MINDFULNESS IN SLOVENE ARMED FORCES

Presentation of a pilot 9 – week program

OF 1 Janina Žiberna,
BSc Psychologist
THE IDEA BEHIND ...

- Introduce mindfulness in the Slovene Armed Forces (SAF) for the first time
- Evaluate the program participation
- To gain insight into participants’ experience of program involvement
- Discuss the future for mindfulness in the SAF
WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

The awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to things as they are.

*Williams & Kabat-Zinn. (2007, pp. 47)*
GAINS OF MBT

- Depression relapse prevention
- Stress reduction
- PTSD prevention
- Chronic pain management
- Quality of life
- Coping strategy for anxiety
- Attention
- EQ
- ...

EQ
MINDFULNESS IN THE MILITARY

Mindfulness-based Mind Fitness Training (MMFT): A Review

Mindfulness-based Mind Fitness Training: Introduction and Empirical Support

A Review by Elizabeth A. Stanley, Ph.D. and John M. Schaldach

Longitudinal Evaluation of the Relationship Between Mindfulness, General Distress, Anxiety, and PTSD in a Recently Deployed National Guard Sample

Mindfulness-based training attenuates insula response to an aversive interoceptive challenge

Lori Haase, Nathaniel J. Thom, Akanksha Shukla, Paul W. Davenport, Alan N. Simmons, Martin P. Paulus, and Douglas C. Johnson
BUT WHY MINDFULNESS?
THE BEING AND THE DOING MODE OF THE MIND
DOING MODE

The fun, creative, active, analyzing, criticizing mind. It enables us to: work, study, escape from danger, evolve, reach goals, etc …
BEING MODE

Observing self, non-attachment, non-judgement, non-reactive mind …
COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Mind Full, or Mindful?

„Being without thoughts“
COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Mind Full, or Mindful?

„Being without thoughts“
COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

„Achieving a state of relaxation“
„Feeling good“
„Solving all problems …“
MINDFULNESS IS

Observing self of the autopilot

Thoughts, sensations, feelings as passing events: Non-attachment, Non-judgement
MINDFULNESS IS

Curiosity & acceptance of the pleasant and unpleasant

Non reactivity: just observing

* Inter and intrapersonal relationships.
THUS: WHY MINDFULNESS IN THE ARMY?

- COGNITION
- EMOTION
- BODY
- BEHAVIOR
THUS: WHY MINDFULNESS IN THE ARMY?

- **Non reactivity**
  
  (relationships, decision making … )

- **Body-mind awareness**
  
  (soldiers, special forces, decision makers, situational awareness … )

- **Strategies for stress prevention: chronic, acute, PTSD**
  
  (pre-deployment programs, regular trainings)

- **Emotional intelligence**
  
  (knowing one’s own emotions, regulating one’s emotions, recognizing emotions in others, and handling relationships effectively)
MBT - SAF

- What
- Who
- How
- Why
- When
MBT - SAF

- **What is MT SAF**
  - Mindfulness – based training in the Slovene Armed Forces
  - 9 week program
  - MBCT – adapted
  - Didactical emphasis on: inter-intrapersonal relationships, understanding the CBT model, gaining self understanding, taking care of oneself …

Psychosomatic therapy
- ACT
- CBT
MBT - SAF

• Who
  ◦ 3 groups (23 members)
  ◦ Qualitative analysis with 1st group: 7 members of the Logistics brigade (3m, 4f)
  ◦ Teacher: military psychologist
-but

How

- 1 session/week, 9 weeks
- 90 min session (8)
- 6h session (1)
- During working hours
- On voluntary bases
- Pre-acceptance interviews
- Mid evaluation, end evaluation
MBT - SAF

- **When**
  - Dec 2017 – May 2018
MBT - SAF

- Why
  - To understand the possible gains and future of MT in the Slovene Armed Forces.
RESULTS
DISCUSSION

• In accordance or exceeding expectations

• Useful in work environment
  • Attention to one task
  • Better dealing with distractions
  • Improving relationships
  • Appreciation of the good

• Useful in private life
  • Quality of relationships
  • Being more attentive to others and oneself
  • Being more present in the moment
DISCUSSION

• The importance of time for discussion
  • Explaining the importance of just being, observing, being compassionate and not react immediately

• The importance of homework
  • Motivation
  • In AF possibility of control over HW

• Hardship & beneficial
  • Staying in the present moment
  • Taking time for one-self at home
  • Sharing with the group
  • Getting in touch with sensations, feelings
DISCUSSION

- How to integrate (with what goals) MBT
  - Motivation, consequences for non-adherence
  - What didactical elements to emphasize
- Mindfulness for leadership development
- Mindfulness in special units
  - Special forces
  - Pyrotechnicians
  - Firearms warehouses
  - Engineers
  - …
DISCUSSION

- We need a better understanding of what influences:
  - Motivation
  - Insights
  - Understanding of the concept
  - Who gains the most out of the program
  - IQ/EQ
Limitations

- Small, heterogenous group
- Half-structured questionnaires
- Lacking in-depth interviews
- The MBT teacher also local military psychologist
- Author of the paper also teacher ob MBT - SAF
Thank you for your attention

janina.ziberna@mors.si
LITERATURE


LITERATURE


