Pre and Post Mindfulness of College Students in a Physical Activity and Wellness Course

Michelle D’Abundo, PhD, MSH, CHES, Seton Hall University
Cara L. Sidman, PhD, University of North Carolina Wilmington,
Kelly Fiala, PhD, Salisbury University

Abstract

Due to its well documented benefits, the practice of mindfulness is being integrated into health promotion programming such as college courses. The purpose of this study was to assess mindfulness of college students before and after taking a physical activity and wellness course. The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), composed of 15 items with response options ranging from 1 (almost always) to 6 (almost never), was completed by students (n=225) before and after the course. A paired sample t-test was used to evaluate whether a difference existed between mean scores of Pre MAAS and Post MAAS. Pre MAAS (3.9 +/- 0.9) were significantly higher than post MAAS (3.8 +/- 1.0) test scores, t(224)= 2.784, p=0.006. Although not significant, scores for females decreased from 3.9 to 3.7 (pre to post) while males remained the same at 4.1.

Results

A paired sample t-test was used to evaluate whether a difference existed between mean scores of Pre MAAS and Post MAAS. Pre MAAS (3.9 +/- 0.9) were significantly higher than post MAAS (3.8 +/- 1.0) test scores, t(224)= 2.784, p=0.006. Although not significant, scores for females decreased from 3.9 to 3.7 (pre to post) while males remained the same at 4.1.

Conclusion

Even though students received information and application activities about the mental and spiritual dimensions of wellness, and completed a stress reduction unit including mindfulness, the students did not seem to practice mindfulness on their own. One explanation might be how instructors covered mindfulness. Another explanation might be related to the higher stress levels experienced by students at the end of the semester. These results may support the need to directly educate students about mindfulness. Another explanation might be that awareness issues are a concern. Previous research has shown mindfulness-based programs to be effective in stress reduction and disease management, and therefore it may be advantageous to improve instructor training, increase focus on mindfulness, and monitor course fidelity to assure all content is being covered.

References


Purpose

To assess mindfulness of college students before and after taking a physical activity and wellness course.