

¹ Complementary Therapies for Chronic Pain Management: Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

² Brant Rogers MS, ERYT500

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is an experiential learning intervention developed as a complement to medical care and therapy in a hospital setting over three decades ago (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). It is based on the practice of mindfulness. It is a particularly suitable healing modality for addressing the complex biopsychosocial dimensions of chronic illnesses with their significant components of comorbidity (Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004). There is a rich and growing library of controlled and quasi-experimental studies documenting the effectiveness of MBSR and similar interventions (Ludwig & Kabat-Zinn, 2008, Rogers et al 2012). MBSR has been shown effective for patients with chronic pain (Gardner-Nix, 2009). Results of local clinical research in partnership between the Stress Reduction Clinic and faculty of Pacific University's College of Health Professions demonstrate the effectiveness of MBSR for a variety of health care concerns including chronic pain (Rogers, et al 2012). In as much as MBSR enhances proactive self care and effectively addresses medical and psychiatric comorbidity it is an ideal for consideration in the development of coordinated care and participatory medical practice as health care evolves over the years ahead.

Further Reading

Grossman, P., Niemann, L., Schmidt, S., & Walach, H. (2004). Mindfulness-based stress reduction and health benefits: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 57, 35-43.

Gardner-Nix, J. (2009). Mindfulness-based stress reduction for chronic pain management. In Didonna F. (Ed.), *Clinical Handbook of Mindfulness*. New York, NY: Springer.

Gardner-Nix, J. (2009). *The Mindfulness Solution to Chronic Pain*. New Harbinger

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. New York, NY: Bantam Dell.

Ludwig, D. S., & Kabat-Zinn, J. (2008) Mindfulness in medicine. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 300(11), 1350-1352. doi:10.1001/jama.300.11.1350

Rogers B., Sunbay-Bilgen Z, Christopher M. (2012) Mindfulness in Participatory Medicine: Context, Research and Clinical Evidence for the Relevance of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) On-the-Ground. 10th Annual International Scientific Conference. Center for Mindfulness, University of Massachusetts Medical School.

Rogers B, Christopher M, Sunbay-Bilgen Z, Pielage M, Fung H, Dahl L, Scott J, Reuter C, Sarma A, Connor D, Gryde C, Alvarez K, Hills M, Holt J, Drury N, Wegner K, Beale N. (2012) Mindfulness in Participatory Medicine: Context & Relevance. Under Review for Publication.

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Local Clinician & MBSR Participant Comments about their Experience of MBSR

"I find that those of my patients who participated in the MBSR course had better awareness and attitude toward their symptoms. In their own personal ways, this positive internal shift of attention helped them gain new understanding of their symptoms (i.e., pain, anxiety, etc.) and even help them in times of more severe symptomatology. In some cases, this skill has helped them become less dependent on pharmacologic therapy and more willing to adopt other self-care methods." - **MD, Internist, referring physician, Hillsboro**

"The body aches and discomforts that the medical doctors couldn't even explain, much less fix, MBSR has alleviated." – **MBSR graduate, Public School Teacher**

"Mindfulness practice teaches my patients to dare to take their health and lives seriously. Carving out time to look within without judgement or agenda helps us all distinguish between the pain and loss that is an irreducible part of being human from the pain we volunteer for by living anywhere but the present, driven by the imperatives of our cultural programming." - **MD, Psychiatrist, referring physician, Hillsboro**

The opportunity to watch my patients unfold before me as empowered individuals actively participating in their own wellbeing and self-care brings me the greatest satisfaction of my entire career in medicine. I consider the graduates of MBSR to be the experts on how to integrate the mindfulness approach to everyday busy lives we all live. - **MD, Family Practice, referring physician, Beaverton**

"I had already endured years of chronic illness, multiple surgeries, and breast cancer with ever-dwindling inner resources to sustain me before discovering the MBSR 8 week course. This course gave me back my connection to healthy self that had been stripped of me over the course of my medical journey." - **Cancer Survivor, MBSR graduate**

"Overall, I am calmer with my clients and sharing what I have learned with them is helping them to change their views of depression, anxiety, and other mental health challenges." - **LCSW, MBSR graduate, referring clinician, Hillsboro**

"I work in palliative care and to provide the greatest benefit to patients and colleagues I need to practice effective self-care; MBSR is the center of that practice. I believe MBSR sustains me during difficult times and it allows me enjoy the bountiful times all the while helping me to remain mindful of my health and wellness." - **MSW, cancer survivor, MBSR graduate**

"MBSR training gave me an exciting tool to share within the self-care opportunities offered by Occupational Therapists." - **OT and MBSR Graduate**

"Due to my Crohn's diagnosis my pregnancy was classified 'high risk.' MBSR was import and in my taking time to recognize and relieve the effects of daily stressors and helping to reduce inflammation. My son was born healthy and unmedicated in a natural delivery." - **MBSR Graduate**

¹ This presentation is part of a panel discussion at the *Pain Management Options for Chronic Pain Disorders* Continuing Education Interprofessional Series at Pacific University's College of Health Professionals, October 19, 2012.

² Brant Rogers is a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) teacher certified by the Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. He teaches MBSR and adaptive, therapeutic yoga classes at the Stress Reduction Clinic, Yoga Hillsboro.