



Finding a moment of
peace -
Mindfulness for asylum
seekers

Julia Taivalmäki

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Laurea University of Applied Sciences

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Mindfulness for asylum seekers**

Julia Taivalmäki
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Long term stress can be one of the biggest influences on mental health and the life situation of asylum seekers can be extremely stressful - due to traumatic past and unpredictable future. The purpose of this Bachelor's thesis is to find out if mindfulness practices can help asylum seekers to cope with the stress that they are experiencing in their current lives, while waiting for their decision of their asylum application and whilst situated in the reception centre. This is a functional thesis that was implemented as an eight weeks long mindfulness intervention in Nihtisilta reception centre in Espoo. Within the eight weeks of mindfulness, the clients had chance to attend mindfulness classes every Wednesday evening, which were instructed by the writer of this thesis.

The theoretical framework of this thesis includes mindfulness, stress-management, asylum seekers, stress and its effect to mental health wellbeing. The key concepts are asylum seekers, stress of an asylum seeker and mindfulness.

The mindfulness intervention practices were a collection of most used and known mindfulness practices, stress management tools and relaxation techniques that can be implemented easily to participants everyday lives. The purpose of the thesis is also to aim to raise awareness of stress - especially long-term stress amongst asylum seekers and how it can affect mental health.

Keywords: asylum seekers, stress, stress of an asylum seeker, stress-management, mindfulness, mindfulness intervention

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1 Introduction

Life situation of an asylum seeker can be extremely difficult and stressful. The future is unpredictable -often asylum seekers have to wait for the decision regarding their asylum for years, regardless the law that was set in 2018 which states that the maximum processing time is six months. (Migri, 2020) Meanwhile trying to adapt into the new country and finding their feet in a new culture - the fear of forced return to their country of origin and the worry of their loved ones back in their country of origin can be extremely stressful. Not to mention the traumatic past that most of asylum seekers have due to their past.

Research shows that anxiety, stress and sleeping disorders are extremely common with asylum seekers, especially whilst they are still waiting their decision of their asylum application and located in the reception centre. In this thesis, I am focusing on specifically what kind of stress asylum seekers can be experiencing. Stress can be one of the biggest influences on mental health and as the life situation of asylum seekers can be extremely stressful, therefore this functional thesis aims to find out whether mindfulness practices can be used as tool to reduce the stress that an asylum seeker is be experiencing. However, I want to emphasise already at the very start that the purpose of this thesis is not to seek cure for the stress that an asylum seeker can be experiencing, but simply to provide simple stress management tools that can be implemented to their daily lives.

Also, I have personal interest over mindfulness and yoga and how or if they can have an effect on individual's overall wellbeing. I am a yoga teacher and I have been practicing mindfulness, yoga and different meditation techniques for several years daily and I have found plenty of benefits of doing these practices, especially during the most stressful times in my life. I have also instructed yoga classes voluntarily in different organisations within social services that work with asylum seekers and refugees and in reception centres - the feedback of these session have been good, so I decided to dive into this subject more deeply as this Bachelor's thesis research.

2 Functional thesis: aim and objectives

This is functional thesis that also has elements of qualitative study. The functional part is the intervention of different mindfulness practices for 8 times. The aim of the thesis process is to be a learning experience for the student, but also prove the knowledge gained during studies that student has cultivated and especially to witness whether or not the student is able to implement the knowledge to the working life.

The aim of functional thesis is to organize or instruct a practical activity or a product, based on the working life. The final product can be for example a guidebook to be used by professionals, or guided activities for the working life clients or employees. (Vilkka & Airaksinen, 2003, 9.) The functional thesis has two stages - the activity and the report about the activity that has been implemented. In the report, the writer justifies the practices used in the activities, the results of the activities and the conclusions according to the results. The report should also clarify how and why the activity has been implemented. The functional thesis also aims to discover new methods of working by using the already existing theory. (Vilkka & Airaksinen 2003, 65-69.)

I chose to do functional thesis as I wanted to understand and observe how the whole process from planning to carrying out an intervention like this in the reception centre would go. As I had instructed yoga classes before in another reception centre, I knew that this project can be rather difficult to carry out, as it can be challenging to motivate clients in the reception centres to participate in such activities.

The qualitative study elements are the interviews held after the mindfulness intervention. I chose to do semi structured interviews in order to understand better the effects of the mindfulness practices and understand in depth what exactly worked in the intervention and what did not. The semi structured interview questions can be seen in Appendix 2.

Another qualitative study element in this thesis is the survey about stress (Appendix 2) that each participant had to fill when participating in their first session. By using this form, I got clearer picture of what would be the best practices for the intervention. Using the qualitative study elements in functional thesis process supports the comprehensive understanding of the subject. (Vilkka & Airaksinen 2003, 63.) However, the data that has been collected in the process of functional thesis, is not necessary to analyse in the way of qualitative study, instead the purpose can be to deepen the conversation between theory and practice. (Vilkka & Airaksinen 2003, 57-58.) Each session was planned ahead roughly but adjusted according to the needs and interests of the participants.

Also, I am using active observation as evaluation method in this thesis process. Observation is good evaluation method when the aim is to understand or study functioning of an individual or the individual's interaction with others. Active observation is method for observations, in which

the researcher is also an active participant in the activity of the functional part of the thesis process and strives to understand and have an affect to the participants. It means that the researcher is actively taking part to the group as a participant whilst also observing the group and their responses to the practices. (Vilkkä 2006, 38-46.) Whilst using active observation, it is also important to note the subtle experiences of the participants. This means non-verbal communication -gestures, facial impressions and body language. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka, 2006, 33)

I constantly observed the group and the participants whilst instructing the mindfulness sessions. As I used active observation in my mindfulness sessions, it means, that I also actively took part to the mindfulness practices. Therefore, I also used intervention diary in my thesis process. The intervention diary aim was to help me remember all the central observations of each session. I am writing more about the intervention diary and how it was used in the chapter 5.1.

2.1 Working life partner

The functional part of this thesis was implemented in Luona Oy's reception centre in Nihtisilta, Espoo. Luona Oy is a Finnish private company that produces social and healthcare services in Finland. Luona Oy was founded in 2014 and their business started by providing crisis accommodation for the homeless. When Europe faced the refugee crisis in 2015, Luona Oy founded their first reception centre services. (Luona, 2020.) Nowadays Luona Oy has two reception centres, one in Espoo and one in Vantaa, which are the biggest reception centres due their client capacity in Finland. (Migri, 2020.)

2.2 Aim of the study

The aim of this thesis is to find out if mindfulness practices help to ease the stress, that asylum seeker is experiencing in their current life whilst located in the reception centre. This means, that the thesis aims to provide everyday stress management tools for the participants, which then can affect asylum seeker's wellbeing positively. Also, the thesis aims to raise awareness of stress, especially long-term stress and how it can affect mental health.

Eventually, I hope that this research will also provide understanding for the people who are working in the reception centres and/or with asylum seekers of the types of stress and its effects that their clients can be facing. However, I want to emphasise that the purpose of this study is not to seek cure or heal the stress or mental health issues that the asylum seekers are experiencing in their current lives or underestimate the possible trauma or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as calling it stress. I will write more about the stress that and asylum seeker can be experiencing and what is the difference between PTSD and stress in part 3.3.

