

RUNNING HEAD: MINDFULNESS IN YOUNG WOMEN

In Her Own Skin: Mindfulness For Young Women

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Abstract

Based on the risks that body dissatisfaction poses for young women, it is necessary to find effective and sustainable ways in which body satisfaction can be promoted within young women in college. This study explores the changes in key variables associated with body image through mindfulness based practices amongst female students in a residence hall at the University of Colorado Boulder, as well as the feasibility of holding mindfulness classes in college dorms. First year students ($N=17$) of a college residence hall were recruited and completed baseline and post class measures associated with body image. The differences in outcome measures were not found to be statistically significant. Brief exposure to mindfulness in regards to body image may not be effective in helping first year female students gain significant changes associated with body satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Future studies must look at a larger sample, a longer follow up period, and ways to make use of existing campus spaces to create spaces of sustainable mindfulness practices in order to help promote healthier body perceptions at the university.

Keywords: Mindfulness, Body Dissatisfaction, Self-Compassion, Body Shame, Awareness, Community, Acceptance,

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Amongst young women, body image dissatisfaction is a prevalent issue, with over half stating that they engage in weight control behaviors that are unhealthy, such as taking laxatives, and skipping meals (Neumark-Sztainer, 2005). Body dissatisfaction has been associated with low self esteem and identified as a risk factor for anxiety and depression (Johnson and Wardle, 2005). Most often, research has found that females suffer from negative body image in greater levels than males, which have been linked to, higher rates of anorexia nervosa, binge eating disorders, and bulimia nervosa (Smink, Hoek and van Hoeken, 2012) The sociocultural theory suggests that the beauty standards of current society places great stress on the importance of the size of one's body and fat distribution (Cundall and Guo, 2017). Given the increased stress placed on women to "fit" this cultural standard of beauty, negative impacts have resulted both on the physical and mental health of young women (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997). Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate, highlighting the great burden they carry, and the need for programs that can help to reduce the amount of body dissatisfaction young women experience (Smink, Van Hoeken, and Hoek, 2012).

Based on the risks that body dissatisfaction poses for young women, it may be necessary to find effective and sustainable ways in which body satisfaction can be promoted within young women. College campuses are uniquely designed with residence halls that are structured to aid in helping create communities that support healthy body images (Smith-Jackson, Reel, and Thackeray, 2011). Mindfulness has been proven to be associated with a number of positive outcomes, including decreased anxiety/depression, pain, and increased self -regulation (Miller, Fletcher, and Kabat Zinn, 1995). Self-compassion has also been found to be closely linked to mindfulness, and is described as the practice of taking on a positive attitude towards oneself.

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Studies have shown that increases in self-compassion are associated with higher levels of self-esteem, psychological wellbeing, and cognitive functioning (Albertson, Neff, and Shackleford, 2014).

This study will evaluate the changes in key variables associated with body image through mindfulness practices surrounding body satisfaction and body dissatisfaction amongst female students in a residence hall at the University of Colorado Boulder, as well as the feasibility of holding mindfulness classes in college dorms.

The Historical Context Of The Use Of Mindfulness For Mental Health And Wellness

Mindfulness originates from Buddhism, where the Pail word *sati* refers to mindfulness. It is interpreted as a mindset of non-judgment and being able to observe without criticism, to see things without condemning them or judging them. It means to simply observe. When the mind is fully developed, mindfulness is able to see the three attributes of existence: soul, impermanence, and suffering directly, without the conscious thought getting in the way (Thera, 1960). It reminds us of what we ought to be doing, to see things as they really are, and to understand the nature of all phenomena. Non-judgment is seen as a key feature of mindfulness that relates to body image through the idea observation without criticism (Dijkstra and Barelds, 2011). This does not imply that judgment ceases to exist; rather, negative judgment towards one's appearance may lessen both in intensity and frequency and one learns to not react as profoundly to thoughts and experiences that can be overwhelming (Baer et al., 2006). It may be that a habituation effect, known as a decreased response to repeated exposure, leads to improved body satisfaction. An individual may experience thoughts that are judgmental towards their appearance, but in practicing mindfulness, there is no reaction in response to those negative thoughts. Frankl Viktor describes non-reactivity as "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our

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power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom” (Cheal, 2012 p.324). Over time these thoughts become less upsetting and in this way mindfulness may lead to improved body satisfaction over time.

