

## **An Experiment of Mental Health based on the Buddha's Teachings.**

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### **Introduction**

Today we enjoy so many benefits in our daily life to make it more comfortable and also the advantages that technology offers; but this has had an impact in our lifestyle, especially on our mental health because of the pressure of society to attain some specific status.

Although the mental and physical illness have been part of samsara, the current conditions increase situations that act as a trigger in certain types of mental illnesses such as depression and physical illnesses that are related to stress.

Stress has been a major problem because of the impact it has on members of society, reducing their quality of life. Being aware of the situation, specialists in the mental health field have been given the task of finding solutions to these problems, fortunately, many of these professionals for various reasons had contact with the teachings of Buddha and personally experienced the benefits of mindfulness and loving-kindness so they decided to bring this knowledge to the field of clinical psychology.

Research has demonstrated the effectiveness of mindfulness in relation to other techniques to reduce symptoms or improve quality of life of many patients, and that mindfulness allows subjects to see things as they are, resulting in reduced discomfort associated with physical distress, depression, anger and inability to deal with situations that arise in life. This experiment arose from the idea of documenting the benefits that can lead to mindfulness and loving-kindness in improving mental health symptoms of disease associated mainly with stress, anger and anxiety.

### **Mental state and physical state:**

We understand that our mental state has a relationship with our physical state. It is well documented that persons with long periods of stress are more susceptible to suffer illnesses, people who experience anger also suffer from high blood pressure and gastritis. Similarly those with nervous problems have stress colitis, headaches, neurodermatitis and many other conditions.

There are many causes for physical illness, therefore, favorable to peace and consciousness as bases provide positive healthy mental development and the alleviation of the diseases closely related to mental states. We know that mental illness is not eradicated with mental health, as the Buddha himself suffered illness and physical pain. However, when the Venerable Master Cunda recited the *bojjhanga-parittam*, he recovered his health because of the joy caused by the speech.

Amongst the mental problems, now there is much emphasis on reducing stress and depression because both mental illnesses are more present in the population in the near future.

Situations in daily life are a prerequisite for the arising of stress, as the situation serves as an external force, whose size and capacity of individuals to adapt to this force, determines to restore the balance of the body and mind or rupture. Emotional reactions such as anger, guilt, fear and affection are transmitted through the neuroendocrine system causing mixed reactions in the body, which when kept for a long time cause changes in the body, so you may have hypertension, gastrointestinal problems, headaches, neurodermatitis, changes in heart rate, respiratory disorders, insomnia, psychogenic rheumatism and chronic fatigue.

For Buddhism, the defilements (kilesa) are the cause of suffering and therefore of mental illness; they are: greed (lobha), hate (dosa), delusion (moha), conceit (māna), speculative views (di□□hi), skeptical doubt (vicikicchā), mental torpor (thīna), restlessness (uddhacca), shamelessness (ahirika), and lack of moral dread (anottappa).

Mindfulness and loving-kindness are excellent tools to reduce, eliminate temporarily and permanently eradicate these defilements. In the field of psychology, these have been a tool for several years to bring relief to many people who are experiencing mental problems.

In the proposed experiment: to detect symptoms of diseases, as well as mental problems, part of the classification assesses whether mindfulness and loving-kindness have any impact on their mental health, first, and therefore physical health. For this purpose a questionnaire was designed for rapid detection of mental and physical experience – to identify physical ailments, we provide information on what kind of mental states are related to them.

### **Proposing solutions:**

Research has demonstrated the potential of mindfulness to help reduce stress, also relieve symptoms and reduce physical illnesses. Mindfulness has the opposite effect of stress and activates the parasympathetic nervous system resulting in relaxation of blood vessels and decreasing heart rate, increasing the chance of becoming high blood pressure or cardiovascular disease.

A U.S. study showed that those suffering from a skin disease called psoriasis which is exacerbated by stress, could recover four times faster if they practiced mindfulness coupled with ultraviolet light treatment than those who received only light ultraviolet.

Another example of the benefits of mindfulness on physical health was the study done in Wisconsin on a Mindfulness course of eight weeks where they practiced mindfulness had a better immune response after receiving a flu vaccine to those who did not practice mindfulness.

After knowing all these benefits of mindfulness and evidence that its scope goes beyond the simple relaxation, he developed the idea of looking for other specific situations can be solved or mitigated by the practice.

Mindfulness allows us to see things as they really are and live in the present, so many conditions that occur in mental illness are controlled, it is not difficult to understand because it is one of the tools used in the experiment.

Loving-kindness is another practice that was excluded because of the benefits, such as: peace, power concentration and sleep. In addition to having a genuine desire towards the welfare of oneself and for others, one should not dwell on a regular basis between individuals causing unhealthy mental states of anger, malice, sadness and depression.

This practice has been included as otherwise unwholesome mental states, especially the dosa. Since anger is an unhealthy mental factor that includes anger, sadness, ill will, fear, grief and its varieties, while the loving-kindness is the opposite of this.

### **Development of the experiment:**

Within the experiment suggests that subjects practice mindfulness daily during the period of three months in daily sessions will begin with twenty minutes of practice during the first three weeks of practice, increasing every three weeks ten minutes to practice until the end of fifty week twelve minutes.

