

# Effectiveness of MBCT on Decreased Anxiety and Depression among Divorced Women Living in Tehran, Iran

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**ABSTRACT: Objective:** the purpose of the present study was to evaluate effectiveness of MBCT on decreased anxiety and depression among divorced women living in Tehran, Iran. **Method:** the present study used an experimental method by pre- and post-test; therefore, 20 subjects were selected by convenient sampling and placed randomly in two groups (experiment and control). Both groups completed Beck depression and anxiety questionnaire during the pretreatment phase as well as the last session. MBCT was performed on the experiment group during eight sessions. Data was evaluated using independent t-test. **Results:** results showed that MBCT significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) influenced on decreased signs of depression and anxiety. **Conclusion:** findings showed that MBCT influenced on decreased depression and anxiety among divorced women.

**Keywords:** MBCT, depression, anxiety, divorced women

## INTRODUCTION

Epidemiologic data of different countries suggest the varied prevalence of depression in different societies. Studies report the prevalence of clinical depression in Iran more than other countries. In addition, the risk of depression is higher for women than in men (kaviani, 2002). Data from epidemiologic studies reported depression disorder as the most prevalent psychological disorder (Segal, Teasdale & Williams, 2002). While, this disorder is often chronic and recursive and depression symptoms may recur 5-7 times during lifetime. The World Health Organization (WHO) predicts that depression will be the second most common disease worldwide by 2020. During recent years, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) is considered as one of the known methods focusing on prevention of recurrence in depression. Twentieth century is called as the era of anxiety; on the other hand, prevalence of anxiety in Iranian society is the same as depression (kaviani, 2002). Depression is highly associated with anxiety. Approximately 60 percent of those who are being treated for anxiety disorders meet diagnostic criteria for major depression (T-A Browne, 2002). Patients with anxiety and depression have more functional impairment; they often are in lower social status and have weaker respond. Moreover, divorce is the most stressful loss causing emotional disturbance and behavioral problems; meanwhile, women are more vulnerable the consequences of divorce than men. Divorce disturbs mental and emotional imbalances of family. Divorce is considered as a strong stress; therefore, women who are characterized with emotional delicacy are more likely to experience psychological disorders (Hafarian, 2007). Several studies showed that behaviors such as depression, anxiety and life stress are symptoms mostly experienced by women. On the other hand, divorce events raise similar behavioral responses. Negative consequences of divorce include immune deficiency, mood disorders, anxiety, change of lifestyle and self-concept, changes in social relationships and reduced social support (Garner, 2008). Although the negative consequences of divorce affect both spouses, undoubtedly women are more vulnerable to divorce than men. Because of the interaction between mother and child, on the other hand, maternal depression causes numerous cognitive and behavioral disorders in children (Hofman, 2006).

Using the prevailing mentality metaphor borrowed from Robert Ornstein, Teasdale (1997) believes that humans do not have a single mind; instead, they have several minds which may separately activate for a moment and process information. In this case, information of that mind is represented in information processing system; as a result, mood, behavior and cognition are influenced by the information contained in that mind. In mood disorders, one adheres to one of these minds (depressor mind). Interaction between cognition and emotion plays a major role in such mind. Moreover, the goal of cognitive-behavioral therapies is to help clients avoid trapping in depressor minds. MBCT is a new promising approach for cognitive-behavioral treatment. Mindfulness training requires metacognitive learning and new behavioral strategies to focus on attention, to avoid spiral of negative moods and thinking interaction, to block tendency to disturbing responses and to develop new approach to unpleasant thoughts and emotions. Metacognitive awareness emphasizes that desires, negative thoughts, and daunting feelings are transitory cognitive events which convert to concrete and lasting events in minds. MBCT is a short-term, structured 8-session intervention stemmed in Teasdale's different activity and assumption and interactive cognitive subsystem (ICS) model.

Various studies recommend development and increase of mindfulness; because previous studies showed that mindfulness training had beneficial results. Kabat Zinn et al, (1992) showed that a mindfulness-based stress reduction program could reduce psychological symptoms (Kabat Zinn, 1992) and pain (Kabat Zinn et al, 1985). Following a review of previous studies on treatment of dysthymic, depression and anxiety by MBCT approach, results of the present study showed that MBCT considerably reduced dysthymic, depression and anxiety among divorced women.

### **Hypotheses**

1. MBCT significantly influences on decreased level of depression among divorced women.
2. MBCT significantly influences on decreased level of anxiety among divorced women.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Participants and Sample**

Participants of the present study included divorced women responsible for the family who were introduced by Hor Social Welfare centre (eastern Tehran) and referred to the Social Welfare within a month. Their average age was 45-50. The sample was randomly selected among 100 participants; then, 20 women with diagnosis of depression and anxiety were selected and divided randomly in two experiment and control groups.

