment, I can appreciate what is happening now instead of worrying about what is going to happen later.
Thoughts are just thoughts. Getting outside your my own small brain / me focus.
(Post only) Not being carried away by my thoughts, returning to my breath to deal with everyday stressful situations, and using mindfulness to let go of the storylines that keep my stress high in everyday life.
(Post only) Mindfulness reminds me to pay attention to what is, as opposed to what is in my head and isn't actually happening.
(Post only) Breathing, letting thoughts pass and there is no correct way of practicing (even though there is).
(Post only) Keeps me grounded and helps keep my mind calmer. More resilience to stressful situations.
(Post only) I can choose to be mindful at any time, in any place, in any situation. Practicing mindfulness is a good way of pulling me out of the past or future, which triggers anxiety, and back to the present moment, which I can cope with better.

2. Which mindfulness-in-everyday-life practices are you finding helpful, and in what way?
(21 participants)

Focus on breath
Being more present, understanding anxious feelings and thoughts as such, head and shoulders helps me to just take a moment and be present, and slowing down—both thoughts and actions.
Brushing my teeth, drinking coffee, showering, eating...again, it helps focus and be present with myself instead of getting caught in a hundred thoughts and things that have to be done...brings calm and permission to just be.
Making myself present which is new for me.
Sitting practice, if I have time to do it. I'm getting better at making the time.
Showering mindfully, trying to eat more mindfully and exercise more mindfully. Also, looking at emotions as a more external item, the emotion is a thing I can see and touch and not what I am. This makes it easier to acknowledge and let go of troubling feelings. I am not the panic or pain but I am seeing the pain.
I find the sitting practice to be helpful in just grounding me. When I feel overwhelmed, just taking a minute has allowed me to reevaluate.
I was skeptical of walking practice at first but I might find it more useful than sitting. The ability to do a simple task like walking mindfully has transferred to a lot of other tasks in my life like cooking, cleaning, even typing at the computer.
I used the mindfulness practice in a public setting yesterday when I got anxious. Calmed me down.
The sitting practice makes me feel a larger sense of myself in place and time, which is something I tend to miss out on. Previously would feel jostled by the events of the day or the thoughts in my own head.
Brushing teeth, washing dishes, sweeping - they are enjoyable on their own, instead of being a chore that must be done begrudgingly.
Loving kindness. Practicing feet to the floor gets me back to the present.
Meditation is refreshing in that it reboots my thinking for the day.
Grounding in the present. Understanding thoughts are just thoughts: I don't have to continually fight off negative emotions or thoughts. Grounding = mindfulness helps me stop ruminating over the past (past hurts and powerful negative responses to past hurts) and brings me back to focus in the present. I've been focusing on being more mindful and present generally to help me stop obsessing about the past. Also being more mindful and present at work, which I find has made me more productive.
(Post only) Sitting: formally for over 5 minutes, and in stressful situations in life, in public. I also promote mindfulness in my work with people, when they are feeling helpless due to their anxiety and stress.
(Post only) Brushing my teeth, taking a shower and drinking my coffee.
(Post only) I've only enjoyed the weekly group sessions.
(Post only) Helps maintain a balance so do not go deep into bad thoughts.
(Post only) Walking meditation, mindfulness during showering, driving, preparing

meals, talking with family members. Walking meditation helps me feel grounded; mindfulness meditation has made me more conscious of and attuned to what is going on right now. I am more patient with family and less judgmental of myself and others.

3. *How helpful has this workshop series been for you?*

Scale: 0 = not helpful, 10 = extremely helpful
(22 participants)

Ranges / Categories	Number of Participants
3-4	3
5-7 (somewhat helpful)	3
8-9 (very helpful)	8
10 (extremely helpful)	8

Average: 8.0

Specifically, how has it helped you deal with anxiety / stress?

