Insight Dialogue: Investigation of a Relational Meditation Practice

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Abstract
Contemporary psychology has shown a strong and growing interest in Buddhist psychological (BP) theory and practice, which has informed numerous clinical interventions, influenced psychotherapeutic approach, and increasingly been the subject of empirical investigation (Goyal et al., 2014, Kend, Smoski, & Robins, 2011, Neff & Germer, 2012). This widespread adoption and adaptation of BP concepts, including mindfulness, self-compassion, and compassion, has primarily focused on the development of individual skills and internal change. However, despite the critical role relationship plays in human development, in the experience of distress, and in healing, the development of these skills and qualities in an explicitly relational context has not been investigated. Insight Dialogue (ID) is a meditation practice that brings into relationship BP concepts and practices typically constrained to individual silent practice. The purpose of the current study is: 1) to assess if participation in a ID meditation retreat results in the development of the skills and qualities of mindfulness, self-compassion, compassion, and well-being; 2) to examine the relationships between these variables; and 3) to provide an increased understanding of how the relational context affected the cultivation of these concepts. The sample consisted of men and women (N=100; Mean age = 55) who were recruited from five ID retreats conducted across North America. Data were collected immediately before (T1) and after (T2) the ID retreat. Repeated measures analyses were conducted to assess for main effects. A simple moderation analyses and a path analysis were used to test for indirect effects and to assess the utility of the hypothesized models. Several hypotheses were supported, including significant increases in mindfulness, self-compassion, and well-being. Additionally, after completion of an ID retreat, self-compassion was found to significantly moderate the relationship between mindfulness and well-being (95% [CI 0.239, 0.474]). The implications, limitations of these results and the current study, as well as directions for future research are discussed.

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