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Improving cognitive abilities and psychological well-being in old adults using short mindfulness-based interventions

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Aging is accompanied by widespread changes in psychomotor and cognitive performance. Also, old adults suffer more from psychological distress and depression than any other age group. As life expectancy increases, it is essential to find interventions that will contribute to the well-being of the older population. Mindfulness is a process inspired by Buddhism and defined as nonjudgmental observation on ongoing experiences. The MBSR (mindfulness-based stress reduction) was found to improve well-being among healthy participants as well as cognitive functions. Even short interventions without prior experience were found to increase abilities to sustain attention and improve visuospatial processing, working memory and executive functions. Due to its demanding session length and intensive home practices, it has been agreed that attempts to shorten the duration of mindfulness intervention are in order, specifically for old adults. We investigated the effects of short mindfulness-based sessions on cognitive functions and well-being among the elderly. Old participants were recruited from the community. Screening of cognitive and psychological status was made before and after the intervention. Participants completed different courses of 8 weeks sessions for old adults, training them in various components of mindfulness intervention. Results showed improvement in both cognitive abilities and psychological distress. This study provides a potential low-cost intervention for improving the life quality of a huge population.

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