

**Commentary***Copyright © All rights are reserved by Susan Penque*

Be Mindful of Mindful Practices: Integrating Successful Practice May Require Continuing Group Mindfulness Sessions

Susan Penque^{1*} and Jacquelyn Rosen²¹Nursing Department, Long Island University-Post, Brookville, New York²Professional Development, Mount Sinai South Nassau, Oceanside, New York***Corresponding author:** Susan Penque, Nursing Department, Long Island University-Post, Brookville, New York, 18 Frans Way, Shelton, CT 06484.**Received Date: March 22, 2021****Published Date: April 08, 2021****Keywords:** Mindfulness; Mindfulness practices; Group work**Commentary**

Mindfulness practices are both enlightening and enriching to the mind, body and soul. The art of mindfulness is a practice offered by various professional groups to aid one in becoming aware of their inner thoughts and feelings and responding in a positive, objective manner. With the COVID-19 pandemic among us, mindfulness practices assist many people cope with the anxiety and negativity from this viral devastation. To maximize the benefits of mindfulness, it is best practiced on a regular basis.

Incorporating mindfulness into daily life involves learning this work and practicing regularly. A supportive environment with experienced leaders in mindfulness must be present if participants are to be successful. Far too often, mindfulness classes are taught, and the program abruptly ends without follow-up. Participants leave with homework to continue the practice on a daily basis but without the guided support needed to be successful. Prior to the pandemic, these authors conducted a qualitative research study to examine the effects of mindfulness education and practice on helping registered nurses to develop skills of mindfulness that may be used in the clinical setting. The educational program was offered weekly for 5 weeks. It consisted of didactic lectures as well as experiential practices and discussion groups. Participants completed a self-survey prior to the program and at the end. In addition, they participated in two focus groups, 1 immediately after

the program had ended and again, 3 months post course. While in the program, the participants expressed satisfaction with learning the practices. They discussed how they used mindfulness in their own lives as well as with patient care. However, at 3 months after the program stopped, fifty percent of the participants reported discontinuing their formal practice of mindfulness. They noted the lack of group classes or additional support needed to help guide them with the practice. The other fifty percent had joined classes that offered similar exercises.

The need for structure and assistance in learning mindfulness practices and sustaining the gains is evident. While there are some who can use computerized tools to continue the daily practice, most want the structure and positive environment of group meetings. Participants enjoy being able to compare their experiences of the exercises as well as sharing how they have integrated the practices into their everyday lives including family and work. Consistency, encouragement and shared energy are just a few benefits of attending group sessions on mindfulness practices.

During the COVID pandemic, especially with the required social distancing, practice as a group has become more arduous. In the healthcare setting of the research described above, Holistic Council members put into place a variety of initiatives to encourage mindfulness practices for all employees. Virtual meditation sessions

are offered where the participants have an opportunity to chat following the exercise if desired. "Mindfulness Monday" weekly emails are sent to all mail users to suggest "a little bit of mindfulness each day" and provide a simple idea to engage in mindfulness. The facility also rings three chimes overhead at 3:00pm and 10:00 pm daily for a "mindfulness pause" - a brief moment to slow down and be in the moment with breath and/or a moment of gratitude. In an attempt to provide the opportunity for small group experiences in person, a "drop in" time for a guided awareness practice is also offered, unit based, in designated areas.

In conclusion, if one is going to offer mindfulness practices to groups, consider how the group can sustain what is learned and grow with the practice. Create an environment where people can come and go and yet always feel welcome. Consider continuing

with weekly sessions after educational programs are completed. Most established meditation retreat houses today conduct daily or weekly group mindfulness meditation sessions. Educational institutions and health care organizations need to provide a similar structure for their constituents. Mindfulness ought to be a group activity that cultivates learning, awareness and connection among the group members. What better support for our workforce than to develop a practice that is enriching and fulfilling.

Acknowledgement

None.

Conflict of Interest

Author declares no conflict interest.