



Compendium of Research re Tools for Well-Being Program

TOOLS I: Goals & Objectives:

- (1) To understand how stress effects the body, brain functioning and emotional regulation
- (2) To demystify mindfulness, meditation and other “non-traditional” tools for well-being
- (3) To introduce evidence-based strategies known to reduce symptoms of stress

CONTENT: Mindfulness, Compassion, Gratitude, Creativity (art & writing), Mindful Communication & Positive Psychology, connecting concepts to reduce stress and enhance feelings of well-being

TOOLS II: Goals & Objectives:

- (1) To deepen participants’ practices in mindfulness, compassion and other strategies that enhance personal well-being.
- (2) To introduce additional Tools that also decrease stress and improve well-being
- (3) To reinforce participants’ integration of the Tools into their daily lives, i.e., developing more routine in using the tools.

CONTENT: Mindfulness, Happiness set-point, Benefits of Yoga, Shame, Compassion, Forgiveness, Mindful Communication with Challenging People, connecting concepts to support overall well-being

TOOLS III: Goals & Objectives:

- (1) To create a community of support in using the tools learned in workshops I & II
- (2) For participants to solidify the tools that work best for them as part of their lifestyle.
- (3) For participants to be able to teach their own families simple techniques in breathing, meditation and mindfulness.

CONTENT: Mindfulness, Building on Intention, Intrinsic motivation, Organizational Cultures, connecting concepts to build community



Tools for Well-Being: Synopsis of the Pilot-Studies thus far...

TOOLS I Workshops

- **All Mom's Matter Group** (October – December 2016; January 2017-March 2017)
 - **RESULTS (Hildreth, 2017; Leanos, 2017)**
 - ✓ self-reports of lowered levels of stress
 - ✓ apply mindfulness to negative situations
 - ✓ less reactive
 - ✓ improved interpersonal relationships
 - ✓ increased self-compassion

Some quotes from the interviews:

“I really learned gratitude more toward myself by not thinking so negatively about myself when I make mistakes.”

“When I’m with my children I’m less likely to freak out when they are doing something; overall I have become a more patient mother. I realize that they are frustrated at times too, it has taught me to be a better mother.”

“I use journaling in my daily life now. It helps me understand how I’ve grown and what I struggle with. The artwork has brought me and my daughter closer; we now share a hobby together.”

“When my son begins to hit or become aggressive, I grab his hands and meditate with him and my other children which helps them to relax.”

“One time I was planning an event and two individuals were going at it. Instead of getting upset, I used my energy to work together with the individuals to find out what was going on, and to come up with a solution as a team.”

“When I have downtime, when the baby is asleep, I color. It makes me feel more grounded, like my head isn’t going a million miles an hour, I don’t feel stressed because I’m thinking about everything, when I color I am able to escape those stresses and have a moment in the present rather than living in the present or past.”

- **Employment & Training Supervisors & Lead Workers** (June-August 2017)
 - **RESULTS (Valladares, 2019)** quantitative study with supervisors and lead workers, comparing pre- and post-tests on two domains: Secondary Traumatic Stress and Mindful Awareness. Several limitations arose due to the limited number of participants, irregular attendance and inability to participate in all of the workshops. Only 4 out of the initial 11 participants completed pre- and post-tests for both scales, making it not possible to test whether or not participation resulted in decreased symptoms of traumatic stress or increased mindful awareness.



(Valladares, 2019 cont.)

