Mindfulness-Based Childbirth and Parenting (MBCP): Transforming Intergenerational Patterns of Suffering?

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Stepping into the Stream
Mindfulness-Based Childbirth and Parenting (MBCP)
MBCP: Four Intentions

- Mindfulness life skills for stress during pregnancy -- and beyond
- Mindfulness skills for working with pain and fear during childbirth
- Mindfulness skills for parenting with wisdom and compassion from the moments of birth
- Skills for interrupting intergenerational patterns of suffering
Course Format

- 9 week course x 3 hours
- Daily home practice: 30 min/day
  6 days/week
- Silent daylong retreat
- Reunion after birth
Mindfulness Practices

- Body Scan
- Sitting Meditation
- Yoga
- Walking Meditation
- Loving-kindness Practice
- Mindfulness in daily life
Practices/Adaptations for Pregnancy and Childbirth

- Being with Baby
- Physiology of Labor
- Mindful Pain Practices
- Causes and Conditions
- Mindful Speaking and Listening Inquiry
- Newborn needs, breastfeeding and mindfulness
- Thread of mindful parenting throughout MBCP
- Creation of community
Looking Upstream
How the Nine Months Before Birth Shape the Rest of Our Lives

Origins

Anne Murphy Paul

How the first nine months shape the rest of your life

The Facebook Movie: The secret history of social networking

Environment Specialist: The oceans — why 20% of our planet is in danger
Stress during Pregnancy
Mother and Baby

I'm stressed!
My genome is being methylated!
I'm anxious!
Now my genes are being methylated!

where does it end?

Photo credit: specialneedsdigest.com
Prenatal Stress:  
A Contributing Factor

- Low birth rate
- Preterm birth
- Postpartum depression
- Quality of mother-infant attachment
- Postpartum increases in marital conflict
- Child abuse/neglect
- *Ghosts from the Nursery*
Long-term Child Physical Health and Mental Health

- Cardiovascular disease
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Prenatal Programming of the Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal Axis
Stress and Long-term Mental Health of Child

“14 independent prospective studies have shown a link between antenatal maternal anxiety/stress and cognitive, behavioral, and emotional problems in the child. The magnitude of the long-term effects of antenatal maternal anxiety/stress on the child is substantial. Programs to reduce maternal stress in pregnancy are therefore warranted.”

Van den Bergh et al., 2005
MBCP Pilot Observational Study

- Duncan and Bardacke, 
  *Journal of Child & Family Studies*
Sample Characteristics
\((n = 27 \text{ pregnant women})\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age in years: (M(SD))</td>
<td>34.6 (4.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate degree</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total household income above area median</td>
<td>81.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-time parent</td>
<td>92.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced a major stressful life event during pregnancy</td>
<td>70.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty conceiving (&quot;yes&quot; or &quot;somewhat&quot;)</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical problems during pregnancy (e.g., bleeding, hypertension, gestational diabetes)</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some experience with meditation or yoga</td>
<td>92.6%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
MBCP Pilot Study
Pre-Post Course Improvements
($p < .05$)

Pregnancy-related anxiety ($d = -.81$)
Depressive mood ($d = -.38$)

Mindfulness ($d = .74$)
Positive affect ($d = .40, .41$)

(Duncan & Bardacke, 2010)
Mindfulness Meditation as a Form of Coping

Proportion of sample using meditation to cope with a stressful aspect of pregnancy

Pre-MBCP: 37%
Post-MBCP: 85%
Did you use what you learned in the program to help you during your birth experience?
“Absolutely! I was on pitocin and went from 3cm to 10cm in 1 hour and 15 minutes. During that time period I just kept staying in the moment and affirming that as long as I could be in this moment, right now, that I could do this. It worked!”
“Absolutely! My husband helped me focus on my breath by saying, “Come back to your breath” at times when the labor got intense. I also remembered that each contraction was getting me closer to delivery and that it was part of a cycle. There would be a time of joy between contractions and I was able to experience that.”
Was anything you learned helpful for managing emotional states, such as fear, during labor, delivery, or postpartum?
“Yes, I am definitely aware of trying to be in the moment and that each moment, good or bad, will pass. When I got really worried about the birth, I would try to just breathe to stop my mind from going to all sorts of bad places. And in postpartum, I have tried to use the practice to deal with stressful situations whether it be a crying baby or just accepting my new role as a mother who doesn’t have much time for herself. Being mindful is always at the back of my mind now, no matter what I am doing, even if it isn’t a formal practice”
Using Mindfulness Skills Post-Birth

“I frequently think about being mindful when I am with my baby—when I’m holding him, nursing, or walking around soothing him. During these times, I take in the experience at that moment and think about the smells, sounds, and sensations of being a new mother...”
Pilot Study Limitations

• No comparison group
• Selection effects
• Expectancy effects
• Self-report data
• Demographically homogenous sample
  – High income, education, access to CAM
MBCP: Impacting Known Risk Factors for Postpartum Depression?

