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Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy: A Review

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Abstract

Mindfulness, an ancient Buddhist practice, is not just recognizing and living in the present moment. It is a way of welcoming things by recognizing them right now. Mindfulness is an approach about gently bringing attention, which tends to go to the past and future, back to the present and accepting what is perceived. It includes intentional and nonjudgmental attention in the present moment. Before thought, which is always one step ahead or behind the present moment, there is awareness in the present moment. In fact, mentally healthy individuals who are able to distinguish between the real and the unreal think about the question of "Is this the case or am I perceiving it this way?". For this reason, how the person perceives is more important than events/situation. The most important determinant on the way to awareness is the way of welcoming individually perceived events/situations. Attitudes as a form of welcoming events and situations are staying in the moment, compassion, noticing judgments, acceptance, beginner's mind, patience, letting things go. Many factors may cause students stress in nursing education. Academic and clinical stressors are experienced by many nursing students enrolled in a nursing education program. When these stressors are not managed well, mental problems such as depression and anxiety disorder may occur. This review aimed to analyze the mindfulness-based cognitive therapy program.

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1. Introduction

It is important to consciously and non-judgmentally direct attention to living in the moment, not the moment. Every moment is a new beginning, and every experience is different and full of richness. Being able to see this richness is associated with being in the moment. Embarking on the path of mindfulness by listening to bodies and minds and experiencing the skills on this path in a disciplined manner ensure staying in the mode of existence. At this stage, it is important to understand and experience the three steps of mindfulness, which are *attention*, *intention*, and *attitudes*. With selective attention, we can look at events/situations from a broader perspective and determine the way we confront events/situations with the attitudes that exist in relation to our intention, without any judgment. The attitudes of the person during the practices of paying attention and being in the moment affect the way he/she confronts situations. These attitudes are non-judgment, patience, beginner's mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance and letting go (Kabat-Zinn, 2021). Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy is an eight-week structured process with formal and informal practices (meditations). A certain amount of time during the day is set aside for formal meditation. Regular meditation is mind training. In informal meditation, a certain time is not allocated. Daily routines such as cooking, cleaning, and driving are carried out by focusing on the activity, and a mental state for meditation is achieved (Alidina, 2020). Techniques used in mindfulness-based cognitive therapy are raisin meditation, body and breathing awareness meditation, body scan, sitting meditation, mindful hearing, and mindful movement meditation.

Many factors cause students experience stress in nursing education. Academic and clinical stressors are experienced by many nursing students enrolled in a nursing education program. These stressors are exam preparation, course load, paying tuition fees, unsatisfied personal needs, heavy workload, patient care, criticism by instructors or experts, caring for dying patients, fear of making mistakes in the clinic, and exposure to bullying and discrimination. When these stressors are not managed well, mental problems such as depression and anxiety disorder may occur (Anderson-Johnson, & McPherson, 2016; Bahadır Yılmaz, 2016; Brown, Aliafsari-Mamahhane et al., 2018; Labrague et al., 2018).

2. Definition of Mindfulness

Mindfulness originated from the Buddhist insight meditation practices implemented in the East. The character used to express mindfulness in Japanese includes the combination of the words "mind" and "heart", and it is defined not just as awareness but as awareness from heart (Alidina, 2020). Mindfulness involves paying attention to what is happening in the present moment, recognizing the quality of this attention, and accepting all that is noticed without haste and judgment. It is defined as perceiving and accepting what is perceived. The mind always tends to go to the past or the future. It is possible to focus on the present moment without going to the past and the future through mindfulness (Atalay, 2020).

Mindfulness, a translation of the ancient Indian word *sati*, suggests making discoveries about living in harmony in life. It means attention and remembering and allows to be conscious of lived experiences.