The Mindfulness Movement came into prominence in the U.S., in part as a result of the work of Jon Kabat- Zinn, who developed Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) (Samuelson, Carmody, Kabat-Zin, and Bratt., 2007). Kabat-Zinn started a clinical trial, placing patients from the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in a 10-week program consisting of yoga, meditation and retreats. His ultimate goal was to provide these patients with self-regulation skills to help cope with the chronic pain that resulted from their medical conditions. His approach made meditation accessible in secular contexts and acceptable to Westerners who may have been resistant to such practices due to a perceived pressure to conform to a religion or philosophy. Applying these practices in an academic medical center also validated the practice in the scientific domain. In 1982, his first research article was published on mindfulness and the treatment of pain, his findings stated that almost all of 51 chronic pain patients reported “great” to “moderate” pain reduction. Even if all of their pain was not reduced, they experienced less depression, anxiety and tension compared to before the clinical trial (Kabat-Zinn, Lipworth and Burney, 1985).

More than 35 -years have passed since Jon Kabat-Zinn published his first paper on his findings about the effectiveness of mediation in reducing stress at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center. Since then more than 20,000 patients have participated in the University of Massachusetts Medical Center Program and today mindfulness is being used for a wide range of medical conditions, from cancer to irritable bowel syndrome. The treatment protocol has become a cornerstone of the mental health field, forming a strong connection with

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psychotherapeutic approaches like mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT), mindfulness-based relapse prevention (MBRP), mindfulness-based trauma therapy (MBTT), and mindfulness-based eating awareness training (MB-EAT).

The Mindfulness Movement has taken the West by a storm. In cities like Boulder, products alluding to “Mindfulness” or media claiming that “Mindful Meditation” can cure you of all of your unhappiness and discontent are ubiquitous. Whether it is in health, business, or education, the Mindfulness Movement surely is taking root here in the West (Wylie, 2015). When meditation was first popularized the U.S. during the 1960s and 70s, the goal was enlightenment (Ross, 2016). As it has become more mainstream in recent decades and has been verified for a range of everyday benefits by the scientific community (Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, and Walach, 2004), it has diverged from the center of practice and knowledge (known as the dharma center) and has entered into various arenas, including educational institutions, as a method for increasing attention and reducing stress. As this movement gains momentum and continues to be more frequently encountered in everyday life, it may be important to step back and look at how college students are exposed to mindfulness and the benefits it may bring for them at a crucial point in their lives (Arnett, 2007).

Current Mindfulness Research On College Campuses

A student’s first year of college is a time of exciting and tremendous change. They build the skills and make connections that carry them throughout their years of college, and it is the first year experience that is crucial in predicting how successful these students will be. Many students decide to leave an institution due to a poor psychosocial fit (Kuh et al., 2016). Students with strong high school academic performance are less likely to return after the first year of college and those who are highly creative and capable are leaving before even earning a degree

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(Cox, 2009). A study conducted by Kuh et al. (2016) looked at the influence of student engagement on first year college grades and persistence. The authors came to two very important conclusions. The first was that engaging in purposeful activities was positively correlated with academic achievement, which was measured by grades and remaining at the institution for a second year. The second was that a compensatory effect was noted on grades and persistence as a result of engagement. Given that engagement in purposeful activities has been shown to be influential in determining whether a student continues on at the same institution for a second year, what might these purposeful activities look like at the University of Colorado Boulder and how might they enhance students' experiences in their first year?

