

Mindfulness-based Interventions as a New Tool for Utah Primary Care Providers

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For different reasons, alternative or complementary treatments carry a bad connotation among many doctors and patients – synonymous with “new-age” or “hippie” or “unscientific” or “anti-medicine.” This may be especially true in conservative and religious parts of the country like Utah.

So it may seem strange to discover an intervention called Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is being taught in 700 medical centers across the United States – and prescribed by thousands of doctors across the country as an adjunct support for a variety of mental and physical health conditions.

In large part thanks to a research program launched in 1979 by Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts, mindfulness and Mindfulness-based Interventions (MBI's) have been explored or analyzed in [over 3600 medical studies and articles](#) in the last several decades.

In the latest issue of the Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, [Dr. Hafeman from the University of Pittsburgh](#) highlights this same evidence as providing strong support for mindfulness-based interventions as a useful tool for children and adolescents facing both mental and physical health conditions.

In collaboration with several other MBSR teachers in the state, we conducted a randomized control trial of a teenage adaptation of MBSR showing decreased anxiety, depression and inattention symptoms, when compared to the control group (forthcoming). For both parents and youth, we have observed 8 weeks of dedicated mindfulness practice leading to significant improvements in stress-related symptoms (like quality of sleep) and overall ability to work with intense, challenging emotions.

For those facing more serious depression or anxiety, Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy provides a smaller group experience where people can learn the same skills. Local practitioners that offer all these resources can be accessed at [MindfulnessUtah.com](#). Each type of mindfulness course has different scholarship opportunities – with Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction classes, for instance, following a sliding scale that offers scholarships based on need (no one is turned away based on financial limitations). Able-differently also has pledged financial support as needed for potential tuition for workshops at [www.Able-differently.org](#)

For individuals frightened or unsure about whether mindfulness may apply – or not ready for an in-person class - we have also created a free online course drawing together mental health and mindfulness professionals for a basic introduction to mindfulness in the context of mental health challenges (see [Mindweather.org](#)).

We are strongly committed to working hand-in-hand with physicians – and welcome referrals of patients you believe might benefit. Health providers are powerful teachers – with an authority almost unparalleled across any other profession. Thank you for your help teaching Utah patients the potential benefits of mindfulness – not as a new-age or unscientific naval gazing exercise – but as a common-sense, practical support for anyone's health.

Jacob Z. Hess is a Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction Teacher and Co-founder of All of Life, an online educational resource offering free mindfulness-based education resources for various health conditions.