

Supplementary Materials: A Pilot Study of a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Programme in Patients Suffering from Atopic Dermatitis (AD)

Implementation and Description of the MBSR Programme

A 45–60-minute introductory meeting between the instructor and each participant was held in preparation for the beginning of the course. On the one hand, this interview gives information about the mindful approach being fostered and the concrete course structure. On the other hand, it is clarified whether or not the participant has the willingness to undertake the intensive practice of mindfulness as well as the concrete implementation of the course program. This willingness is a prerequisite for course participation. The introductory meeting is an integral part of the MBSR course format.

The classes took place once a week for eight consecutive weeks. The course was conducted in autumn 2014. Each class lasted 2.5 hours, from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. In addition, there was a day of mindfulness after the sixth class, on the following Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. This day was conducted in silence (excepting the exercise instructions) and served to deepen the exercises learned so far.

A main part of the classes is the bit-by-bit introduction, practice, and reflection of the formal practices of body scan, mindful yoga, and seated meditation. These exercises each last about 30 minutes. The body scan usually takes place while lying down. Step by step, the awareness is directed to the individual parts of the body. Mindful yoga trains participants to directly sense the body as it gently stretches and bends. A deepened awareness of the body and the breath is a key step in building up consciousness of the present. The seated meditation is practiced sitting on a small bench, cushion, or chair with the upper body held upright. In the meditation, consciousness of the present is built up by paying attention to the body and the breath. Awareness of the present moment is further trained by the direct perception of noises and sounds as well as the immediate perception of thoughts and feelings. Among other things, a helpful understanding of the experiential qualities of stress is imparted in the class meetings and impulses are given on how to let mindful presence of mind flow more and more into one's own experiences of stress and take effect.

Participants received a course handbook along with audio CDs for the formal exercise practices of body scan, mindful yoga, and seated meditation (each 30 minutes long). Participants practiced one of the three formal practices on their own every day and practice evoking the inner stance of mindfulness again and again in the midst of daily life—particularly in stressful situations. There are suggestions for how to do this in the course handbook.

The class mainly takes place on the floor. In the classroom, there are suitable mats, blankets, meditation benches, and meditation cushions available, as well as chairs. Outside shoes are not worn in the classroom, an important aspect for the suitable and fitting atmosphere for working together on the floor.

The course was taught by Michael Seitlinger. He was trained as an MBSR mindfulness teacher at the Institute for Mindfulness and Stress Management (Institut für Achtsamkeit und Stressbewältigung in Bedburg bei Köln/Linda Lehrhaupt) and he is a member of the MBSR Association in Germany.