Studies previously have looked at how mindfulness can help to promote healthy transitions into college, as first year students have been found to have higher levels of chronic stress compared to other classes of students (Egan and Moreno, 2011). These high levels of stress can lead to a lack of coping skills, damaging relationships, and poor academic performance (Schulenberg, Sameroff, and Cicchetti, 2004). Very few studies have looked at how mindfulness based programs can influence students in their first year of college (Dvorakova et al., 2017). One study found that for students who attended mindfulness programs in their first semester, reported having higher levels of life satisfaction and lower levels of anxiety and depression (Schulenberg, Sameroff, and Cicchetti, 2004). Mindfulness is seen as having the ability to provide students with the skills and tools necessary to sit with and overcome discomfort and the many challenging experiences college brings. Instead of reacting emotionally to these experiences, they are able to regulate their emotions, resulting in feelings of empowerment and higher levels of self-confidence (Shapiro, Brown, and Astin, 2011). Moving successfully through the developmental

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period of emerging adulthood, is a predictor of adult success, and the potential benefits of mindfulness programs in this period must be explored further (Masten et al., 2004).

Body Image Amongst College Women

A young woman's college years are acknowledged as a dynamic period of psychological growth. Research suggests that 75% of college students are unhappy with their body weight, and 90% of women on college campuses reported that they engaged in dieting habits. Within that 90%, roughly 22% stated that they engaged in diets "often," or "always" (National Eating Disorders Association, 2013). During this time, college students are starting to create an identity of their own, set the foundation for their intellectual development and success, while embodying a set of views and virtues (Patton, Renn, Guido, and Quaye, 2016). Chickering and Reisser's Theory on student development during an individual's college years identified seven vectors of development that students experience in the college environment, which can affect them socially, physically, emotionally, and intellectually during the formation of their identity. During their freshman year and into their sophomore year, individuals are seen as developing competence, learning to manage emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence and developing mature interpersonal relationships. At the end of their sophomore year and well into their junior year, individuals are establishing their identity, which comes primarily through how they see their body. During the junior and senior year, they engaged in developing purpose and integrity. It is these vectors that are said to drive growth and development in the personalities of college individuals (Chickering and Linda, 1993).

In the context of this developmental framework, interventions and programs during the freshman or sophomore year may help young women build a stronger sense of self and be protected against body image concerns. Women with lower levels of self-compassion towards

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themselves experience greater amounts of body surveillance and shame, as well as negative eating behaviors along with depression. Furthermore, body surveillance, the habitual monitoring of one's body, is positively correlated with body shame and negative eating attitudes (Liss and Erchull, 2015). A healthy body must start with a healthy mind (Sinnard, 2016). But it is difficult for women to achieve these aims when they are constantly surveying themselves from the perspectives of outsiders. In doing so, they continually find that their bodies are lacking in comparison to social standards, such as beauty and thinness. Thus they are more susceptible to engaging in body shaming of themselves (McKinley and Hide, 1996; Moradi and Huang, 2008).

Self-compassion has been identified as a key protective factor in studies associated with body image (Neff, Rude and Kirkpatrick, 2007). It is seen as a tool used to interrupt the process in which body surveillance translates to body shame (Liss and Erchull, 2015). The level of symptoms associated with body image dissatisfaction is wide and can range from no symptoms to extreme symptoms. But if one's resilience is improved, body satisfaction may also improve (McGrath, Julie, and Caron, 2009). Research proposes that self-compassion guides one to be able to see them selves as deserving of compassion, it allows for increased sensitivity and attention, and decreased reactivity. Mindfulness can be used to expand one's views, to "illuminate" multiple perspectives and possibilities that allow for insight and peace. Mindfulness is seen as a key to unlocking the potential to be non-judgmental towards oneself, and open the door for acceptance for the body and the whole person (Stewart, 2004).

