The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

**Thesis**

**The Effects of Mindfulness meditation on listening**

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**"מדיטציה זו דרך להיות, דרך לחיות, דרך להקשיב,**

**דרך ללכת בשביל החיים**

**ולהיות בהרמוניה עם דברים כמו שהם."**

**Kabat-Zinn (1990)**

**"Meditation is a way of being, a way of living, a way of listening,**

**A way of walking in the path of life,**

**and being in harmony with things the way they are"**

**Kabat-Zinn (1990)**

**Abstract**

This research examined the effects of mindfulness meditation on listening. Mindfulness is paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally. These components (being nonjudgmental and awareness) are essential for effective listening. Thus, the hypothesis of this study suggests that mindfulness meditation increases (a) awareness, (b) reduces being judgmental, and consequently increases (c) effective listening as perceived by speakers. I tested this hypothesis experimentally. I asked participants, *N* = 91, to speak for 12 minutes about their experience of being a student in the college they attend. I randomly assigned participants into two listening conditions: a mindful listener (one of 7 experienced meditators) or a regular listener (a student). At the first stage of the experiment, I ask the listeners to fill out a computerized questionnaires measuring trait mindfulness. Next, I asked only the experienced meditators to practice meditation for 10 minutes. Before listening, all listeners filled out a measure of state mindfulness. After that, listeners listened to the participants as they usually listen. After the conversation, I asked participants to fill out computerized questionnaires including measures of experienced listening. The results supported my hypotheses. Specifically, listeners trained in mindfulness were found as better listeners relative to the untrained listeners. Thus, mindfulness of the listener predicted the experience of listening among speakers. The experience of listening depends on the state mindfulness of the listener, which in turn stems from the trait mindfulness of the listeners. It appears that the speaker responds not to the trait mindfulness, but to the state mindfulness. Furthermore, in the group of listeners untrained in mindfulness, the self-reported mindfulness of the listener was positively correlated with the experienced listening reported by the speakers. Both experimental and correlational data corroborated the hypothesis.

Given the powerful and positive consequences of listening, training in mindfulness may improve listening in general. People planning to listen may benefit from practicing mindfulness mediation just before listening.

Curiously, theories regarding both mindfulness and effective listening ascribe a fundamental role to similar components: self-awareness, self-understanding, self-and nonjudgmental acceptance, openness to experiences, and more. Yet, these theories and their associated research are unrelated industries. Therefore, my goal in this thesis is to link mindfulness research with effective listening research, and to test whether mindfulness improves listening effectiveness via the same mechanism espoused in listening theories. To develop my hypotheses, I first briefly review theories regarding mindfulness meditation, then theories regarding effective listening, and finally I will connect the two. Specifically, I will argue that the processes generated by mindfulness are the very same processes theorized to enhance the quality of listening to another person.

**Mindfulness**

When people consciously attend to their moment-to-moment experience in the present, they experience increased-psychological flexibility, and are in a state known as mindfulness (e.g., Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Mindfulness, that is the attention to the immediate internal and external experience in the present moment, is characterized by being nonjudgmental (Yovel, 2011). Being nonjudgmental entails observing one’s thoughts and emotions without identifying with them or automatically reacting to them (Bishop et al., 2004). This observation process enables distancing between thoughts and emotions on one hand, with reactions on the other hand. That is, mindfulness allows a more reflective and less reflexive reaction (Bishop et al., 2004), and acceptance of self, others, and situations (Yovel, 2011). Another definition of mindfulness is Robins’s (2002, p. 55): "Nonjudgmental awareness of one’s experience as it unfolds moment by moment.” Although the definitions of mindfulness vary, the qualities such as nonjudgmental acceptance, observation, awareness and attention to the present moment are still similar.

Mindfulness theory finds a few basic components defining the mindfulness construct. Bishop et al. (2004) suggested a model that is based on two components. The first component is awareness to the experience in the present moment. After developing awareness, the second component is attitude to those experiences, which includes acceptance, openness and curiosity to those experiences. Both awareness and attitude are part of another model of mindfulness presented by Shapiro et al. (2006). This model is based on Kabat-Zinn’s (1994, p.4) definition of mindfulness: "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally." This definition embodies three axioms of mindfulness. The three axioms are attention ("paying attention"), intention ("on purpose") and attitude ("in a particular way"). The first component–intention–is the purpose of practicing meditation. The purpose is evolving through practice (Friedman, 2005). The purpose could be self-exploration, self-regulation or self-liberation (Shapiro et al., 2006). The second component–attention–is awareness and observation of thoughts and actions, experiences internal and external in the present moment (present-moment awareness, Shapiro et al., 2006). The third component is attitude–the qualities one brings to attention and awareness in meditation. The attitude in which the practitioner attends the internal and external experiences, are observing without evaluation or interpretation, practicing non-judgmental acceptance, and showing interest, openness, and curiosity (Shapiro et al., 2006). Attention, intention and attitude are not separate processes, rather, they are interwoven aspects of a single cyclic process and occur simultaneously. Those three fundamental components of mindfulness accounts for the transformations that occur in mindfulness practice, which leads to a significant shift in perspective–"Reperceiving" (meta-mechanism of change). Reperceiving is the ability to dis-identify with thoughts and view the moment-to-moment experience with greater clarity and objectivity (nonjudgmentally). Rather than identifying and being immersed in the drama of one's narrative, the practitioner is able to stand back and simply witness it. Reperceiving in meditation, intentionally focusing nonjudgmental attention on the contents of consciousness (thoughts), enables the mindfulness practitioner to observe the thoughts from a meta-perspective and to strengthen "the observing self" (Shapiro et al., 2006). Through this change in perspective, identity begins to shift from the contents of awareness to awareness itself. Hayes et al. (1996) described this as a shift from "Self as a content" (that which can be witnessed or observed as an object in consciousness) to "Self as a context" (that which is observing or witnessing – consciousness itself). This change affects self-regulation of behaviors and emotions, self-management, cognitive, emotional and behavioral flexibility. This means, that through consciously (intention) bringing awareness (attention) and acceptance (attitude) to experience in the present moment, the practitioner will be better able to use a wider, more adaptive range of coping skills and flexible responding to the environment (Shapiro et al., 2006).