(20 participants)

I've learned that I can change my relationship to stress.
It has helped me to understand that anxious thoughts and feelings are fleeting and that being more present in everyday moments helps to slow negative thought patterns down.
Although I have a long way to go, and am looking forward to practicing more, this has given me so many tools to go back to when I start to feel the anxiety /stress increasing. It can help me prevent the escalation and helps ground me. Fullness of life.
Breathing and accepting the loss of control as OK.
It's another tool in a toolbox of emotional well-being strategies.
The weekly scheduled practice allowed me to dedicate time and patience for myself, which I didn't allow for myself before. The practice significantly helped me to interrupt the stories and my mind from spiralling out of control.
It has helped make it easier for me to navigate my thoughts.
It's given me the ability to realize when I'm stuck in a spiral of negative thoughts and break the cycle, even if only for a few moments. It's also made me a lot more patient!
Gets me grounded; appreciate things around me. Not have a busy mind.
It has helped me cultivate a sense of control, but of soft control, the redirecting of my mind towards the calm of the present.
I feel calmer and less reactive.
Practicing takes me out of troubling thoughts and brings me to the present. Try to stay in today and not think of the past or the future.
I learned that anxiety is not something to run away from but is a temporary thing, which is more to be acknowledged than pushed away. I never really thought about the temporary aspect of anxiety before but it has helped me cope knowing this too shall

pass.
Thank you, thank you, thank you. Decreased rumination in the past / less anxiety and stress.
(Post only) Enabled me to get out of my own head and more aware of the present.
(Post only) Additional practice, re-cementing the concepts I've already learned about Mindfulness.
(Post only) It reminds me that thoughts are not reality.
(Post only) It has helped bring a routine and perhaps even a bit of bravery, but I would prefer talk therapy or drama therapy.
(Post only) Mind is less busy and feel calmer much of the time. Not as keyed up.
(Post only) I am much more conscious of when my thoughts are not present focused now, and am able to bring myself back to the present fairly quickly when I notice same, which lessens my anxiety. I find I am less reactive to everyday irritants and my perspective has expanded.

4. *Have you been able to do some meditation practice at home?* (22 participants answered Yes)
If yes, about how many times per week? (21 participants)

Times per week	Number of participants
1-2	4
3-4	5
5 or more	13

Usually for how long? (21 participants)

Time spent	Number of participants
1-5 minutes	1
5-15 minutes	6
More than 15 minutes	13
It varies	1

5. *Do you think other people could benefit from learning about mindfulness—both meditation and the other practices?*

21 participants answered Yes; 1 answered Maybe.

Instructor's Summary

Provided that individuals have an open mind and are willing to apply themselves to mindfulness practice in between the weekly sessions, this way of working with the mind builds attention, awareness, and resiliency. However, rather than targeting specific outcomes, mindfulness training operates more globally.

Greater present-moment awareness and less preoccupation leads to a more grounded and intentional way of living. By identifying more with one's inherent intelligence and sanity, and less with one's problems, one discovers a source of strength that can help deal with the ups and downs of everyday life. This is one way of describing the global scope of mindfulness. Mindfulness-awareness practice develops both attention (precision/focus) and awareness of the environment/bigger picture. Loving-kindness practice fosters acceptance of self and others, kindness, and compassion. Head and shoulders practice facilitates pausing and disengaging while introducing spaciousness and a bigger-picture perspective.

In the qualitative evaluation, participants were asked how the workshop series has helped them deal with anxiety and stress. Six people mentioned dealing with thoughts in a new way: (1) seeing them as fleeting, and not reality; (2) better able to remove themselves from troubling thoughts; through awareness, breaking the cycle of spiralling negative thoughts; interrupting stories when the mind is spinning out of control (3) and generally finding it easier to navigate thoughts. Regarding anxiety, three people said (1) mindfulness practice helps prevent the escalation of anxiety, and grounds them; (2) seeing anxiety as temporary and not running away from it helps them cope; (3) coming back to the present lessens anxiety. Other responses ranged from accepting a loss of control (instead of fighting it), to being calmer / less reactive and keyed up.