Mindfulness and Body Image on College Campuses

Studies on mindfulness as a way to combat body dissatisfaction and promote self-compassion in women have shown that the practices can be successful in helping women feel better about their bodies (Alberton, Neff, and Shackleford, 2014). Albertson, Neff, and

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Shackleford (2014) looked at a group ($N=98$) of young women ages 18-60 years, to assess how brief meditation interventions improve body satisfaction in multigenerational women. The study found significant differences between pre-intervention, post intervention, and three-month follow up in self report measures. A waitlist control group served as a comparison, along with baseline measures. Mindfulness practices such as compassionate body scans, affectionate breathing, and a loving kindness variation through audio intervention, was spread over three weeks, and associated with significant improvements in body appreciation. It was found that body appreciation was directly related to the number of days within a week during which the participant meditated, meaning that meditation time in audio intervention was correlated with greater gains in appreciation (Alberton, Neff, and Shackleford, 2014). The authors found that intervention decreased the participant's natural tendency to criticize their bodies. Instead of reacting judgmentally towards their bodies, they were encouraged and taught to react more kindly. The participants were able to see their bodies more clearly and with a greater sense of balance, without exaggeration. Participants were also able to lessen the shame they felt while taking a more compassionate stance towards themselves. In doing so, they were able to build a better framework, enabling them to understand their bodies and improve their perceptions. These positive effects were also found to carry through to the three-month follow up period.

The Objectification Theory proposes that, "women's bodies are socially constructed as objects to be watched and evaluated" (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997). Generating positive attitudes towards oneself prevents one from taking the body for granted and begins the process of being grateful towards the body. Other studies have similarly found that even brief exposure to self-compassion is significant enough to result in behavioral and perceptual changes. A group of 76 undergraduates were placed in a one-hour mindfulness session that occurred over four weeks,

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to assess how brief mindfulness interventions could potentially reduce the occurrence of binge drinking amongst college students. The study found that, after four weeks, students reported significantly lower rates of binge episodes, decreased alcohol consumption, a willingness to change alcohol usage habits, and increased dispositional mindfulness (Mermelstein and Garske, 2015). It is generally accepted in research, that there is a connection seen between body satisfaction and mindfulness, the specific mechanism in which this connection occurs is still widely unknown. Studies done by Pearson, Lawless, Brown and Bravo (2015), have explored possible mechanisms such as self-regulation and purpose that mediate the association between non-judgment and symptoms of depression. But the specific process by which more mindful individuals experience lower levels of body dissatisfaction is still an area that needs greater research (Pearson, Lawless, Brown and Bravo, 2015).

There have been no studies conducted at CU looking at mindfulness within residence halls. There have also been very few studies that look at how mindfulness practices and discussions impact body perceptions amongst first year female students. Previous research has looked mainly at women of all ages and used audio meditations, spread throughout a few weeks to measure changes in body satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Albertson, Neff, and Shackelford, 2014). Few studies have looked at how the hours of mindfulness practices impact students. Previous research has looked at the impacts of brief exposure of one-hour mindfulness-based practices over three to four weeks, but it may be worthwhile to investigate how a brief exposure of just four hours may or may not change student perceptions on body image, and whether there is any benefit to students from such a practice. There are also gaps in the current literature related to the influence of mindfulness in first year female college students during a crucial time of development known as emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2007). Mindfulness helps to promote

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cognitive flexibility, which in turn allows for self-reflection and awareness. Undergraduate institutions have the unique opportunity to use social interaction as a way of facilitating healthy changes in behavior. They have the advantage of using these interactions such as mindfulness programs to provide students with the tools to build healthy minds and bodies during key moments of development (Stumpf, 2017).

