

**Introducing Mindfulness Lessons in an Undergraduate Practicum Course:
Self-Care for Helping Professionals in Training**

by

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ABSTRACT

Introducing Mindfulness Lessons in an Undergraduate Practicum Course: Self-Care for Helping Professionals in Training

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This thesis is an investigation of mindfulness lessons designed to teach self-care delivered within undergraduate practicum course seminars. The lessons included instruction on and opportunities to try six mindfulness-based practices. 14 students were interviewed after completion of the course. Interview questions focused on exploring their use of mindfulness-based and other self-care practices as relating to their sense of well-being during their practicum experience. Thematic analysis was used to reveal themes in the data. Results indicate that students learned and used mindfulness-based practices as self-care after learning and practicing them in their practicum seminar. Additionally, students used mindfulness-based practices as self-care in similar ways to other self-care practices not taught during seminar.

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List of Abbreviations

FRAN	Family Relations and Applied Nutrition
FRHD	Family Relations and Human Development
MBSR	Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

Introduction

This study explores the use of mindfulness-based practices as self-care for undergraduate helping profession students. In recent years mindfulness-based practices have been increasingly recognized as beneficial for well-being (Carmody & Baer, 2008; Reid, 2013; Tarrasch, 2014) and self-care has been increasingly acknowledged as necessary for helping professionals and helping professionals in training (Newsome, Christopher, Dahlen, & Christopher, 2006). The present research explores a pilot project in which mindfulness practices were integrated into the weekly seminars of an existing undergraduate (3rd year) practicum course. The focus of the research is students' conceptions of the mindfulness concepts and techniques taught within the course as well as their use of mindfulness-based practices in the context of their self-care practice.

Self-Care

Self-care conceptualizations. Self-care involves behaviours that promote health and well-being (Lee & Miller, 2013). Research suggests that a lack of self-care by helping professionals can have serious personal and professional impacts (Alkema, Linton, & Davies, 2008; Barnett, Baker, Elman, & Schoener, 2007; Eastwood & Ecklund, 2008). Self-care is important for helping professionals for the simultaneous maintenance of personal well-being and effectiveness at work due to high levels of profession-related stress and resultant burnout (Lee & Miller, 2013). A lack of self-care by helping professionals can have serious personal and professional consequences, making self-care especially important in these fields. Many helping professionals struggle to maintain their own well-being while focusing on the needs of those they serve (Lee & Miller, 2013). This lack of self-care is associated with compassion fatigue,

secondary traumatic stress, and burnout (Alkema et al., 2008; Eastwood & Ecklund, 2008). A lack of self-care in helping professions can also have serious professional impacts, such as decreased quality of care for clients or patients (Barnett, et al., 2007). Overall, research has suggested that self-care is extremely important for helping professionals.

Two ways of categorizing self-care exist in current literature on self-care for helping professionals, both of which organize self-care based on domain of well-being addressed by the practices. One such categorization of self-care is the division of self-care practices into the domains physical, psychological, spiritual, and interpersonal support (Richards, Campenni, & Muse-Burke, 2010), whereby self-care practices that address physical well-being are categorized as physical self-care, those that address psychological well-being as psychological self-care, and so forth. Other researchers suggest that when considering self-care for helping professionals, personal and professional self-care are the main categories (Lee & Miller, 2013). Personal self-care involves behaviours that enhance health and well-being, while professional self-care involves behaviours that enhance the effective and appropriate use of self in a professional context while maintaining well-being (Lee & Miller, 2013). Within this conceptualization, physical, psychological, spiritual, and social self-care practices fall within the realm of personal self-care (Lee & Miller, 2013). Alkema and colleagues (2008) found that measuring self-care using a survey that categorized types of self-care as physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, workplace, or balance self-care inaccurately captured self-care. They found that participants' actual self-care practice was more often holistic rather than separated into these categories, and that participants with high self-care in one category are likely to have high self-care in all

categories. These examples demonstrate that self-care is often categorized by domain of well-being addressed.

Importance of self-care. There is consensus among researchers of self-care that integrating self-care is a critical component of professional development in the helping professions (Newsome et al., 2006). Research literature has suggested that training programs for helping professionals rarely educate students about the effects of stress in their workplace or how to prevent burnout (Newsome et al., 2006). This often leaves students responsible for learning and practicing self-care themselves (Rosenzweig, Reibel, Greeson, Brainard, & Hojat, 2003). It has been further suggested that talking about the importance of self-care without actually teaching self-care techniques may be inadequate and place more responsibility on the students (Newsome et al., 2006). As a result of the serious impacts of a lack of self-care by helping professionals and the lack of self-care training in helping profession training programs, research has begun to explore the potential of mindfulness programs for training self-care in helping profession training programs (e.g., Newsome, Waldo, & Gruszka, 2012; Reid, 2013; Tarrasch, 2014).

Cultivating Mindfulness for Health and Well-Being

Mindfulness is typically defined as a state of awareness and attention to the present moment with nonjudgemental acceptance of experiences (Joyce, ETTY-Leal, Hamilton, & Hassed, 2010; Wayment, Wiist, Sullivan, & Warren, 2011). A variety of methods of practicing mindfulness, termed “mindfulness-based practices,” have been developed to cultivate this state of mindfulness (Neff, 2003; Wayment et al., 2011). Some of these practices include mindfulness

meditation, which involves paying attention to the breath and associated physical sensations of the body (Himmelstein, 2011). Another mindfulness-based practice is walking meditation, which involves paying attention to the sensations of the body while walking (Gockel, Burton, James, & Bryer, 2013). The body scan involves moving attention through the entire body, lingering on different parts of the body and is often guided (Dreeben, Marnberg, & Salmon, 2013). Mindful eating is a practice that involves paying attention to the experience of eating to ground attention and awareness in a familiar process (Haruki, Ishikawa, Kouno, & Matsuda, 2008). Loving-kindness meditation involves using imagery related to compassion, including self-compassion, and acceptance (Gockel et al., 2013) to facilitate mindful contemplation of thoughts, emotions, and experiences (Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel, 2008). Tonglen meditation involves focusing on experiences that arise during imagery of suffering and compassion (Gockel et al., 2013).

Research has suggested that cultivating mindfulness can be very effective in improving well-being. For example, a meta-analysis conducted by Grossman and colleagues found that cultivating mindfulness improves several facets of well-being, including depression, anxiety, coping, and quality of life (Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004). Research also suggests that cultivating mindfulness can lead to improvements in executive functioning and emotion regulation (Robins, Keng, Ekblad, & Brantley, 2012; Teper, Segal, & Inzlicht, 2013). Effective methods of emotion regulation ultimately contribute to well-being (e.g., Chin & Richard, 2014). Mindfulness cultivation has also been found to improve self-awareness (Richards et al., 2010). Self-awareness is awareness of the perceptions, emotions, experiences, capabilities, and behaviours of the self, and resulting implications to afford regulation of affect,

cognition, and behaviour (Goverover, 2004; Moon, 2010; Travis, Arenander, & DuBois, 2004).

Finally, mindfulness cultivation has also been shown to decrease hostility (Himmelstein, 2011) and aggressive expressions of anger (Robins et al., 2012).

Integrating Mindfulness into University Training Programs

There have been a few prior studies that have explored the impacts and perceptions of mindfulness-based practices as a tool for self-care in helping profession training programs. The programs studied vary in duration and delivery, including whether the course was on-line or in person and whether mindfulness instruction was provided by an experienced meditator or course professor. In one study, Reid (2013) delivered an 8-week mindfulness program to graduate-level occupational therapy students during their first year. Reid reported that participants had a range of previous understanding of mindfulness and some had previous meditation experience or were engaged in an existing mindfulness practice. The program was optional, offered through the university's online course site, and provided online written and video instruction on loving-kindness, body scan, mindful eating, and mindfulness meditation. It also included lessons and readings on mindfulness, compassion, awareness, and reflection. Participants were free to move through the program at their own pace, including non-chronological engagement with the lessons and practices. They were also encouraged to practice mindfulness in their daily lives. The purpose of the course was to improve students' self-care during the demands of the program as well as to prevent burnout and encourage professional development. Results indicated an increase in mindful attention and awareness at the completion of the program regardless of participants' previous experience with mindfulness. Reid found that participants preferred guided

mediations and appreciated the value of experiential learning above reading about the practices. Participants' personal use of the mindfulness-based practices within their existing self-care practice was not reported. Reid mentioned that qualitative interview data would have been beneficial in exploring participants' experience of and reactions to the program.

Other research has explored the use of mindfulness programs as courses for credit within helping profession training programs. Tarrasch (2014) offered a 2-semester mindfulness course to graduate-level students in an Educational Counselling program. The mindfulness course was offered for credit and included opportunities to try the body scan, mindful eating, mindfulness meditation, and mindful walking, as well as yoga and visualizations of a safe place. It also included hour-long lectures, discussions, and readings on the theoretical foundation and research findings related to mindfulness. The purpose of the course was to integrate self-care into students' academic curricula to lessen their responsibility to learn and practice self-care on their own. Students were encouraged to also practice on their own time and write journal entries about their experiences. The second semester of the course included a practicum in which students taught the mindfulness-based practices at an elementary school. Tarrasch reported that participants had minimal previous knowledge of or experience with mindfulness and some reported initial skepticism of meditation. The research utilized participants' journals for qualitative thematic analysis. Results suggested that participants found the beginning of the course especially challenging due to struggles to stay focused during meditations and challenges with committing to a daily practice. However, Tarrasch reported that most students began to notice the positive impacts of mindfulness practice as the course progressed and used the mindfulness-based practices in their daily life. Participants also reported improvements in their

awareness and regulation of their thoughts, feelings, actions, relations with others, quality of sleep, and sense of their ability to cope with stress.

Researchers have also offered for-credit mindfulness courses to graduate-level counselling students. Chrisman and colleagues (2009) offered a 15-week twice-weekly elective course on mindfulness as self-care to graduate-level mental health, school, and marriage and family counselling students. The course was for credit and involved opportunities to try mindfulness-based practices such as mindfulness meditation, yoga, and qigong, with an emphasis on the practice of qigong. Qigong is a traditional Chinese practice meant to target health (Newsome et al., 2012) involving movement, meditation, and imagery (Chrisman, Christopher, & Lichtenstein, 2009), components common to other mindfulness-based practices. The course also involved discussion of the usefulness of mindfulness-based practices in clinical practice and for personal self-care, as well as additional readings and journaling. Students were expected to practice on their own time at least 4 days a week. Chrisman and colleagues reported that participants had no previous experience with the practice of qigong, but did not report on their previous experience with other mindfulness-based practices. The results focused primarily on participants' experience of qigong, noting that other mindfulness-based practices were taught and separating the effects was difficult. Based on qualitative analysis of participants' journal entries throughout the course, participants reported improvements in their sense of their physical health, such as energy level. They also noted improvements in their sense of psychological well-being, such as feelings of calmness, and improved attention and awareness. During the early stages of the course, many participants reported feelings of nervousness or anxiety while trying the

mindfulness-based practices, which decreased as the course progressed and students became more familiar with the practices.

