

Mindful Ambassadors

A new program of
Counseling and Psych Services
University of Arizona
Marian Binder, PhD, Director





- 1. Training students**
- 2. to teach other students**
- 3. attitudes and**
- 4. techniques**
- 5. for attention and**
- 6. emotional balance/regulation**

Presenters

Stuart Moody, Trainer

Angel Steadman, Ambassador

Isoken Adodo, Ambassador





The Varieties of Contemplative Experience

Silent sitting meditation, compassion practices, walking meditation, deep listening, mindfulness, yoga, calligraphy, chant, guided meditations, nature observation, self-inquiry, and many others . . . (Grace, 2011)



1. SOMATIC MOVEMENT

- Slow
- Smooth
- Within range of comfort
- Relaxing at the end
- Paying attention, start to finish



Flexibility is increased not by forceful stretching (working at the level of the peripheral nervous system) but rather by consciously recruiting tense muscles and then slowly relaxing them.



*This is
mindfulness
in motion.*



2. Self-massage

Moderate-pressure massage increases attentiveness, improves mood, decreases pain, and enhances immune function (Field, 2010; 2014).

Self-administered hand & arm massage reduced pain and increased grip strength in individuals with hand pain or rheumatoid arthritis (Field et al, 2011 & 2013).

Positive, adaptive tactile stimulation gets us back in touch with our embodied nature, the essence of mindfulness.

3. BREATHING EXERCISES

When we breathe fully and consciously, we get “inspired,” literally “breathed into.” Just to breathe, with pure awareness, concentrates our mind, relaxes our nervous system, and heightens alertness.

Conscious breathing is one of the most portable, powerful, and pleasing practices of mindfulness.



Exercise: Imagine that you are holding a candle in your palms. Inhale through your nose. Purse your lips as you exhale, blowing just enough to make the flame flicker.

4. MEDITATION

Cultivating quieter states of awareness,
awakening the qualities of the heart.



If there is light in the soul,
there will be beauty in the person.
If there is beauty in the person,
there will be harmony in the house.
If there is harmony in the house,
there will be order in the nation.
If there is order in the nation,
there will be peace in the world.