Instead, the aim of this thesis is to raise awareness of stress, its affect to mental health and life overall and provide simple stress management tools for the participant's everyday lives in order to reach greater wellbeing for the mind.

2.3. Reliability and ethical principles

Asylum seekers are very sensitive group of clients, so it was important to keep ethical principles in mind throughout the whole thesis project, especially since I and the participants do not share the same mother language. As a researcher, I followed the basic ethical guiding of the Finnish Advisory Board on research integrity. Practically, this mean that as a researcher I followed the principles that are accepted by the research Finnish Advisory Board of research integrity, such as meticulousness, honesty and accuracy when conducting the research and evaluating the research results. (Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity, 2012, 30)

I applied research permit from Luona Oy before starting the functional part of the thesis. In the research permit I specified how I will ensure the anonymity of the participants, what kind of data I am collecting from the participants and why, as well as how I am paying attention to the ethical principles whilst conducting my research. The research permit was accepted by Luona Oy and I was given comments and suggestion for my research, which were similar to the ones that I am explaining in this chapter.

The participants anonymity was honoured during this research and they cannot be recognized from the final thesis. Participant's names were not used in the final thesis and their experiences were not specified for each session, due small group sizing of the sessions, in order to secure the participant's anonymity. Also, the participants were informed that the thesis will be eventually public and published in the Theseus - database.

The participants signed participation agreement letter when attending to their first session. As the participants signed the letter, they noted that they are taking part to the intervention voluntarily and therefore they can cancel their attendance at any time. Also, in the participation agreement letter it was explained that their attendance to the intervention does not have anything to do with Luona Oy or with the decision of their asylum application. Also, it explained that I, as a student and as a researcher have nothing to do with Luona Oy and I am obligated with confidentiality and therefore I will not pass on any information what the participants shared with me to Luona Oy or to others.

With asylum seekers it is important to ensure the participant's comprehension throughout the research in order to get reliable research results. To ensure the comprehension, the participation agreement letter, information letter and overall communication is clear and ensured with using translation. The mindfulness sessions were kept in English and Finnish, and also translated

by the other participants to another, in other languages, if needed. As an example, the information letter of the mindfulness intervention was also made as a video and translated in Arabic.

As the functional part started, we discussed and agreed on some basic principles and rules for the group with the participants. These principles were the idea of safer space; the group is confidential and therefore everything we share in the group discussions will stay in the group.

One of the main ethical concerns to keep in mind whilst doing this intervention was how to ensure that the space feels safe enough to feel all the emotions and feelings that might arise whilst or after the mindfulness practices. To be able to respond and observe the needs of the participants, it is crucial that mindfulness session's group sizing of each session is small, in order to make the space feel as safe as possible to express their emotions and feelings. Another reason for a small group sizing is that the translation can be assured. For practices in which one careful concentration is required in order to relax and understand the purpose of the practice, the environment and its suitability for the practices is extremely important.

Additionally, I emphasised that these practices might not suit for everyone, as mindfulness always require stillness and self-reflection of some sort, which then can arise unwanted repressed emotions into the surface. However, eventually that is the purpose of the mindfulness practices too - to eventually start to process those feelings and have a clearer, more objective view over them and eventually have control over them.

As an instructor, it is important to communicate clearly what kind of emotions might arise whilst doing mindfulness practices and how to respond to it. It is also important to communicate clearly, that the group is voluntary, and if such difficult feelings occur, the participant is not obligated to stay in the session or share the experiences with others.

Most importantly, it is crucial to understand that another person should not encourage another to express or reflect their unwanted, repressed, trauma related feelings and memories if they are not independently ready to. Therefore, it is important that the instructor knows how to instruct mindfulness class and vulnerable group of participants, as well as how to respond if participant reacts surprisingly to the practices.

3 Theoretical framework

In this chapter I explain the theoretical concepts that are essential for this intervention. These theoretical concepts are mindfulness, asylum seekers and the stress of an asylum seeker. As mindfulness is such a central main concept for this thesis, I will explain in chapter 3.1 what mindfulness means in general, and explain in chapter 4 in detail what I mean by mindfulness intervention and especially what kind of practices were used during this functional thesis intervention.

In chapter 3.2 I specify what I mean by asylum seekers and in chapter 3.3 I am explaining in detail what kind of stress asylum seeker can be experiencing according to different studies and also what is this difference between post traumatic disorder (PTSD) and stress that an asylum seeker can be going through in their lives.

3.1 Mindfulness

Mindfulness means a practice of the psychological process in which one purposely brings attention to in the present moment without judgment (Baer, 2003) This is developed through meditation or other mindfulness-based interventions and trainings. Practically, it can be different meditation, relaxation and stress management practices. Mindfulness meditation is practiced by fully paying attention to what is going on around us - instead of letting the mind to wonder on autopilot. (Väänänen 2014, 37)

Mindfulness as a word, translates from Pali term *sati* and Sanskrit term *smṛti*. The term references as remembering. In the mindfulness's frame of reference, this means that the practitioner remembers to return their constantly wondering mind towards a selected target, such as the breath. (Väänänen 2014, 37)

Mindfulness has roots in Buddhism and has been practiced in its oldest form as 'sati' - practice central in Buddhism - for centuries. The training of *sati* - is one of the core principles in Buddhist meditation practices meaning "moment to moment awareness of present events" and "remembering to be aware of something". However, mindfulness nowadays, Western practice is based on Zen Buddhism and modern vipassana meditation practices. (Wilson, 2014) In this chapter, I am focusing on what these practices mean nowadays, what we understand here as "mindfulness practice" or "mindfulness meditation".

Even though meditation has roots in ancient Buddhism, the western mindfulness practices, aim to cut away the religious side of the meditation practices, which are seen as necessary in the Buddhist traditions - such as moral values - instead it concentrates more on cultivating concentration and the sense of objective awareness of the present moment. (Väänänen 2014, 36)

The mindfulness practices, that have arrived in the western therapies, can be seen as the final node to in the wide linkage of Buddhist meditation practices that have evolved and integrated into different cultural contexts. As when used with clients in the field of social-and health services, the mindfulness meditation practices give us the opportunity to view meditation practices from a scientifically proven point of view. When viewing mindfulness practices, the aim is to step out of religious practices related to meditation and head towards scientifically proven method (Väänänen 2014, 36)

Possibly the most common mindfulness practice is as simple as “conscious breathing” - being fully aware of the inhale and the exhale. The point is to offer our whole entire attention to follow, observe and feel the breath. When mindfulness is practiced regularly, it can give us clearer view what is truly happening in the present moment, as we become more aware of our thoughts and feelings. Eventually, the aim is to be aware of our feelings and thoughts yet viewing them more objectively instead reacting over them immediately.

As practitioner becomes more aware of their feelings, they tend to have better stress-management skills as we practice viewing thoughts more objectively instead instantly responding to them. Pennanen describes it as:” It is the ability of being present in this moment. Being aware of it and accept the experience as it is. Our experiences are always rooted in this moment, and it is our own choice whether we aim to live in this moment or leave it without attention as being too difficult or too painful.” (Pennanen 2014, 97)

However, acceptance and objective viewing of our thoughts as concept is usually misunderstood in mindfulness and in its frame of reference. It is essential to note that, the practice’s aim is to accept the present moment as it is, yet it does not mean that one should embody the idea as in “nothing can be done” - mindset, as yet it is rather opposite. (Pennanen 2014, 97) As Kabat-Zinn (1994) describes it:” The acceptance means opening and being in that, what we have in our lives in the current moment. Usually, we act and respond just in the opposite way. The evolution has rewound our inner functioning in that manner, that we always aim to avoid suffering of all kinds. It is enough, if we observe this automatization, because then the change has already happened into the present moment” (Kabat-Zinn 1994, 22-23).