In Her Own Skin

This research project will explore the relationship between mindfulness practice and body image amongst female first year college students who live in a residence hall at the University of Colorado, Boulder. First year students in this study are defined as those who are in their first year here at CU (e.g., also including transfer students). We will explore the extent to which female residents who participate in mindfulness practices report higher levels of compassion and acceptance towards themselves after the session compared to before the session. Specifically, we seek to explore the extent to which participating in the mindfulness class is associated with increased scores on the Body Appreciation Scale, and the Self Compassion Scale, and decreased scores on the Contingencies of Self Worth based on Appearance Subscale, the Objectified Body Consciousness subscale of Body Shame, and the Body Shape Scale. The study also examines how community and discussion can help enhance the process of self-acceptance and compassion through a focus group with final reflection questions.

Methods

Participants

Female University of Colorado Boulder students ($N=17$) were recruited from one of the university residence halls using flyers, email distributions, class announcements, and word of mouth (i.e., study participants were invited to share study information and flyers among

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acquaintances). Participants were enrolled in the study across two-mindfulness half-day sessions in January 2019 ($N=4$) and March 2019 ($N=13$).

Procedures

Participants were invited to attend a half-day of mindfulness activities in one of the university residence halls for approximately four hours total including breaks. Participants were emailed a Qualtrics link to the consent form and baseline measures the morning of the mindfulness day session. If participants had not completed the online forms before the session, they were provided time at the beginning to complete those forms on a personal device (e.g., smart phone or laptop). After consent and baseline measures were completed, all participants were guided through a set of mindfulness practices led by a trained facilitator. The half-day included an introduction to mindfulness, a self-compassion meditation, a body scan meditation, and a session on mindful eating (see Appendix A for more details on the day's agenda). Each activity lasted approximately 10 to 15 minutes and was followed by discussions in dyads or small groups. Breaks in between activities incorporated body movement. Participants then provided feedback in a final reflection group discussion that lasted approximately 20 minutes, which was audio recorded for qualitative analysis purposes. During the final discussion, participants shared their perceptions on the day's activities and brainstormed self-defined practices that they could continue in their day-to-day lives. After the final group discussion, participants were emailed a Qualtrics link to surveys, which they completed onsite on a personal device. The third and final round of surveys was emailed to participants one week later. Compensation in the form of a \$30 Amazon gift card (\$10 per time point) was delivered upon completion of the final set of surveys.

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Measures

Participants were asked to complete the same measures at two time points: baseline (morning of mindfulness day session) and post-class (immediately following session). A follow-up measurement also was administered but is not included in this report (See Appendix B and C for measures).

Demographics

The demographics survey included age, ethnicity, class year, and student status. This survey was only administered at baseline.

Contingencies of Self Worth Based on Appearance Scale

The Contingencies of Self Worth Based on Appearance Scale (CSW; Crocker et al., 2003) assessed feelings on appearance over the past month. The self-report scale contains 35-items across different areas of self-worth and uses a 7-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). Of the 35 items, only five items pertaining to the Appearance subscale (e.g., “My self-esteem does not depend on whether or not I feel attractive.”) were used in this study. Items 1 and 4 are reverse scored and higher scores indicate greater levels of self-worth based on appearance. Only five items corresponding to the Appearance subscale were used, in order to assess how much student’s self esteem depended on their appearance. Cronbach’s alpha was found to 0.84, indicating that it had high internal consistency.

Body Appreciation Scale

The Body Appreciation Scale (BAS; Avalos et al., 2005) contains 13 self-report items on a 5-point Likert scale with responses that range from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). This scale is used to measure negative body image and the first scale of its type that allows for one to visualize

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their body through positive statements. (e.g., “I feel that my body has at least some good qualities; Despite its flaws, I accept my body for what it is.”). Higher scores indicate greater levels of body appreciation. Cronbach’s alpha was found to 0.93, indicating that it had high internal consistency.