Another factor of mindfulness is the presence of the mind (Brown et al., 2007). The presence of the mind can be reached through practicing meditation (Ergas, 2013). While meditating, the practitioner sits calmly and focuses attentively on the body or the breath. If the attention wanders away (to thoughts), the practitioner should notice that, let go of the thoughts, and bring the attention back to the breathing (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Moving the attention from the thoughts to the breathing should be done with nonjudgmental acceptance and full awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

The effects of being non-judgmental, acceptance, awareness, and other aspects of mindfulness have received some empirical evidence (Shapiro et al., 2006; Brown et al., 2007; Brown and Ryan, 2003; Bishop et al., 2004). Moreover, research have also probed empirically the components of mindfulness. Holzel et al. (2011) proposed four components of mindfulness meditation: (1) regulation and focusing the attention; (2) body awareness – focusing on breathing or sensations that lead to body awareness, empathy, and self-compassion; (3) emotion regulation, which includes two parts: no judgment to sensations and thoughts and the establishment of new knowledge following the extinction of prior knowledge that affect the emotion regulation; (4) changing perceptions about the self – comprehension that the self will change with time.

Among the researchers of mindfulness, Baer et al. (2006) suggested five mechanisms for the mindfulness meditation. Those mechanisms were found from examining five measures of mindfulness (Appendix A). From a factor-analysis test of the five questionnaires, Baer and colleagues developed the Five Facets Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ). The mechanism components of the FFMQ are: (1) Describing – Description and conceptualization of an internal or external event. This conceptualization helps to understand the temporariness of the event and the lack of judgment towards it, α = .91; (2) Acting with awareness–Awareness of current activities (as opposed to automatic behavior), α = .87; (3) Nonjudging of inner experience–no judging towards thoughts and emotions, α = .87; (4) Nonreactivity to inner experience–no reaction to passing thoughts, α = .75; and (5) Observing–attention to external and internal experiences such as feelings, emotions, sounds, or smells, α = .83. The last factor—observing—has high correlation with experienced meditators, as opposed to those without experience in meditation (Baer et al., 2008). The FFMQ measures mindfulness for experienced and inexperienced meditators and it predicts outcomes such as- self-understanding, self-awareness, being nonjudgmental, etc.

Mindfulness is trainable through the practice of mindfulness-meditation techniques (Yovel, 2011). Practicing mindfulness meditation increases nonjudgmental acceptance of self and others, acceptance of experiences, self-awareness, positive change in self-perception, understanding the complexity of feelings (Shapiro et al., 2006), self-compassion (Hollis-Walker & Colosimo, 2010 ), openness towards and closeness with friends and family (Bishop et al., 2004), emotion regulation, interpersonal skills and focusing and observing the present moment (Bishop et al., 2004). The awareness to the present moment can rise as long as one practices meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

Many of these consequences of mindfulness, as being nonjudgmental are required of a good listener. Therefore, next I review the requirements from a good listener.

**Listening**

The construct of listening appears to be fuzzy, multi-dimensional, and hard to define (Bodie, 2012; Irving & Dickson, 2006), yet it appears to include attention, comprehension, and relations (Bodie, 2012). Here, I am interested in listening to another person in a relationship such as in a therapeutic session, between friends, supervisor-employee dyads, service provider and a client, parent and child, etc. Note that in this relationship context, attention and comprehension are crucial but not sufficient components of listening. Moreover, the relationship aspect of listening is by itself complex, and it includes aspects such as acceptance of speaker, being non-judgmental and empathic towards the speaker (Rogers & Roethlisberger, 1991/1952). Listening which is non-judgmental and empathic, enables speakers to feel safe, protected, and accepted (Rogers, 1980)

In a classic paper about barriers to communication, Rogers and Roethlisberger suggested that the major obstacle to good listening is the automatic tendency to judge (1991/1952). The opposite, the gateway of communication, according to Rogers, is nonjudgmental listening. Rogers and Roethlisberger (1991/1952) claimed that nonjudgmental listening increases self-acceptance and openness to experience, less defensiveness and change in self-perception. It improves communication and understanding of self and others, and enables developing a nonjudgmental attitude towards others. According to Rogers, the listener must be empathic. The listener’s reaction must not include opinions. The listener should be fully present in the "here and now" and focus on the other person (Rogers, 1961). Therefore, this type of listening is about being completely aware to what is happening in and around (Bodie, 2011). Listening involves attentiveness, awareness, (Bodie, 2011) acceptance and unconditional positive regard (Irving et al., 2006).

Friedman (2005) described that in order to be attentive and aware in listening, one should "quiet his mind" and turn his full attention toward the speaker. The first step of listening is quieting the mind – meditation (first step of focusing). "…I close my eyes. I sit comfortably, breathe. I ask myself, how am I from the inside, right now? I let my attention to come down into my body. I ask if there is a word that matches the feeling inside…. I get calm, clear, meditative, open and ready. I sit with that feeling for a moment and then listen" (Friedman, 2005, p. 224). A quiet mind helps one listen. Friedman (2005) also claimed that the listener should listen only when one is mostly clear and truly attentive and present. In order to be clear inside, one must listen and be attentive to his thoughts and feelings.

