

Why Promote Mindfulness in Nursing Academics? Students Share Their Mindfulness Experiences

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Presentation Objectives

- For participants to identify two outcomes that nursing students reported that enhanced their academic experience.
- For participants to identify and discuss how mindfulness strategies could impact nursing students in their academic setting.

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Background

- Nurses returning to school typically add the role of student, while not reducing the numerous roles already in their lives.
- Added stress experienced from assuming new and multiple roles can lead to feeling overwhelmed and impact adult students' ability to be successful in school (Critz & Feagai, 2014).

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Background

- Mindfulness is one method found in the literature that has been effective in decreasing stress and improving mood (van der Riet, 2018; Guillaumie, Boiral, & Champagne, 2016).
- Mindfulness, a technique and a way of life, is defined as the ability to pay attention in the present moment without judgement, to be aware of both internal sensations, thoughts and feelings and the external environment surrounding the person compassionately, allowing them to choose a response rather than react (Kabat-Zinn, 2009).

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Methods-Design

- Mixed methods study aimed at exploring the effects of an 8-week online, asynchronous mindfulness intervention on online nursing students' stress, mood, and cognition was completed and the quantitative findings have already been shared (Spadaro & Hunker, 2016).

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Methods-Initial Steps

- IRB approval
- Email invitation to participate
- Demographic Questionnaire

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Methods-8 Week Program using LMS

Activities included:

- Journal reflections, video tutorials, readings, practice opportunities, and peer discussion forums

Topics included:

- Origins and overview of mindfulness, mindful eating, abdominal breathing and body scan exercises, sitting meditation, yoga meditation, walking meditation, brief mindfulness exercises, loving kindness meditation, and mindfulness in everyday life.

At the end of the 8-week program, students were emailed an online survey consisting of 15 open-ended questions.

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Methods-End of Study Survey

Open-ended questions included:

“Please tell me about your experience being a participant in this online mindfulness intervention?”

“What are your thoughts and experiences about mindfulness as it relates to your academics?”

“What are your thoughts and experiences about mindfulness as it relates to your mood?”

“Did you learn or gain anything from this experience?”

“Will you continue to use or practice mindfulness?”;

“Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience?”

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Methods-Qualitative Analysis

- Thorne's Interpretive Description (Thorne, Kirkham, & MacDonald-Emes, 1997)
- Qualitative question explored was: *What is the participant's experience with an asynchronous online 8-week mindfulness intervention as a nursing student related to stress, mood, and cognition?*

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Methods- Secondary Aim

Data gathered from:

Student report of session completion, participant retention in the 8-week program, reported practice frequency, and written evaluation feedback provided in qualitative surveys

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Results

4 descriptive themes emerged

- Time - commitment or non-commitment
- Increased self-awareness
- Increased ability to focus and concentrate
- Increased coping abilities

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Time Commitment - Foundational

- Not enough time to commit - some awareness (of stress) but no other themes emerged (participants viewed 1-3 sessions)

OR

- Purposefully/intentionally committed time to learn/practice - led to more benefits (participants viewed 4 - all 8 sessions)

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Increased Awareness

- ▶ Stress: how much stress she is holding onto, recognize it earlier
- ▶ Body awareness: shallow breath, tension, body adjustment
- ▶ Mind: More in tune w/inner thoughts and feelings
- ▶ Present: Paying more attention to the present moment

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Increased Focus

- ▶ Stress: “de-stressing”
- ▶ Self: focusing on self, centering self
- ▶ Deadlines: Able to focus on what needs to be done
- ▶ Daily balance to complete activities... about focus and prioritizing
- ▶ Focusing easier
- ▶ More focused... able to sort out stressors

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Increased Ability to Cope

- ▶ Learning to not condemn self for worried thoughts, not attach value to them, put them aside
- ▶ Relax: attend to my need to relax and cope with loneliness
- ▶ Responses slowed: helps me cope w/unexpected or unknown
- ▶ Coping changed and improved: able to sort out stressors
- ▶ Academics: struggling, take a break and practice mindfulness exercise

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Relative to Quantitative Results

- ▶ **Time:** significant factor in impacting stress and mood. More time spent, significant reduction on stress and mood (anxiety) found.
- ▶ **Awareness:** Tied to cognition findings, orienting network - the ability to select and focus on the to-be-attended stimulus improved.
- ▶ **Focus:** supported the cognitive finding of decreased response time for 'executive control', improved ability of attention and concentration.
- ▶ **Coping:** aligned with stress reduction. As students able to adapt to stressors and distractions, perceived stress reduced.

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Results: Retention

- All participants (N=26) completed the 8 week post and 24 week post intervention surveys, including the qualitative surveys, despite how many sessions viewed.
- The 4 participants that reported 1-3 sessions viewed, the only theme identified was “time” described as a constraint to participating.

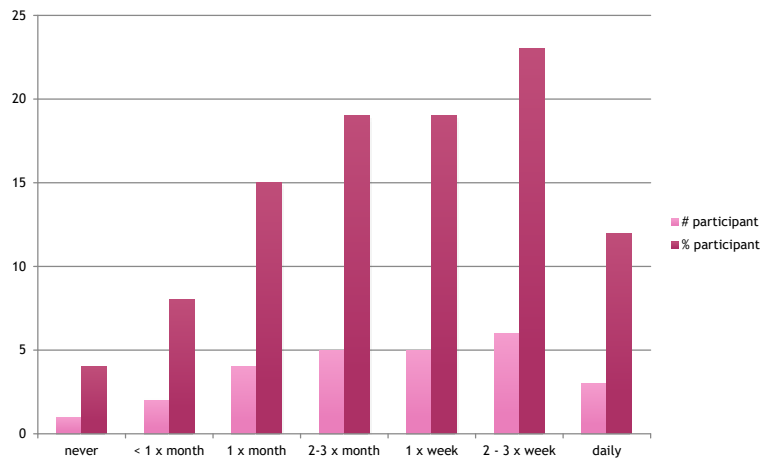
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Results: Feasibility

# of Sessions Watched	# of Participants	% of Participants (N = 26)
0 -1	1	3%
2 - 3	3	12%
4 - 5	5	19%
6 - 7	8	31%
8	9	35%

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Results: Acceptability



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Implications

- **Time:** brief stress reduction exercises, time mgmt. tips, weekly schedules w/activities and due dates
- **Awareness:** acknowledge student stress, anxiety, and functioning on a one-on-one basis or as a group/class. Reflect back to student

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Implications

- **Focus:** encourage mindfulness and other stress reduction strategies to improve student focus
- **Coping:** aid students in the development of coping strategies, not only for academic functioning but overall general health

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Implications

Faculty can directly and indirectly impact student stress and academic success.

What do you do?

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References

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QUESTIONS?