Mindfulness for the College Student

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Learning Objectives

- Participants will be able to list the benefits of mindfulness for college students

- Participants will be able to describe how self-compassion can positively influence students’ mental health

- Participants will be able to compare drop-in mindfulness and relaxation programs with a more structured, 4-week mindfulness book club
what is mindfulness?
What is Mindfulness?

Paying attention to the present moment...
  • On purpose,
  • And without judgment

We can be mindful of our **senses**, and of our inner world of **thoughts** and **emotions**.

It helps us to **reflect & respond**, not **react**.

It is **simple**. But it is not often **easy**.
What mindfulness is NOT

Thinking about nothing or zoning out
• It’s being aware of our thoughts

Being happy ALL THE TIME and loving EVERY SINGLE MINUTE of life
• It’s bringing non-judgmental awareness to the present moment
• Accepting your emotions as they are

Religious
• It can be a secular practice
• It is mental training that is supported by clinical research

Long periods of passive sitting
• It can be active!
• Yoga, walking, daily routines...
What are the benefits of mindfulness for college students?
Mindfulness and the Brain

• We can change the brain by adopting new thought patterns, training our brain like a muscle, to overcome negative thoughts and focus on the present

• **Prefrontal cortex** – became more active and showed more connections during mindful practice
  • The area responsible for impulse control and some stress and emotional regulatory areas
  • This suggests that mindfulness can help us develop greater control over our impulses
  • May help foster resilience

• More activity in the **Hippocampus** – the area of the brain primarily associated with memory
Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness

- Improved attention, focus, and concentration
  - Attentional stability is key to learning!

- Reduced stress, anxiety, and moodiness
  - Aids in the ability to calm down when upset
  - Allows for reflection & thought before action in stressful situations

- Increased self-awareness
  - Ability to recognize and accept emotions

- Increased empathy
  - Self-compassion and empathy for yourself and others

- Improved sleep quality
Self-Compassion

• The capacity to comfort and soothe ourselves

• Supports emotional development, self-awareness, and acceptance

• To motivate ourselves with encouragement, when we suffer, fail, or feel inadequate

• Build awareness of negative or painful experiences, emotions or thoughts, in ways that encourage self-acceptance and ability to move forward without continued rumination
Benefits of Self-Compassion

• Higher capacity to accept negative experiences and increased ability to move past difficult emotions
  • Factor in developing resilience

• Associated with a range of positive psychological strengths
  • Optimism, curiosity, initiative, and emotional intelligence

• Students with higher self-compassion are more likely to
  • Engage actively in the classroom
  • Ask questions
  • Seek help
  • Engage with professors outside of lectures
I never noticed how much time I spent lost in negative thoughts about myself. I think the biggest change for me is I’m not so hard on myself any more.
WHAT IS SELF-COMPASSION?

**Mindfulness**
Self-compassion involves recognising when we’re stressed or struggling without being judgmental or over-reading.

**Self-Kindness**
Being supportive and understanding towards ourselves when we’re having a hard time, rather than being harshly self-critical.

**Connectedness**
Remembering that everyone makes mistakes and experiences difficulties at times. We are not alone!
Mindfulness @ Georgia Tech

Health Initiatives
• Mindful Mondays
• Mindfulness Outreach Presentation
• Mindfulness Book Club (Koru)

Counseling Center
• Mindfulness Book Club (Koru)

Student Orgs
• SKY @ Georgia Tech
• Bhakti Yoga @ GT
Mindful Mondays

• Every Monday from 4-5pm in the Student Center
• Drop – In, less structured atmosphere

• Relaxation space
  • Dim lights
  • Coloring sheets
  • Playdough
  • Stress balls and other items

• Guided Mindfulness Exercises
  • Deep breathing
  • Labeling thoughts and feelings
  • Gatha

Join this relaxation space to learn and practice simple mindfulness techniques and stress management skills that you can easily incorporate into your daily routine.
Mindfulness Outreach Presentations

• **PowerPoint Presentation**
  • Introduction to mindfulness
  • Science of mindfulness
  • 3 guided mindfulness meditations

• **Requested by:**
  • GT1000 (Freshman Seminar) Classes
  • Fraternity/Sorority Chapters
  • Residence Halls
  • Faculty/Staff Meetings

• **Healthy Jacket Peer Educators**
  • Trained to provide presentation
Funding for Mindfulness Training

• Mental Health Joint Allocation Committee
  • $1 million fund allocated by GT Administration and Student Government (SGA)
  • Purpose: Fund initiatives that improve the mental health and well-being of Georgia Tech students

• Grant Award
  • Funded 3 health educators and 3 counselors to attend KORU Mindfulness Training
  • KORU - mindfulness curriculum designed specifically to target the developmental needs and interests of young adults / college students
Koru was designed specifically for **young adults** and differs from mindfulness programs developed for more general populations of adults in several ways:

- Teaches mindfulness meditation and stress-management skills
- A brief model to accommodate college students’ schedules
- Highly structured – discussion based and 10 min. daily practice
- Taught in small, diverse groups
- Active teaching to address skepticism and build motivation

What is KORU?
Mindfulness Book Club

Basic Structure:
• Four, 60 minute classes
• Classes are small groups

Each class includes:
• Short opening meditation
• Check-in
• Mind-body skill
• Mindfulness meditation practices

*For students looking for a more in-depth mindfulness program

Join fellow students in reading and discussing the book *The Mindful Twenty-Something* by Holly Rogers, while also learning simple mindfulness exercises that you can easily incorporate into your daily routine.
Mindfulness Book Club

Skills and Meditations

Class 1
- Dynamic Breathing
- Diaphragmatic/Belly Breathing
- Body Scan

Class 2
- Walking Meditation
- Gatha

Class 3
- Guided Imagery
- Labeling Thoughts

Class 4
- Eating Meditation
- Labeling Feelings
Tips for Mindfulness Programs for College Students

• Shorter program models – time is a huge barrier for college students

• Offer on different days/times to accommodate varying schedules

• Incorporate other forms of mindfulness and relaxation besides seated meditation

• Variety of formats