From the listener’s point of view, the listening contains three processes: cognitive, emotional and behavioral (Jones, 2011). In the cognitive process, the listener understands and interprets the speaker's point of view without judgment (attitude), so that the speaker will feel safe in the process. In the emotional process, the listener needs to be attentive and motivated to listen (intention). In the behavioral process, the listener responds in verbal (guiding questions) and non-verbal ways (body movements).

To conclude, the requirements from a good listener are diverse. The question that rises is what will make us better listeners? Little is known about the mechanisms that influence listening. Yet, clinical observation suggest that to listen well one must first quite oneself as to become available to the other person (Friedman, 2005).

If mindfulness increases the ability to experience the present in a conscious and a nonjudgmental way and it is an important condition for unconditional acceptance and openness, than practicing mindfulness, which increases awareness, attentiveness to self and others, could improve listening. However, when considering listening it seems that the listener may be a poor judge of her or his own listening behavior (Bodie et al., 2014). Therefore, I will seek to test the hypotheses from a perspective of a speaker. Specifically, I hypothesize that:

*H1: Mindfulness meditation (a) increases awareness, (b) reduces being judgmental, and consequently increases (c) effective listening as perceived by speakers*.

H1 is depicted in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1.  *The hypothesized effects of mindfulness on listening*

**Method**

**Participants**

I recruited 91 students, 58% males, *M*age = 33.6, *SD* = 12.0, to talk about their college experiences with listeners who were either experienced, *n* = 7, or inexperienced, *n* = 42, in practicing mindfulness, 60% male, *M*age = 43.8, *SD* = 16.3.

**Procedure**

I asked all participants to speak for 12 minutes about their experience being a student in the college they attend. I randomly paired participants to be listened to by either a mindful listener or a regular listener. The mindful listeners were seven experienced meditators (practice mindfulness meditation 6 years every day), and the regular listeners were 42 volunteers inexperienced in meditation. Upon arriving to the laboratory, I asked the listeners to fill out a computerized questionnaires measuring trait mindfulness (FFMQ). Next, I asked only the experienced meditators to practice meditation for 10 minutes, and *all* listeners to fill out a measure of state mindfulness (state FFMQ). When the listeners were ready to listening, I escorted the participants into a quiet room where the listeners were waiting. I asked all listeners to listen to the participants as they usually listen. After the conversation, I asked participants to fill out computerized questionnaires including measures of perception of the listener’s mindfulness and experienced listening.

**Measures**

*Mindfulness.* Mindfulness was measured with the *Five Facets Mindfulness Questionnaire* (FFMQ; Baer et al., 2006) that is comprised of five measures (appendix A). The FFMQ includes 39 items that represent five facets (factors): *Describing* (e.g., "I can easily put my beliefs, opinions, and expectations into words"), *Acting with awareness* (e.g., "I do jobs or tasks automatically without being aware of what I’m doing"), *Nonjudging* of inner experience *(*e.g.,"I make judgments about whether my thoughts are good or bad"), *Nonreactivity* to inner experience (e.g., "When I have distressing thoughts or images, I just notice them and let them go") and *Observing* *(*e.g.,"I pay attention to sensations, such as the wind in my hair or sun on my face")*.* I used two versions of the FFMQ: trait and state. Although FFMQ was developed to measure trait mindfulness, I modified it to measure state mindfulness because it enables the examination of different facets of mindfulness, and it combines a number of other existing questionnaires (Sauer et al., 2012). Thus the FFMQ was adapted to a state mindfulness in the following way: instead of examining what participants *usually* feel, their feelings "in that moment" of the experiment was examined (Appendix B presents the original questionnaire; Appendix C present the revised questionnaire adopted for this study). For example, I changed the item "It’s hard for me to find the words to describe what I’m thinking" to "Now I cannot find words that describe what I'm thinking". To increase validity, I expanded the original 7-point Likert scale into an 11-point scale (Aguinis et al., 2008), ranging from 0 = *strongly disagree* to 10 = *strongly agree*.

*Listening.* Listening was measured with The Facilitating Listening Scale (FLS), which measures listening skills and listening consequences. The FLS was developed based on 10 existing-listening scales and theoretically derived items (Kluger & Bouskila-Yam, 2011). It captures the speaker's perspective, both regarding the way the speaker experiences the listening, and the perception of the consequences of this listening for the speaker. I measured the speaker perspective because the speaker is a better judge of listening than the listener (Ellis, 2002). I modified it and choose only eight questions out of the FLS. (Appendix D presents the questionnaire).

**Results**

To test the effectiveness of the a priori allocation of listeners who are experienced, versus inexperienced, in practicing mindfulness, I compared the mean mindfulness trait of the listeners, using an independent samples t-test. As expected, listeners who were experienced in mindfulness reported higher mindfulness trait, *M* = 7.83, *SD* = 1.11, than listeners who were not experienced in mindfulness, *M* = 6.17, *SD* = 1.10, *d* [95 %*CI*] = 1.50 [0.62, 2.37].Thus, my allocation of mindfulness experience was as intended.

Table 1 shows the correlations among all variables. Although Table 1 suggests that my hypotheses are supported, the data are nested within listeners (especially in the experimental group). Therefore, I tested whether the *DV—*listening—violates theassumption of independence by using a null HLM model (see Table 2). The test yielded *ICC* = .46, indicating that a typical OLS regression is inappropriate. However, this high *ICC* value could merely reflect the unequal distribution of repeated listening (in the experimental group). Therefore, I computed *ICC* separately in each experimental group. Indeed, the ICC was .06 in the control group and .14 in the experimental group. Nevertheless, even these values still justify using HLM, and hence all my hypotheses were tested accordingly.