3.2 Asylum seekers

An asylum seeker is person who has left their country of origin and is requesting protection from another country in fear of persecution in their home country or in the country that they have their permanent residency. Commonly, asylum seeker is in fear of persecution due their origin, religion, nationality or political opinions. Another condition for asylum to be approved is that the person cannot rely on the authorities of their country of origin or permanent residency due the fear of persecution. (Migri, 2019.)

The Finnish Immigration Service (Migri) decides whether the applicant meets the grounds for getting the asylum. According to Migri, the criteria for asylum is defined in the Finnish law and international agreements, that Finland has accepted. When person has applied for asylum on arrival to Finland, they are usually located to reception centre, until they will hear the decision regarding their asylum. (Migri, 2019.) When the authorities in Finland have received the person's application for asylum, asylum seeker is usually located at first to so called transit reception centre.

Commonly, transit centres are located nearby the Finnish Immigration Service and as the asylum seeker has had their first hearing according their asylum process by an authority in Migri. After, they are usually located to another reception centre, in which they will wait and live until they will hear their final decision according their application for asylum. (Migri, 2020.)

3.3 Stress of asylum seeker

In the world of today, increased amount of people are forced to leave their country of origin due human right violations, conflicts and persecutions. Europe has been the largest continent for forced migration: in 2015, 1 000 573 asylum seekers, refugees and migrants arrived in Europe across the Mediterranean Sea. (UNCHR, 2020.) Finland alone, received 32 476 asylum seekers in 2015. Nowadays, the situation is far more manageable. In 2019, Finland received 2 467 new asylum seekers. (Migri, 2020.)

Even though the number of incoming asylum seekers has settled for now, the receiving countries encounter still increasing amount of refugee and asylum seeker patients and clients in the social-and healthcare services, many of whom have experienced major adversity before, after and during their migration. (Turrini et al. 2017) Which is why, deeper understanding of this phenomenon is crucial for the social and healthcare professionals of today.

Most of the asylum seekers have faced stressful experiences during forced migration and during the resettlement process into new country. These stressful experiences make them vulnerable to several mental health conditions, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety. Research shows, that mental health disorders amongst asylum seekers and refugees appears to be generally high. (Turrini et al. 2017)

Finnish mental health institution also notes that asylum seeker can experience great amount of stress whilst waiting for the decision of their asylum. The process from applying for asylum till the day that asylum seeker will hear the final decision of their asylum, can take years. The waiting may cause long-term stress for asylum seekers. In addition, it is common that asylum seekers worry about the situation in their home country as well as their family members. (Suomen Mielenterveysseura, 2019.)

According to Finnish mental health institution, long-term stress that an asylum seeker can be experiencing, can cause physical symptoms, that can have great impact on one's everyday life. Symptoms can occur as difficulties in sleep, different kind of aches appearing in the body, difficulties of remembering and irritation. (Suomen Mielenterveysseura, 2019.)

Researches implemented the past decade has clarified and deepen the understanding of asylum seekers and especially the factors that influence their mental health wellbeing, recovery and wellbeing. The importance of reducing stress in the post-migratory context and promotion of resilience and the effect of trauma is extremely important during and prior migration. (Turrini et al. 2017). This is crucial, as if asylum seeker will not learn tools to cope with stress, new way of living and worry - it is possible that the person falls ill with depression (Suomen mielen-terveysseura, 2019.)

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is common amongst asylum seekers. (Turrini et al. 2017). PTSD is chronic psychological disorder that might develop after a traumatic event. Followed by traumatic event or events, it is also common that person has other symptoms of reexperiencing the traumatic event. These symptoms can be nightmares, flashbacks or intense psychological distress to memories or reminders of the trauma. (Lanchester et al. 2016).

As in comparison, so called "regular stress" means pressure. All of us experience some sort of stress in our lives and individuals vary widely in their response to stress. Commonly, young and healthy individuals adapt and can recover from pressure created by stress naturally and therefore it does not become health issue. Yet, if stress is long-term, it can cause various physical conditions such as back pain, aches and sleeping issues and can damage health overall. (McEwen & Sapolsky, 2006)

4 Mindfulness Intervention

As mindfulness practices is such a wide term it is crucial to specify that which kind of mindfulness practices were used in this intervention. In this chapter I will be specify and justify the structure of the mindfulness intervention that I implemented during this thesis. Also, I shortly explain the type of mindfulness that was used in this intervention and its history. I also explain shortly what kind of practices were used and why such practices were chosen. As I explain in chapter 3.1 more closely what mindfulness is in general, in this chapter I am going into more depth to those specific practices that were practiced during the eight weeks of mindfulness.

Preliminary plan of the intervention	
Session 1	Introduction to mindfulness & conscious breath meditation practice
Session 2	Body scan - meditation & relaxation
Session 3	Gratitude meditation
Session 4	Visiting required destination - e.g. chapel of silence
Session 5	Self-acceptance meditation practice
Session 6	Movement-meditation & mindful yoga
Session 7	Bearing the unpredictably of life - meditation
Session 8	Closing the intervention & gratitude practice & interviews

Table 1. Preliminary plan of the intervention

Before starting the mindfulness sessions, I made a rough plan of the intervention practices for each week (Table 1). As the sessions started and I had met the participants, I used the survey about stress (Appendix 2) and the requests of the participants whilst planning the future mindfulness sessions. I did this because I wanted to ensure that the intervention would be modified to the needs of the participants every step of the way. I wanted to keep the participants, their needs and interest in the centre of the planning, therefore I had only roughly planned the intervention before meeting the participants.

Practices used in this intervention were modified from well-known MBSR - program which I will be opening up more in this chapter. MBSR - Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program is possibly the most cited method in mindfulness. It is formerly known as the stress reduction and relaxation program, yet nowadays it is widely known as MBSR. It was invented and founded by Jon Kabat-Zinn in 1979 to treat people who suffer from chronic pain. (Pennanen 2014, 96) Kabat-Zinn is often called the pioneer of mindfulness, as he brought the mindfulness practices to wider audience as well as a scientifically proven method to health and social services in the Western world. MBSR program and similar interventions for stress-reduction and relaxation are nowadays widely used in schools, prisons, hospitals and other institutions. (Pennanen 2014, 96)

As the MBSR-program started off with good results in the 1970's, a number of therapeutic applications based on mindfulness have been implemented, treating people with different psychological conditions. Mindfulness have been proved tool to help people to reduce depression, reduce stress, coping with anxiety and treatment for addicts, for example. (Pennanen 2014, 96). Thus, it is crucial to notice that even though mindfulness has plenty of positive effects and due its accessibility - as it can be implemented everywhere with no cost - it is no "magic pill" that will work for everyone or cure people with severe psychological conditions.

