

Examining Adolescents' Beliefs About Meditation

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Learning Objectives:

1. Describe the interconnection between meditation, self-regulation, academic outcomes, and well-being for adolescents
2. Identify beliefs adolescents' have about meditation
3. Describe how school health professionals can use the identified beliefs to create meditation programs for adolescents

Background:

- Adolescence is a sensitive period for development of self-regulation (Steinberg, 2014)
- Self-regulation is critical in adolescence (well-being and academic outcomes) (Lyons & Delange, 2016)
- Meditation improves attention and emotion regulation (Tang et al, 2007)
- Meditation increases white matter in self-regulation center of adolescent brain (Tang et al, 2010)
- **Few young people meditate (Black et al, 2015)**
- Some work has investigated meditation determinants in adult populations (Lederer & Middlestadt, 2014)

Research Question:

What are the salient top-of-the-mind beliefs held by adolescents ages 14-18, about trying to meditate at least twice in the next week?

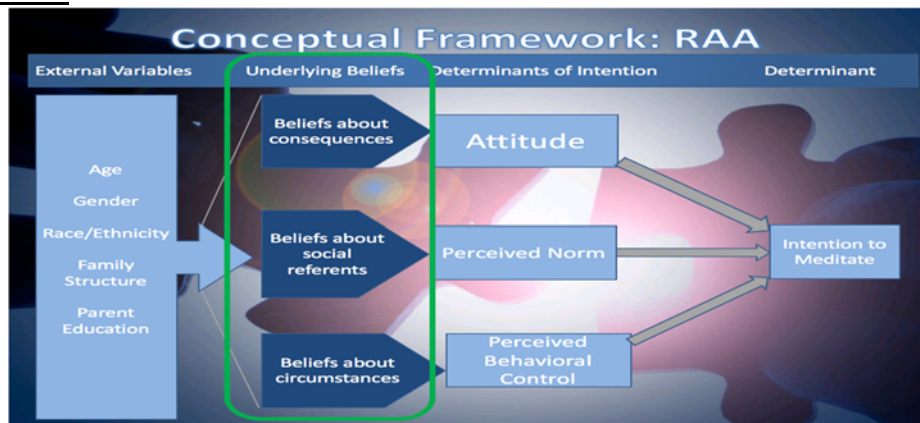
Theory: Reasoned Action Approach:

The Reasoned Action Approach is a general behavior theory that suggests an individual's behavior is primarily determined by his or her intention to perform a behavior. Intention is influenced by three constructs: attitude toward the behavior, perceived norm, and perceived behavioral control/self-efficacy (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010).

Behavior-Meditation:

- **Action-** Trying meditation or focusing attention
- **Time-** At least twice during the next week
- **Context-** Quiet place
- **Target-** Comfortably seated
- **Priority Population-** Adolescents ages 14-18

Conceptual Framework:



Research Methods:

1. Students in Upstate NY
2. Cross-sectional
3. Survey with open-ended questions using RAA (Piloted)
4. Instrument included questions asking about advantages/disadvantages of meditation, who would be supportive/unsupportive, and what would make meditation easier/harder.
5. Questions asking about demographics included age, gender, race/ethnicity, family structure, and parent education.
6. Thematic and Frequency Analysis
7. Used a video created by the first author to define meditation
8. Inter-rater reliability Kappa Statistic (Overall= .96):
 - Positive Consequences=.956
 - Negative Consequences= .833
 - Supporters= .926
 - Disapprovers= 1.000
 - Easy Circumstances= .943
 - Hard Circumstances= 1.000

Results:

Characteristic	n	%
Sex		
Female	60	46.5
Male	63	48.8
Other	6	4.7
Race/Ethnicity		
White/Caucasian	58	46.1
Black or African American	24	18.6
Latino or Hispanic	12	9.3
Asian or Asian American	7	5.4
Multiracial	11	8.5
Other	17	13.2
Age		
14	2	1.6
15	0	0
16	54	41.9
17	56	43.4
18	17	13.2
Family Structure		
Biological Parents	55	42.6
Mother	38	29.5
Father	5	3.9
Mother and Step Father	16	12.4
Father and Step Mother	5	3.9
Grandparents	4	3.1
Foster Parents	3	2.3
Family Education		
Mother Graduated College	53	41.1
Father Graduated College	39	30.2

