

Chapter 3

Mindfulness as Stabilization in Mental Healthcare

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ABSTRACT

Mental stability, besides absence of mental illness, refers to one's ability at sustaining psychological well-being and quality of life. Conversely, one is deemed "mentally destabilized" by society, when one's moods, feelings, and/or actions are consistently unpredictable. As stabilization process is a very important factor in mental health care, this chapter aims to explore and explain the mindfulness process/strategy in stabilizing the affected participants at preventive, during, and post treatment stages as stand-alone or in conjunction with other pharmacological treatment. Relevant information was collected through the individual databases like Psych info, Sciencedirect.com, Embase, PubMed, Scholar.google.com, Medline, and research journals from open access university websites for writing.

INTRODUCTION

Today, nearly 1 billion people worldwide live with a mental health disorder, and in low-income countries, more than 75% of people with mental health disorders do not have access to treatment (WHO, 2013). Over the years, there has been a surge in recognising the essential part of mental health in attaining global development

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goals, as illustrated in WHO (2023), through incorporating mental health in the Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015). The COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing war in Ukraine have negatively impacted the global economy and prompted a pernicious humanitarian crisis, (UN, 2022) as a result, several countries viz., Cambodia, Guatemala, Lesotho, Liberia, Mali, Marshall Islands, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, the Republic of Congo, and Sri Lanka have decided to add mental health support in their psycho-social interventions programs, appreciating the value of adequate mental health in the wake of disaster/emergencies (Kovacevic, 2021). In this scenario, we are left with a simple conclusion: There is no health without mental health! In consideration of any country's investment in health and human capital, it has become imperative to prioritize the psychosocial needs of vulnerable groups through the stabilization of mental health.

In fact, the process of stabilization is important right from the onset of mental instability. It is an integral part of Psychological First Aid as well as during the treatment of diagnosed mental illness to reduce the negative impact of the illness, and as a follow-up management tool (relapse prevention) in cases of treated mental illnesses for maintaining longer durations of clinical improvement and better outcomes.

There can be several effective tools to practice stabilization in mental health care and we feel mindfulness strategies certainly can be one of them. This chapter aims to explore and analyze the mindfulness strategies and psychotherapeutic ways to promote the management of mental illness, and efficacious therapies leading to successful stabilization in the mental health care system.

Mindfulness

To promote individuals and society with positive mental health, mindfulness plays a vital role in enhancing coping capacity; maintaining psychological well-being also serves as a way of stabilization in mental health care settings. An important feature of stabilization in mindfulness is to stabilize the participant in the acute phase of psychotherapy. Mindfulness is an attribute of consciousness, defined as engaging meaningfully, to be aware and live fully to the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

Engaging in practices of mindfulness surely can assist in the stabilization of the participant in the acute phase of psychotherapy. The main force in the rise of the concept of mindfulness was the Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh (Nisbet, 2017).

Mindfulness helps to enhance the character strength of an individual generating a fine balance" (Niemiec, 2012). There is a positive relationship between the trait mindfulness of individual and subjective well-being (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006). This positive relationship tends to result in increased life satisfaction in individuals practising and enduring higher levels of trait mindfulness (Kong, Wang, & Zhao, 2014). Evidence-based research has shown that mindfulness

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