As explained more carefully in chapter 3.1., mindfulness in this thesis context means moment-by moment awareness, in which participants views objectively their thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, environment that they are in with "acceptance". I will not go into a great detail of each practice that I had planned for the intervention, yet all of the practices held, had the same core idea of mindfulness practice, in which participant should offer their full acceptive attention to their thoughts and feelings, without judging them. The key is to firstly learn to view the thoughts and feelings more objectively by using mindfulness practices, and therefore as the difficult emotions, sensations and feelings occur in everyday lives- such as anxious thoughts, pain, or discomfort - the participant is be able to apply non-judgemental awareness to these feelings as well.

As Kabat-Zinn describes the core idea of the mindfulness practice: "the important consequence of mindfulness practice is the realization that most sensations, thoughts, and emotions fluctuate, or are transient and are naturally passing by like waves. We shall not get too attached to our thoughts." (Kabat-Zinn 1994, 38.)

Usually, the MBSR-program is conducted as an 8 weeks long course. Within the 8 weeks, participants meet weekly for an average of 2 hours for instructions, practices of mindfulness meditation and discussions of stress, coping, and homework assignments. I wanted to carry out intervention that the length is 8 weeks, not only because the original MBSR-program is implemented in that manner, but also in order to have enough time to get to apprehend and observe how or if these practices can be properly implemented at reception centre and with asylum seekers. I also encouraged the participants to carry out short mindfulness practices in their everyday lives in order to get a better picture wheatear of not the different mindfulness

practices can be implemented into their lives and most importantly, to know if the practices can help them cope with stress that they experience in their daily life.

The commonly used practices in MBSR-program, were also implemented in the final mindfulness intervention. These practices are body scan meditation, sitting meditation and mindfulness-yoga. The body scan practice lasts about an hour, in which participant is lying on the floor with their eyes closed. The aim of the practice is to relax the body completely by bringing attention to each body part one at the time. The sensations occurring in the body are carefully observed, as objectively as possible.

Sitting meditation is done by sitting on a pillow or a chair, in upright wakeful posture, yet the aim is to relax with eyes closed. The practice is started with short 10-15 minutes sitting meditation, and gradually lengthened as the sitting and focusing eases over practice. Participant's attention is directed to the sensations of the breath. As the mind wanders during the practice, the participant should not judge the thoughts or get attached to them, instead the aim is to view the wondering thoughts objectively. The aim is to develop concentration and objective relation to our wondering thoughts and eventually this objective relation to wandering thoughts could be extended to view negative emotions and unpleasant sensations in the body with the same objective way of looking at the issue.

Mindful yoga practice, or mindful movement practice, is a sequence of relaxing hatha-yoga postures and stretches. The aim is to focus on the breath as the bodily postures change and observe objectively the sensation occurring in the body whilst practicing. The hatha-yoga postures are supposed to be mellow and relaxing, not proper exercise.

Each mindfulness session will last an hour including introduction to mindfulness and its core elements. Each mindfulness practice lasts itself about 15-25 minutes. Each session also includes discussion after the practice, in which participants can share experiences, questions can be asked and answered and discussed together.

4.1 Planning the intervention

At the start, I contacted Nihtisilta reception centre to ask if they are interested about the subject and to provide this intervention for their clients. After Luona Oy noted that they are interested, I applied for research permit from Luona Oy and provided all the appendices and materials that would be given to their clients. Then, I provided Nihtisilta the information letter of the intervention as paper version that was translated to Finnish and Arabic. The information of the intervention was also made as a short video. I also provided posters to Nihtisilta, so that the promotion of the intervention would be easier. Nihtisilta employees then shared the information, posters and the video about the intervention to their clients that they knew could be potentially interested in joining the intervention. Each step of the intervention planning can be seen in chart 1.

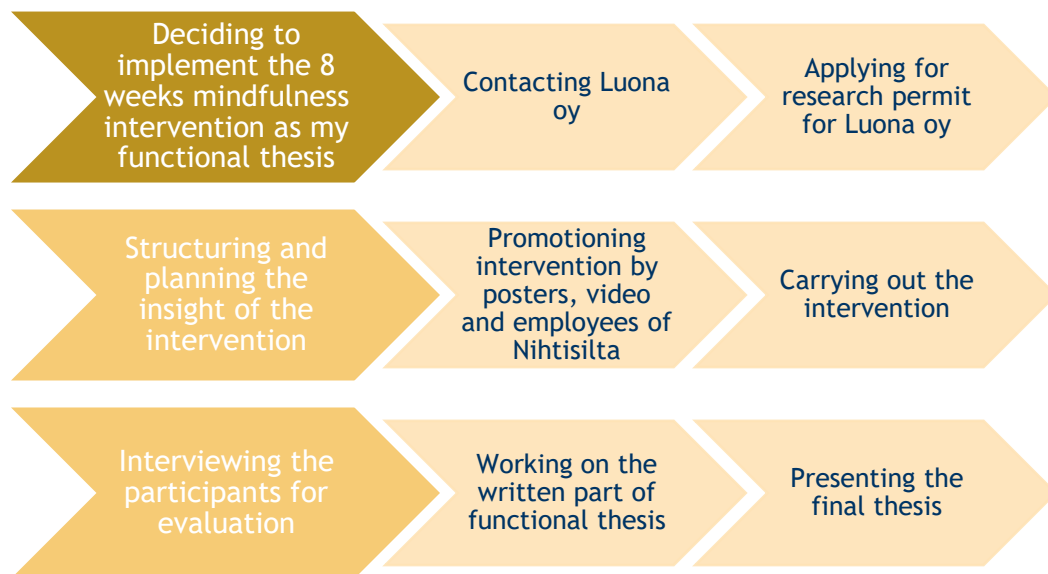


Chart 1. The planned course of the mindfulness intervention

I also did one pop-up visit to Nihtisilta in order to promote the intervention. That was 06.12.2019 in their living room area, where people were gathered to spend Finland's Independence Day celebration. We also viewed the different locations in which the mindfulness intervention could have been held in the reception centre. The plan was also to do pop-up visits in this same living room space before each session, to remind and promote the intervention.

The length was planned to be eight weeks, once a week within eight following weeks. Each session was planned to last an hour and including introduction to mindfulness, the subject of the day and discussion after the mindfulness practice. Each mindfulness practice on its own, was planned to last 15-25 minutes. The whole session was planned to last an hour.

Also, in order to be able to answer the needs of the participants in the best possible way, I planned to collect "smiley faces" (picture 1) after each mindfulness session. I planned to collect the smiley faces in order to understand overall feeling and success of each session. At the end of the functional part, I planned to collect feedback from the participants from the whole intervention and do the interviews, in order to understand if the intervention has been beneficial for the participants, and most importantly, whether the participants feel like that they have benefited from the mindfulness practices in their everyday lives.



Picture 1. Smiley faces that will be collected after each Mindfulness-session

The room in which the Mindfulness practices were implemented was set up in a way that we sat in the circle together, on a yoga mat. It was important to sit in a circle so that every participant feels included in the group and that it would be easier to share thoughts and feelings, as it is big part of the intervention. In addition, to make the room more comfortable, I shimmered the lights, played relaxing music and offered yoga blocs for comfort whilst sitting.

