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Mindfulness can be a meaningful practice across different stages of life: it can help improve well-being for young children (Becker & Whitaker, 2018; Esmaeilian et al., 2018; Li et al., 2019), adolescents (Leavitt et al., 2020; Oppo et al., 2019), and adults (Berk et al., 2018; Pierson et al., 2019). Mindfulness is the act of clearing the mind, being present, and paying attention with the intent to improve well-being (Greeson et al., 2014). Mindfulness began as a common Buddhist practice, but in the 1970s Jon Kabat-Zinn created mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) in an attempt to aid mental health issues (Greeson et al., 2014 ; Hatchard et al., 2017). He defines mindfulness as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4).

While MBSR is usually a two-month program that teaches participants how to meditate, incorporate mindfulness activities into everyday life, and do other mind-body scans and yoga, mindfulness can be simply a daily, weekly, or "as-needed" practice that differs by person (Hatchard et al., 2017). As mindfulness has become more common in the Western world, many researchers have studied the effects the practice has on different facets of life. Research has found that mindfulness in any form is helpful, but the longer one is mindful, the greater the impact (Berghoff et al., 2017).

In recent years, research has shown how mindfulness can affect emerging adults, especially those enrolled in higher education (Chalk, 2016; Gorvine et al., 2019; Hjeltnes et al., 2017; Mettler et al., 2019; Soysa & Wilcomb, 2015; Wingert et al., 2020). Emerging adults are defined as young adults ages 18 to 29 who are transitioning between adolescence and adulthood (Arnett, 2000; Greeson et al., 2014; Leonhardt et al. 2020); these adults are exploring themselves and future career aspirations, still often rely on their parents to some degree, and often delay marriage (Ladhani et al, 2019; Leonhardt et al., 2020). Emerging adults are prone to increased stress, often due to the challenges of academic rigor and mental health (Cherry & Wilcox, 2020; Cole et al., 2015; Soysa & Wilcomb, 2015). Because emerging adults go through so many transitions and challenges, their overall well-being can be negatively affected as they navigate a new world of adulthood.

Mindfulness in any form can help emerging adults across a myriad of different points of transition and learning by improving mental health, minimizing academic stress, increasing learning retention and helping individuals cope with social anxiety, adjust to new environments, get adequate sleep, and exercise self-compassion (Dundas et al., 2016; Friedrich & Schlarb, 2018; Gorvine et al., 2019; Hjeltnes et al., 2017; Mettler et al., 2019; Ong & Moore, 2020; Ramsburg & Youmans, 2014; Stefan et al., 2018). Although many factors can affect college students' overall well-being, current research has alluded to two areas that mindfulness can especially impact during emerging adulthood: stress management, meaning the ability to reduce the amount of negative stress that is felt; and self-efficacy, meaning the perceived ability to perform well on a task or to accomplish the necessary steps to achieve a goal (Dundas et al., 2016; Hjeltnes et al., 2017; Manavipour & Saeedin, 2016; Soysa & Wilcomb, 2015; Stefan et al., 2018; Taylor et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2018). Mindfulness may play a key role in helping emerging adults enrolled in higher education foster stress-management skills and increase self-efficacy as they take time to slow down, recenter, and allow their minds to unwind from the new stresses and environments that they are learning to navigate.

Stress Management

Stress management becomes increasingly important for emerging adults as they experience greater levels of stress during the transition into adulthood. University students in particular tend to experience large amounts of stress because of the numerous educational tasks they take on in addition to normal adult transitions (Canby et al., 2014; Dundas et al., 2016; Gorvine et al., 2019; Taylor et al., 2020). This increased stress impacts college students' ability to be successful in all areas of their life—but especially within academics (Cherry & Wilcox 2020). Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994), the father of MBSR, explained that while stress is unavoidable, mindfulness can help individuals to cope well:

> *Stress is part of life, part of being human, intrinsic to the human condition itself. But that does not mean that we have to be victims in the face of large forces in our lives. We can learn to work with them, understand them, find meaning in them, make critical choices, and use their energies to grow in strength, wisdom, and compassion.*

Stress-management mindfulness techniques can play an effective role in reducing the amount of negative stress emerging adults feel as they face high expectations and demands in higher education (Dundas et al., 2016). Aránega et al. (2019) found that stress levels could be up to 15% lower when a mindfulness practice was implemented.

Mindfulness is effective in helping university students manage stress because it creates a space for them to process and cope with stress in a healthy manner. Students who practice mindfulness tend to have increased self-compassion instead of judg-

ment for themselves and the world around them (Crowley & Munk, 2017; Taylor et al., 2020). They are able to let go of their need to be in control and learn to simply take experiences as they come (Cherry & Wilcox, 2020). Such a perspective can help students who feel stress regarding future events to feel calmness and positive reassurance about the future (Crowley & Munk, 2017).