- Previous episode of MDD
- MDD during pregnancy
- Anxiety during pregnancy
- Previous premenstrual dysphoria
- Family history of depression and bipolar disorder
- Stressful life events during pregnancy (or soon after the birth)
- Poor social support
- Marital conflict
- Demographics: low income, immigrant status, young age

NIMH; Pearlstein et al. 2009 AJOG
The Mind in Labor:
Working with Pain in Childbirth
Stress from Fear of Childbirth

- Lower pain tolerance (Terhi Saisto, Kaaja, Ylikorkala, & Halmesmäki, 2001)

- Greater use of pain medication in labor (Alehagen, Wijma, & Wijma, 2001)

- Longer labor (Adams, Eberhard-Gran, & Eskild, 2012)

- Worse postpartum adjustment (PPD: Lobel & DeLuca, 2007; Raisanen et al., 2013; PTSD: Czarnocka & Slade, 2000)
PEARLS (Prenatal Education About Reducing Labor Stress) Study

- Small randomized controlled trial (RCT) \((N = 30)\)
- First-time mothers planning hospital birth
- English-language only
- Community recruitment: "Are you worried about pain in childbirth?"
- Comparison of:
  - Mind in Labor (MIL) weekend workshop version of MBCP vs. regular childbirth education
- Intention to use epidural at baseline
- 4 self-report questionnaires + medical record review
Childbirth Self-Efficacy Inventory

$F_{\text{Time} \times \text{Condition}} = 4.59, \ p = .04$
Pain Catastrophizing Scale

$F = 1.18$, $p = .29$

Duncan, Cohn, Cook, Chao, Riccobono, Hecht, & Bardacke, 2015-in prep.
Less systemic opioid use in labor?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crosstabulation of narcotic analgesia use by study condition</th>
<th>Labor pain management: Use of narcotic analgesia</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study condition</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIL</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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(trend: Fisher’s exact test $p = .12$)

Duncan, Cohn, Cook, Chao, Riccobono, Hecht, & Bardacke, 2015-in prep.
Depression Symptoms

Post-course difference between groups ($F = 4.30, p = .05$)

Difference in group trajectories ($b = -3.49, t = 2.08, p = .04$)

Duncan, Cohn, Cook, Chao, Riccobono, Hecht, & Bardacke, 2015-in prep.
Mindfulness training in the perinatal period increases flexibility in means of parent-child attunement and parental self-regulation

- Qualitative interviews
- 10 mothers 1.5 to 3 years post (MBCP)
- How mindfulness was used post-birth for parenting in general, and in emotion and attention regulation specifically
- How mindfulness training in the perinatal period might affect intergenerational attachment patterns.

Results: participants’ continued use of both formal and informal mindfulness practices is multi-dimensionally increasing their capacity to cope with stress and attune to their child.

C. Shaddix, L.G. Duncan, J.G. Cook, & N. Bardacke

Article in preparation
Centering Pregnancy with Mindfulness Skills

(NIH/NCCAM K01 AT005270)
Centering Pregnancy with Mindfulness Skills

- Mindfulness thread/lens for existing content
- Mindfulness and pain coping skills
- Mindful parenting
- Formal practices:
  - Body Scan, Mindful Movement Yoga, Centering Breathing Space, Lovingkindness
For Students: Mindfulness Skills for Midwifery Practice
The Long View

- Training Institute: UW Madison School of Human Ecology
- 2nd trimester program
- Post MBCP Mindful Parenting
- Research: biomarkers/Epigenetics
- Long-term follow-up
MBCP Instructor Trainings

- MBCP Trainings
  - Hong Kong, Feb 2015
  - France, March 2015
  - CMRP, Wales, July 2015
  - Australia, October 2015

- Online MBCP Teacher Training
  - April 2015
Start where you are
Use what you have
Do what you can
With Gratitude

- Jon and Myla Kabat-Zinn, Saki Santorelli, Ferris Urbanowski, Bob Stahl and community of mindfulness teachers worldwide

- Larissa Duncan, Joe Cook, Susan Folkman, Kevin Barrows, Judy Cuneo UCSF Osher Center

- Mark Williams, Maret Dymond, Sian Warriner, Oxford Mindfulness Centre (OMC), U of Oxford, UK • Esther de Bruin

- Eluned Gold, Becca Crane, CMRP, Bangor U

- Sharon Rising, Centering Healthcare Institute

- Dedicated MBCP researchers: Susan Bogels, Irena Veringa, Katrina Tsang

- Dedicated MBCP instructors in US and internationally

- MBCP parents and their babies
The Long View