Also, I wanted to create a space in which everyone feels allowed and safer to share their feelings openly. I did this by openly discussing about what kind of feelings and emotions might arise whilst doing these practices and including everyone in the conversations whilst talking with the whole group. I also explained that the participants are allowed to leave the room anytime, if for example some difficult emotions arise, and they do not feel comfortable expressing them there. I also greeted and talked with everyone who joined the group and shared at least few words with them before the session and/or after so that each participant would feel seen and I would stay on track who I am implementing the intervention for, and for everyone who participated to feel welcomed.

I also planned the intervention based on the requests of the participants as well as based on data that I collected from the survey regarding the stress that asylum seekers can be experiencing their current lives (Appendix 2), each participant were asked to fill the survey when attending their first mindfulness session. They are also asked to fill the acceptance letter for the intervention.

4.2 Implementation

In this chapter, I am explaining in detail how the actual implementation of the intervention was carried out. I will explain the different stages of the intervention and the intervention schedule can be seen in the chart 2. Later in this chapter, I am explaining the details of the intervention, such as how many people took part of this intervention and what was the content of the intervention at the end. I will go to details of the experiences of the intervention participants in chapter 5.

The first session of the intervention was held on 29.01.2020. All the participants were clients of Nihtisilta. The whole intervention had all together 13 participants. I will not divide the number of participants of each week as in some weeks the group sizing was so small that their anonymity could not be ensured.

In the first session, each participant got to know about the intervention from seeing the poster about it in the walls of the reception centre and joined as they were curious about the intervention. Later, during the intervention I required many participants from the reception centre's living room area, before each session, where I went to promote each session to their living-room area in the reception centre to promote the intervention.

The main language that was used in the intervention session was English. Most of the sessions were translated also to Finnish, and if there were participants that did not understand either of those languages well, but wanted to join, the translation was made by another participant in the group. Most of the participants did speak English or Finnish very well, so the translation was not an issue, however sometimes it was challenging as it took plenty of time from each session, whilst making sure that everyone follows the instructions.

Every session started with an introduction of what mindfulness is, what is the purpose of the intervention and who am I as a student and as a researcher. Each participant had a chance to introduce themselves and tell why they are interested to join the session, if willing. At the start of each session there were a general discussion about how much the participants knew about mindfulness or different stress-management practices. After the introduction talk, I would introduce the theme of the day and the practice that would be implemented and guide the participants through it.

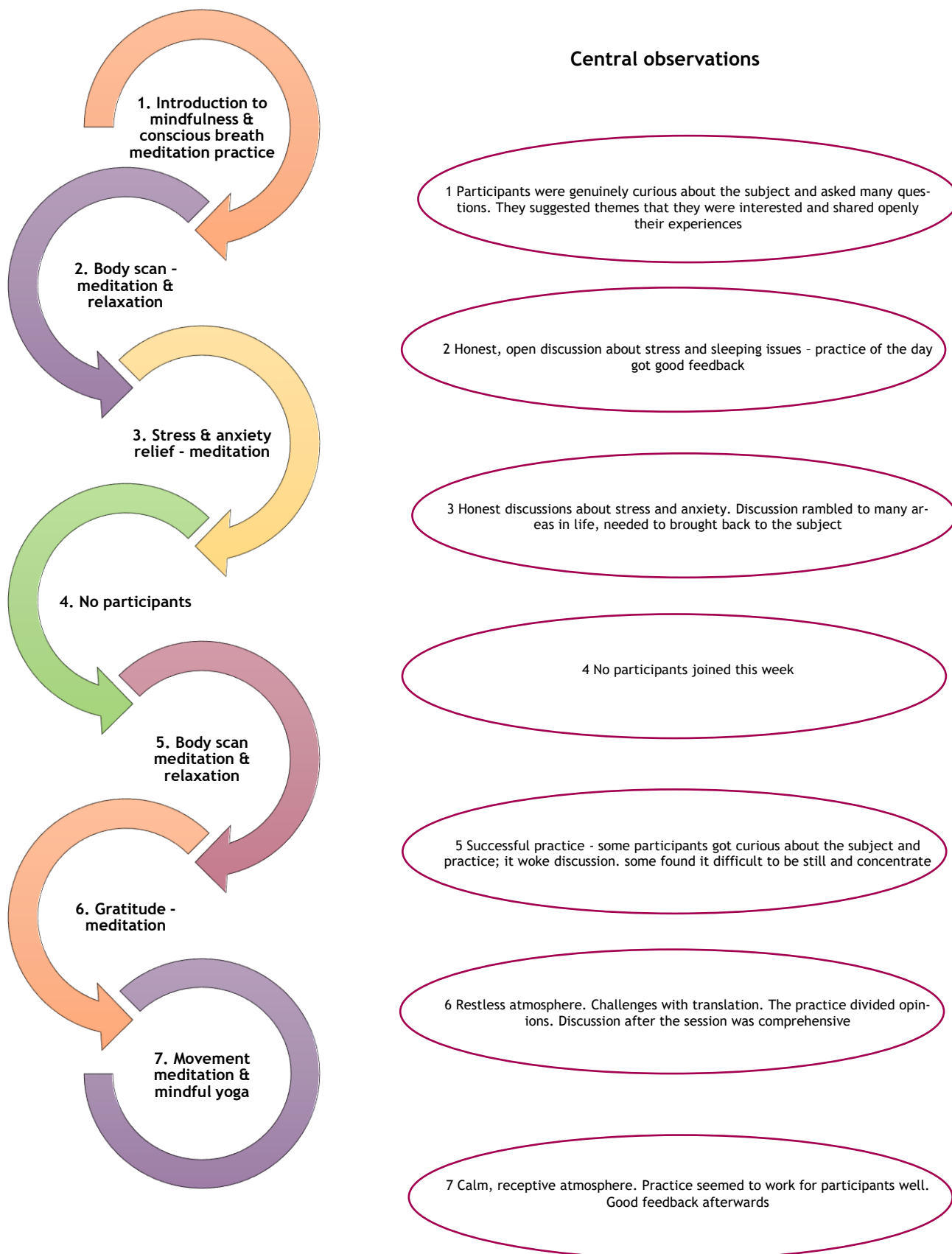


Chart 3: Implemented intervention

The intervention that was implemented can be seen in Chart 3. The chart is a visual overview of the intervention and the most central observations of each session.

Before almost each session, I went to meet clients in the reception centre's living room - area. There I informed and promoted the mindfulness sessions and discussed with clients about it. Most of the clients who were gathered to the living room area were not interested to join, but I always found someone who got eager to join. Whilst I talked with the clients in the living room area, I observed that some of the clients were interested, but eventually did not join as they told me that they did not understand English or Finnish well enough. With some participants we solved this using translation by another participant in the session. Some clients also shared that they are interested, but they do not feel like sharing anything in the group nor they want to talk with other people in the group. To these clients I explained in detail that they are still very welcome to join the group, and that they can leave anytime if the practices feel uncomfortable and that they are not obligated to share anything to anyone else. Some of these clients eventually joined the sessions, but some of them ended up leaving early, so I did not get their signature to the acceptance letter, nor I calculated them in the number of final participants, and therefore I will not be able to use their experience in this research.

Also, when the session had new participants, general information of what mindfulness is and what is the purpose of the intervention was held. I modified some of the sessions after meeting and discussing with the participants at the start of the session, as sometimes participant would ask me to do some practice to ease stress according to some specific theme. As an example, if a participant would share that they struggle with sleeping issues and anxiety, I changed the practice of the day to a practice that could be helpful for sleeping issues, if I observed that it would be good for the other participants too. In every planning and implementation stage, I wanted to make sure that the intervention is based on the needs and interest of the participants. I did not want to just implement sessions based on my interests, instead I wanted to keep the clients in the focus of the implementation and hear their suggestions and interests.