TABLE 2. Salient Consequences Trying to Meditate at Least Twice in the Next Week

Consequence	n	%
Advantages		
Trying to meditate at least twice in the next week...(N=129)		
Will reduce my stress	50	39%
Will make me relax	43	33%
Will help me relax	18	14%
Will make me calmer	15	12%
Will give me peace	11	9%
Will make me more focused	29	22%
Will help me focus	19	15%
Will clear my mind	4	3%
Will help me concentrate	3	2%
Will increase my attention	3	2%
Disadvantages		
Trying to meditate at least twice in the next week...(N=129)		
Will take time	49	38%
Will be a waste of time	13	10%
Will lose time	11	9%
Will take time	14	11%
Will not have time	9	7%
Will slow me down	15	12%
Will fall asleep	8	6%
Will get bored	2	2%
Will become too laid back	5	4%
Nothing	18	14%

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100%, since participants could list multiple answers

TABLE 3. Salient Referents for Meditating at Least Once Per Week for the Next Month

Salient Referents	n	%	Salient Referents	n	%
Approving referents			Disapproving referents		
...approves of me trying to meditate at least twice in the next week (N=129)			...disapproves of me trying to meditate at least twice in the next week (N=129)		
Family	85	66%	Family	25	19%
Both Parents	32	25%	Both Parents	3	2%
Mom	31	24%	Mom	5	4%
Dad	4	3%	Dad	3	2%
Sister	9	7%	Sister	4	3%
Grandparents	4	3%	Grandparents	1	1%
Other family	5	4%	Other family	9	7%
Friends	24	19%	Friends	29	22%
Friends	18	14%	Friends	29	22%
Boyfriend	6	5%	Boyfriend	0	-
School Personnel	21	16%	School Personnel	6	5%
Teacher	19	15%	Teacher	6	5%
Coach	2	2%	Coach	0	-
No One	10	8%	No One	44	34%

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100%, since participants could list multiple answers

TABLE 4. Salient Circumstances for Trying to Meditate at Least Twice in the Next Week

Salient Circumstances	n	%	Salient Circumstances	n	%
Facilitators			Barriers		
...makes it easier to try meditating at least twice in the next week (N=129)			...makes it more difficult to try meditating at least twice in the next week (N=129)		
Having/Taking Time	65	50%	Not Having Time	70	54%
Having More Time/Free Time	35	27%	Not Having Time/Being Busy	39	30%
Having Less School	19	15%	Having School/Homework	25	19%
Scheduling Time	11	9%			
Limiting Distractions	44	34%	Having Sports Activities	7	5%
Having a Quiet Place	22	17%	Having a Job	9	7%
Being Alone	11	9%	Having Distractions	45	35%
Having a Place	6	5%	Being Noisy	19	15%
Being Able to Relax	5	4%	Having People Around	9	7%
			Having Other Distractions	12	9%
			Having and Emotional Issue	5	4%

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100%, since participants could list multiple answers

Discussion:

1. Study fills an important research gap
2. Theory-based approach
3. Advantages: Reduce stress, promote relaxation, and increase focus
4. Main disadvantage: Slow them down
5. Approve: Family (Parents)
6. Disapprove: No one
7. Salient circumstance underlying control: Time

Implications:

1. School health programs can emphasize the perceived benefits of meditating
2. Help youth develop time management and prioritization skills (control over behavior)
3. Provide opportunities for adolescents to see that meditation will not slow them down but can improve focus, etc. (advantage)
4. Launch social marketing campaigns (see that others like them meditate), model and group performance (see that other people important to them would approve)

Limitations:

1. Cross-sectional design
2. Small sample
3. One high school

Future Research:

1. Larger sample size from various regions in the U.S.
2. Multiple time points
3. Follow-up with testing strength of beliefs

References:

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