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# Embedding Mindfulness Practice in Entry-Level Occupational Therapy Education Program: Experiences and Outcomes

Mary Muhlenhaupt, OTD, OTR/L, FAOTA  
*Thomas Jefferson University, mary.muhlenhaupt@jefferson.edu*

Shelly Wallock, Dr.P.H., OTR/L  
*School of Health Professions, Thomas Jefferson University, Shelley.Wallock@jefferson.edu*

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## Objective

To embed mindfulness practice into an entry-level occupational therapy curriculum and assess outcomes to reduce student stress and promote well-being.

## Evidence-base

- **Healthy People 2020:** Promote quality of life, healthy development and healthy behaviors across all life stages
- **Mindfulness training** in higher education (Gura, 2010)
  - enhances cognitive and academic performance
  - supports mental health/psychological well-being
  - provides coping tools to OT students
- **Recent research** (Reid, 2013; Stew, 2011)
  - improved therapeutic interactions in clinical setting, “fully present for clients”
  - Increase ability to cope with challenging situations
  - Increased self-awareness, reduced stress and greater feelings of well-being

## References

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## Implementation

**Summer reading:** Mindfulness: An attentional approach to engaged professionalism (Mueller)

### First class (fall):

- Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (pre measure)
- introduced mindfulness (11-minute videotape) and led students through one mindfulness practice
- pairs/small group discussion
- opportunity to share in large group discussion

### Weekly in lab (fall and spring semesters):

- 5-6 minute mindfulness practice (video led)
- lab instructors encourage use of mindfulness while practicing skills (listening during Interpersonal module activities, breathing, visualizing before patient transfer)

### Backboard resources:

- All videotapes archived for student use
- Published peer-reviewed evidence on mindfulness programs and outcomes (multiple populations)
- Mindfulness apps
- YouTube videos - relationship of social-emotional environment to mental and physical health

### Course assignment (spring semester):

- Integrated selected mindfulness practice/activity at start of group-led intervention session

### Evaluation:

- Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (post measure in fall)
- after each of 3 modules, student feedback in anonymous online evaluation (qualitative and quantitative)

### Integration into other courses:

- Mindfulness moment before tests in other courses – led by course instructors

## Outcomes

### Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) results

- Inconclusive after first semester
- Students more observant of own degree of awareness?
- Is FFMQ sensitive to recognize short-term change?

### Students

“... mindfulness definitely helps to calm me down before fieldwork, exams or anything else that causes me stress and anxiety.”

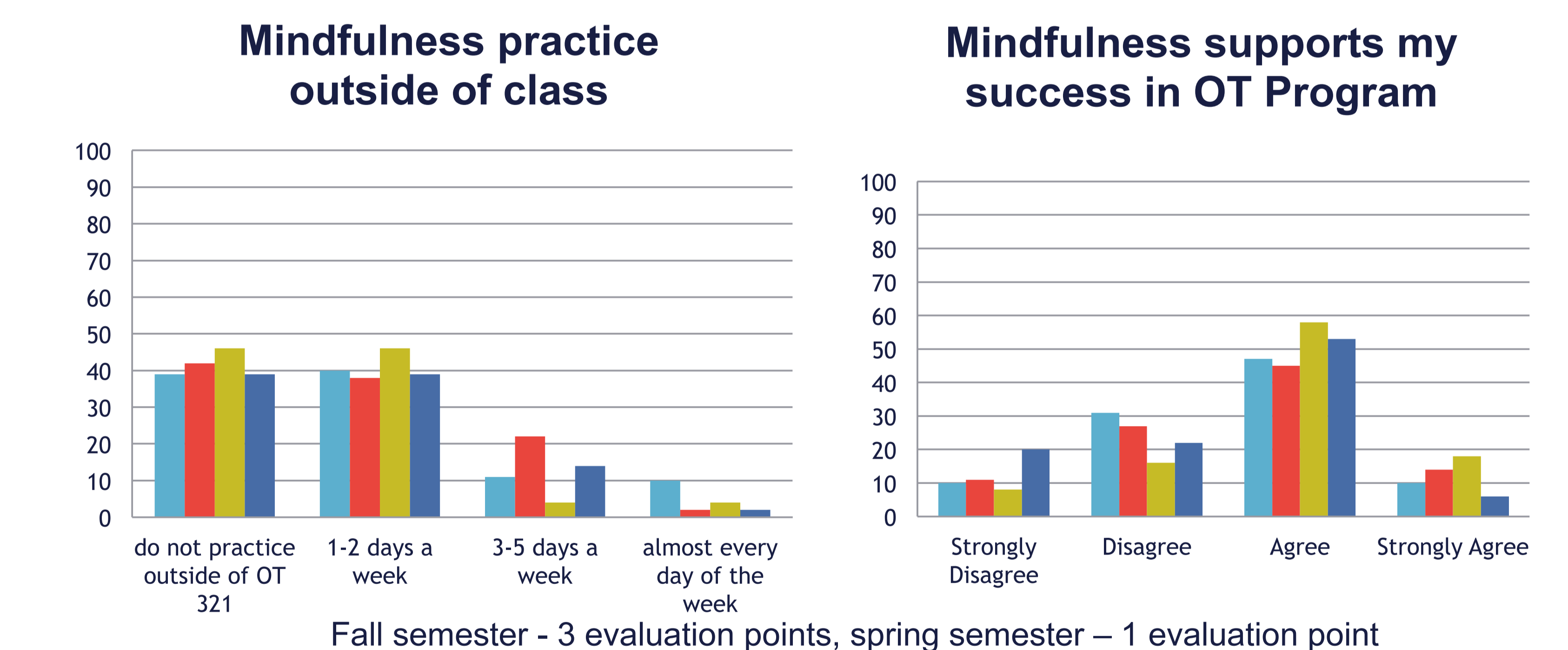
“...it allows me to recognize my feelings and/or worries when I am in class, but then focus on the task at hand. I acknowledge them, let them go, or make a mental note to think about it.”

“...mindfulness helps me to improve my well-being outside of class and be more positive in general.”

“I don’t at this moment really believe mindfulness is something that benefits me. Perhaps I will feel differently in the future.”

### Faculty

“... used ... prior to the first A & K exam. Students participated, most really got into it with closed eyes and breathing along with my voice. It was a good addition. I plan to do it again next week.”



## Next steps

- End of year data collection/evaluation (Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire, student feedback)
- Plan for second year implementation and first year revision with student input; reconsider FFMQ
- Online training plus in-person session option
- Volunteer participation
- Create separate mindfulness module



## **Embedding Mindfulness Practice in Entry-level Occupational Therapy Education Program: Experiences and Outcomes**

Mary Muhlenhaupt, OTD, OTR/L, FAOTA and Shelley Wallock, DrPH, OTR/L

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