The practice of loving-kindness should be made for at least fifteen minutes each day if you practice mindfulness. In order to gain more benefit from this teaching, it must be put into practice at times of day that the subject is accompanied by people or animals, and find a suitable place for practice.

The participants have a weekly meeting lasting two hours. The first meeting is to apply the questionnaire to determine problematic mentalities and physicalities. After the participants are taught techniques of mindfulness, and loving-kindness – they perform their first practice of forgiveness and loving kindness, then continue with mindfulness.

### **Instructions are as follows:**

First you ask forgiveness from those whom you may have offended by deed, speech or thought, then you have to forgive others and finally you have to forgive yourself. Loving-kindness is love without attachment, craving or lust. To be able to practice loving-kindness towards others beings, you must practice towards you. When you repeat the sentences in your mind, mean them and try to see and visualize the beings you really mention as well, happy and peaceful and make them in your thoughts - happy as well. Now you repeat silently to yourself.

May I be well, happy and peaceful.

May all Beings in this place be well, happy and peaceful.

May all Beings in this area be well, happy and peaceful.

May all Beings in this city be well, happy and peaceful.

May all Beings in this state be well, happy and peaceful.

May all Beings be well in this country, happy and peaceful.

May all Beings be well in this continent, happy and peaceful.

May all Beings in this world in this all Beings be well, happy and peaceful.

May all Beings in this universe be well, happy and peaceful.

May all Beings be well, happy and peaceful.

Mindfulness first will consist of focusing on your breathing your attention, keep your mind in the spot of your nostrils where you feel the sensation of the air. Do not force or strain yourself. May you make a mental note when you breath in and when to you breath out, this is to help to keep your mind on the object. Be mindful. Then you will notice to all the other mental phenomena and physical object that arise until they disappear from your mind, then go back to the breaths. Take the object as it is, subjective without additions of your own.

In the consecutive weeks, topics cover:

- Week 2: Impermanence as part of life. The importance of accepting it and see how we cause suffering.
- Week 3: Unsatisfactoriness and its impact on our lives.
- Week 4: The unsubstantiated. The ability to change our self-image.
- Week 5: The importance of forgiveness in our lives.
- Week 6: Discussion on the changes, feedback and questions.
- Week 7: Anger. Consequences of anger.
- Week 8: Desire as a source of suffering.
- Week 9: The attachment and its consequences.
- Week 10: Facing the responsibility for our actions.
- Session 11: What can change and what do we have to accept.
- Session 12: Final application of the questionnaire. Final impressions.

Each session also provides time for individuals to outsource their worries and stressful situations in your life. The therapist will observe in each session the subjects to determine if there are improvements in how they interact or how they feel.

## **Conclusion:**

For this reason, Lord Buddha said:

“Mindfulness, I declare, or monks is helpful everywhere.”

Mental health should be our main goal in this life. The Buddha gave us the tools necessary to achieve mental health and we must take advantage of them. Modern psychology should continue to document and study the benefits of the teachings of Buddha.

In this experiment, we observed the participants for improvement in mental status, reduction of anxiety, stress, anger and sadness brought more mentally healthy subjects, may notice improvement in symptoms of diseases related to unhealthy mental states who had frequently.

The response to various conflicts and even common situations you experience is much more accurately assessed and involves less physical and mental stress. Most of them reduce their

anxiety and insomnia with just a couple of days of practice, coupled with an improvement in their self-esteem and safety. Most anxiety-related physical symptoms disappeared or were attenuated.

Therefore, the practice of mindfulness and loving-kindness is very important to help people to have stability, peace and exercise healthy mental states where its scope may be reflected in mentally healthier and better able to cope everyday situations.

There is still much work to psychology to develop strategies to integrate the teachings of Buddha to therapy and thus to help achieve a greater number of people to be more healthy, functioning in a world where there is no room for the cultivation of a correct understanding.

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## Questionnaire:

Read each of the items carefully and indicate in the appropriate box depending on the frequency or intensity with which it was made in last week, including today. Please answer all items.

	Always	Almost all the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. You feel cheerful.					
2. You have noticed excessive perspiration or dry mouth.					
3. You have head aches or vertigo.					
4. You have found yourself nervous or about to explode.					
5. You have found yourself overwhelmed and stressed.					
6. You have difficulty to get to sleep, you don't sleep well or your sleep is interrupted.					
7. You get irritated.					
8. You have difficulty to concentrate or bad memory.					
9. You have diarrhea, constipation or abdominal pain.					
10. You are afraid of what might happen.					
11. You feel satisfied about the way you do things.					
12. You have muscular stiffness, muscular spasm or ticks.					
13. You have self-confidence.					
14. You have been scared or have had panic with no reason.					
15. You consider yourself aggressive.					
16. You have noticed itching sensation or trembling.					
17. You have chest pain, palpitations or tachycardia.					
18. You experience lack of pleasure or interest in pastime.					
19. You have skin lesions or rashes.					
20. You have sudden mood swings.					

21. You experience breathlessness or pressure in your chest.					
22. You feel with low energy.					
23. You feel impatient and restless.					
24. During the questionnaire you have found yourself restless, worry or uncomfortable.					