

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Parent Engagement in Online Mindfulness Exercises Within a Parent Training Program for Post-Deployed Military Families

Zhang, N., Rudi, J. H., Zamir, O., & Gewirtz, A. H. (2017). Parent engagement in online mindfulness exercises within a parent training program for post-deployed military families. *Mindfulness*. doi:10.1007/s12671-017-0810-2

SUMMARY: Online mindfulness training has the potential to reduce military parents' stress level and improve their parenting practice, but little is known about the engagement level of military parents with online mindfulness training or the effectiveness of such training. This study investigated military parents' experiences of an online mindfulness training program. Results revealed modest participation rates of military parents and positive associations between training engagement and parents' dispositional mindfulness.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Nearly half of participants (44.6%) engaged with the online mindfulness training.
- Participants who attended in-person group meetings were more likely to finish all the online mindfulness training sessions, whereas participants who never attended group meetings only engaged with the online training during the first month.
- Mothers engaged with online mindfulness training more than fathers and they were more likely to self-report increased dispositional mindfulness six months after the intervention.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Incorporate a mindfulness-informed approach to parenting programs so that parents can learn how to use mindfulness skills to reduce their stress level
- Offer parenting programs both online and in-person so that different parents' needs can be met
- Design parenting programs according to fathers' interest and needs to increase fathers' engagement level

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support research and programs that promote positive parenting practice in military families
- Encourage training for professionals who work with military parents on how to incorporate a mindfulness-informed approach to teach parents to reduce stress associated with parenting and deployment
- Support programs aimed at increasing family well-being during the deployment cycle

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

- Data were obtained from a larger study that evaluated the effectiveness of the After Deployment Adaptive Parenting Tools (ADAPT) program; the method of recruitment was not reported.
- All participants were invited to attend 14 in-person group sessions and use online supplemental mindfulness exercises (OSMEs); measures included OSME engagement (the frequency of "clicks" on the OSME website) and dispositional mindfulness (mindfulness practice) at baseline and six months after intervention.
- Data were analyzed to examine participants' online engagement in mindfulness exercise as well as the associations between engagement and dispositional mindfulness.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 370 parents (female = 190) from 207 military families who enrolled in the program; each family had at least one parent who had been deployed and at least one child aged 4-12 years at the time of the study.
- The average age of participants was 36.79 years (SD = 6.04, age range = 24-52) and the majority of participants were White (91%), the race/ethnicity of the rest of the participants was not reported.
- Participants served in National Guard or the Reserve.

LIMITATIONS

- The design of the study did not allow for examining the causal relationships between online training engagement and dispositional mindfulness; therefore, it is not clear whether parents' training engagement caused dispositional mindfulness, or vice versa.
- Most participants were White, so the results cannot be generalized to people of other race/ethnicity background.
- Parents' online training engagement was operationalized as the frequency of "clicks" on the training website, but some parents might download the training materials and study them without going online; therefore, the measure may not accurately represent parents' engagement with the training.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Design experimental studies to examine the causal relationship between online training engagement and parents' dispositional mindfulness
- Recruit participants from a diverse race/ethnicity background to increase the generalizability of the study
- Measure parents' online training engagement by not only recording their "clicks" of the website, but also letting them self-report their level of engagement

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>