Researchers have also integrated mindfulness lessons directly into existing courses. Gockel and colleagues (2013) evaluated a mindfulness training program integrated directly into an existing graduate-level course for social work students. The program involved 15 minutes of mindfulness training and discussion during 28 classes for a clinical interviewing course. The practices taught included mindfulness meditation, walking meditation, loving-kindness, and Tonglen meditation, along with other imagery exercises. The instructor had training in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and a personal mindfulness practice for over 5 years. About a quarter of participants had previous experiences with practices that involved mindfulness, such as yoga and meditation. The purpose of the research was to explore the potential benefits of mindfulness training on participants' well-being and professional development including counselling skills. The researchers found that mindfulness training improved students' perceived effectiveness as a clinician, as well as reduced their experiences of anxiety and improved their self-awareness during training. They found that participants used the mindfulness-based practices to ease their anxiety and improve concentration in clinical settings, as well as manage stress and take care of themselves in their daily life. The researchers also intended to explore how the results were impacted by time spent on mindfulness practice outside of the course and how participants' previous experience with mindfulness influenced their learning; however, attrition and methodology limitations did not allow them to explore these concepts. They did not find a significant difference in well-being before and after the program and suggested that a larger dose of practice may be necessary for quantitative outcomes.

The studies described above have primarily focused on graduate-level training programs and only one study, conducted by Newsome and colleagues (2012), included undergraduate students. In this study both graduate and undergraduate students in training programs for helping professionals (e.g., nursing, physical therapy, and education) were offered an optional 8-week MBSR program. This program was separate from students' required school courses but participants did receive a course credit for their participation. The program included lessons and opportunities to try the practices of seated and walking meditation, the body scan, yoga, and qigong. After students tried a practice the instructor facilitated a discussion about students' experience with the practice. Students were also encouraged to practice on their own time and kept a log of their experiences. Results indicated that participants' perceived levels of stress decreased and perceived levels of self-compassion and mindful attention increased.

In summary, research on mindfulness programs as self-care training for helping profession students is limited and varied. The mindfulness programs that have been studied have differed in duration, method of program delivery, role of instructor, inclusion of mindfulness-based practices, and outcomes measured. Participants' reactions to the program have seldom been included in the research. There have been several other gaps identified in the existing research that set the stage for the current research. Firstly, only one study to date has involved undergraduate students when considering the use of mindfulness-based practices as a method of improving self-care in helping profession programs and more specifically mindfulness self-care programs for undergraduate helping profession programs requires further research. Secondly, none of the existing research on mindfulness programs as self-care for students in helping profession programs consider participants' understanding of the concepts of mindfulness after the

mindfulness training programs or whether they seem to be correctly practicing the mindfulness-based practices. Finally, research on mindfulness programs within helping profession training programs has yet to extend to explorations of how mindfulness-based practices compare and fit within students' existing self-care practice or what their existing self-care practice entails. This is an important gap, as research on the self-care practices of *working* helping professionals has suggested that mindfulness is not the only type of self-care utilized (e.g., Killian, 2008). The current research seeks to address these gaps by examining students' conceptions and practices of mindfulness following a course-based mindfulness pilot program within an undergraduate practicum seminar.

Context of the Research

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this investigation: (1) How do undergraduate helping profession program students perceive mindfulness lessons within their practicum course seminars? (2) What do they learn about mindfulness from the mindfulness lessons? (3) How do students conceptualize their use of mindfulness-based practices for the purpose of self-care? (4) How do mindfulness-based practices fit within students' existing self-care practices?

The Practicum Course

The target course is a practicum courses in Family Relations and Human Development (FRHD) at the University of Guelph are offered within the Bachelor of Applied Science program in the Department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition (FRAN). Students are required to

take the third year practicum course that is associated with their major, either Child Youth and Family or Adult Development. These courses serve as the major applied courses in the FRHD curriculum and they offer students an opportunity for practical experience in a helping profession context. The FRHD practicum courses are associated with a wide range of placement sites, including schools, child care centres, mental health centres, shelters, and nursing homes, among others. Each student is placed within a professional agency or program and performs unpaid work 12 hours/week in this context for the duration of the 1-semester course for a total of 144 hours.

Assignments. Students in the practicum sections associated with this research completed up to four written reflection assignments, one of which addressed the students' experience with stress and maintaining their well-being during their practicum experience (see Appendix A). These assignments were completed for a percentage of the students' final grade in the course and were not optional.

The Mindfulness Lessons

I was the instructor of the mindfulness lessons, which were integrated into six of the practicum course seminars, most often for the first 15 minutes. The adaptation of mindfulness lessons for the FRHD practicum seminars derived from the work of Gockel et al. (2013), who adapted the MBSR program into 10-15 minute practice and discussion periods for a social work training program. As per the program used by Gockel et al. (2013), each seminar covered one of the formal or informal practices from MBSR and a discussion of the experience. The six practices that were taught during the practicum seminars were some of the mindfulness-based

practices previously researched: mindfulness meditation, walking meditation, body scan, mindful eating, loving-kindness, and Tonglen meditation. These practices were chosen both for their prevalence in current literature and my familiarity with them. An overview of each practice is provided in Table 1.

Table 1	
Mindfulness-Based Practices Taught In Seminars	
<u>Practice</u>	<u>Overview</u>
Mindfulness meditation	Paying attention to the breath and associated physical sensations
Walking meditation	Paying attention to the sensations of the body while walking
Body scan	Guided moving of attention to all parts of the body
Mindful eating	Paying attention to experiences of eating
Loving-kindness meditation	Paying attention to thoughts, feelings, and sensations associated with loving-kindness imagery
Tonglen meditation	Paying attention to thoughts, feelings, and sensations associated with suffering imagery

The instructor had a prepared lesson outline (see Appendix B) for each practice that allowed space for student questions and discussion in each seminar. Each mindfulness lesson contained a reiteration of the 3 A's of mindfulness: attention, acceptance, and awareness, as well as explanations of the practices and their mechanisms. Students were encouraged to practice any or all of the mindfulness-based practices on their own time. Students were also encouraged to share their perspective of the teachings and practices to monitor their understanding. Students were given the opportunity to leave class for the mindfulness lesson portion, an option a few

students chose each lesson for unknown reasons. They were also given the opportunity to stay in the room during the lessons but not participate in the practices. The instructor reiterated that students were free to participate as much or as little as they felt comfortable at the start of each lesson and often the course instructor echoed this point and offered themselves as support if students wanted to opt out of the lessons.

Methodology

Ethics

The current study received approval from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Guelph (see Appendix C).

Participants

The participants were undergraduate students who completed one of the FRHD practicum courses during the fall semester of 2014. There were 14 participants, all of whom were female. This was not surprising as the vast majority of the students in the practicum courses were female. Four of the participants had taken the Child Youth and Family practicum course and 10 had taken the Adult Development practicum course. Their placement locations included the on-campus childcare centre for the students who had taken the Child Youth and Family course, and alternative education schools, healthcare facilities, community service programs, and on-campus support programs for the students who had taken the Adult Development course.

Recruitment

Two recruitment emails were sent to each of the practicum students from the fall semester of 2014 in January and February 2015, after the completion of all aspects of the practicum

course, including placements, seminars, all course assignments, and the submission of final grades by the practicum instructors. This ensured that participation in the research did not affect students' final grades or their perceptions of their grade. Response to the first email was low, which prompted a second and more succinct email in February. Response to the second email was higher. To encourage students who had positive, negative, neutral, and all other experiences within their practicum course and with the mindfulness-based practices to participate in the research, the recruitment email mentioned that all student experiences were valued, including all reactions to the mindfulness-based practices and any grades received in the course. Once a student responded to the recruitment email, they were emailed a consent form to review and an interview date and location was arranged.

The Interview

I used a semi-structured interview to generate qualitative data. The interviews were conducted on campus in a private office. The interview questions and protocol are provided in Appendix D. The interview questions were derived from the research questions and focused on learning about how mindfulness-based practices were perceived and used. The interview began with focusing on stressful experiences during their practicum semester, what they did to maintain their well-being during the semester, and their personal definition of self-care. The interview then moved to discussion of the mindfulness lessons and participants' reaction to and use of the mindfulness-based practices. It then focused on the stressful experience participants' wrote about in their reflection assignment, or another stressful experience during practicum that was salient to them. Participants were given the option to send their written reflection assignment that addressed a stressful experience during practicum to me via email prior to the set interview time.

Eight participants sent their assignment beforehand and one brought it to the interview. I had a hard copy of the assignment for participants to reference during the interview as a reminder of their stressful practicum experience. Participants were then prompted to discuss what they did to maintain their well-being during and after their stressful experience. This point in the interview, which came after discussion of participants' stressful experience and related self-care and the mindfulness lessons, was designed to facilitate responses that considered participants' self-care practices, the mindfulness-based practices, and the potential relationship between the two. It is important to note that during the interview, participants were asked to tell me about the stressful experience at their practicum placement that they wrote about in their reflection assignment and what they did to maintain their well-being during this experience. While they were also asked about self-care practices during their practicum semester in general, some of the self-care practices they reported using were likely situational and not necessarily techniques used to address general stress. Finally, the interview ended with questions focusing on the interviewer's dual role as instructor of the mindfulness lessons.

The Researcher

As the graduate student researcher, I was the instructor for the mindfulness lessons during the practicum seminars as well as the person who conducted the interviews. I have education, experience, and training in teaching and practicing mindfulness-based practices and philosophy. I began a personal mindfulness practice in 2010 at the University of Toronto where I completed the Buddhism, Psychology, and Mental Health minor while studying Psychology. I have also completed an Applied Mindfulness Meditation Certificate at the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of

Social Work at the University of Toronto. The discussion section will explore the strengths and limitations of my dual role as mindfulness instructor and researcher.

Thematic Analysis

Once the interviews were complete I transcribed the interview recordings verbatim. The transcribed interviews were then analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involves organizing data to identify and offer insight into collective experiences and ways experiences are discussed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest six steps for conducting a thorough thematic analysis of data: familiarizing, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and reporting the results. Each of these steps was utilized in the analysis of the transcribed interviews. I took a contextualist method of conducting a theoretic thematic analysis using mostly semantic level themes, but also latent level themes related to mindfulness. Braun and Clarke (2006) write about the contextualist method of conducting thematic analysis. They report that this method sits between essentialist and constructionist methods. The essentialist method reports the experiences, meanings, and reality of the participants involved in the research while the constructionist method examines the ways experiences, meanings, and realities are the outcome of various discourses in society. I took a contextualist method of conducting thematic analysis, reporting the experiences, meanings, and realities of participants as they described them. A theoretic thematic analysis is used, which Braun and Clarke (2006) describe as being guided by the researcher's theoretical focus. They suggest that this provides a richer analysis of aspects of the data and coding occurs to answer specific research questions.

The data were coded for self-care, practicum and stressful experiences, and mindfulness with the goal of answering the research questions. Self-care, practicum, and stressful experiences themes were coded at the semantic level, which reports surface meanings of what was said by the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Mindfulness themes were coded at both semantic and latent levels. Latent level themes consider underlying assumptions and conceptualizations shaping the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Latent themes as related to mindfulness were uncovered as I have extensive training and experience in researching, teaching, and practicing mindfulness and therefore advanced knowledge of mindfulness theory. This way, I was able to notice conceptualizations of mindfulness concepts and practice even when participants may not have realized the connection. Discussions with my advisor and Committee member helped to ensure trustworthiness during this process.

Results

The results are organized into two sections. The first describes participants' experiences with the mindfulness lessons in their practicum seminar. The second addresses participants' self-care during their practicum experience, including their personal self-care practices and their use of mindfulness-based practices as self-care. An overview of the themes is provided in Table 2 followed by a detailed description of each of the themes.