The pre and post evaluations reflect changes in participants' feelings about the quantitative statements over the three-month program period. The statement with the highest percentage change (33.3%) was about getting stuck with storylines that bring anxiety and not knowing what to do about it. This significant increase relates to a central aspect of mindfulness practice: training in recognizing thoughts (storylines) and coming back to the present moment. Similarly, there was a 32.4% increase in feelings of control with regard to thoughts, moods and feelings. This seems to be related to regular practice engendering familiarity with one's own mind. Significantly greater self-efficacy is suggested by the 32.1% increase related to believing that one can make a difference in one's own life. Participants acquired mindfulness tools, techniques and resources they did not have at the beginning of the program. In the post evaluations, there were significantly more indications that not being fully present is not normal (27.9%), which maps to the mindfulness emphasis on developing a present-moment orientation. There was a 25.6% improvement regarding rumination, suggesting they are dwelling on their thoughts less: recognizing them, and returning to *now*. They indicated feeling more grounded in the body (25%). There is an element of grounding in all of the mindfulness practices. Suggesting greater realism, there was an increase in acceptance of things as they are (22.9%). They learned to not run away from anxiety and other uncomfortable feelings, but to relate to them as they are. Further, loving-kindness practice cultivates self-acceptance. They indicated greater confidence in dealing with stress (21.2%). Regarding obsessive thinking, there was a 20.9% improvement—again, the fundamental mindfulness practice is to recognize thoughts and come back to the present moment. A significant percentage of participants were less oriented to getting rid of troubling emotions (20.5%). The power that storylines (preoccupations, daydreams, concepts) have to pull us out of the present moment seems to be waning (20%). There were 10 to 20% average score increases in responses to a half-dozen additional statements.

Asked how the workshop series has helped participants deal with anxiety and stress (0= not helpful; 10=extremely helpful), 22 responded. The average was 8.0 (very helpful).

Asked if they felt that other people could benefit from learning about mindfulness, 21 said Yes, and 1 said Maybe.

Note Sent by Participant

“In my personal life, I am currently in the middle of a complicated family court matter. Last week was a particularly stressful court appearance, where I knew there would be a lot of conflict and uncertainty, and I was suffering some major anxiety while waiting. In the midst of a panic attack, my sister (who attends your Thursday night class) was texting and helping to remind me of what we've been learning in your class about just accepting the present moment.

Using the things I've learned from your class, your book, the other people in the class, and my ongoing practice, I was able to quietly sit and just let all the emotions and thoughts go through my mind. I looked at the current suffering as a temporary state, and was able to see them for what they really were, that my body and brain were reacting to the current situation and preparing me for the 'battle' that was coming. The change in perspective I experienced fully allowed me to accept my body's reaction, see it, then let it go and focus on what I had to do next. This was very powerful and helped me tremendously. The physical symptoms of my anxiety quieted once they were acknowledged, then with a quick 'head and shoulders' check, I went in the courtroom feeling confident, calm and with a clear plan, and these things dramatically affected the outcome.”

Next page: Evaluation Form

ANXIETY, STRESS & MINDFULNESS

Personal code

(pre-post intervention)

Please write down in the box on the left the number that best fits how you feel with regard to the statement:

1=Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Neither Agree, nor Disagree 4=Disagree 5=Strongly Disagree 0=Don't Know

- When I start thinking about something that concerns me, I can't get it out of my mind.
- My mind never stays in one place and keeps jumping from one thought to the next.
- I think over and over about things that have already happened.
- I keep projecting my concerns for the future.
- This pattern of not being fully present in my immediate experience is normal for me.

- I don't believe that I can make a difference in my life.
- I don't have confidence in my ability to deal with the stressful things that happen to me.

- Staying in the present hurts so much that I prefer to run away from what is unpleasant.
- I don't usually know what to do to bear with my discomfort and sense of vulnerability.
- I have difficulty accepting things as they are.
- I have difficulty dealing with troubling emotions.
- I always have the feeling that there is something I should be doing to get rid of my troubling emotions.
- I often don't feel grounded in my body.
- I'm not usually aware of what things or events trigger my anxiety.
- I feel like I have no control over my thoughts, moods, and feelings.
- I get stuck with the storylines that can make me feel anxious and I don't know how to pause or interrupt this pattern.
- My storylines keep the everyday stress rolling and pull me out of the present moment.

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(Continued)

(Post-intervention only):

1. What are some of the main points about “mindfulness” that resonate for you and your everyday life?

2. Which mindfulness-in-everyday-life practices are you finding helpful, and in what way?

3. How helpful has this workshop series been for you? (0 = not helpful; 10 = extremely helpful) _____

Specifically, how has it helped you deal with anxiety / stress?

4. Have you been able to do some meditation practice at home? _____

If yes, about how many times a week? _____ Usually for how long? _____

5. Do you think other people could benefit from learning about mindfulness—both meditation and the other practices? _____

6. Do you intend to come to Monday night meditation at least once, to check it out? _____

7. Do you have any suggestions on how this workshop series can be improved?

Thank you!