First, I tested the effect of the experimental condition on the experience of being listened to. As can be seen in Table 2, participants in the experimental group (those who were listened to by listeners experienced in mindfulness) reported significantly higher listening than in the control group. Second, I tested whether the state mindfulness of the listener predicted the experience of listening among speakers. As can be seen in the third columns of Table 2, the higher the listener-reported-state mindfulness the higher the speaker-reported listening. Finally, I tested the mediation model that suggests that the experience of listening depends on the state mindfulness of the listener, which in turn stems from the trait mindfulness of the listeners (the experimental condition). As can be seen in the last columns of Table 2, when the state mindfulness was controlled, the experimental effect no longer affected listening, thus supporting the mediation model.

Table 1

*Means, standard deviations, and correlations*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variable | *M* | *SD* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Group | 0.46 | 0.50 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. Listening | 8.68 | 1.38 | .38\*\* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. Mindfulness | 7.47 | 1.79 | .76\*\* | .45\*\* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4. Non-judgmental | 6.28 | 2.76 | .62\*\* | .39\*\* | .83\*\* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5. Awareness | 6.18 | 2.52 | .64\*\* | .45\*\* | .84\*\* | .76\*\* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6. Observe | 8.59 | 1.90 | .42\*\* | .12 | .49\*\* | .07 | .18 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7. Describe | 8.84 | 2.25 | .50\*\* | .35\*\* | .71\*\* | .30\*\* | .51\*\* | .54\*\* |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8. Nonreact | 8.49 | 1.92 | .65\*\* | .31\*\* | .81\*\* | .49\*\* | .48\*\* | .61\*\* | .66\*\* |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 9. Listener Age | 43.77 | 16.35 | .39\*\* | -.00 | .06 | -.08 | -.11 | .11 | .17 | .32\*\* |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10. Speaker Age | 33.61 | 12.02 | .01 | -.06 | -.11 | -.01 | -.17 | -.12 | -.05 | -.14 | .02 |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11. Listener Gender | 0.60 | 0.49 | -.10 | .08 | -.02 | -.01 | -.04 | .08 | -.02 | -.04 | .08 | -.18 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 12. Speaker Gender | 0.58 | 0.50 | .02 | .36\*\* | .02 | -.01 | .12 | -.09 | .10 | -.03 | -.01 | -.04 | .23\* |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

*Note.* Group: 0 = listeners untrained in mindfulness, and1= listeners trained in mindfulness; Gender: 0 = female and 1 = male.

\* *p* < .05; \*\* *p* < .01.

Table 2

*HLM models predicting listening*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Estimates | Null (Step 1) | Experiment | Mindfulness | Mediation |
| Intercept | 8.47\*\*(0.19) | 8.28\*\*(0.20) | 6.39\*\*(0.69) | 6.67\*\*(0.80) |
| Experimental groupa |  | 1.01\*(0.45) |  | 0.33(0.50) |
| Mindfulness |  |  | 0.31\*\*(0.10) | 0.26\*(0.12) |
| Variance components |  |  |  |  |
| Within-person (L1) variance (σ2) | 0.95 | 0.99 | 1.07 | 1.04 |
| Intercept (L2) variance (τ00) | 1.10 | 0.89 | 0.58 | 0.64 |
| Additional information |  |  |  |  |
| ICC | 0.46 | 0.47 | 0.35 | 0.38 |
| –2 log likelihood (REML) | 304 | 299 | 294 | 292 |
| Number of estimated parameters | 3 | 4 | 4 | 5 |
| Pseudo R2 |  | negative | negative | negative |

*Note.* a 0 = control; 1 = experimental.

\* *p <* .05; *\*\* p* < .01.

Despite the support for my hypothesis, there is some concern with the HLM results. Specifically, the error (σ2) increase, rather than decrease, with the addition of predictors, and consequently leads to estimations of pseudo *R*2 that are negative. There are two possible reasons for this outcome: “if negative values are obtained or if the estimates decrease when a regressor is added in the course of fitting candidate models, then the cause must either be random chance or a misspecification of the fixed effects” (Recchia, 2010). To rule out the possibility of misspecification, I took several measures. First, I tested whether the negative skew of listening could cause this problem. Therefore, I normalized listening by raising it to the power of two. The results remained similar to the results reported in Table 2. Second, I tested whether the experimental effect interact with mindfulness in predicting listening. Indeed, there was a hint that this is possible, as the interaction term approached significance *t*(85.6) = - 1.74, *p* = .085. Yet, the addition of the interaction term did not reduce σ2. Third, I tested whether lack of centering the mindfulness variable about the mean of the listener caused this result, and it did not.

Given this problem, I tested the data once more by aggregating the data across listeners. This approach has the drawback of losing data (e.g., the 14 observations of one listener are turned into a single observation), but has the advantage of ensuring independence among observations, and thus overcoming the need to test the hypothesis with HLM, which may require much larger sample size to estimate its variance components. Aggregation resulted in having seven listeners in the experimental group and 47 listeners in the control group. To test my hypothesis on the aggregated data, I ran *t*-test on listening and mindfulness. Both tests indicated, not surprisingly, unequal variances, due to ceiling effect in the experimental group. Therefore, I used *t*-tests for unequal variances. As can be seen in Table 3, assigning a listener trained in mindfulness caused speakers to report better listening, consistent with my hypothesis. In addition, listeners trained in mindfulness reported much higher state-mindfulness than untrained listeners did.

Table 3

Means, *SD*s, and *t*-Tests for Aggregated Data

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Control* | | | *Experimental* | | | *t (df)* | ***d*** |
| *DV* | *n* | *M* | *SD* | *n* | *M* | *SD* |  |  |
| Mindfulness | 46 | 6.29 | 1.37 | 7 | 8.68 | 0.70 | 3.98(36.2)\* | **1.82** |
| Listening | 47 | 8.30 | 1.45 | 7 | 9.33 | 0.39 | 7.21(14.5)\* | **0.75** |

*Note. t­*-tests are for unequal variances.

\* *p* < .001.

