

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Civilian

Mindfulness-Based Childbirth and Parenting Education: Promoting Family Mindfulness During the Perinatal Period

Duncan, L. G., & Bardacke, N. (2010). Mindfulness-based childbirth and parenting education: Promoting family mindfulness during the perinatal period. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 19(2), 190-202.
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SUMMARY: Many women participate in childbirth and parenting classes while they are pregnant. In this study, researchers evaluated the effectiveness of a mindfulness-based childbirth and parenting education program. Results indicated that participation in the program was associated with positive changes for women.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Pregnancy anxiety significantly decreased after participation in the program.
- Mindfulness, particularly non-reactivity, and positive emotions significantly increased after participation in the program.
- Learning to stay in the present moment was the practice learned in the program that mothers used most during labor and delivery.
- Mothers noted that bringing mindful awareness to interactions with their spouse and their baby and to their own emotional reactivity were very beneficial.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Encourage pregnant women to develop the ability to stay in the present moment so that they can use that skill during labor and delivery
- Help to prepare pregnant women and their spouses for the changes that will occur in their relationship after childbirth

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Incorporate mindfulness into prenatal childbirth and parenting classes for military parents
- Offer workshops for expectant parents to learn skills to cope with anxiety about pregnancy

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Recommend training for professionals who work with military families regarding unique factors that may influence military families during pregnancy and childbirth (e.g., spousal separation due to deployment)
- Encourage collaboration between community-based programs and military programs in order to fully support military families who are preparing for the birth of a child

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METHODS

- Participants decided to participate in a mindfulness-based childbirth and parenting program.
- The women completed questionnaires measuring pregnancy anxiety, stress, emotions, mindfulness, coping, and depression before and after the program and participated in structured interviews after the program.
- Data were analyzed to determine if there were changes from before to after participation in the program and coded interviews to identify themes.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 35 pregnant women in the end of their second trimester or beginning of their third trimester.
- The women's average age was 34.6 years old (SD = 4.22). Most (93%) were first-time parents.
- Most (70%) participants reported experiencing a major stressful life event during pregnancy.
- Women were White (88%), Asian-American (4%), Latina (4%), or another race (4%).

LIMITATIONS

- There was no control group included in this study, so it is unclear whether the findings are due to the intervention itself.
- Most of the women were first-time parents; results may not extend to women who are already parents.
- Women opted in to the study because they wanted to participate in the mindfulness-based parenting education program. These women may differ from women who did not participate in important ways that may influence results.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Compare outcomes of women who participate in a mindfulness based childbirth and parenting class to those of women experiencing in a class without mindfulness or women not participating in a class
- Include mothers who are already parents
- Examine the influence of stressful life events on women's outcomes

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