

REFRAMING PERCEPTIONS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY INTO STUDENTS' WRITTEN REFLECTIONS ON LEARNING ABOUT MINDFULNESS

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INTRODUCTION

Mindfulness practices offer approaches to reflection that have been argued to contribute to positive outcomes for students in the health professions. Despite calls for more phenomenological investigations in the field, few studies examine the lived experience of learning about mindfulness in professional schools.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study was to inquire into first handwritten accounts of students' experiences of learning about mindfulness.

METHODS

This study reports on occupational therapy health professions students' phenomenological reflections written during and following a 5-week, 15-hour, mindfulness elective course offered at a Canadian University. The

study adopts a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology and is informed by theoretical frameworks of embodiment and practice theories. An in-depth thematic analysis of twenty-one students' written reflections on the experience of integrating mindfulness practices into their lives was undertaken.

RESULTS

Predominant themes identified in students' written reflections include reframing perceptions, 'being' while 'doing', witnessing the struggle, and compassion for self and others.

CONCLUSIONS

This research contributes richly textured accounts that advance understandings about the affordances of mindfulness education in the lives of future health care practitioners. The results also hold implications for educational design in higher education professional school contexts, considerations of mindfulness practices in future professional practitioners' every day and workplace occupations, and identification of promising avenues for future research. This study is funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). ■