Table 2 Overview of Results	
<u>Section</u>	<u>Themes</u>
Mindfulness Lessons in Practicum Seminar	<p>Participants' prior understanding of mindfulness and what they learned from the mindfulness lessons.</p> <p>Responses to mindfulness lessons within practicum seminars.</p>
Mindfulness-Based Practices Within Existing Self-Care Practice	<p>Mindfulness-based practices as self-care to improve sense of well-being.</p> <p>Self-care practices for reflecting deeply to improve self-awareness.</p> <p>Self-care practices for briefly acknowledging thoughts, feelings, and experiences.</p> <p>Self-care practices for escaping from stress.</p> <p>A gradient of engagement with thoughts, feelings, and experiences.</p> <p>Self-care practices with a potentially negative side.</p>

Mindfulness Lessons in Practicum Seminar

Participants' prior understanding of mindfulness and what they learned from the mindfulness lessons. Participants began their practicum course with a range of understandings of mindfulness concepts and prior experience with mindfulness-based practices. While all participants reported learning something from the mindfulness lessons, the specifics of what each participant learned varied. One participant was very familiar with mindfulness-based practices, having previously taken an MBSR course and learning from her father, who also practices

mindfulness. Her level of understanding of mindfulness-based practices and theories before her practicum seminars was high. She shared:

I have been practicing meditation for about a year now on my own... I've just been— like, I practice a few times a week on my own and do a lot of yoga as well. And my dad's practiced for over ten years now so yeah. I've always had— not always, but since I've been in university I've known some of those techniques. (Participant 12, p. 2)

Though her knowledge and experience with mindfulness was high, this participant appreciated the opportunity to learn from my and other students' perspective on mindfulness and to learn new techniques. She explained:

It was good to hear other people's opinions and points of view on the teaching that you did in class... It was just interesting to hear like, talking about what does happen when — what does happen when thoughts arise and how you learned how to like, label those thoughts and process them and move on. (Participant 12, p. 8)

She suggested that she found it valuable to learn from other people's perspectives on the mindfulness lessons and to be exposed to different techniques of staying focused while meditating.

Other participants were only somewhat aware of mindfulness concepts and practices before their practicum seminars, most often from their experience with yoga. These participants frequently reported that they had an understanding of focusing on the breath and the body scan practice. For example, while reflecting on the mindfulness lessons in her seminar, one participant shared, "I also do yoga too though, so like the breathing things, I'm used to that. Cause you always do that at the end of class and like during class" (Participant 11, p. 4). She explained that

she was familiar with the practice of focusing on the breath. Participants who had previously practiced yoga reported learning about mindfulness concepts more deeply and having the chance to try mindfulness-based practices they had not previously tried. Most explained that they had never heard of the other four practices and that the lessons in their seminar enhanced their existing mindfulness practice. One participant said, “I’ve done yoga and I’ve done meditation but I haven’t done like, the food one or like, the sending love” (Participant 7, p. 3). She explained that the mindfulness lessons in practicum expanded her existing mindfulness practice:

I think that [the lessons in seminar] has really accentuated— like, I’ve really noticed it a lot more... just before practicum I was working at a yoga studio in the summer and then it was all the time. But the different— like, that one was very much relaxing at the end of a yoga session and being mindful during the day I guess just like— but it didn’t really click with me until we got the different like, different kinds of mindfulness like, focusing on eating and like, like, other people instead of just yourself. (Participant 7, p. 5)

This participant suggested that the mindfulness lessons caused her existing understanding of mindfulness to “click” and she learned from trying the mindfulness-based practices that were new to her. Participants who were familiar with mindfulness concepts and the practices of focusing on the breath and the body scan found that mindfulness lessons enhanced their awareness of mindfulness concepts and introduced them to new practices.

Finally, some participants did not have any awareness of mindfulness theories or practices prior to the practicum course. These participants reported appreciating the opportunity to try a new type of self-care practice. One participant shared:

I found seminar was a lot about self-care too, so including mindfulness in it was a good way of introducing something new that not probably any of us or a lot of us had done before. So I think it's just like, it was nice to have a new technique to debrief and kind of relax from like, the potential stressful practicum experience. (Participant 14, p. 6)

In addition to exposure to mindfulness-based practices as self-care techniques, these participants described gaining an understanding of mindfulness concepts, such as being present. One participant shared the concept that she found most valuable from mindfulness lessons in her seminar:

When you have a thought that's kind of impeding your moment, to just kind of put it away and just compartmentalize— whatever that word is— just acknowledge it's there, it's going to be there when you're done, but this moment's for you kind of thing. So like, I take that into my daily life now when something's stressing me out or something's on my mind. It's just like, 'okay, it's there, you'll get it done, but just focus on what you have to do right now.' So I really like that thought. (Participant 6, p. 7)

This participant described gaining an understanding of being present in the current moment and applying it to her life. Many participants who were previously inexperienced with mindfulness concepts or practices reported and demonstrated understandings of mindfulness concepts such as this. Ultimately, the analysis suggests that participants with a range of familiarity with mindfulness concepts and practices prior to their practicum seminars were able to learn from the mindfulness lessons.

As noted above, it can be challenging to determine whether individuals are actually practicing mindfulness when they claim to believe themselves to be; however, analyses suggest

that most participants seem to have gained an *accurate* understanding of mindfulness and were *correctly* engaging in the mindfulness-based practices. While speaking about the practices, participants often mentioned the fundamental concept of mindfulness: being present. For example, one participant explained that she would practice mindfulness meditation,

...just in my room. Probably like, at the end of the day, or just take a moment like, write in my journal and then sit there and just let it go. Just like, let my day go and just be in that moment. (Participant 6, p. 3)

She described using mindfulness meditation to be in the present moment. Another participant demonstrated her understanding of the focus of attention during mindfulness meditation—the breath—when she stated, “when you find yourself kind of in a stressful situation and you can just take like, 2 to 5 minutes and just sit there and like, close your eyes and just like, focus on your breathing” (Participant 12, p. 2). Overall, participants spoke about mindfulness-based practices with accurate understandings of mindfulness concepts and explanations of how to practice. While some had familiarity with mindfulness before the lessons, all participants tended to demonstrate an accurate understanding during the interviews. This suggests that participants acquired, or at least maintained or enhanced, accurate understandings of mindfulness concepts and practices from the lessons in their seminars.

Participants also reported learning which mindfulness-based practices resonated with them and which practices did not. Favourite and least favourite practices varied between participants; there was no single practice that was unanimously favoured or disliked. One participant expressed that she had certain practices that she found helpful and others that did not “work” for her:

If I were talking to somebody else I honestly would say, ‘if you were having a tough time like, maybe try some of these, because they are very relaxing, and like, we did find that’... Maybe it wouldn’t work for everyone, or, some of them work for me, some of them I know didn’t work for me. Like the walking around the classroom, I didn’t really get into that. And so I wouldn’t say that was something that was helpful for me. But in other aspects I did find some of them helpful. Like, I like the body scan, and the meditation. (Participant 3, p. 6)

This participant did not find the walking meditation worked for her, but found the body scan and mindfulness meditation relaxing and helpful. On the other hand, another participant reported that the walking meditation was one of her favourite practices and noted that she continues to use it in her daily life. She explained that the walking meditation and mindful eating are the practices that have affected her the most:

The walking one— like, I have been consciously making decisions to park farther away so that I can walk like, and be alone and just like, calmly think about what’s— what I am doing and clear my mind. So that has definitely been like a— an adjustment I guess like, for my life. And the eating one again like, I try— it’s inspired me almost to be more conscious about what I’m eating, how fast I’m eating, like, if I’m actually enjoying the food that I’m eating or if I’m just hungry or bored. Yeah, those are probably the main ones that I’ve noticed still affect me and my daily life. (Participant 7, p. 4)

She favoured the walking and eating meditations over the other practices taught in her seminars.

Participants favoured and used different practices depending on their preferences and needs.

Participants also connected with the mindfulness-based practices for different reasons. Participant 3 reported above that she appreciated the practices that were relaxing to her, while Participant 7 reflected on how the practices that affected her life the most caused her to be more aware and reflective. These two ways of engaging in mindfulness-based practices—relaxing and reflecting—will be further explored below. It is again important to note that a variety of practices are needed when teaching mindfulness as self-care. One participant clearly highlighted this point when she said of the mindfulness lessons in her seminar, “I liked them. Like I thought that they still were like, informative for the people that don't know necessarily what one they want to try or what works for them. And like, it works well for that” (Participant 4, p. 3). Participants appear to have benefited from the opportunity to try a variety of practices and decide which ones resonated with them.

Responses to mindfulness lessons within practicum seminars. Participants reported primarily positive responses to the six mindfulness lessons that were delivered during their practicum seminars. For example, one participant reflected that after the mindfulness-based practices in seminar she, “felt relieved. Like, not relieved but a little bit less stressed about the day... after I'm like, ‘oh, I'm happy I did that’” (Participant 9, p. 9). Many participants preferred the mindfulness lessons, especially the opportunity to try a mindfulness-based practice at the beginning of the seminar, expressing that these put them into the right state of mind for the discussion that followed during their seminar. For example, some participants found that trying mindfulness-based practices at the beginning of their seminar helped them relax and become

present for their seminar. One participant said of the mindfulness-based practices at the beginning of her seminars:

I think it was nice to start the seminars with them because people may have gone in there feeling antsy or not really calm because it's like, Friday afternoon, they don't want to be at school, right? So I think that the ones that you were at that you did facilitate mindfulness at the beginning really made everyone just like, like, I don't know, like, more like, mutual. Like, everyone felt together, united, rather than everyone just coming in from their separate ways. It was a really good beginning to a seminar... I think that [future practicum courses] could do like, that three-minute mindfulness at the beginning of every session just to kind of calm people down and get them opening up about how they are feeling that day... I really liked the mindfulness because it just kind of calms you down and gets you focused. (Participant 7, p. 3, 9)

This participant explained that the mindfulness lessons helped students become present at the seminar, which contributed positively to their willingness to share during the discussions and feel present and focused in the remainder of the seminar. Participants suggested that mindfulness lessons at the beginning of seminars had a positive impact on their experiences of the remainder of the seminar.

Many participants also reported that they appreciated the chance to *actually try* self-care techniques rather than only being told to practice self-care. While participants had heard about the importance of self-care in other courses, few courses had included an opportunity to practice self-care techniques. One participant explained:

Everyone bonds over practicum because it is so stressful. So it was good to like, have something that— like, a de-stressor I think, like, built in. Cause like, profs always talk about it. But like, you're like, 'ok whatever. You're just talking about whatever.' But it's not necessarily like, applicable all the time. Cause profs are like, 'make sure you take care of yourself' and, 'don't get too stressed out.' But you're like, 'ok, but what does that mean?' ... In FRHD courses you hear that all the time. Like, you know, 'you're working with people,' and whatever. But I don't think in any course really we would talk about how to actually do it. So like, that was interesting. Yeah, or like, actually trying it.

(Participant 11, p. 12)

This participant explained that the importance of self-care had been reiterated in previous courses, but rarely were actual techniques explained or opportunities to try these techniques included. She expressed that she appreciated that the mindfulness lessons within her practicum seminar included an opportunity to try new techniques for de-stressing. This positive response both to the opportunity to try self-care techniques and to mindfulness lessons at the beginning of seminar suggest that including opportunities for students to try mindfulness-based practices was an important component of mindfulness lessons within seminars.