- *Chinese Proverb*

RESULTS: Ambassadors

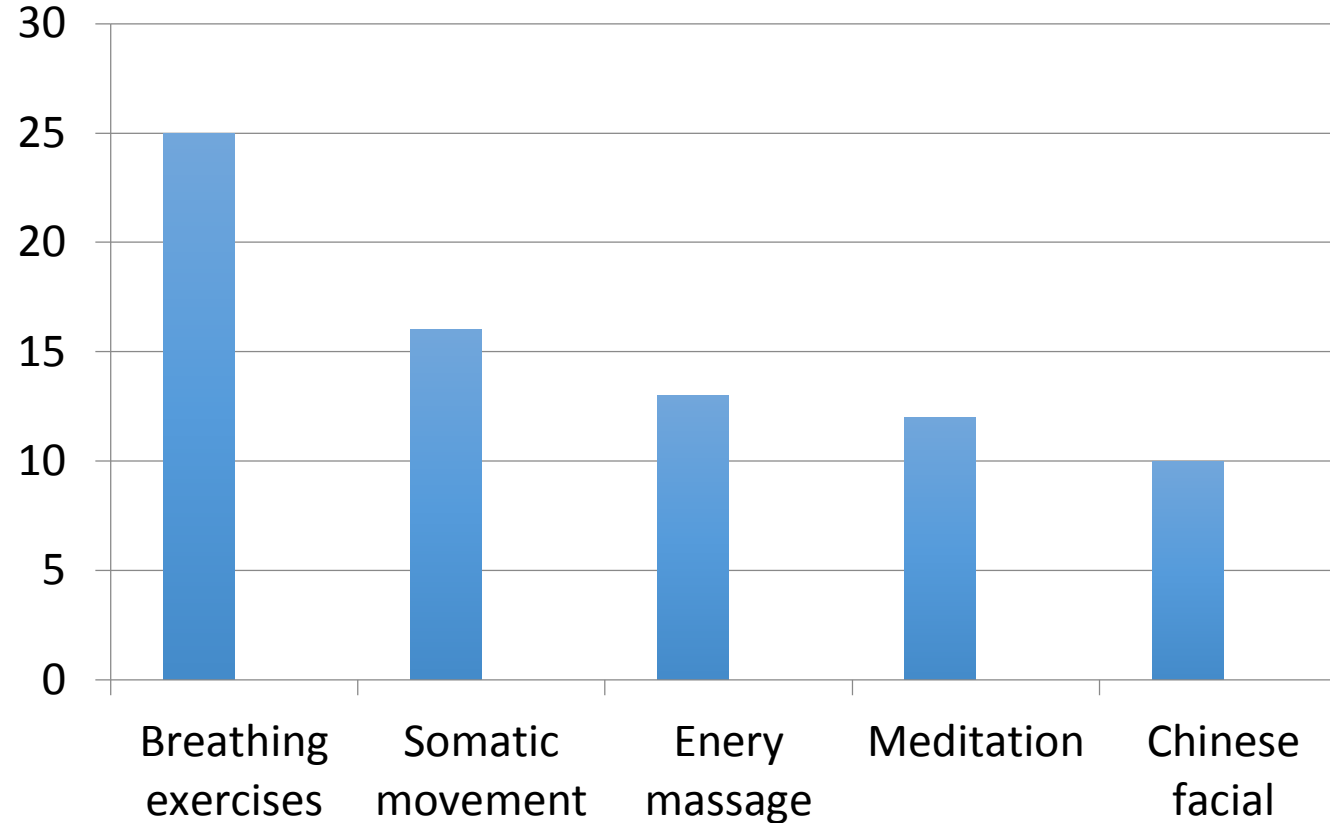
PERSONAL PRACTICE

Number of Ambassadors doing . . .

At least one of the practices daily	3
Two or more practices several times/week	6
Something from all categories at least once/week	1
Something at least once/week	13



PERSONAL USAGE OF PRACTICES BY AMBASSADORS



A “usage score” for each practice was calculated by counting daily practice as 3, several times a week as 2, and 1-2 times a week as 1. Breathing exercises were the most regularly used by Ambassadors.

EFFECTS NOTED BY AMBASSADORS AFTER PERSONAL PRACTICE OF MINDFUL EXERCISES

Calm (6)

Greater ability to focus/concentrate on tasks (5)

Less tense (3)

Greater peace (2)

Acceptance (2)

Energized (2)

Better equipped to go through the day, solve problems, and relieve stress (2)

Also

Centered, grounded

Less anxiety

Mind less burdened

Renewed motivation

Breathing more deeply

Compassion

Appreciation

Restored sense of well-being

AMBASSADORS: Any indications of increased clarity of mind?

YES: 9

Y/N: 2

NO: 1

Answer unclear: 1

Examples

- **Less overwhelmed with work**
- **More patient with things that frustrate me**
- **Less exhausted; can think and process better**
- **Decisions/actions are more purposeful**
- **“I have been thinking about the meaning of life a lot.”**
- **“It feels like a weight has been lifted from my body, my mind feels clear and light, and I can engage in my work more easily and enjoyably.”**



ANY IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONSHIPS?



YES: 11

Y/N: 1

NO: 1

Comments

- More patient (5)
- More empathetic (2)
- More acceptance (2)
- Easier to take a moment before reacting with strangers
- Focus better on my students' needs
- Less quick to anger
- More present for my family at a time of loss, even while I was deeply grieving
- "I'm less sarcastic and more appreciative of others' differences."
- "I breathe before I speak, which allows me to think longer on what I was about to say, and this often allows me time to either soften my words or decide not to even make certain comments."

IMPROVED ABILITY TO STUDY OR WORK?

YES: 11

NO: 2



- Carefully read materials; more meticulous
- “I’m more able to set aside blocks of time to complete tasks rather than wishing I was doing something else. I’m more present and able to accept work-time and play-time.”
- “I’m better able to focus on one task at a time rather than constantly jumping from one thing to the next trying to take care of everything all at once.”
- “Especially in my ability to study! I feel like I am retaining more when I study mindfully.”
- “I typically engage in the energy massage or facial massage during strenuous academic activity (e.g., sitting at a computer writing a paper). After the massage, I usually observe a renewed sense of motivation. I tend to breathe a bit deeper in the hours following – filling up my lungs more.”



Sleep quality

Same: 9

Better: 4 (31%)



“The softening imagery exercise and/or tensing and releasing of the toes and fingers (like a cat 😊), as well as inner recitation, have really helped me sleep well, falling asleep quickly, staying asleep throughout the night, and keeping a healthier bedtime/wake time schedule.”