As I collected the surveys from clients, I started to have clearer picture of the participants and what kind of mindfulness practices could be used. For example, many participants answered in the survey that they have difficulties to fall asleep almost always. Therefore, I planned and instructed the "body scan relaxation" - practice twice during the intervention, as all of the sessions had some new participants. That particular practice aims to relax the whole body completely and can be used to relax before going to sleep.

The mindfulness practices itself lasted about 15-25 minutes, so big part of the sessions was the discussion before and after the practice. As the subject itself is rather sensitive, I observed that group sizing should be very small in order for me to be able to fully be present and talk with all the participants. The number of participants in the sessions varied a lot, but most of the sessions had 3-5 participants. Like mentioned before, I did not want to specify the number of participants of each session, in order to ensure the anonymity of the feedback of the sessions. Small group sizes ended up being really fortunate, as I observed that then everyone had a

chance to share their opinion and feel seen. Also, translation took a lot of time from each session, so if the group sizing would have been bigger, it could have been difficult to implement.

After the practice of the day, we discussed how the practice had gone and talked about questions that had come up whilst practicing. In each discussion, I wanted to encourage each participant to share honestly and openly how they felt during the practice. The participants were also encouraged not only to share their opinion about the practice of the day, but also to share their wishes of what kind of practices they would like to try in the upcoming weeks.

The sessions were planned to last an hour, but soon I realized that an hour was too short, and all the session ended up being closer to 1,5 hours. I observed this to be fine with the participants, as almost each session some of the participants wanted to stay overtime and continue the discussion about the subjects that had risen in the group discussions. As my observation, it shows that this kind of practices can help some of the asylum seekers to find suitable stress management practices, as most of the participants were really eager to learn more and discuss these subjects with me and the group.

The fourth session of the intervention was not held as there were no participants that were eager to join, and the last session got cancelled due the global epidemic, Coronavirus. So, eventually only six mindfulness sessions were implemented for Nihtisilta clients. The week that I was supposed to have the last session, I contacted Nihtisilta and agreed with one the employee's that due to all of our safety, the last class should be cancelled. We agreed with one of the employees of Nihtisilta that they will inform their clients about the cancellation of the last session. We did not reschedule the session as the Coronavirus situation is extremely unpredictable at the moment, as no one knows how the situation with the virus will evolve and when similar group gatherings would be possible to be implemented again.

5 Feedback and evaluation

In this chapter, I write in detail about the outcome of this thesis. I am explaining how and why I used the intervention diary in chapter 5.1. and survey about stress. In chapter 5.2 I am writing about the feedback that I received from the asylum seekers. I will also write about the feedback that I received from the asylum seekers in the chapter 5.2. because the last session was supposed to be focused on interviews and feedback, yet due to the global Corona virus pandemic, the last session was cancelled. Therefore, the feedback that I am introducing here, is collected verbally from the participants after each session. Lastly, I am writing self-assessment for this thesis.

5.1. Intervention-diary, survey about stress and discussion with clients

In this chapter, I am explaining the insights of my intervention diary and reflecting the participant's answers to survey about stress (Appendix 2) that I collected from each participant. Whilst the intervention, I used the survey about stress in order to understand better which practices would suit the participants in the best possible way.

As the research continued, I decided not to hold interviews after the intervention. This was due to a realization, that after and during each session, we talked about the practices openly with the participants and what had been experienced during the practices. I also conducted my thesis supervisor and she recommended to leave out the interviews as she thought that I already have enough data, the observations and discussions with participants, to support my thesis. I used the intervention diary to remember all central observations of each session. I did this in order to remember what the feedback had been like and also in order to understand better what kind of practices could suit for the participants in the best way. This intervention diary was kept in private space and no names were used whilst writing it.

As I did not hold the final interviews, I am relating to the verbal feedback that I got from the participants. Most of the feedback of the sessions were positive and people were eager to try whether these practices could help them to manage their stress. Many participants shared that they join the session as they had sleeping issues and they wanted to try whether the practices could help them. Another common reason to join the group was overall anxiety. These two themes were the most common answers in the survey about stress that I collected from the participants.

According to the survey about stress in the daily life (Appendix 2) almost each participant felt anxious almost always or really often. Thus, the most common reason to join the mindfulness intervention was sleeping issues, according to the survey and verbal feedback that I got from the participants. Almost each participant answered in the survey that they have difficulties falling asleep almost always.

After collecting these surveys, I adjusted the intervention. I did the "body scan-meditation" twice during the intervention, that is often used to relax before going to sleep and can be used to fall asleep easier, as participants constantly shared that they would like to learn practices to help with sleeping issues. Participants were asking specifying information and details of some of the practices, especially the ones that aimed to relax the whole body - "the body scan" meditation. As they were curious about theme and practice, I recommended similar practices for them that they could find from internet for free, and therefore easily apply to their everyday lives.

Most common subject discussed during the session discussion were sleeping issues, anxiety and its symptoms and anxiety about the future. Many participants also wanted to share the symptoms of the anxiety and how it feels in their body, and what it causes them. Almost every participant answered the survey about stress (Appendix 2) that they feel anxious about the future almost always. Many participants also verbally shared that they feel anxious because they like “stuck” - whilst they are waiting the decision of their asylum application. Many participants also shared and answered the survey that they find it difficult to stay present in the present moment and focus.

According to observations, participants were really eager to share different opinions and concerns related to the themes. Some people were eager, yet they had suspicions whether mindfulness practices have religious purposes. Almost each session some of the participants wanted to stay after the session and continue the discussion that we had had in the session. Many times, these discussions were the participants asking different practices that they could use to help their sleep and anxiety outside of the mindfulness class. I then suggested different practices that they could use to cope with the stress they experience. Mostly, the discussion went on after the session about sleeping issues and sleeping anxiety.

5.2 Feedback from the asylum seekers

As the group sizing was small in each session, I realized that the best possible way to collect the feedback is straight from the clients after each session, verbally. The feedback was collected during the intervention, after each session verbally. I also used the observation that I have documented to my intervention-diary, that I had held from the very start of the thesis, as a memory support.

As I mentioned before in chapter 5.1, I decided not to hold interviews after the intervention. Due the small group sizing, I had a chance to discuss with each participant individually. Also, the discussions after and during each session were genuine, and I realized that subjects we discussed with participants were very similar as the ones that I would have had asked in the interviews. For this same reason, I left out the smiley face - evaluation method (picture 1) as the group sizing in each class was small - collecting smiley faces after genuine, deep and personal conversation felt unnecessary and pretentious. Therefore, I am leaning to the feedback that I got verbally from the participants, which I will open in this chapter.

Overall, the feedback after the sessions were really good. After each session, some participants wanted to stay and continue the discussion about the themes. Most commonly, participants wanted to find practices for their sleeping issues.

One participant said after session:

“I think that these practices could help people who are in this situation. It would be good to find something that I can manage my stress.”

Yet of course I got critical feedback. Example of the critical comment followed by critical discussion afterwards after gratitude meditation:

“I do not see, how this could help me. I feel so anxious about what have happened to me in the past, and I cannot stop thinking about it. When I close my eyes, I only focus on the things that make me anxious”

However, to the same practice another participant said:

“This make me feel grateful of the things that I have now in my life. I was thinking about my mom. It feels peaceful and I feel joyful.

Therefore, it can be said that these practices are not suitable for all clients in the reception centres, which was expected. There were some participants, that joined the session at the start, but left in the middle of the session - as I did not get chance to speak with comprehensively, I do not know whether it was due to their lack of understanding, or due to other unsuitability of the practice. Also, I observed that some participants struggled with understanding the whole concept of relaxation or stress management. It seemed to be challenging to understand why exactly mindfulness practices could be good. However, many participants eventually understood, why such practices could be beneficial as I linked them to the stress and anxiety and gave examples how the stress can feel in the body. Describing the symptoms appearing in the body caused by stress and anxiety seemed to work as link between the purpose of the practice.

According to my observations during the sessions, especially the relaxation techniques used in this intervention seemed to work well for the participants. There seemed to be need for relaxation in their lives. After each session at least two clients said that they think it relaxed them and that they could see themselves using those practices again. I observed that therefore, there is a need relaxation practices in their everyday lives.

One participant shared after the body scan -meditation session:

“I have not been able to fall asleep without sleeping pills, but now I did. I don’t know what happened. I just followed your voice and I fell asleep”

Another comment after the second body scan mediation:

“I feel peaceful. I felt like my whole body relaxed. I want to try this before going to sleep tonight.”

Also, the feedback after mindful movement session was good. I observed the session to suit the participants well, as it conducted mellow movement that aimed to relax and stretch the body. The comments after the mindful movement practice from three different participants:

“It felt like...peace”

“Felt like my body opened. Somehow felt like the body and mind is together”

“It gave me similar feeling that I get after I pray.
I feel calm and at peace.”

Also, some participants requested continuance for the sessions. This I observed to be proof that there is need for this kind on practices in the reception centre. I observed that many participants benefited from mindfulness practices, some maybe momentarily, yet many were interested to find practices for their daily lives. Even though the practices can be difficult to approach to some participants, many participants seemed eager to know more about the practices and try them in their everyday lives. The eagerness and openness of the participants during the sessions was genuine and many participants were aware that they experience lot of stress yet wanted to know more and learn how to cope with it.

5.3 Self-Assessment

Even though I have experience in instructing yoga classes for asylum seekers in reception centres before, this thesis process was a big learning experience for me. I was surprised of the amount of work that this whole thesis process took. All in all, I have used a huge number of hours whilst preparing, planning and instructing the mindfulness classes and the whole entire written thesis process has also been long and required a lot of hours, even though I aimed to keep this very compact. However, I am grateful that I went on this path with my thesis and got to chance to meet all the people who participated in my sessions. After each class, I was blown away by the depth of the conversations that participants were willing to go and how openly they welcomed this new subject and that some participants were already well aware of mindfulness practices and really curious to learn more.

Even though I personally feel that mindfulness practices could be used and be beneficial for almost everyone - especially in social services - I am well aware that especially with vulnerable client groups such as asylum seekers, it is crucial to stay with methods that can be proved scientifically, explained clearly and simply, and also watch not to generalize the asylum seekers and their stress into one group. Also, what I found out whilst doing this intervention, is that mindfulness and its practices can raise prejudices in people. It is somehow seen as “useless, unnecessary and boring” - according to my opinion and what I have seen that people’s reactions are. However, many people who are willing to try the practices are usually surprised and realize that they have done some mindfulness practices already in their lives but never thought them as “mindfulness practice”. Therefore, I think for the instructor, it is crucial to stand after your words and believe in the practice that you are teaching, which is one of the biggest teachings for me whilst this intervention. Even if it does not work for everyone, yet it can work for some. And for the one’s it works; I know they can find plenty of benefits and discover a useful tool that they can use in their everyday lives in this busy world of ours that never stops.

Instructing these classes was rather challenging at times. I learned a lot while instructing sessions for people with such big variety in their backgrounds. I learned that clear communication and translation is essential. The translation was challenging and took lot time from of each session, and therefore it caused some distraction to the theme and concentration of participants, which then required consistency whilst instructing from me. Sometimes participants also reacted rather surprisingly to practices, and I learned how my own calm presence, open communication and clear further instructions could help such participants. I of course have still a lot to learn, but I learned that as I keep the instruction to the theme clear, specific and make sure that everyone understands, the participants feel calmer to experience and share their feelings and thoughts of the practices, even though the response to the practice would have been surprising or unwanted.

The functional part of this thesis was rather long, which allowed me to get used to environment and some participants, which showed to be very beneficial for the thesis process. With some participants, I felt that I was able to form genuine, open connection and they shared plenty of personal thoughts, feelings and details about their lives. Meeting the participants was definitely the highlight of the whole thesis process. I also got requested to continue these sessions from the participants. That was the best feedback that I could get as an instructor. There were many things that I could have done better, but overall, I was very pleased with the outcome - which was the feedback from the asylum seekers.

6 Conclusion & discussion

In this chapter, I am writing the conclusion wheatear or not mindfulness can be used for asylum seekers and the whole thesis in general. I am pondering the results of the thesis in relation to the aim of the thesis.

In my opinion, due my observations and based on the verbal feedback from the participants, mindfulness works as stress management practice for asylum seekers, whilst located in the reception centre. I also observed that there is a need for stress-reduction and relaxation within the asylum seekers in reception centre. This was also the aim of the thesis; to discover whether or not these practices could be used. Another aim was to raise awareness of stress, especially long-term stress and how it affects mental health. I also anticipated that this thesis intervention could provide easy and simple stress management tool for asylum seeker, that they could easy apply into their everyday lives. These aims were fulfilled during the intervention.

I cannot generalize that mindfulness practices could work for each asylum seeker or say that it would be beneficial for all, as this is a very small study, that but due to my experiences whilst these mindfulness classes - I observed that the participants were genuinely interested to seek for better wellbeing for the mind, to hear and learn more about stress, how it affects our minds and how to manage their stress in their lives. I also observed that there would be a need for this kind of weekly class, in which participants could openly share their thoughts, feelings and stresses about their lives and the stressor of their current life situation.

I think that mindfulness related stress management practices could and should be introduced to clients, in this case asylum seekers, who seek for stress management tools to their everyday lives. Most of the participants were looking for practices to help them manage their sleeping issues and anxiety. Many of these participants also shared that they have not found ease from medication or other provided methods of improvement and were looking for more tools for their wellbeing. Especially for these people, I think mindfulness practices is very beneficial to introduce.

As in this intervention there were many different practices implemented, so then some practices worked better than others. According to my observations, different relaxation practices and breathing practices worked well and got good feedback from the participants. Also, a specific practice; I observed that the mindful movement class could be beneficial and needed. The practice got really good feedback and I observed that it seemed to suit well for the participants, as there were not so many concepts to explain and instruct; it was easy to understand, internalize and follow as the language was not so central for the theme.

However, whilst implementing this intervention, I also observations that these practices do not suit everyone. For example, people with possible PTSD, or other trauma related mental health disorders can find some these practices difficult and uncomfortable, as there can be arising some suppressed emotions.

