Integration of a Mobile Mindfulness App on Employee Health Processes in a Virtual Work Environment

Kimberly Richards, DNP, MBA, BSHI, RN, CNE and Ruth Ellen Yeager, DNP, RN, WHNBC

**Theoretical Framework**

The Theory of Planned Behavior serves as the theoretical guide for this project. According to this theory, the critical deciding factor in predicting a person’s behavior is intention. Intention is an individual’s internal willingness to engage in specific behaviors. Motives derive from:

- the individual’s conclusions regarding the end results of engaging in the potential behavior
- the societal norms to which the individual has been exposed
- the individual’s perceived locus of control

Through the lens of the Theory of Planned Behavior, this project is designed to promote the development of mindfulness practices among nursing faculty and improve faculty interactions with health-promoting resources currently available within the organization.

**Project Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to support faculty in developing and integrating a mindfulness meditation practice into their daily health practices. Integration of mindfulness into daily living would improve faculty attitudes, intentions, and behaviors about making personal health a priority and increase engagement in wellness activities.

**Methodology**

- WGU has 4,234 faculty who live & work in all 50 states
- Approximately 600 of these are nursing faculty.
- When faculty work in a virtual environment, job activities, such as faculty meetings, course instruction, & peer interactions, take place in front of a computer.
- WGU nursing faculty who work from home offices are noted to engage in organizational health-promoting resources & sponsored wellness activities in sporadic fashion or to meet deadlines for insurance incentives suggesting there is room for improvement in faculty engagement with organizational resources.
- WGU nursing faculty were invited to participate in the Introduction of Mindfulness Meditation course via college newsletters, website banners, & social media channels of Psi Upsilon Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International.
- The course included an orientation session where faculty received training on mindfulness in order to develop a foundation of positive attitudes & intentions which are necessary to promote change as well as a brief orientation to the Headspace app.
- Four additional live support group sessions were provided to offer ongoing assistance with the app plus additional mindfulness training to support behavioral change.
- Twenty-five published studies show the impact of the Headspace app on outcomes such as stress, focus, and compassion.
- Currently, 65+ research studies are in-progress to scientifically validate the Headspace app approach to meditation.
- These studies are in progress with 35+ of the most prestigious scientific research organizations and institutions, such as Stanford and USC, run by leading mindfulness experts.

**Results**

I am using the mobile mindfulness app daily:

| Yes | 51.29% |
| Yes | 48.71% |

The mobile mindfulness app changed the way I think or feel about health promoting behaviors:

| Yes | 62.90% |
| Yes | 37.10% |

I am likely to recommend this mobile app to others:

| Yes | 62.22% |
| Yes | 37.78% |

I am likely to participate in a more advanced mindfulness course:

| Yes | 40.00% |
| Yes | 60.00% |

**Practice Implications**

- This problem is significant to the nursing profession because of potential long-term negative effects to qualified nursing faculty.
- As more nursing programs move to a virtual environment, it is important to learn how to best support faculty in creating healthy behaviors and maintaining healthy lifestyles in order to encourage optimal performance, satisfaction, and longevity in the nurse faculty role.
- By promoting nurse faculty engagement in wellness activities and behaviors, the potential exists to optimize employee health and organizational performance over the long term.
- Use of a mobile phone app or web-based application for increasing mindfulness is an effective, low-cost, and highly accessible alternative to more expensive in-person employee assistance programs in improving personal health behaviors.

**Reinforcement**

Currently working with University’s Program Experience Team to develop a sustainment piece to provide ongoing support to course participants. Workshop participants are now the stakeholders in this initiative and will also be tapped to help lead out future course offerings and support groups. Additional resources are also being made available for participants who desire to delve further into mindfulness meditation.