Be MINDFUL

AN INNOVATIVE MINDFULNESS BASED TRAINING PROGRAM FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

IN THIS ISSUE

1 BE MINDFUL&ACT PILOT TRAINING

2 MINDFULNESS: ON-SITE OR ON-LINE?

BE MINDFUL&ACT PILOT TRAINING

The pilot test of the Be Mindful&ACT online training program is coming to its end. A total number of 58 health and social service professionals took part in the pilot training. The participants have undergone a 13 weeks mindfulness training program for mental health professionals, consisting of two clearly differentiated parts: a 10 weeks training directed at self-application of mindfulness techniques and a 3 weeks training addressed at learning techniques useful in bringing patients' awareness to the present moment. During the first part of the training program, the participants learned and practiced tools useful to become a more present professional, through the development of the ability to remain aware of the present moment in both professional and personal context. They have reinforced their ability to keep their valued direction as professionals even in adverse situations. They have learned to put things in perspective and differentiate between their internal events- what they think and feel- and themselves. The last 3 weeks of the training were oriented at practicing the application of the mindfulness principles in interventions with patients and clients affected by mental discomfort, helping the latter to create a relationship with their own private events that would not impede them from leading a valuable life.

All along the way through the course, two psychologists and experts in Mindfulness, Dr. Carlos Salgado and Ms. Melita Kosak,

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

have been in charge of tutoring the participants in the pilot training in Spain and in Slovenia respectively. Over the 13 weeks of duration of the training, the experts have communicated with the participants through real-time online tutorials. Additionally, there has been a forum for communication with the tutor where the participants placed their questions and shared difficulties that had arisen during the weekly practice.

Now that the training comes to its end, the participants report having acquired not only solid theoretical and practical knowledge about the technique of mindfulness but also knowledge about themselves, in what refers to (re)discovering what is important to them as individuals and as professionals. For the majority of participants, the most positive learning of the training is the realization of the importance of dedicating the necessary time to nurture oneself and promoting positive changes and, in particular, learning to be compassionate and adopting a non-judgmental attitude with oneself as a professional and with the patients and clients. In addition, most of the participants say that they did acquire new knowledge and insights about how to cope successfully with professional challenges they are facing every day, avoiding these from affecting their therapeutic relationship with patients.

The participants had quite a journey – technical, theoretical and personal. Some participants expressed a wish, for the lessons to be more even more theoretically oriented and that some practical exercises could be shorter. The intensity of the training remains high throughout the week and demands a high level of dedication; otherwise, the effects would be minimal.

"Now that the training comes to its end, the participants report having acquired not only solid theoretical and practical knowledge about the technique of mindfulness but also knowledge about themselves, in what refers to (re)discovering what is important to them as individuals and as professionals."

Moira Kobše, OZARA d.o.o.

The participants report to enjoy the listening exercises and evaluate them as of very high quality. However, some participants have pointed out that certain audios are a bit too long. They state that, for full maintenance of concentration, it is sometimes necessary to repeat the already started work within one exercise which leads to conclusion, and that material of such high quality and intensity could (in some cases) easily overlap the one week time that can be dedicated to each weekly session.

MINDFULNESS: ON-SITE OR ON-LINE?

Some of the participants in the Be Mindful&ACT pilot training- in particular, those who had previously attended on-site mindfulness training- were of the view that it would have been helpful to have face-to-face meetings with the tutor and the group. This suggests that some persons who have had the opportunity to try both modes appreciate some aspects of the face-to-face training beyond the one online.

In terms of the effectiveness of the online mode of a mindfulness training, a group of investigators from the University of Oxford has measured the feasibility of a web-based mindfulness course for stress, anxiety, and depression on a sample of 273 participants. The findings of the study- published in BMJ Open- were that perceived stress, anxiety and depression of the participants significantly decreased at course completion and further decreased at 1-month follow-up, with effect sizes comparable to those found with face-to-face mindfulness courses. In the view of these results, a potential participant in a mindfulness training may be sure that the choice of the mode of a mindfulness training shall not affect the outcomes.

This does not want to say that each mode does not have its pros and cons, which it obviously has. Notwithstanding, the latter shall be considered exclusively from the perspective of individual priorities and preferences. For example, the online mode is convenient for those persons who are familiar with the computer, have irregular schedules and prefer to stay anonymous. These persons will feel at ease connecting from the privacy of their own home or another place familiar to them. In addition, some persons might find it easier to do the practices alone, surrounded by nothing but peace and quiet and for that. Other persons, to the contrary, might prefer to interact with a tutor and a whole group of people in person in order to keep themselves motivated. In these cases, regular face-to-face sessions might help to reinforce the engagement of these participants.

"The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein."