

Challenging Behaviour – National Strategy Group  
Winterbourne View: What needs to change?  
Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2012

## Mindfulness-based approaches with family and professional carers



Richard Hastings PhD

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## Presentation overview

1. What is mindfulness?
2. Why is mindfulness relevant to carers working with challenging behaviour?
3. Some outcomes from evaluations of mindfulness-based intervention with family and staff carers

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## Mindfulness

- Mindfulness is “the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens *to* us and *in* us, at successive moments of perception . . .” (Nyanaponika Thera, 1992)
- It is the awareness and nonjudgmental acceptance by a clear, calm mind of one’s moment-to-moment experience without either pursuing the experience or pushing it away (Singh)
- It is being fully present in the here and now
- It enables us to focus our attention to the present
- Mindfulness is about using the mind to train the mind to experience the present moment

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## Mindfulness and “therapy”

- Mindfulness offers an alternative or an adjunct to current therapies
- Instead of challenging an individual’s irrational or negative thinking, mindfulness-based approaches focus on the individual’s relationship to thinking itself
- Transformative - changes the way we relate to thoughts, feelings, emotions, and actions; changes the way we engage in life itself

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## Relevance to challenging behaviour

- Positive associations of mindfulness/acceptance with reduced parental and care staff distress  
[Lloyd & Hastings, 2008; MacDonald et al., 2010; Noone & Hastings, 2011]
- Negative associations of avoidant coping with stress for parents and care staff  
[Hastings et al., 2005; Devereux et al., 2009]
- Models suggesting that responses to CB driven by emotional demand

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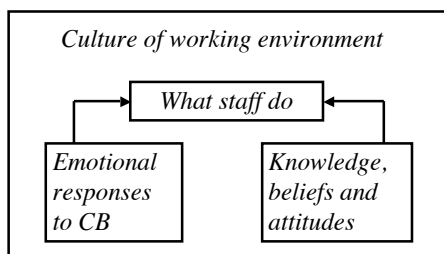
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## Influences on paid carers



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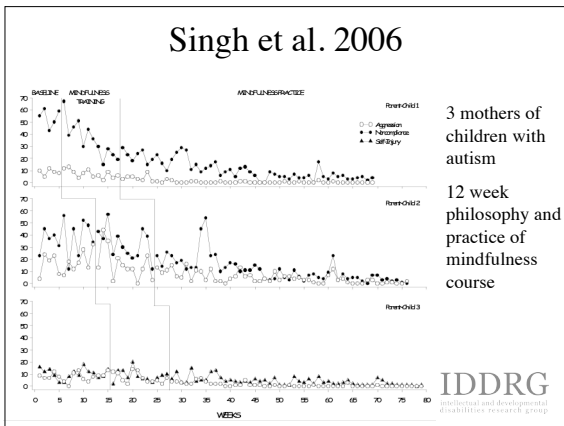
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- ### Singh carer research
- Reductions in challenging behaviours in children (by training parents just in mindfulness) and in adults (by training support staff)
  - Increased learning opportunities and improved social skills in children and adults with ID
  - More observed signs of happiness in people with severe-profound ID when train staff
  - Staff use less physical restraint
  - Mindfulness training may enhance the effects of other training such as positive behaviour support
  - Transfer effects - sibling interactions improve, support staff interactions with their children at home improve
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- ### Promotion of Acceptance in Carers and Teachers (PACT)
- Day 1: morning session**
- Understanding the demands of caring
  - Describing the challenges within your job and evaluating how successful is your present coping
  - Coping is the problem not the solution: the promotion of willingness (Hayes et al., 1999, pp. 123-4)
  - Clean versus dirty discomfort (p. 136)
  - First mindfulness exercise – short body scan
  - Diffusion exercise – leaves on a stream (pp. 158-62)
- Afternoon session**
- Values clarification exercises – coat of arms about my values
  - Values assessment (pp. 224-7)
  - Writing own eulogy (p. 216)
  - Homework exercise (mindfulness) – daily practice of ‘leaves on a stream’
- Day 2: follow-up morning session**
- Review of homework exercises
  - Soldiers in the parade (pp. 158-62)
  - Bubble in the road metaphor (p. 230)
  - Tin-can monster exercise (pp. 171-4)
  - Personal statement of commitment
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## PACT Outcomes

[Noone & Hastings, 2010]

- Evaluation of PACT with 34 support staff working in services for adults with ID (31 had more than 3 years experience in services)
  - Perceived work demands did not reduce pre to post-intervention
  - Psychological distress (General Health Questionnaire) did reduce significantly (effect size  $d = .48$ )
  - GHQ scores reduced for 22 staff, no change for 2 staff, increase for 10 staff

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## Conclusions

- Challenging behaviour is emotionally demanding
- Avoidance processes are likely to come into play
- Mindfulness and acceptance-based interventions tackle avoidance, and support strong values
- Focus is on the carer, not the person with challenging behaviour
- Potential to enhance effects of existing evidence-based interventions for challenging behaviour

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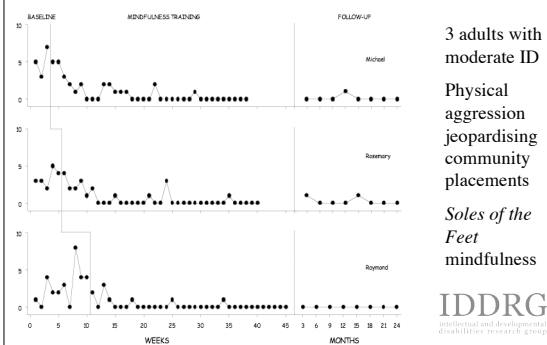
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## Singh et al. 2007




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