

Journal of Depression and Anxiety Forecast

The Importance of Mindfulness during COVID-19 Pandemic

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Dear Editor,

Mindfulness, a psychological concept rooted in ancient eastern tradition, is the non-judgmental attention on an experience in the present moment [1]. In the last two decades, mindfulness-based interventions have attracted growing interest. Increasing research has demonstrated the interventions' positive impacts on mental health promotion among normal and clinical populations [2]. Currently, mindfulness plays a profound role in a variety of psychological interventions, such as mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, which effectively treat various psychological disorders, including anxiety and depression [3]. Indeed, studies suggest that through facilitating adaptive emotion regulation, mindfulness accomplishes psychological changes [4]. Emotion regulation is a fundamental element of mental health, and its dysregulation contributes to numerous mental disorders [5]. In fact, emotion regulation enables individuals to have appropriate responses to environmental demands by modifying their emotions, their responses, or situations [6]. Developing early awareness and accepting emotions without any judgment, mindfulness provides opportunities for individuals to regulate their emotions early during stimulus processing, before intense emotional responses [7].

There is currently an ongoing global health crisis, given the emergence of a new coronavirus, COVID-19. Controlling contagion, governments impose restrictive measures that lead to dramatic life changes, such as limitations in basic life activities, loneliness, unemployment, financial instability, and family-work conflict. Besides, loss of loved ones, excessive worry over the health of oneself and other family members, loss of control, and helplessness seems to contribute to the enhanced prevalence of depression and anxiety in many countries [8]. More specifically, during the pandemic, people may experience a high level of anxiety, given the uniqueness and fast transmission of the virus, high mortality rate, and worries about the future. This high level of anxiety among individuals weakens the immune system, which in turn increases the risk of becoming infected with the virus. Besides, following the misinformed COVID-19 news can result in aggravation of depressive symptoms among the general population. It is also found that the age group of 21-40 years shows a higher level of anxiety and depression, given that this group is considered as the working force of the society and deal more with business closures, as well as they have more access to the COVID-19 news [9].

Based on the aforementioned points, we suggest that through fostering emotion regulation, mindfulness may have the potential for sustaining the quality of life and buffering the pandemic's negative impacts among healthcare professionals, patients, their families, and the general public.

Keywords: Mindfulness; Emotion regulation; Anxiety; Depression; Covid-19.

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Received Date: 25 Dec 2020

Accepted Date: 30 Dec 2020

Published Date: 02 Jan 2021

Citation: Fadaeimoghadam HM, Gharibzadeh S. The Importance of Mindfulness during COVID-19 Pandemic. *J Depress Anxiety Forecast*. 2021; 4(1): 1019.

ISSN 2643-7139

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