Additionally, mindfulness practices can decrease students' stress by helping them cope better with their emotions. When a college student is able to regulate their emotions and develop a sense of control, they can better navigate the everyday stresses they feel and remove negative thoughts from their minds (Canby et al., 2014; Cherry & Wilcox, 2020; Heath et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2020). Students dealing with intense stress can better self-cope when they practice mindfulness, but mindfulness can also help college students alleviate intense stress, such as that resulting from PTSD symptoms (Cherry & Wilcox, 2020), as well as life-threatening stress that could otherwise lead to self-harm (Heath et al., 2016). A reduced amount of stress through mindfulness can allow college students to concentrate more on their lives with less worry and anxiety.

Studies have found that the positive impacts of mindfulness increase as time increases, but even short practices can be helpful (Berghoff et al., 2017; Canby et al., 2014). Any type or amount of mindfulness practice can positively impact psychological distress among college-age students because it allows students to foster an increased amount of self-control over emotions and reduces overall levels of stress (Canby et al., 2014; Cherry & Wilcox, 2020).

Self-Efficacy

While transitioning away from home, beginning university students are also adjusting to new ways of learning, studying, and testing—all of which can be discouraging. College students report that academic stress is the highest and heaviest source of stress they feel (Taylor et al., 2020). This stress can lead to sleep issues, headaches, anxiety, and depression (Cole et al., 2015); it can also contribute to a new source of stress for emerging adults: low academic self-efficacy. If a student is confident in their ability to pass a rigorous and difficult college course, they have high academic self-efficacy. They are better prepared to overcome academic failures and feel confident in their studies (Manavipour & Saeedin, 2016; Taylor et al., 2020). Students who are low in academic self-efficacy are not confident in their ability to pass difficult classes and are not prepared to overcome academic failures. The stress resulting from low academic self-efficacy can create feelings of hopelessness and lack of ability in students' minds. However, research has shown that mindfulness is positively associated with college students' academic self-efficacy (Hanley et al., 2015; Tan & Martin, 2016; Taylor et al., 2020). This may be because mindfulness is positively linked with increased self-confidence, the ability to pay more attention in learning activities, and the use of posi-

tive appraisal to reduce testing stress (Hanley et al., 2015; Manavipour & Saeedin, 2016).

Mindfulness can foster academic self-efficacy and overall well-being due to an increase in self-confidence (Hanley et al., 2015). When college students practice mindfulness, they are more likely to be self-confident, feeling more able in their learning abilities and general ability to succeed in school (Manavipour & Saeedin, 2016; Tan & Martin, 2016). While mindfulness does not make students instantly better at calculating equations or understanding deep philosophy, it can increase students' ability to pay attention and, partnered with confidence, help students focus more on learning rather than on worrying about passing an exam or a class (Manavipour & Saeedin, 2016).

Testing is a common way to measure understanding and academic success in higher education, and it can therefore be a source of anxiety and worry among college students. Current research shows that mindfulness can mitigate testing anxiety in university students, leading them to have less stress over exams and finals (Wang & Zhao, 2015). Students who practice mindfulness are more able to overcome testing failures through positive appraisal—seeing it as a beneficial experience (Hanley et al., 2015). This positive mindset about the academic experience allows students to increase in academic self-efficacy. Students who do poorly on a test and regularly practice mindfulness may find it easier to apply positive reappraisal to their testing experience and have more self-efficacy moving forward despite the failure (Hanley & Garland, 2014; Hanley et al., 2015). The practice of mindfulness allows students to remain positive about their academics despite setbacks they may face (Hanley et al., 2015; Wang & Zhao, 2015). An increase of mindfulness can allow university students to lessen testing stress and increase their academic self-efficacy.

Conclusion

Emerging adulthood is a time of transition, self-discovery, and stress. For many emerging adults, much of this stress comes from going to school and the transitions associated with it. Current research shows that mindfulness practices can play a role in helping university students improve their overall well-being by increasing their ability to cope with the abounding stress present in their lives and nurturing their academic self-efficacy. Future research regarding college students should focus on experimental designs that can measure mindfulness practices and levels of stress and self-efficacy congruently. Research could include other stressful areas in the lives of university students such as social anxiety and living away from home for the first time. Additionally, mindfulness has been researched as a generic principle, and further research on different types of mindfulness practices would be beneficial. Researching different types of mindfulness and their corresponding benefits will help professionals understand which practices will best help those in need and improve overall well-being.

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