6.1 Further development ideas

In this chapter I will reflect what could have gone better and what is the importance and effectiveness of this kind of study. Even though the intervention did not go as planned, I still think that it was overall successful experience.

If I would conduct this kind of intervention with asylum seekers again, I would add a translator as one of the participants to be involved in the group. I found it many times challenging to instruct the class, do the translation and observe all at once. Many classes during this intervention was instructed only in English, because it was the strongest language to understand for all of the participants. Yet, many times the classes were instructed both in Finnish and English. The tough part was that if we agreed that one of the participants would translate for another participant- sometimes there were three languages spoken in the class. That was found to be too complex; to have the instructions in three languages, have enough time to share the experiences, to hear and observe each participant and to hear participant's thoughts, feelings and questions about the practices.

Additionally, I would consider very carefully where the intervention would be held physically. By this I mean the room or space in which the intervention would be implemented. The room in which this intervention was held was rather big, and noisy, as it was on the way to the common showers - there were plenty of people passing by the room which caused noise, which then caused shuttle restlessness. Therefore, the location of the mindfulness room is extremely important.

Also, as I have mentioned before in this thesis, for the future, the group sizing should be very small. With participants with huge variety in their backgrounds, small group sizing is essential in order to ensure proper translation and that each participant has a chance to share their opinions and feelings which is crucial for successful mindfulness session.

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Appendices

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Appendix 1: Participation agreement

Dear Participant,

I am Julia Taivalmäki, a final year student of Social Services in Laurea University of Applied Sciences. I am doing my bachelor thesis. For that, I am kindly asking your participation.

My thesis is a functional thesis where I will be leading a Mindfulness group that will meet in Nihtisilta for 8 times, within 8 following weeks. The group will be led in Finnish or English and/or translated to needed languages. The purpose of the group is to learn stress management and relaxation skills together that can be implemented into your everyday life. Your participation to the activity will be voluntary, therefore you can cancel your participation to the intervention at any time. When ready, thesis will be published in Theseus (www.theseus.fi) and it will be public. However, all data will be analysed and published anonymously, and I will not collect any specific information about you. The mindfulness group will be strictly confidential, and I will not pass on any information that you share with me to Luona Oy or to anyone else. Before and after the participation to the group, I will be asking about the levels of stress that you are facing in your life. At the end of the 8 weeks of I am hoping to interview you to understand better whether the mindfulness practices have helped you to manage your stress better.

I also want to note that your participation to the group, or myself as a student, does not have anything to do with Luona Oy or with your processes of the asylum seeker status. The core idea of the mindfulness group is to provide stress management skills and tools for your everyday life and also raise awareness of stress and how it can affect your mental health and therefore your everyday life. My thesis supervisor is Riikka Kanervo, and she and I will be glad to answer your questions regarding the thesis process. Contact details can be found below.

Thank you for your cooperation!

Julia Taivalmäki - The student and researcher of this thesis
julia.taivalmaki@laurea.student.fi

Riikka Kanervo - Senior lecturer & supervisor of this thesis
riikka.kanervo@laurea.fi

I assure that I am participating to this intervention voluntarily and I understand and agree what is mentioned above.

Name

Signature

Appendix 2: Survey about stress & open interview questions

Survey about stress in daily life

Below you can find collection of statements about different experiences of a daily life.

Please fill the survey by using the scale from 1-6 of how often or not you feel like this.

Fill **X** to a right number box.

Almost always 1	1	2	3	4	5	6
Really often 2						
Semi often 3						
Not so often 4						
Quite rarely 5						
Almost never 6						
It is difficult for me to stay in the present moment						
I tend not to notice physical tensions or discomfort until they really grab my attention						
I do activities and tasks without being attentive on them						
I found it hard to stay focused what is happening in the current moment						
I am often worrying about the future or the past						
I have difficulties to fall asleep						
I feel anxious						
I have short temper						
I feel irritated by others						
I found it difficult to get organized in my daily tasks						
I don't feel well rested in the morning when I wake up						
I feel anxious about the future						
I feel that I have no control over my own life						

- How did you feel before you did mindfulness practices?
- How did you feel after mindfulness practices?
- Did you feel increased amount of anxiety, happiness, other feelings after doing the mindfulness practices?
- Have the mindfulness practices helped your stress that you experience in your life, if yes, how? If not, why do you think the practices are not suitable?
- Did you do mindfulness practices in between the sessions, if yes, how often?
- Do you think that mindfulness practices can help other asylum seekers?
- What was good about the Mindfulness intervention? What was not good?

Appendix 3: Information letter of the intervention

This information letter is for the clients, to be used to find interested participants for the intervention. Information letter will be translated to needed languages and also can be made as a video. The purpose of this information letter is to explain shortly and simply, what a social service student is, who am I and what is the purpose of the thesis and the intervention that I am doing. Also, the exact details, like place and time for the intervention will be filled later when all the details are confirmed.

Hello!

I am Julia Taivalmäki, a social service student from Laurea University of Applied Sciences. I want to tell you a little bit about myself and my thesis project that I will be doing in Nihtisilta reception centre. I am about to be professional of social services, it is similar to social worker - but not exactly. In Finnish we call this profession Sosionomi. Sosionomi profession means that I can work with children, families, people with disabilities or for example in the reception centres - with people like yourself. Sosionomi works with different people that need support in some way in their lives. In my studies, writing a thesis and this kind of thesis project is mandatory, but the subject of it is free of choice. I chose this subject because I am really interested in You and how we could provide better help and support for asylum seekers when they arrive to Finland.

I will be doing Mindfulness intervention in Nihtisilta starting from November 2019. This Mindfulness group will meet in Nihtisilta once a week for eight times. In the group, we will be learning about stress, how to handle stress and how to relax. The purpose for this group is to provide tools for your wellbeing and stress management into your everyday life. I am doing this thesis because I want to understand Your life better, and also provide information of stress that you are possibly experiencing for future social service students and professionals, so that I and them can understand your life situation better and how can we offer better support for your wellbeing in the future. But most importantly, this group is for You.

Everyone is welcome to the group, regardless of age or background. If you are curious to learn how to relax and learn stress management tools for your everyday life, you are very welcome to join!

I am looking forward meeting you!

Julia

Appendix 4: Intervention poster for the reception centre



The poster is titled "Mindfulness project" and features a teal lotus flower logo at the top left. The text is arranged in a clean, modern layout with a teal and orange color scheme. A teal box highlights the class times: "7:00 - 8:00 PM Every Wednesday". The location and schedule are listed as "Vanha kellarin pelihuone KESKIVIKKOISIN klo 19.00 - 20.00". The first class is on 29.1.2020, and the last class is on 18.3. A paragraph of text describes the project's goals, and a closing line says "You are very welcome to join!". A large teal lotus flower is at the bottom.

Mindfulness project

Come to learn basic stress management skills and relax!

**7:00 - 8:00 PM
Every Wednesday**

First class 29.1.2020
Drop in and try it!

Vanha kellarin pelihuone
KESKIVIKKOISIN
klo 19.00 - 20.00

First class 29.1.2020
5.2.
12.2.
19.2.
26.2.
4.3.
11.3.
Last class 18.3.

In mindfulness project we will learn basic stress management skills, breathing techniques and relaxation for your every day life. These techniques can help for example with anxiety, sleeping issues and stress.

You are very welcome to join!