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Developing Capacity and a Culturally Appropriate Mindfulness Intervention for Inner City Survivors of Violence

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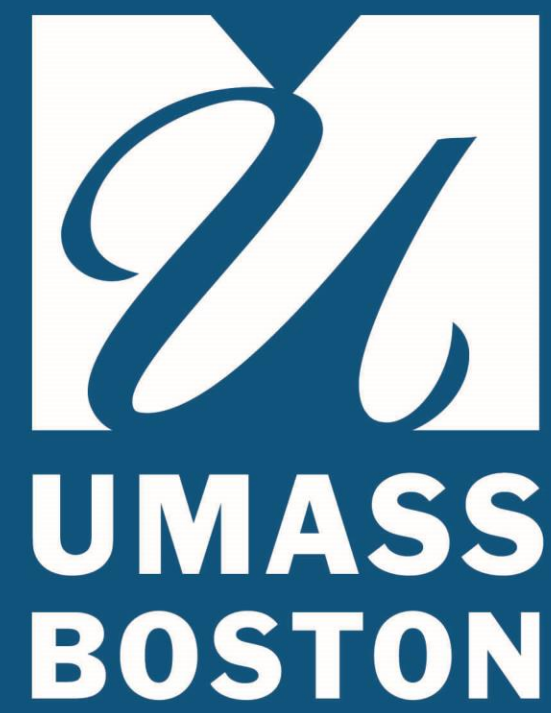


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Developing Capacity and a Culturally Appropriate Mindfulness Intervention for Inner City Survivors of Violence

Summary

This project examines the acceptability and cultural relevance of Mindfulness for low-income communities of color most affected by urban/gun violence. The burden of violence extends to classmates, friends, family members, and communities through adverse effects on parenting, quality of life, economic productivity, and social cohesion.

Contact Us

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Why Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is widely recognized as an evidence-based practice that:

- reduces the multiple negative dimensions of psychological stress
- improves psychological well-being.

19TH ANNUAL MOTHER'S DAY



WALK for PEACE

5.10.2015

to benefit the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute

Louise D. Brown Peace Institute

The Peace Institute serves 98% of the families affected by the homicides in Boston and provides crisis response training for front-line service providers. It is through this mission that we began to introduce Mindfulness to family members and front line service providers at the Peace Institute.

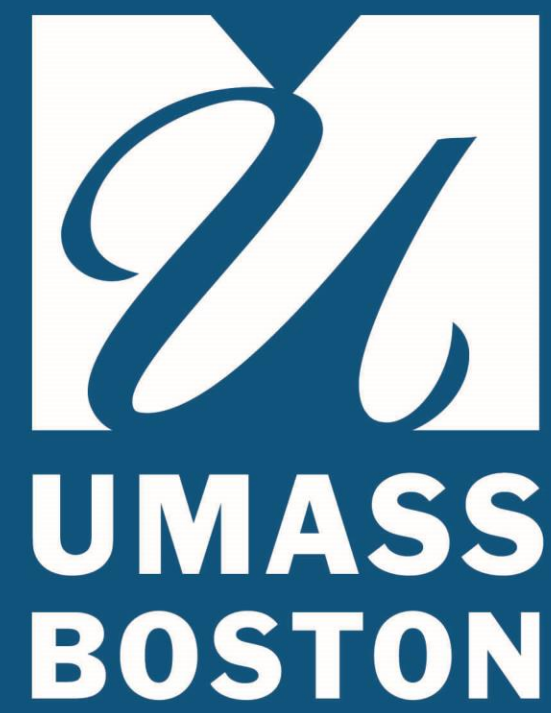


Our Collaborative Approach

Findings: Providers

Findings: Family Members

Findings: Institute Staff



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Our Collaborative Approach

Using community-based participatory principles, we aimed to adapt and extend the evidence base of Mindfulness. The goal is to promote coping and healing for high-risk victims of gun violence and first responders as well as for gun violence prevention. Community investigators include family members, first responders, and staff from the Peace Institute.

Formative Assessment

- Identified barriers and facilitators to a Mindfulness intervention
- Held community forum and 3 focus groups with staff, family members, and first responders

Adapt Program

- Used lessons learned from formative work
- Adapted for individuals impacted by gun violence
- Resulted in training materials and participant workbooks

Training Staff

- At Peace Institute using culturally adapted model
- Building capacity to infuse into prevention efforts in schools, families, and with front-line responders to gun violence

Evaluation

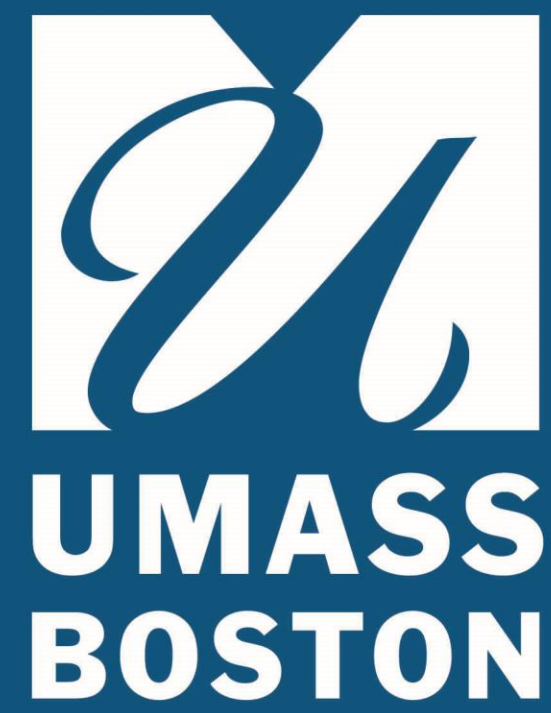
- Of implementation, acceptance, feasibility of Mindfulness as a practice in this context
- Used survey methods

