

Mindfulness across time and space - Different theoretical approaches and current research trends

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One of the most emerging trends in psychology is referred to the concept of mindfulness. We can identify two main definitions for this concept.

One definition has been developed from experimental research on mindlessness, by Ellen Langer. According to this approach, mindfulness can be defined as “a process of actively making new distinctions about objects in one’s awareness, a process that cultivates sensitivity to subtle variations in context and perspective about the observed subject, rather than relying on entrenched categorizations from the past”.

The other definition has been provided by Jon Kabat-Zinn, based on the use of Buddhist meditative practices in behavioral medicine. This approach defines mindfulness as remembering to pay attention in a certain way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). This approach uses meditation to improve the mindfulness level. In the 1979, Kabat-Zinn developed a specific protocol, the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR).

More than three decades of research about mindfulness, from both these approaches, indicates that being mindful has a variety of positive effects on one’s health, improving psychological and physical well-being. Previous studies report that the increasing of mindfulness leads to a better quality of life, both in the general population and in clinical samples.

What are the new trends in mindfulness research? Can we try to foresee new mindfulness developments? What will be the future influences that mindfulness research will provide on the general population? Which new insight can it provides in the fields of clinical and social psychology? The presentation will try to answer to these questions, providing an historical framework and an overview of possible future trends.

Biography

Francesco Pagnini has completed his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at the age of 27 years from the University of Bergamo and a period of Postdoc at the Harvard University. Currently he is Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Clinical Psychology at the Catholic University of Milan. He is the Principal Investigator of the project “Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for people with ALS”. He has published more than 30 papers in reputed journals and is Associate Editor for the journals “Frontiers in Psychology for Clinical Settings” and “BMC Psychology”.

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