Self-Compassion Scale

The Self Compassion Scale (SCS; Neff, 2003) is a 26-item self-report measure that assesses how compassionate participants are towards themselves. Responses are on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Almost Never) to 5 (Almost Always). The scale consists of six subscales: self-kindness (e.g., “I try to be loving towards myself when I’m feeling emotional pain”), self-judgment (e.g., “I’m disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies”), common humanity (e.g., “When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through”), mindfulness (e.g., “When something upsets me, I try to keep my emotions in balance”), over-identification (e.g., “When I am feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that is wrong”), and isolation (e.g., “When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world”), and Items of self-judgment, isolation and over-identification were reverse scored, with higher scores indicating higher levels of self-compassion. Cronbach’s alpha was found to 0.85, indicating that it had high internal consistency.

Body Shame Questionnaire

The Body Shame Questionnaire (BSQ) is a self-reported questionnaire containing eight items that are subscale of the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (Mckinley and Hyde, 1996). Responses are on a 7-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree) and measures how participants feel in the context of social expectations of

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beauty (e.g., “When I can’t control my weight, I feel like something must be wrong with me”). Higher scores reflect greater amounts of body shame experienced generally. Cronbach’s alpha was found to 0.57, indicating that it had moderate internal consistency.

Body Shape Questionnaire

The Body Shape Questionnaire, was used to measure how concerned students are with their weight (e.g., “Have you taken laxatives in order to feel thinner?”) and shape (e.g., “Have you been afraid that you might become fat or fatter?”)(Cooper et al., 1986). The scale contains 33-items and assessed how participants felt using a 6-point Likert scale with response ranging from 1(Never) to 7 (Always) and has been widely used to measure body dissatisfaction (Albertson, Neff, & Shackleford, 2014). Scores that fell under 80 indicated that there was no concern with shape. Scores that fell between 80-110, indicated mild concern with shape. Scores between 111-140 indicated moderate concern with shape, and anything over 140 is noted as marked concern with shape. Cronbach’s alpha was found to 0.96, indicating that it had high internal consistency.

Focus Group

A final reflection group discussion prompted participants to collectively examine descriptive reflections on the experiences from the day. The discussion was audio-recorded and provided qualitative data on student perceptions of a half-day of mindfulness practice and its connection to body satisfaction, self-compassion, and sense of community. This assessment was only administered post-class.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using R Studio. Paired samples t-tests were conducted, comparing baseline and post-class responses for the numeric surveys. Graphs were made from the data to

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display change over time. Data from the focus groups was analyzed using thematic analysis. First it was transcribed, and then color-coded based on different themes that emerged from the transcriptions. Yellow was used for “Shared Experience,” pink was used for “Relaxation/Reset”, gray was used for “In the Present,” red was used for “Take Aways” and green was used for “Current Feelings” (Lacy and Luff, 2001)

Results

Of the total participants, ($N=17$) 88.2% self-identified as Caucasian/White, 5.9% identified as Hispanic/Latina, and 5.9% identified as being both Caucasian/White and Hispanic/Latina. The average age of the subjects was recorded at 18.79 ($SD=0.970$). All students were in their first year at CU, and included 14 freshman and 3 transfer students.

In contrast to the initial hypothesis, there was no indication that participation in the class was associated with increases in body appreciation and self-compassion. Specifically, paired samples t-test conducted, comparing baseline and post-class scores indicated no significant difference by time (See Table 1.).

For the Body Appreciation Scale, the average was 3.60 ($SD=0.69$) at baseline and for post class, the average was 3.61($SD=0.61$). The averages indicate that students reported being sometimes appreciative of their bodies. Overall students do appreciate their bodies, contrary to what was originally hypothesized. It may not be always, but they often find themselves appreciative than ungrateful for their bodies. There was no significant difference found between baseline and post measures, $t(16)=-0.04$, $p=0.97$) (See Figure 2 and Table 1).