While most responses to mindfulness lessons in practicum seminars were positive, some participants had negative responses to part or all of their experience. Some participants reported feeling uncomfortable trying mindfulness-based practices in a classroom setting with other students present. A few participants also mentioned feeling uncomfortable with their experience of awareness during a mindfulness-based practice. One participant shared her experience trying the mindfulness-based practices, including loving-kindness, during her seminars:

The one, yeah, the one— week five. Is that where you like, well-wished?... Yeah, I was there, I didn't participate though I just like sat. Yeah, they made me super uncomfortable. I just like, like, I don't know if like— cause I was hyper aware or like, being in a room full of other people... like, you know sometimes when you're like, hyper aware of everything. Like, you can just like, feel everything and like, your breathing and stuff like that. Like, you're— and I wouldn't say like, breathing heavy or anything, but like, I just— you're really aware... I just think it was like, you were thinking so much, or like, you know what I mean? Or like, blocking everything out. But I definitely think like, the other people in the room like, made a difference too.

(Participant 2, p. 3)

She explained that closing her eyes and trying the mindfulness-based practices in her seminar made her uncomfortable because of the other people in the room and her increased awareness. She went on to explain that she was intrigued by the mindfulness concepts taught in her seminar and tried the practices alone at home; however, she still found that the practices made her feel uncomfortable:

I was intrigued by it. Like, it sounded really interesting. Like, it made sense like, what you were saying, you know what I mean? Like I— like, yeah, if you can tune out of focus on like, one thing, you know what I mean? Like, that could be super helpful. So I decided to like, try it at home... and like, I still get the same feeling though. Yeah, so it's just— it's, it's not for me. (Participant 2, p. 3)

The participants who felt uncomfortable trying mindfulness-based practices in their practicum seminar—due to the presence of other people or the awareness they experienced during the

practice—also reported feeling intrigued by the concepts of mindfulness as a potential self-care technique. These participants concluded that mindfulness was not for them as they did not connect with the practices, but no participant reported that they thought the mindfulness lessons should not have been part of their seminars.

The negative responses to mindfulness lessons taught in practicum seminars suggest an important finding: that it is imperative to leave space for students to opt not to participate in trying the mindfulness-based practices. Participants mentioned appreciating that the instructor was forthcoming about how each practice may not resonate with each individual and that students were welcome to participate to their comfort level. One participant shared:

You were really open in the seminars too. Like, ‘if you don’t like this, that’s fine, I’m still going to like, show it to you anyways. If you don’t want to participate—’ like, you were open to no one participating if they didn’t want to, so it wasn’t like we were forced in that you made us do things we were uncomfortable with. Like, you told us we might be uncomfortable with it and you were very open. So I just feel like, we had the opportunity to not participate or not be a part of it. If it made us that uncomfortable or like, you did that bad of a job, we could not come back the next week or like whatever.

(Participant 5, p. 10)

Mindfulness-Based Practices Within Existing Self-Care Practice

Mindfulness-based practices as self-care to improve sense of well-being. Participants’ descriptions of their use of mindfulness-based practices suggest that these practices were used as self-care, namely for the improvement of their sense of well-being. Most participants reported

using their preferred mindfulness-based practices as self-care, either during their practicum placement or elsewhere in their daily life. One participant shared of mindfulness, “I definitely would say it’s made an impact on how, yeah, I’m able to like, de-stress and like, focus myself when I’m in a really stressful situation in school” (Participant 12, p. 2).

Participants suggested that these practices contributed to their sense of well-being. One participant shared of her use of the mindfulness-based practices as self-care:

I definitely think it impacted my well-being positively because it like, released a lot of stress so if I didn’t— like, I don't know if there would be a different way that I would react to it in those situations, but when I did do the mindfulness, like I said, my heart rate would go down or I would not think about it later at night so I think I would get more sleep, or you know it would kind of spiral into something good. (Participant 14, p. 6)

This participant reported that the mindfulness-based practices released her stress and therefore improved her sense of well-being.

Analyses of the semi-structured interview data suggest that participants demonstrated an understanding of self-care consistent with definitions in the literature. They explained that self-care consists of practices intended to maintain overall physical and psychological health and well-being. For example, one participant shared her definition of self-care as, “taking care of yourself... doing things, making decisions that are good for your overall health, like your physical and emotional health” (Participant 10, p. 4). Participants consistently mentioned well-being, and less frequently health, when speaking about self-care.

Participants spoke of engaging in mindfulness-based and other self-care practices in similar ways. Unlike some previous self-care literature mentioned above, which divided self-care practices into the domain of well-being addressed, participants described self-care practices that addressed their well-being overall and distinguished between self-care practices with different purposes. Participants discussed these purposes as ultimately improving their sense of overall or holistic well-being, and rarely discussed practices that addressed only one domain of well-being. Three types of engagement with self-care practices, both mindfulness-based and otherwise, emerged in the data: reflecting, acknowledging, and escaping. These three types of self-care served different purposes, each of which ultimately contributed to participants' overall sense of well-being. Previous research on mindfulness-based practices has not identified these types of practices or reasons for practicing, and these themes were emergent in the data.

Below, certain mindfulness-based practices are referred to as reflecting, acknowledging, or escaping practices; however, which practices served which purpose depended on the individual and the situation, and different practices were mentioned by different participants for different purposes.

Self-care practices for reflecting deeply to improve self-awareness. Participants' reported engaging in mindfulness-based practices to facilitate reflecting. This finding is consistent with the above-mentioned contemplation that often occurs during mindfulness practice. Participants reported cognitive processing during which they deeply contemplated or reflected on their thoughts, feelings, experiences, behaviours, and/or situations in which they were involved. Some participants' reported that reflecting practices improved their sense of self-awareness, including awareness of their thoughts and feelings, and ultimately well-being. This is

consistent with existing mindfulness literature, as summarized above, where the cultivation of mindfulness has been shown to improve emotion regulation, executive function, and self-awareness and ultimately improve one's sense of well-being.

Participants reported that mindfulness-based practices for reflecting led to improved self-awareness, which contributed both directly to participants' sense of well-being and to their awareness of what they needed to improve their well-being. One participant shared that, after learning and beginning to practice the mindfulness-based practices, "I'm so much more self-aware of how I'm feeling or how tired I am at like, the end of the day" (Participant 5, p. 7). She reported using the practices to "check in" or reflect on her well-being. Another participant recalled that, during stressful times at her practicum placement, "to be able to take a moment and just breathe and think about things for a moment was very helpful" (Participant 3, p. 3). She described using mindfulness meditation to make space for her to think about stressful situations. She elaborated that after taking a moment to breathe and think about a specific stressful experience of taking on the 'leadership role' at her placement, "I came back and like, had kind of a new perspective on it. Like I could do it" (Participant 3, p. 4). Mindfulness meditation improved her self-awareness in the situation, contributing to her sense of capability in the leadership role.

Participants reported improved awareness of how the mind tends to think and feel as well as increased clarity about a situation. For example, one participant highlighted this when she described mindfulness as "being one with your thoughts...being able to really think back and like understand what's going on". She elaborated: "...a lot of the time I'll— you'll jump to conclusions or overthink something. But then actually being able to look back on what happened

and take a second to like, think about the situation...” (Participant 14, p. 7). This participant described using mindfulness-based practices to “take a step back” and observe her thoughts and the situation. A similar idea was expressed in the following excerpt where a participant explained how mindfulness meditation improved her responses to stressful situations:

The deep breathing, when I would get really frustrated— and then I’m— like I said I was really dramatic, so if I were to get angry or upset by something I would be like, either I want to pout or like yell at you, so. And just taking a step back and being like, ‘ok, like, this is where I’m at, this is the situation I’m in, there’s not much I can do about it. So this is what I have to do.’ (Participant 5, p. 7)

For this participant the mindfulness-based practice of mindfulness meditation seemed to have improved her awareness of herself and allowed her to objectively observe her stressful situation. This improved her awareness of what was needed in response to the stressful situation.

Similar to mindfulness-based practices used as reflecting self-care, participants reported that other self-care practices were used to improve self-awareness. These reflecting self-care practices also involved cognitive processing of thoughts, feelings, experiences, and abilities through either written or internal reflecting on the self in situations. I was unable to uncover previous literature on mindfulness and self-care for helping professionals which had identified reflecting practices used by helping professionals or the parallel of these practices to mindfulness-based practices used as self-care. In the current research, reflecting seems to have led to participants’ sense of improved self-awareness, which contributed to sense of well-being. One participant considered her self-care practice of journaling:

I did a lot of reflecting... [and] journaling... I write the date and I put like a little bubble around it and then I just write... that day I felt guilty, anxious, frustrated, annoyed, exhausted. And then like, I can keep going and fill like, the whole page with just words that I think basically reach to like, the beginning of my day about all the feelings that I had. And I just feel so— I just feel like I let them out without complaining or like, really over-exaggerating... putting it on the page , it's just— it's like a different form of a release. (Participant 5, p. 4)

She used her journal to reflect on the feelings she had during the day, and described this as facilitating her self-awareness of her feelings and serving to release stress.

In addition to personal writing self-care practices, the practicum course reflection assignments also provided an opportunity for developing self-awareness. This idea was suggested in the following excerpt:

I know that like, those reflections helped me like, so much with the practicum. Like, I think, yeah, I am the kind of person— I always try to see the better side. But the reflections, I don't know. If we hadn't had them, I don't know if I would have been able to, or if I would have taken the time to kind of reflect on my practicum experience and see the better side. Because if you don't take that time then you're not really fully— what are the words I'm looking for? You're not really fully taking in the whole experience if you're not acknowledging those things. (Participant 8, p. 6)

The opportunity for reflection that was afforded by this assignment may also be considered as contributing to self-care. Indeed, this participant suggested that writing the reflection assignments helped her maintain her positive outlook and ultimately her sense of well-being

during stressful experiences at practicum. Another participant similarly suggested that self-reflection assignments—in practicum as well as other courses—contributed to self-care. She shared, “I’m in like, three courses that call for a lot of self-reflection. So as I do those I’m very like, conscious about what I’m doing in my daily life, how I’m handling it” (Participant 7, p. 8). She suggested that her self-reflection assignments in her courses have improved her self-awareness of her well-being and related behaviours. It is worth noting that participants found the reflection assignments in their practicum and other courses important tools for self-care that improved their self-awareness and sense of well-being and therefore that these assignments are likely important components of practicum and other courses.

