Mindfulness & Reconnecting to the Body

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REDEFINE

Reducing Emotional Distress, Enhancing Function and Improving Network Engagement in Adolescent and Young Adult Oncology
Funding
Challenges Young Adults Face
Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction
Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Course

- Class length: 2.5 hours
- Retreat length: 5 hours

Occurs on either a Saturday or Sunday.
Unexpected Observations
Looking within the Body
Practice
How are participants talking about their bodies as a result of mindfulness practice?

And how does cancer effect AYA’s relationship to their bodies?

How might this relationship be restored?
## Methods

### Mid-Course Debrief

- What are you learning about yourself?

- What are you learning about the practice of becoming more mindful?

- What are you discovering in the following practices:
  - Yoga
  - Body Scan
  - Walking Meditation
  - Sitting Meditation

- What challenges have you faced?

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<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Time Spent</th>
<th>What did you notice?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Day 22</td>
<td>Class</td>
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<td>Day 23</td>
<td>Short listing (3 or 10 min)</td>
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<td>Format: Body Scan (5 min) OR Lying Down Yoga (10 min) OR Standing Yoga (15 min)</td>
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<td>Informal (STCP or Physical sensations that accompany stress)</td>
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<td>Day 24</td>
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Coding

- 30 Transcripts
- Systematically coded using Dedoose qualitative research software
- Read and reviewed by 2 investigators
- Specific focus on comments related to bodily awareness
- Open coding, axial coding, selective coding process
Results
Themes

1) Increased Bodily Awareness

1) Negative Relationship to the Body

1) Positive Relationship to the Body

1) Observations of Learning Mindfulness
1) Increased Bodily Awareness

- Awareness of Feeling Tired
- Awareness of Bodily Energy
- Awareness of Restlessness
- Awareness of Strength/Power
- Awareness of Bodily Insights
- Awareness of Different Sensation
  - Heaviness
  - Temperature
  - Tracking
- Awareness of Pain/Discomfort
  - Neuropathy
  - Soreness
  - Tension
  - Tightness
I realized I haven’t taken a deep breath in a while.

I noticed how tense my shoulders were. I tried to ease this as soon as I noticed it.

I am discovering how much of my mental and emotional states can affect my body physically.

It’s easy to focus on strong sensations (pain, etc.), but during the body scan I can check in with the rest of my body. See if it’s feeling anything – acknowledge that the majority of my body is free from pain.

I need to listen to my body more. There’s not always something hurting. It’s okay to have limitations. I’ve been through a lot.
2) Negative Relationship to the Body

- Difficulty Connecting with the Body
- Body Avoidance
- Body Has Let Me Down
- Bodily Mistrust Because of Cancer
- Fear of Listening to the Body
- Feeling Anger Towards the Body
- Longing For Old Body
- Worry of Slowing Down and Being with the Body
I never realized that I held so tight to the groin area. It’s where the cancer was.

I did not know how angry I was until this class. I also feel surprised at how much distance I have developed from my body and how difficult I find it to engage in my body. Although these have not been pleasant discoveries they have been necessary ones; I am trying to allow myself to express some of the anger and disappointment and not feel guilty about that when in many ways, my problems are so insignificant in comparison to those faced by others.

I blocked out noticing my body for a year.

I ignore my body and what it’s trying to tell me because I’m afraid to listen...afraid what it’s saying because I jump to the conclusion it’s going to be bad or it’s going to cause pain.

The body scan continues to be frustrating and different for me. I feel my failure to connect with my body recently, and it does not seem to be getting easier with practice. I am getting better at keeping my mind on this task, but quite often in negative ways – by noticing how little connection I sense rather than by becoming more adept at sensing what my body feels.
Positive Relationship to Body

- Gratitude
- Calm/Peaceful/Relaxing
- Curiosity of the Body
- Bodily Patience
- Nurture the Body
- Sense of Connection/Attunement
- Slowing the Body Down
I carry a lot of tension in places of my body that I never really knew. It’s amazing how something so simple and easy (ie MBSR course) can provide such long-lasting benefits in all aspects of life. I was already somewhat mindful, but now I’m becoming even more so. It’s amazing how many experiences you miss (ie breathing, weight on the feet, clothes on the skin, texture in food) when you aren’t being fully aware.

Nice to feel cool breeze on my face and hot sun on my back (was outside). The contrast was amazing and something I never really noticed.

Re-energized after this. I appreciate all the different temperatures on my body and this helps my posture.
Observations of Learning Mindfulness

- Applying Practice to Cancer Treatment
- Awareness of Challenges in the Practice
- Bodily Barriers to Practice
- Bodily Benefits of Practice
- Bodily Regulation
- Expectancy/Belief
- Insights on Practice
- Things that Help the Body Focus
- Transforming Experience
Observations of Learning Mindfulness Quotes

Was getting an MIR. Did the body scan exercise while on the bed, since no where to go and nothing else to do.

I did the body scan in the Doctors office while waiting on the Dr. It made the wait much more tolerable, but I fell asleep. Rest of my day I seemed much better at handling situations.

This practice does reduce stomach cramping from stress.

I couldn’t feel my legs so I started to touch them, this seemed to help me notice sensation and connect with my body.
Awareness of Pain/Discomfort & Transforming Experience
Awareness of Pain/Discomfort & Transforming Experience

“My chest hurt during this exercise. Focusing on it helped me recognize it, not freak out, and it eventually went away.”
“I was nervous about the night before doing the Avon walk. The breathing exercise helped calm me and reminded me that I could connect to my breath during the walk. I did the Avon 39.3 mile walk and tried a walking meditation. It helped me focus on the feeling in my feet and the physical sensations around me. This helped me set aside the pain of walking that far. I was sore after walking 39 miles. My feet were throbbing. It was hard to concentrate on anything but my feet. However, I noticed that when I did concentrate on my feet, they hurt less.”
Awareness of Pain/Discomfort & Transforming Experience

“I did the body scan so I could look past my pain”

“My muscles and joints really hurt today so instead of doing my planned yoga I’m listening to my body and just doing the body scan. Again, I feel peaceful, not angry at my body for hurting, more accepting that it just is.”
Awareness of Feeling Tired & Calm, Peaceful, Relaxed
“Fatigue, tired in a good way, felt relaxed at a cellular level. Was able to take a 5 day STOP in Florida to slow down. Felt at peace and rested.”

“I found myself tired, but felt a release of stress.”
Awareness of Feeling Tired & Calm, Peaceful, Relaxed

“I feel I’m becoming more aware of my body and allowing myself to relax.”
Looking within the Body
I don’t think so, NOT this Elephant!
I Can’t Ride That Elephant!
How Is That Possible?
Practice
Bodily Regulation

Denial  Discomfort  Avoidance  Regulation  Staying With What Is  Relating  Connecting
Resources For Practice

www.tarabrach.com
-- See Mediations
Resources

www.truenorthtreks.com
Thank You

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