Next, to test H1 with these data, and to explain the possible interaction between the experimental group and mindfulness in affecting listening (see above), I calculated the zero-order correlation between listening and mindfulness, separately in each group. There was no evidence of a correlation between listening and mindfulness in the experimental group, *r*(7) = -. 11, *p*  = .82. This seems to reflect a ceiling effect in the group trained in mindfulness, where state mindfulness had both high scores and low variances. In contrast, in the control group this correlation was significant *r(46)*  = .35,  *p =* .02. The latter correlation lends further support for my model because variation in listeners-reported-state mindfulness among the untrained listeners (the control group) correlated with speaker reported listening. Thus, the aggregated data replicated the results of the HLM, while overcoming potential problems with variance estimates.

Finally, listening (Table 1) was positively correlated with all the components of mindfulness, albeit a correlation of one component did not reach significance. Therefore, whereas these correlations are consistent with my mediation model, the problems of these data (nesting combined with small sample size) prevents a meaningful test of the specific hypotheses.

**Discussion**

This study was set to examine the effect of mindfulness meditation on listening. I hypothesized that people who are trained in mindfulness listen well. Specifically, the hypothesis (H1) predicted that mindfulness meditation (a) increases awareness, (b) reduces being judgmental, and consequently increases (c) effective listening as perceived by speakers.

Although both groups (experiential and control) reported good listening, listeners trained in mindfulness were found as better listeners relative to the untrained listeners. Thus, mindfulness of the listener predicted the experience of listening among speakers.

The experience of listening depends on the state mindfulness of the listener, which in turn stems from the trait mindfulness of the listeners (the experimental condition). Listeners trained in mindfulness reported much higher state-mindfulness than untrained listeners did. Yet, when the state mindfulness was controlled, the experimental effect no longer affected listening (see last column of Table 2). Thus, it appears that the speaker responds not to the trait mindfulness, but to the state mindfulness. This in turns suggest that being in a mindfulness state, whether due to practicing meditation just before listening or to other causes, improves the experience of the speaker of being listened to. This interpretation is consistent with the finding that the self-reported mindfulness of listeners untrained in mindfulness was positively correlated with the experienced of listening reported by the speakers. Thus, both experimental and correlational data corroborated the hypothesis.

Given the powerful and positive consequences of listening, training in mindfulness may improve listening in general. People planning to listen may benefit from practicing mindfulness mediation just before listening (cf., Friedman, 2005). Mindfulness is trainable through the practice of mindfulness-meditation techniques (Yovel, 2011). Practicing mindfulness meditation increases nonjudgmental acceptance of self and others, acceptance of experiences, self-awareness (Shapiro et al., 2006), emotion regulation, interpersonal skills and focusing and observing the present moment, which are crucial for listening.

Theory suggested that mindfulness is composed of five components (facets): non-judgmental, awareness, describe, non-react, and observe. Although four out of the five facets of mindfulness (non-judging, awareness, describing, non-reactivity) correlated with listening, consistent with my hypotheses, the problems of my data (nesting combined with small sample size) prevents a meaningful test of the specific hypotheses. Nevertheless, these correlations are consistent with the view that the components of mindfulness are the same components found in good listening.

Specifically, mindfulness appears to improve listening effectiveness via the same mechanism espoused in listening theories. Mindfulness meditation improves self-awareness, and nonjudgmental acceptance, and it allows the listener to bring those qualities into the conversation. When people consciously attend to their moment-to-moment experience in the present while meditation, they experience increased awareness and psychological flexibility (e.g., Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 1994). They are able to bring their psychological flexibility and attention to the immediate internal and external experience in the present moment to the conversation while listening.

Another facet of mindfulness is crucial as a listener--being nonjudgmental. Mindfulness meditators practice non-judgmental acceptance--observing thoughts and emotions without identifying with them or automatically reacting to them (Bishop et al., 2004). This observation process enables the meditator, as a listener, distancing between thoughts and emotions on one hand, with reactions on the other hand. That is, mindfulness allows a more reflective and less reflexive reaction (Bishop et al., 2004) to the listener.

If we use Kabat-Zinn (1994, p.4) definition of mindfulness: "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally", as a basis to listening, this definition embodies three axioms of mindfulness and listening. The three axioms/ components are attention ("paying attention"), intention ("on purpose") and attitude ("in a particular way"). The attitude in which the mindful listener attends the internal and external experiences, without evaluation or interpretation, and practice non-judgmental acceptance, interest, openness and curiosity (Shapiro et al., 2006) while listening.

Those three fundamental components of mindfulness are accountable for the transformations that occur to the mindful listener, which leads to a significant shift in perspective - "Reperceiving" (meta-mechanism of change). Reperceiving is the ability to dis-identify with thoughts and view the moment-to-moment experience with greater clarity and objectivity (nonjudgmentally). Rather than identifying and being immersed in the drama of one's narrative, the mindful listener is able to stand back and simply witness it. Reperceiving enables the mindful listener to observe the thoughts from a meta-perspective and to strengthen "the observing self" (Shapiro et al., 2006), which in turn enables the listener to perceive the speaker in a nonjudgmental way. This change effects self-regulation of behaviors and emotions, self-management, cognitive, emotional and behavioral flexibility. Which means, that through consciously (intention) bringing awareness (attention) and acceptance (attitude) to experience in the present moment, the mindful listener will be better able to use a wider, more adaptive range of coping skills and flexible responding while listening (Shapiro et al., 2006).

**Practical Implications**

The findings of this research suggest that mindfulness meditation has beneficial effects on the listening experienced among speakers. Those findings can be adjusted to various environments. In organizational environments, it could be beneficial in employee-employer relations, supervisor-employee dyads and also relations between two cooperative colleagues, competing colleagues, negotiators, and between service providers and their customer. In those organizational environments, mindful listening can increase the level of awareness of the listener to thoughts and feelings, and can reduce automatic responses. Through mindfulness listening, one can observe his/her feelings before responding according to them in the conversation. The listener would not react impulsively, but rather reflectively.