Self-reflection focused self-care practices did not always involve writing. One participant shared that one of her self-care practices is, “taking the time to think about my personal issues and stuff” (Participant 1, p. 1). For her, self-care involved giving herself the opportunity to think about her issues, a process that she suggested contributes to her sense of well-being. Similarly, another participant explained:

I take like, time to myself everyday to just like, think about how I’m feeling. And if I’m feeling like, crappy a certain day, what I can do like, what might have— what might have made me feel that way and things I can do differently so that I don’t feel that way again... just checking in with yourself basically. (Participant 12, p. 5)

After reflecting on her feelings, this participant was more aware of what had caused her stress and what she needed to do to maintain her well-being. While this participant was not speaking of practicing a mindfulness-based practice, the similarities in reflecting as self-care to the reflecting mindfulness-based practices mentioned above are clear. This participant further shared that

during her practicum course her self-care practices included “debriefing” with herself about her experience at practicum on her commute home. She said:

I had like, an hour commute to and from. So in the morning I was more so just tired on the bus, but on the way home it gave me like an entire hour to reflect on what had happened at practicum that day and almost like, debrief it in my head with myself. So yeah, I would like to think about things that went really well. Obviously like, thinking about the good things that happened at my practicum and what I was excited about, but also obviously would like, replay the negative things in my head. And I would just, in that hour I would try and sort of resolve it with myself and yeah, just trying to think of what I can do differently next time and if it was my fault and just really reassuring myself that like, there's nothing I could've done but it was a learning experience. And you know, I'm walking away from the experience with like, more knowledge than I had before. So I— yeah, it was actually really helpful that I had that entire hour just to myself like without anything else to do but to debrief it. (Participant 12, p. 5)

She took the time to reflect on herself in situations that arose at her practicum placement. As a result of this reflecting she expressed becoming more aware of her feelings and how to take care of herself. Her sense of well-being was improved when she used this self-awareness to reassure herself, stay positive, and learn from her experiences. Similar to participants' discussion of reflecting mindfulness-based practices, other self-care practices not described as mindfulness-based were used to reflect on experiences, thoughts, and feelings. Ultimately, whether written or simply involving conscious thought, mindfulness-based or otherwise, reflecting on thoughts,

feelings, experiences, and abilities improved participants' sense of their self-awareness and well-being.

Self-care practices for briefly acknowledging thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Sometimes, participants did not engage as deeply with their thoughts, feelings, and experiences as they did when they were reflecting. Participants reported engaging in mindfulness-based practices for the purpose of briefly acknowledging their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. This is consistent with existing mindfulness literature and considerations of the mechanisms at work during mindfulness practice, for example decentering and re-perceiving. Decentering refers to the process of stepping back from an experience in order to look at the experience, while re-perceiving involves the perceiving of experiences from this new perspective (Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, & Freedman, 2006). These mechanisms foster engagement with objects of attention without sinking into emotional content. Engagement with thoughts, feelings, and experiences is therefore less emotional during mindfulness practice. Additionally, the mechanism of disidentifying allows for increased objectivity and understanding of thoughts as subjective and passing experiences (Bishop et al., 2004; Fresco et al., 2007; Shapiro et al., 2006). Thus, the content of thoughts and emotions is impermanent rather than fundamental or defining. It is therefore not surprising that participants reported using mindfulness-based practices to *briefly* acknowledge their challenging thoughts, feelings, and experiences, without engaging with them. One participant explained her experience with acknowledging during mindfulness meditation as follows:

Meditation is hard sometimes because things come up that you don't want to think about that you've put out of your mind for so long. And then they eventually peek their way

out and it's like, 'ok, I have to acknowledge this at some point.' And, yeah, helps you— well for me it's helped me, yeah, I don't know. You just come to peace with things eventually, right. Like, a few practices in a row I'll have the same thing sort of like nagging at me and bothering me. And just letting it come up and acknowledging it and, yeah, letting myself think about it sometimes for like, a short period of time and then breathing on it, and then letting it go. (Participant 12, p. 9)

Here, she was not deeply engaging with her thoughts, feelings, or experiences as in the previous examples, but rather briefly acknowledging them as they moved through her mind. She further explained how she deals with her nagging thoughts during her meditation while remaining mindful by using imagery:

A leaf will float down the river. That's like, my thought coming in to my head. And then I like, label it and let it like, continue on. So just like, the flow of it coming into my mind and like, acknowledging it and letting it go. (Participant 12, p. 9)

Participants reported that they were able to briefly acknowledge thoughts and feelings through the mindfulness-based practices.

Participants also reported engaging in other self-care practices for the purpose of acknowledging thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Participants described acknowledging self-care practices as the brief noticing of thoughts, feelings, and experiences to ultimately improve their sense of well-being. One of the ways participants engaged in acknowledging self-care practices was self-talk, which participants' used to acknowledge stressful situations. Self-talk is a form of self-care in which participants give themselves a pep-talk related to stressful situations.

One participant explained how she used self-talk while at practicum with a very critical supervisor. She said:

For self-care I would honestly think— to me when I relate it to practicum, it would be to keep my like, composure, to keep my self-confidence. And I would try not to let— I mean I had to tell myself a million times a day, '[name], that's one person's opinion.' ... Like, I know that yes, I'm not going to be perfect going into practicum, but this is also my very first time dealing with kids in this kind of setting. But like, I would say self-care in the sense that like, I didn't want her to break me down so much where it resulted in me being like, 'I never can do this. I'm awful.' So like, I almost had to go home and like, talk to myself and like build my confidence back up. Otherwise I feel like it could've been very— it could've resulted like, in me being like, 'oh, I'm going to be an awful teacher' or, 'that's not what I want to do.' So I would say just like, self-care as in like, self-talk. Like, I would just tell myself— yeah. (Participant 13, p. 6)

This participant used self-talk to acknowledge her situation and build her confidence up. Self-talk differs from reflecting self-care practices because participants did not report engaging with their thoughts, feelings, and experiences to the same depth as with reflecting self-care practices. In the above example, the participant reported briefly reminding herself that negative feedback from her supervisor was one person's opinion. When she spoke about her self-talk practice, she did not report engaging deeply with her thoughts or feelings around the negative feedback or practicum experience, but rather how she briefly acknowledged this experience to build her confidence up. The similarity is that both acknowledging self-care and reflecting self-care involve noticing thoughts, feelings, and experiences; however, the difference between these types

of self-care practices is the depth with which thoughts, feelings, and experiences were engaged. Participants reported that both types of self-care practices ultimately improved their sense of well-being.

Another way participants reported acknowledging their thoughts, feelings, and experiences was through discussion. This involved sharing both their own experiences and hearing the experiences of others. These discussions occurred with individuals not directly involved in the stressful experience, but who could relate to the feelings associated due to similar experiences. The individuals with whom participants reported engaging in these discussions were most often fellow practicum students in their seminar.

Acknowledging thoughts, feelings, and experiences through discussion was described as a validating experience when the sharer learned that others were having similar experiences. One participant recalled what was useful about seminars when she shared:

I think hearing everyone else's stories. Because when I first went and I didn't think anyone else was feeling useless or really having the same experience as me. But then hearing other people stories I was able to hear like, this person isn't enjoying their experience either. So it was kind of nice to relate to someone on the same level. So I think that was really positive for me. (Participant 14, p. 7)

She found acknowledging her story and hearing other students' similar experiences validated her feelings about the experiences she was having at her practicum placement. Acknowledging thoughts, feelings, and experiences through discussion was described as validating even when other students' stressors and self-care needs were different. Another participant described seminars as follows:

I liked our seminars... I liked our small group and it was—I found them helpful.

Because then everyone else was going through like, different situations and stuff, or like hearing their placements and stuff like that. Like, it made like me feel better about my placement... I feel like everyone's situations were so different, and like everyone's stressors, and what they needed self-care for were not remotely the same. But being able to go to practicum to talk about it was useful. (Participant 2, p. 6)

This participant reported that her sense of well-being related to her experiences at practicum improved as a result of briefly acknowledging her experiences through discussion.

Self-care practices for escaping from stress. The final purpose of self-care practices that participants reported was escape. Participants used mindfulness-based and other self-care practices to escape from stressful thoughts. Stressful thoughts were described as thoughts that focus on stressful situations, cause stress themselves, or both. This finding is not surprising as mindfulness-based practices have been identified as relaxing and useful for stress reduction (e.g., Newsome et al., 2012, Tarrasch, 2014). Participants reported that escaping from stressful thoughts through mindfulness-based practices occurred both in and outside of seminars. When explaining what she found de-stressing about the mindfulness-based practices in her seminars, one participant shared, “I think because you didn't have to think about everything else that was going on. So yeah, it was just like something else to focus on and like, let go of all your stress from the weekdays” (Participant 11, p. 3). This participant escaped from reflecting on the stress of her week through the mindfulness-based practices in her seminar. Other participants stated finding that mindfulness-based practices offered escape from stressful thoughts in their daily

lives. One participant recalled how she used mindfulness meditation as a break from thinking about anything stressful. She said:

In terms of mindfulness, I use the technique of like, just taking two minutes and just literally just breathing and trying not to think of anything. Depending on how stressful the situation is I try my best not to think of what I'm stressed about, but sometimes it's hard to kind of veer away from that. But actually you said that technique a couple of times and I really liked it. (Participant 14, p. 4)

Though it can be challenging to entirely clear the mind, this participant enjoyed escaping from thoughts about her stress.

One of the most commonly mentioned ways mindfulness-based practices were used to escape stressful thoughts was to aid in relaxing to fall asleep. The body scan, the practice most often referred to as relaxing, was used to aid participants in falling asleep after escaping from thoughts and anxiety related to their responsibilities and stress. One participant shared of the body scan, "I used it more when I went home and I was trying to fall asleep and my mind was racing. I would do the body scan" (Participant 4, p. 4). The body scan helped to quiet her racing mind so that she could relax and fall asleep. Similarly, another participant shared how the body scan helped to quiet her anxiety before bed. "When you taught us mindfulness and— I started like, a meditation kind of thing at nighttime to help me get to sleep. Cause sometimes I have like, I have a lot of anxiety when I'm going to bed" (Participant 5, p. 3). The body scan meditation was an escape from anxiety and stressful thoughts to facilitate relaxing and ultimately sleep. Whether to aid in falling asleep or take a break from reflecting on stress and responsibilities

throughout the day, relaxing mindfulness-based practices were used by many participants to escape from stressful thoughts.

Participants also reported using relaxing mindfulness-based practices as a form of escape from stressful situations. One participant reflected on how she dealt with stressful situations at her practicum placement:

I would go to the bathroom and I would just like, take a couple deep breaths and then go back... so I would just like, be like, 'ok, I'm going to go to the bathroom really quickly' and calm down and then come back. (Participant 4, p. 3)

Stepping away from her practicum placement and focusing on her breath helped her to calm down after a stressful experience and then return to her placement in a calmer state. She explained that she also uses this technique to take a break from her homework, enabling her to return to her homework in a calmer state. She said:

I'm spending a lot of time at home doing a lot of homework, cause I have a bunch of classes this semester. So just be like, in my room, I would just push my laptop aside and take a quick little break. Kind of take a few deep breaths, calm down, and then go back to work. (Participant 4, p. 4)

Here, mindfulness meditation is an escape from responsibilities such as homework. Participants reported that escaping through mindfulness-based practices had relaxing effects that improved their state of mind to return to and handle stressful situations.

Most participants reported engaging in other self-care practices to escape from their stresses or responsibilities as a way of maintaining or improving their sense of well-being. In the present data the ways participants reported escaping were varied but some patterns in methods of

escaping as self-care emerged. One of the ways participants reported escaping from their stresses or responsibilities was exercise. One participant spoke of her self-care practice of going to the gym. She said, “sometimes like, if I’m getting like, stressed out with school, I’ll just go to the gym and like, burn off some energy and stuff. And then like, come back and it’s kind of a clean slate” (Participant 4, p. 1). She used her time at the gym to escape from her stress related to school.

