

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Civilian

Pilot Study to Gauge Acceptability of a Mindfulness-Based, Family-Focused Preventive Intervention

Duncan, L., Coatsworth, D., & Greenberg, M. (2009). Pilot study to gauge acceptability of a mindfulness-based, family-focused preventive intervention. *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, 30(5), 605-618. doi:10.1007/s10935-009-0185-9

SUMMARY: Researchers adapted the Strengthening Families Program: For Parents and Youth 10-14 (SFP) to include concepts and activities specific to mindfulness and mindful parenting (e.g., listening with full attention, emotional awareness of self and child). Self-reported and focus group data were utilized to assess acceptability and effects of this adapted program. This intervention was rated as acceptable and positively influenced family functioning and parents' well-being.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Parents generally liked the mindfulness components and found them to be useful, although guided compassion/meditation practice was not as well-liked.
- Parents who participated in a focus group after the intervention reported greater emotion regulation and an improved ability to cope with family-related stress because of the intervention.
- Participant experiences also pointed to areas of improvement regarding the intervention, such as condensing some activities and refining the mindfulness practice instructions to include more frequent, shorter periods of compassion/meditation practice that were silent (versus including verbal guidance).

IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Collaborate with parenting programs utilizing mindfulness techniques or approaches regarding how to incorporate or adapt these interventions for military families
- Attend trainings about mindfulness parenting interventions in order to offer these interventions to military parents

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Consider incorporating mindfulness and mindful parenting education and activities in current parenting programs to help improve parent emotional regulation and coping strategies
- Include a brief meditative or contemplative silent time at the beginning of their session to help attendees be more focused and attentive

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support evidence-based behavioral intervention programs that support military families and adolescents and improve outcomes
- Continue to support research efforts that evaluate the effectiveness of parenting programs, including mindfulness-based programs

This product is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with The University of Minnesota.



Putting Research to Work for Military Families



METHODS

- Parents with children in the sixth grade participated in this pilot study. Surveys, focus groups, and video-taped observations were used to collect data in this mixed-methods study.
- This study focused on civilian families who were recruited through local school districts via letters sent home to parents.
- Surveys, focus groups, and video-taped observations were used to collect data in this mixed-methods study.

PARTICIPANTS

- This study sample included nine parents from five families (four families were dual-parent, one was a single mother).
- Most of the parents were women (five mothers).
- No other demographic information was presented.

LIMITATIONS

- Participants may have differed from non-participants in a way that was not measured, but affected the outcomes. For example, those who participated may be more familiar with mindfulness practices than those who did not participate.
- The small sample size severely limits confidence that the patterns of findings will be true for other parents who participate in the intervention.
- Given that the sample was comprised of civilians, it is not known how these patterns would apply to parents in the military.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Replicate the current study with a larger, more diverse sample
- Incorporate a control group, a pre- and post-design, as well as longitudinal study designs that include measures of development over time
- Incorporate responses from children, parents, or caregivers to get a more comprehensive understanding of this intervention

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:
<https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>