Therefore, practicing mindful listening and reflective responses can affect a variety of organizational outcomes: job satisfaction, well-being, better working processes, engagement with the organization, less turnover, and more. In organizations that do not promote mindful listening, people can find themselves reacting to colleagues or clients without being aware of what they are saying and without really listening to them. Mindful listening can prevent such behavior, thus improving both employees and organizational effectiveness (Porzycki, 2014).

Mindful listening could be beneficial in dispute resolution and negotiation (Riskin, 2004; Wheeler, 2002). Wheeler (2002) suggests that adapting meditation could promote negotiation success. Mindfulness meditation has added value to creating discussion climate and transformation in interpersonal conflicts. In interpersonal conflicts the motivation to listen and to open communication decreases when facing threat. Bowling (2003) emphasized how the personal qualities of the mediator impact the process of conflict resolution. Attending negotiation after practicing mindfulness meditation could improve listening and the ability to be present nonjudgmentally, examine the interests of the negotiators and find the best solution. It could rebuild the cooperation dynamic.

Moreover, practicing mindfulness could cultivate dialog skills, such as, improving concentration without distractions for longer periods while listening to another person, developing empathy and compaction, awareness to thoughts, feelings and conditionings. Thus, mindful listening could improve the quality of encounter in negotiations and interpersonal conflicts.

Another environment that mindfulness meditation could be beneficial for both the listener and the speaker is therapy. In the therapeutic context, attention and comprehension are important but not sufficient components of listening. Therapeutic listening includes aspects such as acceptance of speaker, being non-judgmental and empathic towards the speaker (Rogers & Roethlisberger, 1991/1952). Mindfulness mediation could improve the therapists listening. Clinical observation suggest that to listen well one must first quite oneself as to become available to the other person (Friedman, 2005). In order to be attentive and aware in listening, the therapist should "quiet his mind" and turn his full attention toward the speaker. The first step of listening is quieting the mind – meditation. Friedman (2005) also claimed that the therapist should listen only when one is mostly clear and truly attentive and present. In order to be clear inside, one must listen and be attentive to his thoughts and feelings. Mindful therapy is a healing art of true presence and deep listening (Bien, 2006).

In the realm of education, mindful listening could be very influential. Practicing mindfulness meditation was found to be beneficial for teachers and pupils as well. (MBED - Mindfulness Based Wellness Education; Soloway, Poulin, Mackinzie & Karaoylas, 2010). This research could imply that the ability of the teachers to be better listeners to their pupils or to their pupils’ parents may improve, if they practice mindfulness meditation. The teacher as a listener could be fully present in the "here and now" and focus on the other person (Rogers, 1961). The teacher as a mindful listener could show in class more acceptance and unconditional positive regard (Irving et al., 2006).

On the other hand, pupils who will practice mindfulness meditation could be better listeners, and could be more aware, attentive and present in the moment in class, because mindful listening is being completely aware to what is happening in and around (Bodie, 2011). Teachers of pupils who practiced mindfulness reported on better listening, calmness and less violence (Suttie, 2007).

A different aspect of education - parents could find mindful listening an influential tool (MBPT ; Mindfulness Based Parent Training) (Eyberg & Graham-Pole, 2005).  Mindful listening can increase the level of awareness of the parent to thoughts and feelings of their children, and can reduce automatic responses. Parents will be able to be aware and nonjudgmental with their children. Nonjudgmental listening to children increases self-acceptance and openness to experience, less defensiveness and brings changes in self-perception (Rogers and Roethlisberger, 1952/1991).

Mindful listening could make a difference between couples. Couples, who will practice mindfulness meditation, could be more open, aware and nonjudgmental to each other. As Rogers and Roethlisberger suggested that the major obstacle to good listening is the automatic tendency to judge (1991/1952). Couple that would work on the tendency to judge with mediation could find the gateway of communication.

Mindfulness increases the ability to experience the present in a conscious and a nonjudgmental way and it is an important condition for unconditional acceptance and openness. Thus, practicing mindfulness, which increases awareness, attentiveness to self and others, could improve every kind of listening.

**Limitation and Future Research**

There are limitations and future researches suggestions to consider. Most of the results were significant, but the problems of these data (nesting combined with small sample size) prevents a meaningful test of the specific hypotheses. Therefore, future research should be employ a larger sample of experienced meditators. A larger sample of experienced meditators, will allow testing the effects of additional variables on perceived listening. These variables may include length of mindfulness training, type of mindfulness practiced, personality variables that may predict listening irrespective of the mindfulness training, etc. Next, it will be desirable to test the effect of a mindfulness-meditation practice by comparing the perceived listening experience by speakers listened to by trained mediators just before versus immediately after practice.

Moreover, a large sample may allow to tease out empirically, perhaps with a multiple regression, which of the mindfulness components—non-judgmental, awareness, describe, non-react, and observe—is crucial for predicting the experience of listening.

**Conclusion**

This thesis suggests that mindfulness and good listening share common requirements, and thus that mindfulness will improve perceived listening. Consistent with this view, speakers who spoke with practitioners of mindfulness, or with listeners reporting state-mindfulness, experienced better listening. This work suggest one way to improve listening: practicing mindfulness.

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**Appendixes**

**Appendix A**

**Five measures of mindfulness**

The *five facet mindfulness questionnaire* is based on five self-reports measurements of Mindfulness. Each one of them has different approach for measuring Mindfulness. Therefore there is no consistency between the measurements about the mechanism of Mindfulness ( Baer et al., 2006(.