Participants also reported spending time with other people as a form of escape self-care. Participants spoke of this type of social interaction as very casual and free of stress and responsibilities, as opposed to the methods of discussion addressed above. For example, one participant shared that her main self-care practice involves taking time off from school and other responsibilities to spend time with her family and boyfriend. She shared:

To me [self-care] means taking time off from school things and everything else. I am involved in a lot of stuff on campus so I— like, I take the weekend off. Like, I'll check emails but that's it. I don't do any work on the weekend. And so that— like, I'm fine working Monday to Friday so that I can have Saturday and Sunday off. So that's like my main thing... Sundays I go to church with my family and with my boyfriend... just spending time with my family and just one-on-one time with my boyfriend or whatever. We like cooking and whatever, so we go to the grocery store and make dinner and that kind of thing, watch a lot of Netflix, and just kinda do nothing... just like, take it easy, sleep in a little bit, and just see what happens. (Participant 11, p. 2-3)

She explained that her self-care involves taking time off from her school and extracurricular responsibilities to spend time with her family and boyfriend. She shared that this time is spent doing activities that are enjoyable and not very demanding.

Many participants spoke about escaping from responsibilities and stress by engaging in relaxing activities. Sometimes participants mentioned doing enjoyable relaxing activities with others, such as the example above, and sometimes these relaxing activities were done alone. One participant shared how she takes care of herself in the middle of a busy week. She said:

Wednesday I have like, an hour that I dedicate to just a bath and I don't take my phone, I don't take anything. And it's been, honestly, the light in my life. Like, it's, it's every Wednesday, it's the middle of my really busy week. So I just like, I don't talk to anyone, all the lights are off, I have like a few candles... I just, I find my like, mental state when I come out is like, positive and so much better. (Participant 5, p. 6)

Her self-care practice of escaping by taking a bath improves her sense of well-being. She further explained that this improvement in her well-being is the result of escaping from her responsibilities and stress. She said:

I try not to let my brain think or like, think about what I have to do or what I did today. I don't really want it to be like, that— because it's— my brain's just always going for like, so many hours of the day, that I just need it to not think about anything and just let myself not be constantly like, worried or whatever. (Participant 5, p. 6)

Again, while this participant was not talking about practicing a mindfulness-based practice, the similarities between escaping mindfulness-based practices, as mentioned above, and other self-

care practices are present. In both cases, thoughts and emotions are being set aside and stress is being ignored or avoided.

A gradient of engagement with thoughts, feelings, and experiences. While the themes of reflecting, acknowledging, and escaping emerged as separate in the analyses, many participants mentioned more than one when speaking about their use of mindfulness-based and other self-care practices. For example, one participant described acknowledging only positive thoughts and escaping from other thoughts during her mindfulness-based practice:

I try my best not to think about stuff. But then at the same time if I'm thinking about like, positive thoughts and I'm like, 'okay, as long as it's positive I'll think about it.' And also sometimes like, my heart rate will go up or something so it kind of just lets me relax and let it go down. (Participant 14, p. 5)

During her practice she was sometimes escaping and not thinking and sometimes trying to control her mind to acknowledge only positive thoughts. She explained that these are separate ways of engaging in mindfulness-based practices, but also that she may switch from one to the other depending on the activity of her mind at that time. When asked to elaborate on how her practice unfolds, she explained, "I think once I noticed my thoughts and realize it's not as big of a deal as I once thought, it relaxes me" (Participant 14, p. 7). The acknowledging that occurs during mindfulness-based practices leads to relaxing. She elaborated, "at the beginning my thoughts are all over the place... which makes me pretty stressed out. But then after I start thinking about it more, then it slowly relaxes me" (Participant 14, p. 7). She begins her mindfulness-based practices by acknowledging—and perhaps reflecting—on her thoughts, which eventually leads to relaxation. This example highlights how the themes of reflecting,

acknowledging, and escaping are likely not mutually exclusive but rather exist on a gradient of amount of engagement with thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

It is important to note that it would likely require mindfulness to attend to thoughts appropriately during a practice and engage in reflecting, acknowledging or escaping depending on the instance. Therefore, it is useful for mindfulness lessons to include practices that can facilitate reflecting, acknowledging, and escaping as well as instructions on paying attention to which purpose is useful at different times. Ultimately, the ways participants reported using mindfulness-based practices as self-care point to the importance of including a variety of practices in mindfulness lessons to meet the diverse needs of different students in different moments.

Self-care practices with a potentially negative side. While many participants spoke of their self-care practices as improving their sense of well-being, many also admitted or alluded to the potentially negative side of these behaviours. This was a surprising but recurring pattern in the data; some self-care practices may have negative aspects. This came across in the way participants reported these self-care practices, including their tone of voice and word choices. For example, the same participant who enjoys relaxing baths shared that to her self-care is, “something or anything that you enjoy doing that doesn’t involve extraneous amounts of work” (Participant 5, p. 3). She explained that one of her self-care activities that fits this description is, “Netflix. I’m a bit of a binger though” (Participant 5, p. 3). While she appreciated the value of escaping from work and responsibilities as self-care, she shared this self-care practice with a sense of guilt. Another self-care practice that participants reported using with some level of guilt was eating junk food. One participant shared that to maintain her well-being

during her practicum semester, “I ate ice cream.” (Participant 4, p. 2). With a slight sense of guilt, she went on to explain of her self-care practice of eating ice cream, “I know that’s not necessarily healthy for you... I go to dairy queen. It’s my emotional well-being I’m taking care of when I eat the ice cream” (Participant 4, p. 2). She shared that eating ice cream did not necessarily improve her health but that it improved her sense of emotional well-being.

Another form of self-care that participants engaged in during their practicum semester and reported with a sense of guilt was venting. For example, when reporting their use of venting as self-care, participants used words with negative connotations to describe their behaviour. One participant explained that she and fellow practicum students, “kind of bitched and complained” to deal with the stress of their practicum placement (Participant 5, p. 8). Other participants mentioned “ranting” or referred to venting behaviours as “coping” strategies rather than speaking of them as self-care practices; however, participants also shared that venting improved their sense of well-being. One participant shared, “I think that’s what helps me the most, is just like, not holding everything in. Just like, to release it” (Participant 9, p. 3). She explained that venting and the release associated with it allowed her to feel better. She said, “I just vented and then I—it was just like release that I felt better after... That’s how I am. Like, I just need like, to talk about it, and then I’m usually better for the most part” (Participant 9, p. 5). Participants suggested that venting allowed them to release their stress and therefore improved their sense of well-being. Overall, the surprising finding that emerged in the data of self-care practices with potentially negative aspects and reported in a guilty way suggest that self-care is fluid and complex for different individuals and individuals at different times. Again, the importance of introducing a variety of self-care practices when teaching self-care is evident.

Discussion

The purpose of this research is to explore mindfulness lessons designed to teach self-care delivered within undergraduate practicum course seminars. Results indicate that students learned and used mindfulness-based practices as self-care after learning and practicing them in their practicum seminar. Additionally, students used mindfulness-based practices as self-care in similar ways to other self-care practices not taught during seminar. This section will further explore the themes that emerged from the data.

What Was Learned About Mindfulness Lessons in Seminars?

The present research identified some important perspectives and feedback on mindfulness lessons used in undergraduate course seminars as a method of teaching self-care to helping professionals in training. Overall, the mindfulness lessons were well received and students expressed appreciating the opportunity to try actual self-care practices. This is consistent with previous literature that has suggested that simply talking about self-care can increase the burden of responsibility to avoid burnout for helping professionals (Newsome et al., 2006). The results also identified some key components of the lessons that are important for successful facilitation. For one, the results of the present research suggest that it is important to include a variety of mindfulness-based practices when teaching mindfulness as self-care in post-secondary courses. This is in part because students come to the lessons with a variety of experiences with mindfulness concepts and practices, from very experienced to mindfulness being a new concept. By introducing a variety of mindfulness-based practices, students with all levels of experience with mindfulness were able to learn from the mindfulness lessons and build their self-care practice. Additionally, the results suggest that individuals preferred different practices for their

own self-care needs and utilized different practices at different times. Participants spoke of different experiences with self-care practices; where one practice was calming and useful for one student it may have been anxiety-provoking for another. Therefore, providing a variety of mindfulness-based practices within the lesson was important to ensure that students with different preferences and needs could experience a mindfulness-based practice that worked for them. Ultimately, the results highlight the importance of including a variety of mindfulness-based practices within the mindfulness lessons to provide students with options to best suit their previous experience and self-care needs.

The results of the present research also indicate that participants were accurately understanding and practicing mindfulness. Though previous researchers have acknowledged that it is challenging to identify when an individual is actually practicing mindfulness (e.g., Chiesa & Malinowski, 2011), few studies on mindfulness have addressed this topic. In the current research, participants accurately explained mindfulness concepts and practices several months after experiencing the mindfulness lessons. In addition, they described ways of engaging in mindfulness-based practices and outcomes consistent with mindfulness literature. This suggests that students were actually practicing mindfulness, or at least gained enough from the mindfulness lessons to have the capacity to practice correctly. Several potentially important components of mindfulness lessons may have contributed to this result. Firstly, I am an experienced meditator who studied mindfulness in depth prior to teaching the lessons. The students' success in learning the practices and mindfulness concepts was likely influenced by my knowledge and comfort. Additionally, the simplified nature of introducing complex concepts may have contributed to students' ability to learn, especially those new to mindfulness. For

example, breaking down the concept of mindfulness into 3 A's: attention, awareness, and acceptance, and repeating this definition during each lesson was one of the ways complex mindfulness concepts were simplified and taught. Finally, echoing the aforementioned importance of providing students the opportunity to try self-care practices when teaching self-care, the chance to actually try mindfulness-based practices with an experienced meditator may have contributed to students' ability to learn how to practice.

What Was Learned About How Mindfulness is Used as Part of Self-Care Practice?

The present research expands current understandings of both mindfulness-based practices as self-care and self-care practice in general. As a whole, the results suggest that self-care is personal and dynamic. Individuals had varying preferences for self-care practices that improved their personal sense of well-being. These preferences also changed depending on the individual's mindset or needs at that time. This suggests that a repertoire of self-care practices is important for successful self-care overall. When considering teaching self-care, it is therefore important to include a variety of practices that can meet the needs and preferences of different individuals and individuals at different times. In considering how mindfulness-based practices fit within individuals' existing self-care practice, it is evident in the results that engagement with mindfulness-based practices as self-care is also personal and dynamic. Much like other self-care practices, mindfulness-based practices can fulfill different self-care needs and were used for a variety of purposes. Again, the results highlight that it is important to present a variety of mindfulness-based practices when teaching mindfulness as self-care. With this variety, participants are able to select the practices that best suit their preferences and needs.

The results suggest that the mindfulness-based practices taught in seminar were used in similar ways and for similar purposes as other self-care practices. These other self-care practices were not taught or discussed in seminars, demonstrating that participants integrated the mindfulness-based practice into their existing self-care practice. Both existing self-care practices and mindfulness-based practices were used for reflecting, acknowledging, and escaping. Further consideration of the results suggest that reflecting, acknowledging, and escaping self-care practices, including mindfulness-based practice, may fall on a gradient of engagement with thoughts, feelings, and experiences. For example, reflecting self-care practices would involve the most engagement and escaping self-care practices would involve the least. The distinction between categories of self-care practices and a gradient of engagement on which all self-care practices may fall is significant for how self-care is understood and explored. It may be possible that the same self-care practice could shift along the gradient depending on the individual or context. Or it may be possible that certain self-care practices serve the purpose of a certain level of engagement and are therefore useful for certain self-care needs. This could have implications for the way self-care practices are taught and used.