RESULTS: Undergraduate workshop participants

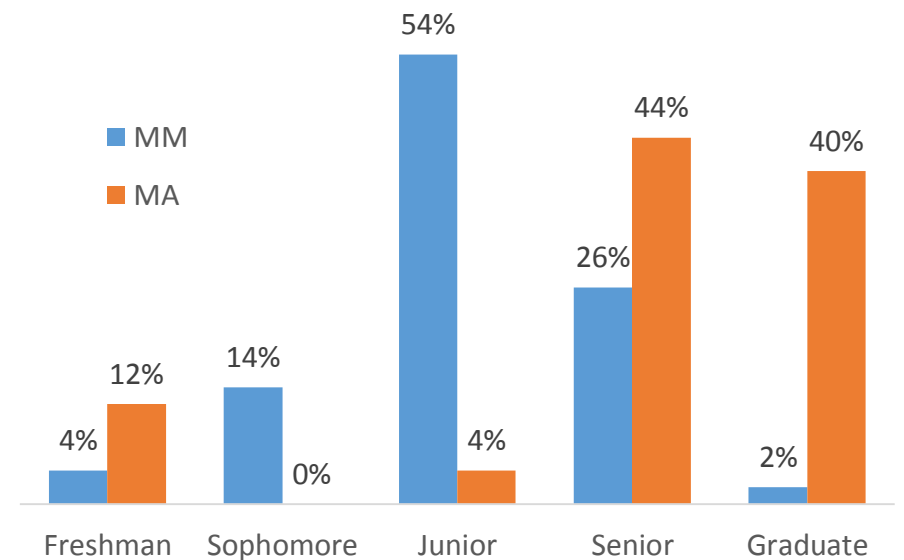
Mindful Workshops (MW)

- 30 Participants
- 50% female, 50% male
- 40% had never engaged in mindfulness
- 47% had been under more than average or tremendous stress in the past two weeks
- Mean GPA 3.38

Mindful Moments (MM)

- 114 participants
- 76% female, 24% male

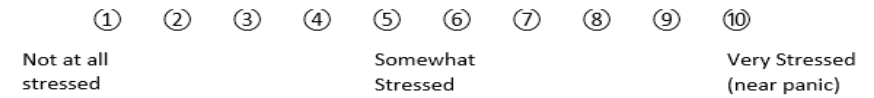
% Class Standing, **MM** and **MW** participants



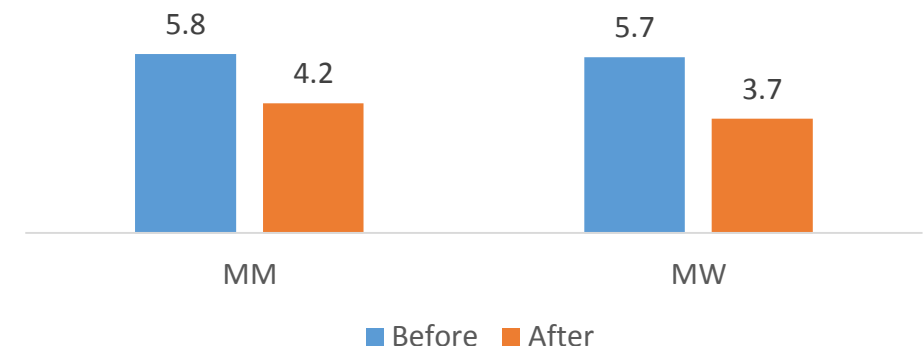
Undergraduates: stress before, and after

- Participants were asked to rate their level of stress on a scale of 1 – 10
- Both MM and MW participants showed a **significant decrease in stress after the presentation** ($p < 0.001$)
 - In MM, among those with higher than average stress (above 6), the reductions were more marked, from 7.1 to 5.1 on average ($p < 0.001$)*

Please mark the number that best describes the level of stress you are experiencing **right now**:



Self-Reported Mean Stress Before and After Trainings



*at this time, the sample for MW was too small to run the same analysis

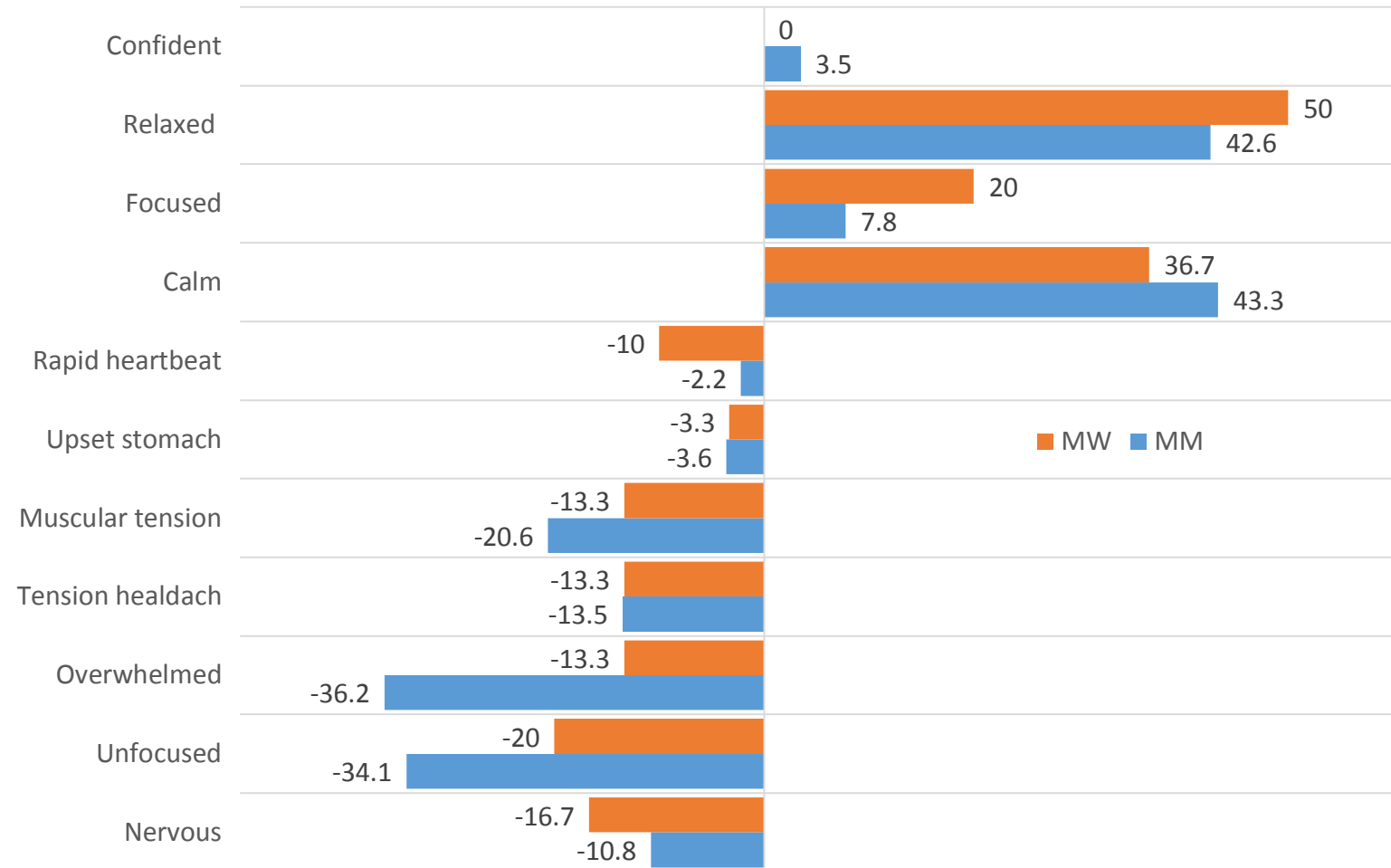
Undergraduates: emotional state before and after

- Participants marked, in a list of both positive and negative feelings, , from overwhelmed to relaxed, any that they were experiencing in the moment (11 items)
- In both MM and MW, there was a reduction in all negative emotional states and an increase in all positive emotional states
 - In MM, significant reductions in feeling overwhelmed, nervous, unfocused, having a tension headache and muscular tension; significant increases in feeling calm and relaxed ($p < 0.001$)
 - In MW, significant reductions in feeling nervous ($p = 0.023$), unfocused ($p = 0.031$) and tension headache ($p = 0.043$). Significant increases in feeling calm ($p = 0.003$) and relaxed ($p < 0.001$)

Undergraduates: emotional states before and after

Difference in self-reported emotional states before and after trainings

The biggest **reductions** were seen in *feeling unfocused* and *overwhelmed*, and the biggest **increases** in *feeling calm* and *relaxed*



Undergraduates: Did it 'work'?

- Participants were asked to report whether the training helped them “feel more calm, relaxed, or at ease” after participating
- Around 90% of participants in both MM and MW trainings agreed that it helped
 - Among those who said that it did not, the most common reasons were that they had a hard time relaxing or keeping their minds from wandering

Findings: Intent to Practice

- Students in MW trainings were asked whether they would use what they had learned in the future
 - 90% agreed that they planned to continue a mindfulness practice based on what they learned
 - 60% agreed that what they learned in the training would help them with their academic goals (37% did not know whether it would; only 3% disagreed)

**“I am thinking about the meaning of life a lot.
I feel the spirituality in the movement is influencing me.”**