The Self Compassion Scale found that on average, students sometimes practiced self-compassion. The average score was 2.97 ($SD=0.40$) at baseline and 3.05 ($SD=0.40$) at post class. There was no significant difference found between baseline and post measures, $t(16)=-1.11$,

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$p=0.28$ (See Figure 3 and Table 1). For the Self Kindness Subscale, it was found that at baseline, the average was $3.13(SD=0.92)$, and for post class it was $3.24(SD=1.08)$. There was no significant difference found between baseline and post measures, $t(16)=-1.11$, $p=0.28$ (See Figure 3 and Table 1). The averages inform us that overall students felt that they sometimes practiced self-kindness. However there was no significant difference found between baseline and post class measures, $t(16)=-0.54$, $p=0.59$ (See Table 1). For the Self Judgment Subscale, it was found that on average, students seldom and sometimes, engaged in self-judgment. The average at baseline was $2.72(SD=0.88)$ and for post class, it was $2.68(SD=0.94)$. No significant difference was found between baseline and post measure, $t(16)=0.18$, $p=0.82$ (See Table 1). For the Common Humanity Subscale, which assesses how students recognize shared human experiences, students on average, sometimes understood that failing and making mistakes is all human and that life is imperfect. The average score at baseline was $3.34(SD=0.93)$ and for post class it was $3.37(SD=1.02)$. No significant difference was found between baseline and post measures, $t(16) = 0.23$, $p=0.82$ (See Table 1). For the Mindfulness Subscale, most students reported that they were sometimes mindful, at baseline, the average was $3.48(SD=0.85)$, and at post class was $3.43(SD=0.71)$ as well. There was no change in means from pre class to post class in measured Mindfulness of the students, $t(16)= 0.35$, $p=0.73$ (See Table 1). For the Over Identification Subscale, students reported that they seldom felt themselves stuck in the negative aspects of their life. The average at baseline was $2.68(SD=0.68)$ and at post class was $2.74(SD=0.68)$. No statistically significant difference was found between the two time points, $t(16)=-0.31$, $p=0.76$ (See Table 1). For the last subscale, Isolation, students expressed that they seldomly felt isolated in their experiences of imperfection, indicating a general understanding of shared experiences amongst their peers. The average at baseline was $2.56(SD=0.85)$ and at post class was

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2.72($SD=0.69$). There was no significant difference found between baseline and post measures, $t(16)=-1.40$, $p=0.18$ (See Table 1).

Also, in contrast to the initial hypothesis, there was no indication that participation in the class was associated with a decrease in contingent self-worth based on appearance, body shame, or body shape (body dissatisfaction). Specifically, paired samples t-tests conducted from baseline and post class scores indicated no significant difference by time.

For the Contingent Self Worth Based On Appearance Scale the average was 4.42 ($SD=0.46$) at baseline, and 4.24 ($SD= 0.76$) at post class. The average score indicates that for the most part, students were undecided on the questions contained in the scale. It appears that to some extent, students may struggle with defining or not defining their self worth based on their appearance, but not to a great level. There was no significant difference found between baseline and post measures for contingent self worth based on appearance $t(16)=1.04$, $p=0.31$ (See Figure 1 and Table 1).

For the Objectified Body Consciousness Subscale of Body Shame, the Body Shame Scale was used to assess how much shame students felt with respect to their body and in the context of cultural expectations. The average score at baseline was 2.79($SD=0.67$) and at post class, was 2.74($SD=0.71$). Indicating that students rarely felt ashamed, however it should be noted that for “When I am not the size I think I should be, I feel ashamed,” responses were almost evenly split between all options on the scale. It can be concluded, that to some degree students in general do feel some extent of shame depending on their size. However there was no statistical difference found between baseline and post measures, $t(16)=-1.40$, $p=0.18$ (See Figure 4 and Table 1).