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Themes Identified Through Focus Groups with Service Providers

Awareness of Personal Use of Mindfulness Practices:

- Meditation
- Zumba
- Yoga
- Going to the gym
- Mindful eating

Practicing Mindfulness with People Experiencing Trauma Requires Sensitivity (readiness and dose):

- “Stillness and calm is scary. It could be beneficial especially with multiple trauma but often people push their trauma away to keep busy and avoid impact. The stillness could cause flooding.
- “If someone’s overwhelmed in the moment the provider needs to think about how this practice could help them in this moment. For instance maybe going to breathing when the patient is crying and all stuffed up isn’t a good idea as breathing would be harder and less calming.”

Currently Using Mindfulness in Direct Work with Families:

- “It brings a person into a different stage of calm, takes them out of trauma mode, and lets them decompress.”
- “It helps gain control over actions and is helpful in focusing.”

Commitment and Capacity for Additional Training:

- Majority expressed interest in Mindfulness as an evidence-based practice
- “I want to learn more about MBSR because of articles stating how people with chronic pain use it and see incredible results.”
- Most expressed challenge of time commitment as barrier to taking an intensive training course

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Findings from Mindfulness Mini-Course with Family Members

Context:

- Mini-course on Mindfulness embedded into the Institute's Survivors Leadership Academy (SLA)
- SLA provides weekly structured support groups for family members surviving homicide
- All survivors convened were mothers
- Participants ranged in distance from losses from two weeks to twenty years



How Mothers Experienced Grief:

- Described as palpable and noticeable
- Difficulty with ability to breathe and "silence their mind"
- "Plain stress stuck in the brain so that you can't relax"

What Mothers Learned and Expressed:

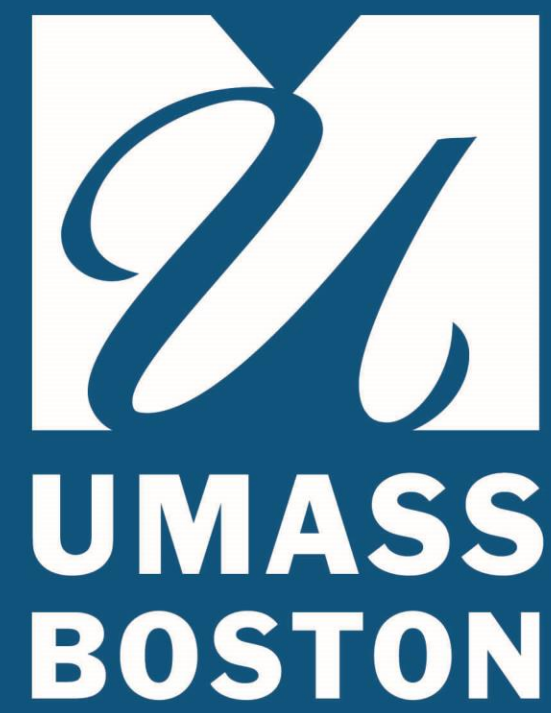
- Uniformly enjoyed exercises such as mindful eating and yoga
- Learned to use techniques such as breathing and a body scan – "When I took the time to breathe and recuperate at Thanksgiving during a breakdown, it was a huge moment..."
- Ability to "catch themselves when their mind wanders...and focus on breathing"
- Inability of mental health care providers to understand their grief – "just get over it"
- Enjoy the "here and now" of the lessons – "It helped me to just be there with other mothers with the same type of trauma, it was peaceful...The entire experience was rewarding and helpful.
- All expressed interest in additional training – "No one wants to go to therapy so this works."
- Participants suggested a buddy system for accountability and support to complete at-home assignments.

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Themes from Mindfulness Mini-Course with Peace Institute Staff

Validating Practice with Theory:

- “It is great to have a name for something we are already doing that is also interconnected with principles and research/theory.”
- Viewed Mindfulness as a tool to be added to Peace Institute’s Toolbox.
- Belief that survivors appreciated having a real trainer and participating in techniques used across the world.

Supporting First Responders and Service Providers:

- A need to “Practice what you preach” – Staff felt providers lacked self care – “I learned to take care of me...this is an awareness providers need to have. If you find this hard to do, you cannot expect clients to do it.
- Belief that Mindfulness diversifies providers’ methods – “People have complex issues...people need choices.”

Alignment between Mindfulness and Survivor Leadership Academy:

- Staff credited mini-courses as providing viable, concrete curriculum to relaunch its SLA.
- SLA as nontraditional support group model – helping survivors try new methods to manage grief and alternative to clinical mental health.
- Belief that community connection, gender, and race of Mindfulness teacher was critical – “Bonita is a great fit as she comes from the community...some of the participants even recognized her.”
- Interest in Train the Trainer model with survivors and providers teaching Mindfulness.

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