1. ***Mindful Attention Awareness Scale*** (MAAS; Brown & Ryan, 2003(. This scale includes 15 items, that focus on the tendency to be attentive and aware to activities in the daily life α=0.82. The scale positively correlates with openness to experiences and to well-being, and negatively correlates with social anxiety. Higher rates in this scale can be achieved with practicing meditation.
2. ***Freiburg Mindfulness*** ***Inventory*** (FMI; Buchheld et al., 2001, Walach et al., 2006). This scale includes 30 items that focus on the nonjudgmental present moment observation in the daily life and openness to negative experience α=0.93. This scale has been developed while testing mediators with experience, and it discriminated between experience and novice mediators.
3. ***The Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills*** (KIMS; Baer et al., 2006). This scale includes 39 items that sample four factors: Observing; Describing; Acting with awareness; Accepting without judgment α=0.76-0.91. This scale examines the overall tendency to be attentive and to be aware in the daily life of people with no experience in meditation.
4. ***The Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale* (**CAMS;Feldman et al., 2007)[[1]](#footnote-1). This scale includes 12 items that sample four factors: attention, awareness, present focus and acceptance/ nonjudgment α=0.74-0.80. The scale positively correlates with emotions clarity, cognitive flexibility and well-being, and negatively correlates with experiential avoidance, thought suppression, rumination, worry, depression, and anxiety
5. ***The Mindfulness Questionnaire*** (MQ; Chadwick et al., 2008). This scale includes 16 items that focus on the awareness to distressing thoughts and images. The items sample four factors: mindful observation, letting go, non-aversion of thoughts and nonjudgmental thoughts (α=0.89). The scale positively correlates with MAAS (r = 0.57). In addition, the authors reported significant differences between meditators and nonmeditators.

**Appendix B**

Five Facets Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ)

**FFMQ - שאלון לבחינת קשיבות**

**שאלון 2**

אנא קרא כל אחד מההיגדים הבאים ודרג כל אחד מהם בשימוש בסקאלה המוצעת. אנא סמן את הסיפרה המשקפת בצורה הטובה ביותר את דעתך בנוגע למה שבדרך כלל נכון לגביך.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| משקף במידה רבה מאוד |  |  |  |  | משקף במידה בינונית |  |  |  |  | לא משקף בכלל |

|  |
| --- |
|  |
| 1. כאשר אני הולך, אני מבחין במתכוון בתחושות של גופי הנע. |
| 1. אני טוב בלמצוא מילים שמתארות את רגשותיי. |
| 1. אני מבקר עצמי על כך שיש לי רגשות לא רציונאליים או לא ראויים. |
| 1. אני מבחין ברגשותיי ותחושותיי ללא צורך להגיב להן. |
| 1. כאשר אני עושה דברים, המחשבות שלי נודדות ותשומת הלב שלי מוסחת בקלות. |
| 1. כאשר אני מתקלח, אני נשאר ערני לתחושות של המים על גופי. |
| 1. אני יכול לבטא במילים את אמונותיי, דעותיי, וציפיותיי בקלות. |
| 1. אני לא שם לב למה שאני עושה בגלל שאני חולם בהקיץ, דואג או מוסח בצורה אחרת. |
| 1. אני מתבונן ברגשות שלי בלי לאבד עצמי בהן. |
| 1. אני אומר לעצמי שאני לא צריך להרגיש את מה שאני מרגיש. |
| 1. אני שם לב איך אוכל ושתייה משפיעים על המחשבות, תחושות גוף ורגשות. |
| 1. קשה לי למצוא מילים שמתארות מה שאני חושב. |
| 1. אני מוסח בקלות. |
| 1. אני מאמין שחלק ממחשבותיי הן לא נורמליות או רעות, ושאני לא אמור לחשוב בצורה כזו. |
| 1. אני שם לב לתחושות, כמו הרוח בשערי או לשמש בפניי. |
| 1. קשה לי לחשוב על המילים הנכונות שיבטאו איך אני מרגיש כלפי דברים. |
| 1. אני שופט את מחשבותיי--האם הן טובות או רעות. |
| 1. קשה לי להישאר ממוקד במה שמתרחש בהווה. |
| 1. כאשר יש לי מחשבות או דימויים מטרידים, אני לוקח צעד אחורה ומודע למחשבה או לדימוי בלי שהיא תשתלט עלי. |
| 1. אני שם לב לקולות, כמו תקתוק שעון, ציפורים מצייצות, או מכוניות שעוברות. |
| 1. במצבים קשים, אני יכול לעצור בלי להגיב באופן מידי. |
| 1. כאשר יש לי תחושה בגוף, קשה לי לתאר אותה בגלל שאני לא מצליח למצוא את המילים הנכונות. |
| 1. נראה כי אני "רץ על אוטומט" בלי הרבה מודעות למה שאני עושה. |
| 1. כאשר יש לי מחשבות או דימויים מטרידים, די מהר אני מרגיש רגוע לאחר מכן. |
| 1. אני אומר לעצמי שאסור לי לחשוב בדרך בה אני חושב. |
| 1. אני שם לב לריחות וניחוחות של דברים. |
| 1. גם כאשר אני מרגיש מודאג, אני יכול למצוא דרך להתבטא מילולית. |
| 1. אני ממהר בין פעילויות שונות בלי באמת להיות קשוב אליהם. |
| 1. כאשר יש לי מחשבות או דימויים מטרידים, אני יכול לשים לב אליהם בלי להגיב. |
| 1. אני חושב שחלק מהרגשות שלי הם רעים או לא ראויים ואני לא צריך להרגיש אותם. |
| 1. אני שם לב לאלמנטים חזותיים (ויזואליים) באומנות או בטבע, כמו צבעים, צורות, טקסטורות, או תבניות של אור וצל. |
| 1. הנטייה הטבעית שלי היא לבטא את חוויותיי בצורה מילולית. |
| 1. כאשר יש לי מחשבות או דימויים מטרידים, אני רק מביט בהם ונותן להם ללכת. |
| 1. אני עושה עבודות או משימות באופן אוטומטי בלי להיות מודע למה שאני עושה. |
| 1. כאשר יש לי מחשבות או דימויים מטרידים, אני שופט את עצמי לטובה או לרעה, תלוי במחשבות או בדימוי. |
| 1. אני שם לב לדרך שבה הרגשות שלי משפיעים על המחשבות וההתנהגות שלי. |
| 1. אני יכול בדרך כלל לתאר איך אני מרגיש באותו רגע באופן מפורט. |
| 1. אני מוצא את עצמי עושה דברים בלי לשים לב. |
| 1. אני שולל את עצמי כאשר יש לי רעיונות לא רציונאליים. |