Categorizing Self-Care Practices

The categorizations of reflecting, acknowledging, and escaping self-care practices that emerged in the results highlight another area of current self-care literature that needs to be further considered and studied. In the present research, the purpose of mindfulness-based and other self-care practices was the distinguishing feature used to categorize and explain self-care. As mentioned above, previous research has suggested that self-care practices should be categorized

by domain of well-being addressed by the practice. Yet, participants in the present research did not describe their self-care practices, including mindfulness-based and other practices, in this way. Participants described self-care practices that contributed to many domains of well-being and distinguished between the purpose the self-care practice served. Some previous research has found similar challenges with categorizing the use of self-care practices into domains of well-being. For example, Chrisman and colleagues (2009) reported that they found it difficult to organize participants' comments about their use of the practices into domains of well-being such as cognitive, emotional, and physical and suggest that experiences and uses of qigong may transcend these categories. Future research should explore the existing domain model of self-care and whether this model accurately represents the way self-care is conceptualized and engaged with. The current research suggests that helping profession students usually engage with self-care practices that contribute to their overall sense of well-being rather than domain-specific well-being. This theory should be further explored and considered for its generalizability to other populations.

Overall, the present research suggests that mindfulness lessons, including opportunities to try a variety of mindfulness-based practices, can contribute to the need for self-care for helping profession students. Future research and programming should further explore the integration of mindfulness-based practices into helping profession programs for the purpose of self-care.

Limitations

One potential limitation of the present research was the dual role of instructor and researcher and the resulting trustworthiness of the data. My dual role could have led to skewed

participation by students with positive assessments of the mindfulness-based practices taught during their seminar. It could also have led to biased responses to interview questions such that participants suggest that they perceived the mindfulness-based practices more positively. While this dual role may have increased the risk that participants biased their interview responses towards a positive evaluation of the mindfulness-based practices, I encouraged honest responses built on rapport built and experiences shared during the practicum seminars I attended. The interview protocol was constructed to accept and examine positive, negative, neutral, and ambiguous experiences with mindfulness-based practices in the practicum courses. The results suggest that participants' responses about mindfulness were accurate as both positive and negative thoughts and evaluations were shared. It is, however, possible that students who had a more negative experience with mindfulness in their practicum seminar would not have opted to participate in the research.

Another potential limitation of the present research is the lack of focus on specific elements of the mindfulness lessons. While some participants mention their preferences and experience with certain elements of the lessons, no interview questions focused on gaining a deeper understanding. As a result, the useful or preferred components of the lessons are only estimates. For example, the three reasons for students' accurate reporting of their understanding and practicing of mindfulness-based practices presented in the discussion are conjecture. The contribution to literature on self-care as the creation of future self-care and specifically mindfulness programs by the present research would have been strengthened with a more thorough analysis of the specific components of the mindfulness lessons.

The present research is also limited by the interview's focus on specific stressful situations during practicum. While many participants spoke about the self-care practices they use throughout their day, the focus on practicum specific stressful situations and how well-being was addressed as a result of these experiences may have resulted in increased reporting of practicum specific methods of self-care. Therefore, the results of the present research may over-estimate the degree to which self-care occurs in the moment of a stressful situation, may be biased toward certain types of self-care, and may misrepresent the context where self-care most often occurs. The present research would have benefitted from asking about both situational and general self-care practices separately, rather than tying discussion of self-care to the practicum setting.

Future Directions

To address the limitations of the present research and to enhance the field of helping professional self-care and mindfulness literature, future research should consider several directions. One direction that future research should explore is a variety of methods of gathering data on students' experiences with mindfulness lessons. Future research could utilize in-class surveys or mandatory course assignments— rather than interviews after the completion of the course and semester— to hear from those students who may have had more negative experiences with the mindfulness lessons. Alternatively, future research could explore alternative methods to interview data collection and keep the instructor and interviewer separate.

Future research should more closely study what components of mindfulness lessons contribute to accurate understanding and practice of mindfulness-based practices to contribute to successful design of mindfulness lessons. Future research should also explore individuals'

understandings of mindfulness concepts and mindfulness-based practices more thoroughly to assess whether students are actually gaining an accurate understanding of mindfulness concepts and practices after in-class mindfulness lessons. Deeper discussions of how participants practiced mindfulness-based practices may uncover inaccurate techniques or understandings or more clearly demonstrate accurate practicing. Future research should also utilize more objective measures to assess participants' accuracy in engagement with mindfulness-based practices.

Literature on self-care could be enhanced with future explorations of the potentially negative side of certain so-called self-care practices. In the present study, some of the self-care practices, or ways of engaging in the mindfulness-based practices, could have been detrimental to well-being even if participants felt they contributed positively to their well-being. This is especially possible for the surprise finding of self-care practices with potentially negative aspects. The objective impact on well-being, and different aspects of well-being, of different self-care practices is only minimally explored in literature. For example, research has begun to explore the negative impacts of binge watching television, linking it to serious outcomes such as decreased lifespan (Basterra-Gortari et al., 2014) and decreased mental well-being (Dempsey, Howard, Lynch, Owen, & Dunstan, 2014). Research has also identified venting emotions as a maladaptive avoidant form of coping with stress, which ultimately leads to decreased well-being (e.g., Chu-Lien Chao, 2011). These examples highlight the importance of examining self-care practices in relation to both perceived and actual well-being. Future research would benefit from measuring actual well-being alongside perceived well-being. For example, future research could further explore self-care practices that involve ignoring stress, such as some of the escape practices mentioned above, or self-care practices with potentially negative aspects using more

objective measures of well-being. While no research to date has identified potential negative aspects of mindfulness as self-care, future research would benefit from measuring the impact of mindfulness lessons and the use of mindfulness-based practices as self-care on actual well-being.

Future research should also further consider the above-mentioned gradient of engagement with thoughts, feelings, and experiences during self-care practice and the potential differing or situational effects on well-being. Further theoretical explorations of the gradient of engagement with thoughts, feelings, and experiences could begin to explore the need for different levels of engagement at different times as part of an overall self-care regimen. Future research should consider the differences or similarities between mindfulness-based and other self-care practices in terms of purpose for engagement and level of engagement with thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Ultimately, future research and theoretical considerations should work to more clearly and succinctly address the way self-care practices are and should be categorized and understood.

Implications

An important consideration regarding burnout and self-care for helping professionals and helping professionals in training is the perspective that the helping professional and/or student is primarily responsible for their own self-care. While teaching self-care techniques and encouraging active self-care practice is useful for encouraging well-being maintenance in helping professionals, a broader consideration of the factors of helping professions that contribute to burnout is needed. Existing research and literature has considered the greater systemic reasons for high levels of burnout in helping professions. Khamisa, Peltzer, and

Oldenburg (2013) conducted a review of existing literature and found that longer working hours and high levels of emotional contact with clients contribute to high levels of burnout among one essential group of helping professionals, nurses. This suggests that factors beyond the helping professional's control contribute to burnout and ultimately well-being. Some research suggests that factors such as autonomy, social support, performance feedback, and opportunities for professional development at work buffer the effects of job demands and stress (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). Findings such as this place onus on the organization and management to mitigate burnout, rather than the individual helping professional. Additionally, researchers can call for government level changes and funding to address realities of the helping professions such as long hours, low salaries, and minimal support. Helping professionals who do experience burnout should not be blamed and self-care should be supported and celebrated wherever possible. Research on mindfulness-based practices as self-care should contribute to the empowerment of helping professionals to make space for their own self-care, but should not increase the burden of responsibility to avoid burnout on the individual alone.

Given that this study focused on student learning within a specific course and Department, it also has implications for the FRHD practicum courses and the overall program. In light of the findings from this research, I would recommend integrating trainings on a variety of self-care practices directly into students' coursework with the FRHD program. These trainings should involve opportunities to actually try self-care practices. Rather than simply setting aside certain lectures or courses to focus on self-care, self-care trainings should be woven into the curriculum to mimic the way self-care should be woven and supported throughout a helping professional's career.

Overall, the present research has contributed to literature on self-care for helping professionals by exploring a method of teaching mindfulness-based practices as self-care for helping professionals in training. Integrating discussions and experiences of self-care techniques early on in the helping professionals' education could have significant impacts on well-being and burnout throughout their career. Ongoing consideration of the need for, method of, and responsibility for self-care among helping professionals is essential in supporting such a valuable role in our society.

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Appendix A

Reflection Assignment

Consider your experience at your placement thus far. Please try to address each of the following questions. This assignment should be 2.5-4 p.s in length (double spaced please!). It is worth 4% of your final grade.

1. Describe a stressful experience you have had during your practicum placement.
 - What factors contributed to it being a stressful experience?
 - What was your immediate reaction?
 - Did you respond differently after some time had passed? How?
 - Do you feel that the issue was resolved? Please explain.
 - Would you respond differently if a similar situation occurred again? Please explain.

2. Describe what you did to maintain your well-being after this stressful experience.
 - Did the effects of the stressful experience last beyond the day it happened?
 - What did you do to maintain your well-being (1) immediately after the experience and (2) in the week that followed?
 - How did different behaviours, activities, or thoughts differently impact your well-being?

Appendix B

Outline of Mindfulness Lessons in Seminars**Week 1: Mindfulness Meditation**

1. Intro to me
 - Studied Biology at Western
 - Studied Buddhism, Psychology, and Mental Health at UofT
 - Now am doing my Masters at UofG in Family Relations and Human Development
2. What is mindfulness?
 - State of mind focusing on present moment
 - 3 A's: attention, awareness, acceptance
3. How to become mindful
 - Practice
 - not necessarily relaxing or easy; can be stressful, challenging
4. Why practice mindfulness?
 - responding to situations with 3A's instead of reacting automatically
5. How to practice mindfulness meditation
 - Close eyes, or cast gaze downward, whichever is more comfortable
 - Focus on the sensations of your breath wherever they are most noticeable
 - E.g., air moving in and out of your nose, chest rising, breath reaching your fingertips
 - Say 'in' and 'out' in your head with each breath
 - When your mind wanders, which it will:
 - Label the distraction with an 'ing' word (e.g., planning, worrying)
 - Return focus to the breath
 - Remember: distractions are ok. They are an opportunity to practice the 3A's and return to the present moment
6. Try it for 3 minutes
7. Discussion of experience
 - Ask students to share what they experienced while trying the practice
 - Ask students if and where they think this practice would be useful
8. Encourage students to practice in their placement or lives in general
 - Can change practices to better suit you
 - Can ignore practices that do not resonate with you

Weeks 2: Walking Meditation

1. Mindfulness refresher
 - Ask students if they remember the 3A's
 - Review the meaning of the 3A's
2. Experiences with mindfulness
 - Ask students if they used mindfulness since the last seminar
 - Ask students if they thought of mindfulness since the last seminar

- Ask students if they can think of an experience they had since the last seminar where mindfulness would have been useful
3. How to practice walking meditation
 - This is another practice to focus on the experiences (e.g., sensations, thoughts, feelings) of the present moment
 - Similar to mindfulness meditation from last week, only now focusing on the sensations of walking instead of breathing
 - Walk silently and slowly with gaze cast downward
 - Pay attention to the sensations of walking wherever they are most noticeable
 - E.g. feet touching the floor, legs taking steps, or top of head moving
 - When mind wanders, which it will
 - Label the distraction with an 'ing' word (e.g., planning, worrying)
 - Return focus to the sensations of walking
 4. Try it for 3 minutes
 5. Discussion of experience
 - Ask students to share what they experienced while trying the practice
 - Ask students if and where they think this practice would be useful
 6. Encourage students to practice in their placement or lives in general
 - Can change practices to better suit you
 - Can ignore practices that do not resonate with you

