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Oral report

Title: What factors support improvements in eating behaviour post-MBS? Mechanisms of change as identified by participants in a mindful eating group.

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Aim: This mixed-methods study examined outcomes and mechanisms of change from an 8-week mindful eating group to improve eating behaviour in post-MBS patients. In addition to evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention, the study sought to identify mechanisms of change that are unique to mindfulness-based interventions as well as those that can be promoted by other psychosocial modalities.

Methods: Participants were 29 adults who had undergone MBS and sought to improve problematic eating habits that are related to weight regain such as overeating and emotional eating. They participated in one of four mindful eating groups delivered over eight weekly sessions. Each group contained eight to fifteen members. To evaluate outcomes, participants completed measures of binge eating, interoceptive awareness, depression, mindfulness and self-compassion before the first session and after the last session. To identify mechanisms of change, participants completed the Helpful Aspects of Therapy (HAT) form at the end of each session. The HAT form asks participants to identify and describe group activities they found to be particularly helpful as well as activities they found unhelpful.

Results: Significant improvements were found in binge eating, mindfulness, and interoceptive awareness. Participants reported that helpful events were psychoeducation, mindful eating practices, other types of mindfulness practices, group discussion, increased self-awareness and self-compassion, and increased confidence in making food choices. Hindering events were off-topic discussions, sleepiness and physical pain that prevented full participation.

Discussion: Mindful eating was found to be an effective intervention for addressing problematic eating habits post-MBS. Mechanisms of change identified through thematic analysis of participants' HAT forms include those that are unique to mindfulness, whereas others that can be found across behavioural interventions. These findings have important implications for clinicians looking to provide effective support to post-MBS patients.