### **Methods**

MBCT was administered on experiment group by the researcher for 8 sessions during 60 days, once a week for two hours. The treatment was conducted in groups with 10 participants; while control group remained without treatment sessions. Then, after 24 hours of the last session, Beck depression and anxiety inventories were redistributed among both control and experiment groups. Then, the difference between the two tests was compared with each other and the control group.

Content of MBCT sessions included:

1. Identification of automatic guidance
2. Greater awareness of momentarily sensations, thoughts, and physical emotions by physical review practice and being in the present moment
3. Mindfulness or Awareness of breathing: Consciousness, a 40-minute sitting meditation, breathing and body and physical sensations
4. Training participants to respond to unpleasant thoughts and feelings by learning skills
5. Training that thoughts are not facts. Thoughts are just thoughts
6. Learning and practicing various meditations
7. Learning regular and slow deep breathing
8. Learning the best way to take care of ourselves: list of fun and tricky activities, list of the signs and symptoms of recurrence, action plan for dealing with recurrence, say goodbye training program
9. Applying what has been learned to deal with negative mood in the future

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The present study used t-test to compare experiment and control groups. First, Table 1 shows mean and standard deviation of scores in both pre- and post-test for each group.

Table 1. mean and standard deviation of scores in both pre- and post-test for each group

		MBCT		Control	
		M	SD	M	SD
Pre-test	Depression	23.10	5.97	20.10	5.65
	Anxiety	26.60	11.99	22.20	4.78
Post-test	Depression	19.20	2.53	22.80	4.73
	Anxiety	17.70	3.77	21.30	4.67

**Hypothesis 1:** MBCT significantly influences on decreased level of depression among divorced women. Comparison of means show that MBCT significantly influences on decreased level of depression among subjects. This finding supports the hypothesis 1.

Table 2. results of t-test to compare mean scores of depression post-test for experiment and control groups

Group	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean difference	Df	T	Sig.
MBCT	19.20	2.53	3.6	18	2.12	0.048
Control	22.80	4.73				

**Hypothesis 2:** MBCT significantly influences on decreased level of anxiety among divorced women. Result from comparison of mean anxiety for both groups in post-test shows a significant difference between two groups ( $p < 0.50$ ). Results show that MBCT significantly influences on decreased level of anxiety among subjects. This finding rejects null hypothesis and supports the second hypothesis.

Table 3. Results of t-test to compare scores of anxiety for both groups

Group	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean difference	Df	T	Sig.
MBCT	15.70	3.77	5.6	18	2.95	0.009
Control	21.30	4.66				

### Discussion and Conclusion

According to the hypothesis 1, MBCT significantly influences on decreased level of depression among divorced women. Results from t-test showed that pre-test mean scores of experiment group was almost close to control group; in the next steps, however, post-test scores of experiment subjects significantly reduced. Results of the test showed a significant difference between pre- and post-test scores of depression among subjects in  $\alpha = 0.05$ . In the other words, pre-test level of depression significantly decreased compared to post-test level among experiment group. Result of the present study is consistent with Hall et al, (2003). Mindfulness training considerably decreased depression and anxiety. According to Teasdale, Williams and Segal, (2000), learned skills of attention control in mindfulness meditation can be helpful in preventing recurrence of major depression. According to their information processing theory, people who experienced major depression periods are vulnerable to recurrence of depression when faced with the dysphonic states. Because these states can reactivate depressor thinking patterns during previous period(s). Results of the preset study are consistent with Schulman, (2004) who treated depressed people using mindfulness; he finally could decrease depression by 70%. Post-test level of depression and anxiety significantly decreased compared to pre-test level among experiment group.

According to the hypothesis 1, MBCT significantly influences on decreased level of anxiety among divorced women. Mindfulness training significantly decreased post-test scores of anxiety. Results of the test showed a significant difference between pre- and post-test scores of anxiety among subjects in  $\alpha = 0.05$ . These results are consistent with Schulman, (2004) who found that groups participating in the workshop experience significantly less anxiety disorder periods compared to control group.

Mindfulness and its training moderate emotions without judgment and increase awareness of psychological and physical feelings and help clearly seeing and accepting the emotions and physical phenomena just as the way they occur (Brown and Ryan, 2003). Therefore, depression may play an important role in moderating scores for anxiety and dysfunctional attitudes. In this respect that mindfulness training increases attention and awareness of physical and mental feelings and leads to trust in life, a sense of deep love to others and acceptance of real-life events, it can make a person to know his abilities.

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