

Knowing the Facts for Military Families



Mindfulness: Applications to Military Families

Definition

Mindfulness practices are derived from Buddhist teachings and have become an important component in interventions aimed at stress reduction, positive physical health, and emotional well-being. Generally, mindfulness is defined as intentionally and nonjudgmentally attending moment by moment. The cornerstone of mindfulness is meditation, and mindful meditation involves awareness and acceptance of all sensations and external information that arise in the consciousness.

Mindfulness practices are derived from Buddhist traditions and have been integrated into Western secular medical and helping professions, research suggests mindfulness interventions are effective at decreasing negative symptoms and increasing wellness with individuals, couples, children, and youth. These interventions fall into two main categories: mindfulness-informed and mindfulness-based.

Interventions

Mindfulness-informed interventions incorporate mindfulness concepts into a multi-component therapeutic approach. These programs include techniques that teach individuals self-awareness, acceptance, reflection, and regulated behavioral responses; however, the techniques that are used are only loosely based on mindfulness meditation.

Mindfulness-based interventions emphasize the importance of training meditation practices, and as such, meditation is a central component in these interventions.

Examples of Mindfulness-Informed and Mindfulness-Based Interventions

Mindfulness-Informed	Mindfulness-Based
Acceptance and Commitment Therapy	Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy
Compassion Focused Therapy	Mindfulness-Based Mind Fitness Training
Dialectical Behavior Therapy	Mindfulness-Based Relationship Enhancement
Mindful Self-Compassion	Mindfulness-Based Resilience Training*
Mindfulness-Enhanced Strengthening Families Program	Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction
	Mindfulness-Based Supportive Therapy
	Mindfulness Experiential Small Group*

Note: Interventions and preventions denoted with an asterisk (*) were developed for helping professionals self-use.

Mindfulness interventions can:



Decrease tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drug use

Improve management of parenting stress, conduct problems, and chronic medical conditions

Increase quality of interpersonal relationships and parenting skills

Reduce symptoms of anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress

Implications for Professionals Who Work with Military Families

Mindfulness interventions are effective with a wide range of families who have diverse needs and are well-suited for military families. Helping professionals who work with and on behalf of military families could consider four main factors when incorporating mindfulness techniques and skills into their services:



Location of the interventions (e.g., youth programs, schools, home)



Recipients of the intervention (e.g., couples, children)



Areas of functioning that are the target of the intervention (e.g., parenting, relationships)



Intensity and dosage of the mindfulness techniques and skills (e.g., duration of time, amount of exercises)