- Secondary Post Traumatic Stress Scale (SPTSS) - there was a collective decrease on two statements: “I have trouble concentrating on things or paying attention to something for a long time” and “I feel very irritable and lose my temper”. This indicates that all four participants collectively increased concentration and emotional awareness.
 - Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale - there was a collective increase in three statements: “I get so focused on the goal I want to achieve that I lose touch with what I’m doing right now to get there”, “I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I’m doing” and “I snack without being aware that I’m eating.” This indicates that the four participants were able to increase their mindfulness awareness in the present moment.
 - The low number of participants in the post-test can be a reflection of the many roles and responsibilities social work supervisors are often faced with, which may get in the way of full participation in the intervention.
 - Weekly feedback sheets completed by the participants highlighted the value of content learned:
“The entire class was valuable, the coping tools/techniques learned were useful and desired.”
“I love the exercises and guided meditation. This class is helping so much. Thank you.”
“Totally enjoyed the classes, appreciated what I have learned and the gifts and tools you provided for me!”
 - Evidence lends support that providing supervisors who work in a high demanding field (with high levels of stress and exposure to secondary traumatic stress) with a mindfulness-based stress reduction curriculum increases resilience, optimism, capacity to collaborate, leadership in complex situations, overall quality of services and overall personal well-being (Crowder & Sears; 2017).
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- **Employment & Training Staff only** (August-September 2017)
 - **RESULTS (Lopez-Alejandre, 2018)** quantitative study, comparing participants & non-participants across four domains: Secondary Traumatic Stress, Mindful Awareness, Subjective Well Being, Coping Mechanisms with Stress.
 - The study revealed two major findings: (1) those who participated in the mindfulness training showed significant improvement from pretest to posttest on all four measures, and (2) in addition to the progress made from pretest to posttest scores, the experimental group made significant gains to close the gap between the comparison group from pretest to posttest.
 - At pretest, the comparison group was already doing significantly better than the experimental group on secondary traumatic stress, mindfulness, coping mechanisms, and subjective well-being. Meaning the static group did not necessarily need the intervention; however, at posttest measurement, the two groups were comparable, suggesting that the intervention was effective in decreasing secondary traumatic stress, and increasing mindfulness, subjective well-being, and coping mechanisms for the experimental group.



- **Employment & Training Staff only** (August-September 2017)
 - **RESULTS (Alamkhel, 2018)** qualitative study of participants only
 - ✓ Well-being was supported by the Agency – seen as an investment in them
 - ✓ Gained skills in reducing symptoms of stress
 - ✓ Better equipped to recognize own emotional triggers which enable ability to mediate unpleasant feelings and thoughts
 - ✓ Increased feelings of well-being

Some quotes from the interviews:

“I assess the situation and what I really need in order to make the situation positive. That is a skill I learn from the class. Before taking the class, I would procrastinate as far as my needs from the situation and create bigger problem for both parties. After taking the training, I evaluate what I need from the situation and address the need in order to make it positive. That way there is no grey area. This is what I need. There are no if, ands, or buts.”

“I have worked for this agency for over ten years. Having training like this was a reminder as to why I invested so much of my life in this agency. I feel like having this training shows that they actually care about the workers.”

“It can be emotionally draining when I encounter clients who are resistant to change. Now instead of dwelling on why the client is being difficult, I am more compassionate about what they are going through and I question what are the barriers for this client that is causing them to miss an appointment or a visit.”

“It is hard to work with clients with addiction especially if they are struggling with drinking. I myself struggled with alcohol addiction and talking to clients who are going through that struggle is a trigger. The material that was presented to us on emotional trigger was eye opening. The class help me understand my triggers and be mindful when I am interacting with clients who are struggling with addiction.”

“When I get stressed out, I can feel my body get tense. A few days ago, I had an unpleasant interaction with my supervisor. Immediately, I wanted to react to what my supervisor said. But instead I start paying attention to my body and start feeling my body get tense. I had to be mindful of what my body was communicating to me and not react. I asked my supervisor if I can be excused and get back to her concerns once I check on my notes. She was understanding. I had to remove myself from the situation because that is what my body asked me to do.”

“I feel like a new culture is emerging from this training. A culture that is friendly to self-care and mindfulness practices. Employees in my unit have different art projects that they hang on the wall which is very encouraging because it shows that the people who went through the training are still practicing what they learned from the training.”

- **Employment & Training Staff, Child Welfare & Adult Services** (February-March 2018 - 2 Groups)
 - **RESULTS (Greenberg, 2019)** quantitative study comparing participants across two domains (Secondary Traumatic Stress and Mindful Awareness) over three points of time: Pre-participation in Tools I, Post-participation in Tools I (N= 22) and Post-participation in Tools II (N=10).



