Abstract

Background: There is mounting evidence regarding the psychological benefits of mindfulness. Yet, does mindfulness really help people to cope with the recollection of acute stressors? Method: To address this question, we examined the effects of trait mindfulness and experimentally induced mindfulness in cognitive and emotional responses to the recollection of an acute stressor among 76 female college students. Results: Trait mindfulness was associated with fewer intrusive thoughts 24 hours after the stress induction, but not with affect balance immediately after the induction. Experimentally induced mindfulness showed the opposite pattern: it was associated with better affect balance immediately after the stress induction, but not with intrusive thoughts 24 hours later. Conclusions: These results suggest that even individuals predisposed to mindfulness may find it difficult to use mindfulness to cope effectively with memories of highly stressful events. Furthermore, our results suggest that the effects of brief mindfulness interventions may be too short-lived to really help people cope with such memories. Considered together, these findings highlight the importance of designing mindfulness-based interventions involving not only intensive practice but also specific training to help individuals use mindfulness to cope with acute stressors.

Keywords

Mindfulness; stress; coping; emotional intelligence; training.