Feasibility and Preliminary Outcomes of a School-based Mindfulness Intervention for Urban Youth.

http://www.springer.com/psychology/child+%26+school+psychology/journal/10802

The purpose of this research was to assess feasibility and preliminary outcomes for a 12-week mindfulness and yoga intervention for youth in urban schools. The study assessed the effects of the intervention on pre and post-survey measurements of involuntary stress responses, depressive symptoms, and peer relations.

Key Findings:

- Students showed enthusiasm about attending the program and there was no difficulty in recruiting participants. Attendance varied between study locations with one school showing improved attendance in the program compared to the other. Focus groups indicated students enjoyed the program and felt they learned useful skills to use in their day-to-day lives.
- Teachers were supportive of using mindfulness techniques and expressed interest in knowing more. Teachers varied on whether or not they observed an impact from the intervention on their students.
- In terms of outcomes, the intervention group showed an overall statistically significant improvement in the Involuntary Engagement scale, a measure of involuntary stress responses. Also, three of the five subscales showed significant improvements (Rumination, Intrusive Thoughts, and Emotional Arousal).
- No statistically significant differences were found in depressive symptoms or changes in the relationship with peers or teachers.

Implications for Programs:

- School or other community programs may consider a mindfulness intervention given the acceptability and feasibility established in this research for students, teachers, and administrators.
- Programs should ensure the use of reliable and valid instruments used in previous research to assess the intended outcomes of mindfulness or yoga based interventions.

Implications for Policies:

- Pending the development of additional research, school districts or administrators may consider adding evidence based mindfulness interventions to a list or registry of supported programs that may be implemented in a school-based setting.
- Mindfulness interventions may be considered by agencies and other non-profits that seek to serve at-risk youth who may be vulnerable to stress given that improvements in self-regulation may affect improvements in socio-emotional and behavioral domains.

Avenues for Future Research:

- The study should be replicated with a larger sample.
- Future research should control for other factors to work towards establishing causality.
- Future research should include additional methods to measure outcomes beyond self-report.
### Background Information

#### Methodology:
- Students from four Baltimore City public elementary schools were invited to participate. Twenty-five students from each of the four locations were randomly selected for participation from among those who provided assent and parental consent. Students provided self-report assessment via the following measures: Response to Stress Questionnaire (RSQ), The Short Mood and Feelings Questionnaire – Child Version (SMFQ-C), the Emotion Profile Inventory (EP) and the People in My Life survey (PIML).
- Pre- and post-assessments (the time between pre and post is not specified) were administered by research assistants. After the intervention, focus groups were conducted with consenting youth and teachers of students who participated.
- This study focused on civilian youth in a public school system.

#### Participants:
- The total sample included 97 4th and 5th grade students (51 in intervention, 46 in control). Of the 97, 55 were 4th graders whose mean age=9.7 years, and 42 were 5th graders whose mean age=10.6 years. In terms of gender, 59 (60.8%) were female and 38 (39.2%) were male.
- In this sample, 81 (83.5%) of participants were African American, 4 (4.1%) were Latino, 4 were (4.1%) White, and 7 were (7.2%) mixed race or other.

#### Limitations:
- The sample size may impact generalizability and did not permit tests of moderating or mediating variables.
- The authors did not account for the grouping of the data (e.g., due to the effects of being grouped together, students in one school or class may be significantly different from students in another school or class in ways that were not measured).
- As the authors note, causal effects cannot be inferred as the clustering of the data was not accounted for in the analyses.

### Assessing Research that Works

| Research Design and Sample | Quality Rating: | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
|----------------------------|-----------------| ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |
| The design of the study (e.g., research plan, sample, recruitment) used to address the research question was... | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |

| Research Methods | Quality Rating: | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
|------------------|-----------------| ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |
| The research methods (e.g., measurement, analysis) used to answer the research question were... | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |

| Limitations | Quality Rating: | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
|-------------|-----------------| ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |
| The limitations of this study are... | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |

| Implications | Quality Rating: | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
|--------------|-----------------| ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |
| The implications of this research to programs, policies and the field, stated by the authors, are... | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ Not applicable because authors do not discuss implications |

**Overall Quality Rating**

Prepared by Military REACH Team.
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