Attention means focused awareness. Mindfulness improves the ability to direct and maintain attention as desired. Remembering, on the other hand, involves remembering to pay attention to the experience at every moment as being aware can easily be forgotten (Alidina, 2020). Kabat-Zinn (2021) who was the first to apply mindfulness in the therapeutic setting, stated that mindfulness can be developed by directing attention in a specific way, in the present moment, and as non-reactively, non-judgmentally, and openly as possible. When we analyze this statement thoroughly, we see the concepts of attention, in the present moment, being non-reactive, non-judgmental and open. Attention refers to directing attention to whatever is of interest. The present moment is the reality of being here now and the awareness of the present state of the existing things. As far as being non-reactive is concerned, it can be stated that when a situation is experienced, a reaction is generally given according to past conditioning. The response is automatic and does not give the person a choice. Mindfulness, on the other hand, argues that responding is a conscious act and ensures a response to the experience rather than reacting to the lived situation/events. As for being non-judgmental, it can be said that in mindfulness, eliminating judgments allows everything to appear as it is, rather than through the filter of personal judgments shaped by past conditioning. As far as being open is concerned, it can be stated that mindfulness is not only related to the mind but also to heart. Being open-hearted adds kindness, compassion, warmth and sincerity to experiences (Alidina, 2020). Mindfulness allows consciously observing the body and mind, and being aware of moment-to-moment experiences. Every moment is a new beginning. Mindfulness focuses on

living in the moment, not on every new moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2021).

3. Mindfulness Attitudes

Times The mind must be open and receptive in order to develop the healing power of mindfulness and in order for learning, seeing and change to take place. It is necessary to include the whole existence in the mindfulness process, and attitudes are vital during the practice of paying attention and being in the moment. Attitudes are fundamental to calming the mind, relaxing the body, focusing and gaining the ability to see more clearly. Developing calmness and relaxation is difficult when commitment to practices and energy are low. When energy and commitment are very strong, the person may push himself/herself to realize something and then to relax; however, when the desired objective cannot be achieved, negative thoughts may emerge. Acquiring attitudes determines what will happen on the path to mindfulness in the long run. These attitudes can be gained and developed through mindfulness practices. Non-judgment, patience, beginner's mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance and letting go are the basic attitudes. These attitudes are not independent of each other, and the focus on one of these attitudes also affects the acquisition of other attitudes (Kabat-Zinn, 2021).

Non-judgment: The mind naturally tends to classify. It categorizes perceived situations. While this facilitates the recognition of perceived events, it clarifies the viewpoint. It is important to be aware of the automatic responses that result from the habit of judging. Being non-judgmental does not mean not having an opinion or not criticizing, but noticing the lens of judgments and our reactions in situations that we like and do not like. The important thing here is

that one does not have to stop making a judgment immediately when he or she realizes that a judgment is being made because stopping making a judgment means judging the judgment and it strengthens judgments rather than eliminating judgments (Atalay, 2020).

Patience: Kabat-Zinn (2021) argues that a child can help a butterfly come out of its cocoon by breaking it. However, butterflies generally do not take advantage of this. Every adult knows that butterflies come out of their cocoon at the right time, and there should be no rush. This statement emphasizes the attitude of patience, that everything has its time, and it is important to accept and understand this. People are generally impatient as they want their dreams or wishes to come true as soon as possible. In mindfulness practices, the attitude of patience is focused on. Meditation includes patience, waiting, tolerating the emptiness, and showing patience that development and change are not easy and quick (Atalay, 2020). In this process, people learn to be patient with their mind and body. Those who practice mindfulness should approach themselves like butterflies and live and enjoy their experiences. Being patient, in its simplest form, means being open to every moment, accepting the moments with their fullness and richness, giving oneself enough time (Kabat-Zinn, 2021).

Beginner's mind: Kabat-Zinn (2021) states that no memory is like any other. They are all unique and involve unique possibilities. The beginner's mind reminds us of this simple truth. Kabat-Zinn (2021) draws attention to the importance of turning off autopilot and being more connected with the present moment in mindful awareness. Knowing the lived

experiences can actually prevent one from being aware of the richness of that experience. The most important motivation to discover the present moment is to be curious. Having a beginner's mind and understanding that every moment is a new moment increase discoveries and richness (Atalay, 2020). To see the richness of the present, it is necessary to have a "beginner's mind". By putting forth the beginner's mind, one can be free from past experiences and be open to new possibilities. Every moment is unique and includes special possibilities (Kabat-Zinn, 2021).