(Greenberg, 2019 cont.)

- Study revealed some evidence that participation in Tools I bolstered mindfulness across most participants. Scores in Mindful Awareness increased from pre-test to post-test. Scores did not further increase at follow-up although remained higher than pre-test score inferring that the effect generally lasted over time.
- Study found that participation in Tools I and Tools II decreased participants' symptoms of trauma. Scores on the SPTSS (Secondary Post-Traumatic Scale) decreased between pre-test and post-test, and between post-test and follow-up. Statistical significance was found between pre-test and follow-up scores. *Evidence supports the notion that the Tools curriculum was effective in decreasing levels of traumatic symptoms and that this effect lasted over time.*

TOOLS II WORKSHOPS

- **Employment & Training Staff, Child Welfare & Adult Services** (September – November 2018 – 1 Group)
 - **RESULTS (Yepez, 2020)** qualitative & quantitative study. The qualitative study explored effects of Tools II participation on employees' personal and professional life, while the quantitative study examined participants pre- and post-test scores across four domains (Mindful Awareness, Coping Skills with Stress, Subjective Well-Being & Secondary Traumatic Stress).
 - Quantitative study (n = 13): It should be noted that the community building workshops were initially presented as "Tools II," therefore all participants in this cohort had already completed two of three Tools modules. As such, scores at pre-test revealed participants had already had low levels of secondary traumatic stress symptoms and high levels of coping skills with stress. While there was no statistically difference, there was continued maintenance or slight improvements. Mindful awareness was statistically significant at post-test, i.e. participants reported increased attention and mindfulness behaviors. Subjective well-being, i.e., feelings regarding life-satisfaction, were also found to have increased by post-test.
 - Qualitative study (n= 9): Participants interviewed to provide further insight about the effect of participating in the Tools workshops. Themes that emerged were:
 - ✓ *Shared knowledge with others, i.e. participants shared what was learned with co-workers, clients, family and friends.*
 - ✓ *Positive feedback regarding mindfulness training*
 - ✓ *Coping skills learned were utilized both at work as well at home*
 - ✓ *More mindfully aware of their surroundings and present in the moment more often as compared to before*
 - ✓ *Increased feelings of subjective well-being*



(Yepez, 2020 cont.)

Some quotes from the interviews:

“Mindfulness has made me think of self-care more, made me more patient, where I don’t overreact.”

“This is a very worthwhile and valuable tool for the organization and individual as well.”

“Mindfulness training has helped reduce stress and be aware.”

“I really enjoyed the training.”

“Mindfulness makes me more tolerant.”

“I encourage my staff to just breathe.”

“I breathe a lot.”

“Training has helped with everyday stress.”

“I take mindful walking exercise when I need to take a break.”

“I am more focused on being in the moment.”

“I am more mindfully aware of my surroundings...listening to the sound of leaves when going out on a walk, or the sound of raindrops when I’m driving and it’s raining outside as well as listening to peaceful music like the sounds of ocean waves.”

“Mindfulness has made me think of self-care more, be more patient, where I don’t overreact.”

“I feel re-energized.”

“I’m able to meet work goals.”

“Relationships have benefited from training.”

“I feel less stress even with a high caseload.”

“I have learned not to take it personally when others upset me.”

“I don’t become upset so easily.”

Overall, study concluded that findings were consistent with previous studies, i.e. benefits of mindfulness-based interventions and have implications for future research and policies.



TOOLS II WORKSHOPS (cont.)

- *In progress: currently two studies in progress exploring effects of participation on work and/or personal life over time; anticipated completion date 5/2021*

TOOLS III WORKSHOPS

- **Employment & Training Staff, Child Welfare & Adult Services** (April – May 2018 – 2 Groups)
- In progress - one study exploring effects of Tools program on organizational culture; anticipated completion date 5/2021

***LIMITATION: all pilot studies contained small number of participants. While the results are inferential and promising, the small sample size precludes us from achieving statistical significance. We recognize the need for continued research in determining the efficacy of the Tools Curriculum*



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