Week 3: Body Scan

1. Mindfulness refresher
 - Ask students if they remember the 3A's
 - Review the meaning of the 3A's
2. Experiences with mindfulness
 - Ask students if they used mindfulness since the last seminar
 - Ask students if they thought of mindfulness since the last seminar
 - Ask students if they can think of an experience they had since the last seminar where mindfulness would have been useful
3. How to practice body scan
 - This practice involves focusing on the sensations of the body
 - It can be practiced sitting or lying down
 - It can be guided or done in silence
 - I will guide you through the practice today; there are guided body scans available online, or you can try guiding yourself
 - Close eyes, or cast gaze downward, whichever is more comfortable
 - Focus on the sensations of your breath wherever they are most noticeable
 - E.g., air moving in and out of your nose, chest rising, breath reaching your fingertips
 - Focus on the sensations of your body parts, as guided to
4. Try it for 3 minutes
 - Read Guided Body Scan Script (Appendix E)
5. Discussion of experience

- Ask students to share what they experienced while trying the practice
- Ask students if and where they think this practice would be useful
- 6. Encourage students to practice in their placement or lives in general
- Can change practices to better suit you
- Can ignore practices that do not resonate with you

Week 4: Mindful Eating

1. Mindfulness refresher
 - Ask students to explain the 3A's
2. Experiences with mindfulness
 - Ask students if they used mindfulness since the last seminar
 - Ask students if they thought of mindfulness since the last seminar
 - Ask students if they can think of an experience they had since the last seminar where mindfulness would have been useful
3. How to practice mindful eating
 - This practice involves focusing on the sensations of eating
 - Have students eat a piece of chocolate or a grape as they would normally
 - Then, have students take another piece of chocolate or grape but not eat it yet
4. Try it for 3 minutes
 - Feel the sensations of the chocolate or grape in your hand
 - Notice what the chocolate or grape looks like
 - Notice that the chocolate or grape smells like
 - Place the chocolate or grape in between your lips without chewing
 - Move the chocolate or grape around in your mouth without chewing
 - Slowly begin to chew, noticing the flavours and sensations of eating
5. Discussion of experience
 - Ask students to share what they experienced while trying the practice
 - Ask students if and where they think this practice would be useful
6. Encourage students to practice in their placement or lives in general
 - Can change practices to better suit you
 - Can ignore practices that do not resonate with you

Week 5: Loving-Kindness Meditation

1. Mindfulness refresher
 - Ask students to explain the 3A's
2. Experiences with mindfulness
 - Ask students if they used mindfulness since the last seminar
 - Ask students if they thought of mindfulness since the last seminar
 - Ask students if they can think of an experience they had since the last seminar where mindfulness would have been useful
3. How to practice loving-kindness meditation
 - This practice involves focusing on the experience of extending loving-kindness to yourself and others

- During this meditation, notice the feelings, thoughts, and physical sensations you experience
 - Close eyes, or cast gaze downward, whichever is more comfortable
 - Say ‘may you be happy and healthy’ silently in your head
 - Can alter the wording to better suit you
 - Direct this first towards yourself, then to someone you love, then to someone you are neutral to, then to someone you are feeling negatively about, then to all living beings
4. Try it for 3 minutes
 5. Discussion of experience
 - Ask students to share what they experienced while trying the practice
 - Ask students if and where they think this practice would be useful
 6. Encourage students to practice in their placement or lives in general
 - Can change practices to better suit you
 - Can ignore practices that do not resonate with you

Week 6: Tonglen Meditation

1. Mindfulness refresher
 - Ask students to explain the 3A’s
2. Experiences with mindfulness
 - Ask students if they used mindfulness since the last seminar
 - Ask students if they thought of mindfulness since the last seminar
 - Ask students if they can think of an experience they had since the last seminar where mindfulness would have been useful
3. How to practice Tonglen meditation
 - This practice involves focusing on the experiences that arise while considering suffering and the alleviation of suffering
 - During this meditation, notice the feelings, thoughts, and physical sensations you experience
 - Close eyes, or cast gaze downward, whichever is more comfortable
 - On each in-breath, focus on suffering
 - Yours, others’, and the world’s
 - On each out-breath, focus on the alleviation of suffering
 - Toward yourself, others, and the world
4. Try it for 3 minutes
5. Discussion of experience
 - Ask students to share what they experienced while trying the practice
 - Ask students if and where they think this practice would be useful
6. Encourage students to practice in their placement or lives in general
 - Can change practices to better suit you
 - Can ignore practices that do not resonate with you
7. Final Questions and Goodbye

Appendix C

Research Ethics Board Approval



RESEARCH ETHICS BOARDS

*Certification of Ethical Acceptability of Research
Involving Human Participants*

APPROVAL PERIOD: January 13, 2015
EXPIRY DATE: January 13, 2016
REB: G
REB NUMBER: 14NV025
TYPE OF REVIEW: Delegated Type 1
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Breen, Andrea (abreen@uoguelph.ca)
DEPARTMENT: Family Relations & Applied Nutrition
SPONSOR(S): N/A
TITLE OF PROJECT: Self-Care of Undergraduate Practicum Students

The members of the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board have examined the protocol which describes the participation of the human participants in the above-named research project and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement, 2nd Edition.

The REB requires that researchers:

- Adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and **approved** by the REB.
- Receive approval from the REB for any **modifications** before they can be implemented.
- Report any **change in the source of funding**.
- Report **unexpected events or incidental findings** to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants, and the continuation of the protocol.
- Are responsible for **ascertaining and complying with all applicable legal and regulatory requirements** with respect to consent and the protection of privacy of participants in the jurisdiction of the research project.

The Principal Investigator must:

- Ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of facilities or institutions involved in the research are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.
- Submit a **Status Report** to the REB upon completion of the project. If the research is a multi-year project, a status report must be submitted annually prior to the expiry date. Failure to submit an annual status report will lead to your study being suspended and potentially terminated.

The approval for this protocol terminates on the **EXPIRY DATE**, or the term of your appointment or employment at the University of Guelph whichever comes first.

Signature:

Date: January 13, 2015

L. Kuczynski
Chair, Research Ethic Board-General

Appendix D

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Preamble: I'm interested in finding out about your experiences of the practicum course. I'm especially interested in learning about the challenges students' face in practicum and the strategies they use to deal with these challenges.

1. Did you find aspects of your practicum experience stressful? What did you find stressful about your overall practicum experience, and how was it stressful? Your placement? Assignments? Seminars?
2. What did you do to maintain your well-being during the entire semester and practicum experience?
3. What does self-care mean to you?

The next questions are going to focus on the mindfulness component of our seminar. While answering the following questions, please keep in mind that I welcome, and even want to hear about your negative, neutral, and ambiguous experiences, thoughts, and feelings about the mindfulness-based practices in the practicum course. I'd like to learn from you, to use your opinions and ideas to improve the ways mindfulness-based practices can be incorporated into the FRHD practicum courses, or to understand better if they should be at all. I have a list of the mindfulness-based practices here if you'd like to refer to it.

4. How did you find the mindfulness-based practices within the practicum seminars? What was your experience of this component of the course?
5. Did you practice any of the mindfulness-based practices outside of seminar? If yes, where? When? How often? If you didn't use them can you tell me why not?
6. Did you use any of the mindfulness-based practices at your practicum placement? If yes, when? Why? How Often? If not why do you think that you didn't use them?
7. Did you find that any of the mindfulness-based practices specifically impacted your well-being? If yes, which ones? How? If not, can you tell me your thoughts on why not?
8. Do you plan on continuing to practice any of the mindfulness-based practices? If yes, which ones? When? Why? If not, why not?

I'd now like to ask you about the stressful experience in the reflection assignment you wrote during practicum. If they sent it beforehand: I have it here if you would like to refer to it.

9. Can you tell me about the stressful experience you wrote about in your reflection assignment, or another stressful experience that is more salient to you now, and what you did to maintain your well-being during and after it? Prompt: Did the stress of that experience carry into the rest of your day or week? What did you do to maintain your well-being then?
10. If they refer to their assignment: Can you point out and elaborate on anything that you wrote in the assignment that you feel differently about now?
11. Is there anything else in the assignment or about the stressful experience that you would like to point out or tell me about?

I would now like to turn your attention away from the practicum experience and reflection assignment to me as the interviewer. Obviously I was at the seminars where mindfulness-based practices were taught because I was teaching them and am now the one asking you about your experience. I want to reiterate that I appreciate hearing any and all perspectives.

12. I know that everyone adjusts how they act and what they say for different audiences. How do you think your responses to the interview questions would be different if I were not the interviewer? Prompt: Is there anything you think you would be more willing to talk about honestly with someone else who was not present in your seminars? What about less honestly?
13. What prompted you to participate in this research?
14. Is there anything else about the mindfulness-based practices, the practicum seminar, or your experience that you would like to share with me?

Appendix E

Guided Body Scan Script

- Allow your eyes to close gently if this is comfortable. Let your arms lie alongside your body. Allow your feet to fall away from each other.
 - Slowly bring your attention to the fact that you are breathing. Simply experiencing the air moving in and out of your body.
 - Feel the sensations of the breath coming into your body and the abdomen expands gently. And as the breath leaves the body and the belly deflates. Let your body become heavy on each out breath, sinking into the floor or your chair.
 - Now, when you feel ready, shift the focus of your attention to your feet. Become aware of whatever the feelings are in this region of your body. There may be sensations of tingling, itching, or warmth. If you find you are registering a blank, just experience not feeling. Experience your feet, as they are, breathing with these sensations
 - When you're ready, let go of the experience of the sensations of your feet and scan your awareness up to your legs. The shins in front, calf muscles in the back, the knees, and the thighs and hips. Experiencing this region as it is, not trying to make it be any different. Just accepting the feelings that you feel and breathing with them.
 - And when you're ready, relax and sink deeper into your chair or the floor, letting go of your legs and moving your attention up to your torso. Your belly, chest, rib cage, and back. Experience whatever sensations are here, this region as it is. Letting the breath move into every region. Let tension and tightness, any holding on, flow out with the out breath. Breathe with the sensations of this region. Feel your back and belly expanding with each breath.
 - And allowing your attention to shift to your arms. Becoming aware of the sensations in the tips of your fingers, along your palms and the backs of your hands, and up to your wrists. Letting the field of your awareness expand to include your forearms, elbows, upper arms, and shoulders. Aware of any and all sensations, regardless of discomfort. Just experiencing your body as it.
 - And now let the focus of your attention move on to your neck. The back of the neck, the spine, and the throat. Breathing in down into the neck intentionally. And on the out breath letting it relax. And becoming aware of your face, a region that often stores accumulated tension. Focus on the jaw, lips, cheeks, nose, eyes, and forehead. Aware of any sensations. Breathing with these regions.
 - Now, expand your awareness to the entirety of your body. Let it be still, neutral, and relaxed. Feel your breath move throughout the entire length of your body, from the top of your head out through the tips of your toes. Experiencing your entire body breathing.
 - When you are ready, slowly and gently open your eyes.
- Derived from Kabat Zinn, J. (2002). On *Guided Mindfulness Meditation Series 1*. Louisville, CO: Sounds True