Trust: It is difficult to meditate in mindfulness without a certain level of trust. Trust in the notion that something does not exist or is "wrong" helps one continue to believe in the mindfulness process. It is realized that the experiences lived with trust are temporary (Alidina, 2020). It is important for one to trust his/her own feelings and intuitions at all stages of meditations. Rather than being guided, the individual continues his journey of mindfulness with his own feelings and focuses on being himself (Kabat-Zinn, 2021).

Non-striving: A certain amount of effort and energy is required for something to be done. In mindfulness practices, this can become a real barrier to awareness. There is no goal in mindfulness practices other than being oneself. When a non-striving attitude is adopted, one can gain a new perspective with very little effort (Kabat-Zinn, 2021).

Acceptance: Acceptance, one of the most beneficial attitudes within mindfulness, means perceiving the experience and approving it without judging it as good or bad. Accepting involves experiencing the moment, without surrendering or quitting (Alidina, 2020). It is a prerequisite for realizing life as it is. It adds sincerity

and compassion to mindfulness. Experiencing the lived experiences with an accepting attitude is the most important point in mindfulness practices. Accepting makes it easier to be equally open to pleasure and adversity, to face loss as well as to win, and to pause to evaluate before reacting. Acceptance ensures that the aspects that are constantly changing and that are hidden about personality are approved (Atalay, 2020).

Letting go: Letting go, which is the basis of mindfulness, involves thoughts, feelings, ideas, opinions, beliefs, and sensations, and the observation, discovery, and release of all these. In mindfulness practices, the person's efforts and struggles to fulfill his/her expectations create an obstacle to awareness. Instead of such an attitude, awareness is achieved through the attitude of letting things go (Alidina, 2020).

4. Techniques Used in Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy and Nursing

Apart from the meditations used in Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, cognitive behavioral techniques are also used. Cognitive behavioral therapy includes approaches to evaluating thoughts and creating alternative thoughts, while mindfulness involves the relationship and awareness of individuals with their emotions and thoughts. In mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, which is an eight-week structured program, each session lasts approximately two and a half hours. The techniques used in mindfulness-based cognitive therapy are raisin meditation, body and breathing awareness meditation, body scan, sitting meditation, mindful hearing, and mindful movement meditation (Bogosian et al., 2017).

Many factors in nursing education cause stress to students. Academic and clinical stressors are experienced by most nursing students enrolled in a nursing education program. These stressors are exam preparation, course load, paying tuition fees, unsatisfied personal needs, heavy workload, patient care, criticisms by instructors or experts, caring for dying patients, fear of making mistakes in practice, and exposure to bullying and discrimination in clinical settings (Bahadır Yılmaz, 2016; Brown et al., 2016; Aliafsari-Mamahhani et al., 2018; Labrague et al., 2018). Deveci et al. (2013), Cam and Top (2018) reported the incidence of depression in nursing students in Turkey as 26.7% and 18.3%, respectively. Tekir et al. (2018) reported the rate of depression in nursing students as 17.1%. Yüksel and Bahadır Yılmaz (2019) found the depression rate in nursing students as 20.3%. Gümüő and Zengin (2018) reported the incidence of anxiety symptoms in nursing students as 30.2%. Studies have reported that mindfulness practices and cognitive therapy reduce the symptoms associated with stress, depression and anxiety in nursing students and improve their academic skills, well-being and quality of life (Kinsella et al., 2018). It has also been reported that thanks to mindfulness practices and cognitive therapy, the academic achievement levels of nursing students increased, their learning skills and mental health improved (Wiguna et al., 2018).

5. Conclusion

Nursing students may experience many problems during their education. The non-pharmacological mindfulness-based cognitive therapy can be used to cope with these problems. This therapy improves quality of life and academic achievement, ensures

physical relaxation, supports self-confidence, and reduces depressive symptoms. Considering these benefits, students should be encouraged to participate in mindfulness-based cognitive therapy.

In addition, it is recommended to conduct further studies on mindfulness-based cognitive therapy to gain a better insight into the practice, to increase the application of this program, and to evaluate its reflections in our culture.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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