A Gain in Weight Loss: A psychosocial approach to obesity

Dara James, MS; Linda Larkey, PhD
College of Nursing and Health Innovation, Arizona State University, Phoenix, Arizona

Purpose
The purpose of this pilot study is to conduct a mixed methods, single group design to examine the feasibility and preliminary efficacy of an 8-week mindful-eating intervention among obese female female college-age students (N = 20) on obesity-related behaviors (binge eating, emotional eating, external eating) and the primary outcome of decreased obesity.

Background
- 40% of undergraduates are overweight or obese
- Transition to college is a marked developmental period with likelihood of increased stress, maladaptive eating behaviors and weight related issues
- Research lacks successful long-term weight loss intervention

Significance
- Novel approach incorporating multiple components of mindful eating program for specific, understudied population
- Intervention addresses psychosocial behaviors of the “how” and “why” related to behaviors of food consumption

Hypothesis
8-week mindful-eating intervention program & practices will effectively address consumption-related behaviors linked among obese female students resulting in:
- Reduced weight
- Improved body composition
- Reduced episodes of binge eating
- Reduced frequency of emotional eating
- Reduced frequency of external eating
- Decreased stress

Psycosocial Behaviors

**Why:**
- Internal/external hunger cues
- Emotional discomfort/stress
- Autopilot process

**How:**
- Unaware of cues/sensations indicating satiety
- Heightened emotional state
- Multi-tasking/lack of quality of attention

**Why do people eat?**

**How do people eat?**

Impacts of Food Behavior Dysregulation

Obesity-Related Behaviors

1. Binge Eating
2. Emotional Eating
3. External Eating

1, 2, 3... May lead to...

- weight gain
- obesity
- depression
- isolation
- emotional stress
- physical stress
- type 2 diabetes
- increased BP
- increased risk of heart attack

Mindful Eating = Non-judgemental present moment awareness of food related choices and behaviors.

Methods

Participants
- Obese female undergraduate full-time students
- Ages 18-24 years old
- BMI>/=30kg/m²

Measures
- Self-report questionnaires (eating behaviors, stress, sleep, exercise, mindfulness, self-compassion, mindful eating)
- Diurnal salivary cortisol samples (stress)
- DXA (body composition)
- One-time focus group

Procedures
- All measures collected pre/post 8-week intervention with 8-week follow up
- Intervention group sessions meet weekly for 1.5 hours with trained staff to facilitate mindful eating program

References