

A heuristic and art-based inquiry: The experience of combining mindfulness practice and art-making

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KEY WORDS

Art Therapy, Mindfulness, Insights, Existentialism

ABSTRACT

By utilising concepts of heuristic and art-based research, this project aims to examine the experience of combining mindfulness practice with art-making. The researcher has combined art-making with her experience as both a participant and a trainer in the Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course. This project has generated three hypotheses, through which implications for further research are propositioned: Firstly, art-making can help to consolidate insights that are attained through mindfulness practice and therefore enhance one's self-knowledge. Secondly, a combination of art-making and mindfulness practice may not only evoke existential anxiety but may also help one to address and confront existential dilemmas. Thirdly, as mindfulness practice can be disconcerting, art-making can be a grounding concentration activity that supports the process.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research project is to closely examine the experience of combining mindfulness practice and art-making. The research and its methodologies are exploratory and descriptive in nature. The researcher has combined art-making with her experience as both a participant and a trainer in the Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course. The process of the inquiry is recorded as research findings, from which hypotheses and implications for further research have been generated.

Mindfulness practice in the context of the MBSR model

In this project, the term 'Mindfulness Practice' is defined and informed by Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Program (MBSR). Founded by Dr Jon Kabat-Zinn, the MBSR is a well-defined educational training program.

The MBSR program is conducted as an eight week course for groups who meet weekly, in which participants were instructed to practice and discuss mindfulness meditation skill.

On top of the weekly training, participants are instructed to practise these skills outside group meetings for at least 45 minutes per day, six days per week (Baer, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Klatt, Buckworth & Malarkey, 2009; Praissman, 2008).

Mindfulness has been used in psychotherapy under different names since as early as the 1900s (Hirst, 2003; Mindfulness Therapy, 2010).

Specifically, mindfulness-based psychotherapy refers to models that explicitly teach clients how to practice mindfulness. Other more recent mindfulness-based psychotherapy treatments include Dialectical Behavioural Therapy; Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy, and Acceptance and Commitment