**Scoring Information:**

Observe items:

1, 6, 11, 15, 20, 26, 31, 36

Describe items:

2, 7, 12R, 16R, 22R, 27, 32, 37

Act with Awareness items:

5R, 8R, 13R, 18R, 23R, 28R, 34R, 38R

Nonjudge items:

3R, 10R, 14R, 17R, 25R, 30R, 35R, 39R

Nonreact items:

4, 9, 19, 21, 24, 29, 33

**Appendix c**

**שאלון לבחינת קשיבות**

השאלון הבא מתייחס לקשיבות (mindfulness). קשיבות, כמו מצב רוח, היא דבר משתנה מרגע לרגע. לכן, נבקשך לדרג בסולם הבא, באיזה מידה כל אחד מהתיאורים הבאים משקף את מצבך ברגעים אלה (אפשר להשתמש בכל הספרות).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| משקף במידה רבה מאוד |  |  |  |  | משקף במידה בינונית |  |  |  |  | לא משקף כלל |

**עכשיו, ממש ברגעים אלה, אני...**

|  |
| --- |
| 1. מבקר עצמי על כך שיש לי רגשות לא רציונאליים או לא ראויים |
| 1. מבחין ברגשותיי ובתחושותיי ללא צורך להגיב להן. |
| 1. מרגיש כי המחשבות שלי נודדות ותשומת הלב שלי מוסחת בקלות. |
| 1. מבחין ומודע לתחושות בגופי. |
| 1. יכול לבטא במילים את אמונותיי, דעותיי, וציפיותיי בקלות. |
|  |
| 1. מתבונן ברגשות שלי בלי לאבד עצמי בהן. |
| 1. אומר לעצמי שאני לא צריך להרגיש את מה שאני מרגיש. |
| 1. שם לב איך דברים חיצוניים משפיעים על המחשבות, תחושות הגוף והרגשות שלי. |
| 1. שופט את מחשבותיי--האם הן טובות או רעות. |
| 1. אומר לעצמי שאסור לי לחשוב בדרך בה אני חושב. |
| 1. יכול לשים לב למחשבות או דימויים מטרידים מבלי להגיב. |
| 1. חושב שחלק מהרגשות שלי הם רעים או לא ראויים ושאני לא צריך להרגיש אותם. |
|  |
| 1. יכול לבטא את החוויה שלי בצורה מילולית. |
| 1. יכול להביט במחשבות או דימויים מטרידים , ותת להם ללכת. |
| 1. עושה דברים באופן אוטומטי בלי להיות מודע למה שאני עושה. |
| 1. שופט את עצמי לטובה או לרעה, בתלות בתכנים של מחשבות או דימויים מטרידים. |
| 1. שם לב לדרך שבה הרגשות שלי משפיעים על המחשבות וההתנהגות שלי. |
| 1. יכול לתאר איך אני מרגיש כרגע באופן מפורט. |
| 1. מוצא את עצמי עושה דברים בלי לשים לב. |

**Appendix D**

**שאלון לבחינת הקשבה**

**שלום רב, שאלון זה מועבר במסגרת עבודת תזה בחוג לפסיכולוגיה קלינית, באוניברסיטה העברית.**

**השאלון מתייחס לחוויה שלך בזמן השיחה והינו אנונימי לחלוטין. תשובותיך לשאלות ישמשו לצרכי מחקר בלבד.**

**השאלות מנוסחות בלשון זכר אך מיועדות לגברים ונשים כאחד.**

**לכל שאלה שתתעורר, ובמידה ותהיה מעוניין לדעת את תוצאות המחקר, אנא צור קשר עם החוקרת האחראית, טלי זיידמן, במייל:** tali@insideoutside.co.il

**תודה רבה על שיתוף הפעולה**

**שאלון 1**

**השאלון הנוכחי מתייחס לשיחה שזה עתה קיימת. אנא קרא כל אחד מההיגדים הבאים ודרג כל אחד מהם בשימוש בסקאלה המוצעת. אנא סמן את הסיפרה המשקפת בצורה הטובה ביותר את הרגשתך כרגע.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| משקף במידה רבה מאוד |  |  |  |  | משקף במידה בינונית |  |  |  |  | לא משקף בכלל |

1. באיזו מידה חשת שבן זוגך לשיחה הקשיב לך
2. באיזו מידה חשת שבן זוגך לשיחה התעלם ממך
3. באיזו מידה חשת שבן זוגך לשיחה התעניין בדבריך
4. באיזו מידה חשת שבן זוגך לשיחה הבין אותך
5. באיזו מידה חשבת שלבן זוגך לשיחה היו כוונות טובות כלפיך
6. באיזו מידה חשת שבן זוגך לשיחה הקדיש לך את תשומת הלב המלאה
7. באיזו מידה חשת שבן זוגך לשיחה היה לא שיפוטי כלפיך
8. באיזו מידה חשת שבן זוגך לשיחה ער ומודע למה שקורה לך

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)