Considering the Role of Religion and Spirituality in Adapting Mindfulness-Based Interventions for Black Communities

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Objectives

- Highlight the central role of religious and spiritual life within Black communities in the US
- Review studies examining Black Americans’ perceptions of mindfulness, especially pertaining to religion and spirituality
- Utilize a strengths-based approach to consider potential adaptations to mindfulness-based interventions

Recommendations for adapting mindfulness-based interventions

Adapt language, metaphors, and content
Proactively address concerns about the compatibility of mindfulness with participants’ religious and spiritual affiliations

Share information about the experiences of participants across religious and affiliations in mindfulness meditation programs

Use culturally familiar language and metaphors

Invite participants to share connections between mindfulness meditation and their religious and spiritual practices

Collaborate with faith leaders to implement and develop interventions
Implement mindfulness-based interventions at houses of worship

Train faith leaders to implement mindfulness-based interventions

Develop spiritually-tailored mindfulness-based interventions in collaboration with faith leaders to serve groups with a high level of religiosity and affiliation to a particular religious group

Novel Interventions
Develop novel interventions using a bottom-up approach with Black religious community members as experts

Discussion

Studies of mindfulness-based interventions with Black American participants generally indicate positive outcomes and perceptions of cultural acceptability.

Some concerns are noted among participants regarding religion and spirituality:

- Perception of conflict between mindfulness meditation and religious beliefs [5]
- Worries that others from Black community might perceive religious conflict with mindfulness and/or judge participant for engaging in mindfulness instead of relying solely on God [6, 7, 8]

Meanwhile, other participants viewed mindfulness as a tool that helps deepen religious and spiritual life [6, 9] and could be implemented at houses of worship [8]

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Religion, Spirituality, and Wellbeing among Black Americans

Black Americans report higher rates than other racial/ethnic groups in measures of religiosity [1]:

- 75% rate religion as very important in their lives
- 47% attend religious services weekly
- 69% feel a sense of spiritual peace/wellbeing weekly
- 73% pray daily

Common use of healing practices such as prayer circles [2] and dissemination of prayer requests [3].

African American patients rank spirituality as 3x more important for depression treatment than White patients [4].