

Abstract: Mette Elmose

MYmind-DK: Mindfulness for children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorder

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Background: Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is often associated with high levels of distress for the person and families and professionals throughout the lifespan. Mindfulness training has been shown to reduce anxiety, depression and stress and improve attention. However, only few studies have investigated the effects of mindfulness for adolescents with ASD and though the results are promising more research is needed.

Purpose: The main objective of the study is to investigate the feasibility and effects of a 9-week mindfulness training with parallel parent training for children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorder. The primary outcome measure is psychological distress. Secondary outcome measures are child and adolescent quality of life, rumination, social responsiveness, mindfulness, metacognition and behavioural regulation and parental quality of life, stress, parenting and mindfulness. It is hypothesized that the intervention will result in reductions in psychological distress and rumination, and improvements in social responsiveness, mindfulness, quality of life, metacognition and behavioural regulation. A further reduction in parental stress as well as improvement in parenting, quality of life and mindfulness is expected.

Method: A non-experimental pre-post design with follow-up measurements will be used, with a within group waitlist condition to control for time effects. 25 adolescents between the age of 12 and 23 years, with a confirmed diagnosis of ASD, an estimated IQ of 80 or higher and their parent(s) will be included in the intervention. The mindfulness training follows the MYmind protocol for mindfulness training for children and adolescents with ASD. Susan Bögels and Esther DeBruin both from UvA have developed the protocol. The intervention involves 9 weekly 90 minutes group sessions, with children or adolescents in 1 group and their parent(s) in a parallel group. Before starting the training, participants are first placed on a waitlist, in order to be able to control for time effects. Measurement occasions are at waitlist (T0), pretraining (T1) and at posttraining (T2). At 9 weeks (T3) and 6 months (T4) after posttraining, follow-up measurements are planned in order to determine whether training effects are long-lasting. Further weekly registrations on individual goals are collected.

Status: TrygFonden and Aarhus commune fund the project. The first “group” was initiated end April and recruitment for 5 more groups is currently running. The groups will be run in Aarhus and Copenhagen by

practitioners trained by in collaboration with Langagerskolen, Center for Specialpædagogisk Børnetilbud og Center for mindfulness til børn.