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Worry less and reduce your stress: Impact of mindfulness-based stress reduction on university students

Stress is our body's way of adapting to change; but when stress is prolonged, it can damage our health. Stress-related illnesses account for a large portion of doctor's visits, so reducing stress can reduce the need for these visits and can lower health costs. Studies have shown that Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) can lower stress and boost immune function. We investigated how learning stress reduction skills can lead to better learning and improved health in university students. Mindfulness is paying attention to one's thoughts, feelings, and body sensations without judging them. The goal of our study was to find whether a program based on mindfulness would help lower students' stress and depression. Eighteen occupational therapy students participated in a 12-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program, and took pre- and post- tests on mindfulness, depression, stress, and worry. To measure the success of this project, we examined changes in the students' test scores. We found a significant increase in mindfulness ($p < .047$ on the Toronto Mindfulness Scale) and significant decreases in depression ($p < .001$ on the Beck Depression Inventory) and worry ($p < .004$ on the Penn State Worry Scale). Health profession students who learn and practice mindfulness-based stress reduction skills will also be able to use these skills to benefit their patients.