



Implications of Mindfulness-Informed Interventions for Trauma-Focused Practice

Brown, S. M., & Bellamy, J. (2017). Feasibility, acceptability, and clinical trends of a mindfulness-informed child welfare intervention: Implications for trauma-focused practice. *Advances in Social Work, 18*(1), 369–386.

WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?

Child welfare services tend to focus on addressing the symptoms of child welfare involvement instead of looking at the underlying causes. It is reported that almost one-third of parents involved in the child welfare system have themselves experienced childhood trauma. Because individual experiences of adversities can contribute to automated ways of behaving and thinking, the authors evaluated how training parents in **mindfulness** could affect overall behavior patterns.

MINDFULNESS

Defined as a nonjudgmental acceptance and awareness of present moment experiences. The use of mindfulness can allow someone to shift focus from unpleasant thoughts and feelings, which helps deter learned negative behaviors that have been used in the past as coping mechanisms.

The Study: A trained licensed counselor was sent into the field to hold six weekly one-on-one, in-home mindfulness training sessions with parents who:

- were involved with or at risk of being involved with the child welfare system;
- had substance misuse problems; and
- had children in the home or had visitation rights with their children.

WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL FINDINGS?

Session content ratings indicated that participants benefited from the mindfulness program. The program helped parents:

- Recognize triggers to stressful situations
- Become calmer and more attentive
- Improve communication with their child

Overall, participants reported an increase in awareness and the ability to step back from stressful situations without getting overwhelmed by them.

It should be noted that because most parents involved in this study were white, there may be cultural differences that need to be addressed when working with families with different racial or ethnic identities.

PAST ABUSE

EXPOSURE TO STRESS

IMPAIRED COPING

MINDFULNESS

UNHEALTHY BEHAVIORS

IMPROVED FAMILY FUNCTIONING

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR WORK?

An integrated mindfulness intervention that targets stress and coping may improve family functioning for child welfare-involved families with substance misuse. When parents can control their thoughts, feelings, and sensations using a trauma-informed approach, their ability to respond in a more controlled manner to stressful situations may improve.