For the Body Shape Questionnaire, on average students were found to have mild concern with their body shape, meaning that they were mildly dissatisfied with their bodies. The average

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score at baseline was 95.5($SD=26.3$) and at post class, it was 93.8($SD=23.7$). No statistical difference was found between the two time points $t(16)=0.25$, $p=0.80$ (See Figure 5 and Table 1). Of the total participants ($N=17$), one student was found to have a score that indicated marked concern (>140), and three were found to have moderate concern (111-139). Two students of the total 17, also shared that they struggled with bulimia, and others also shared that they noticed their disordered eating patterns become heightened in college. The high standard deviations calculated shows that body shape scores are spread out across the scale, indicating that student's monitoring of their body varies in degree, as does the dissatisfaction they feel.

Despite no reported statistical significance difference between pre and post class scores, numerous themes emerged from coding the final audio reflection portions of each day. Students found the practices to be helpful tools ($N=2$), discussion helped to normalize their experiences ($N=8$), mindfulness was a “reset” for their week ($N=3$), and feelings of anxiousness and disconnectedness in general ($N=3$). Students shared an interest in engaging in mindfulness activities, sharing that mindfulness seem to come to them when they needed it the most and at the right time ($N=2$). Students found that by the end of the class, they perceived themselves as looking better, the problems they had with their bodies became less pressing, and they grew more comfortable within themselves and their bodies through the practices ($N=3$). One student shared that she perceived her self as looking better, not because she was suddenly skinner or looked any different now than she did at the beginning of the session, but because she felt good about herself. In general students agreed that weekends, primarily Sunday afternoons were the best times to hold such programs. They would also like to have seen more body movement incorporated into the session, such as yoga, and for the sessions to be broken into smaller segments over a couple of weeks, rather than all in one day. Students also shared that the

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experience was overall positive and helpful ($N=2$), and one that they would like to participate in again ($N=7$).

Discussion

Overall, no statistically significant differences were found between baseline and post measures of contingent self worth based on appearance, body appreciation, self compassion, body shame, and body shape, for the first year female students who participated this study, disproving the initial hypothesis.

Despite these results, there is much to be said on the data collected surrounding student perceptions on body image. Most students in the study, on average do monitor their bodies and have mixed feelings regarding their appearance. Seldom do they practice self-compassion and are they mindful of their thoughts. There is a general understanding that these experiences are shared with other students, and that they are not isolated within their experiences of body dissatisfaction.

Four hours of practice is not enough to see significant effects in how young women perceive themselves. Mindfulness is not a one-time vaccine that protects us from self-objectification, nor is it always a blissful and positive experience. The mindfulness practices used, such as the body scan, can make parts of one's body, like the folds of the stomach or the tight waistband, more noticeable. These emotions may need a space for discussion to help students understand what mindfulness is and is not, along with the continued reassurance that they are not alone in these feelings. It may be that brief exposure to mediation may reduce anxiety and stress levels in college students (Schulenberg, Sameroff, and Cicchetti, 2004), but is not enough to reduce body dissatisfaction in students. Body dissatisfaction may be more complex

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and therefore must employ greater amounts of practices and discussions spread throughout the year.

The sessions were also spread between two days with two different instructors, and the personalities of the different groups determined how vulnerable students felt, how much they were willing to share, and their experiences with the practices. The first group contained only four students, and with a small group, discussions were livelier and students felt more comfortable being vulnerable with their peers. The second group contained 13 students and vulnerability wasn't established till the end of the session.

Self-compassion in this study was used in practices to help cultivate mindfulness in students. Self-compassion has been found to lead to enhance coping skills and resilience, healthier body image and eating behaviors, along with greater levels of motivation. The key aspect of self-compassion is understanding and non judgment. Mindfulness can be seen to have a direct link to lower levels of thought suppression (Baer et al. 2006). Thought suppression is seen as a negative mind state that can cause anxiety, depression, and increased levels of shame. It is regarded as being counterproductive, because the suppressed thought may come back stronger and more intensified over time Being able to recognize these thoughts and emotions is a powerful way of being able to let go. Through the process of non-identifying with your emotions, one is able to understand the impermanent nature of thoughts and loosen the attachment one may have to them. It is important to be able to sit with one's thoughts and emotions and see them for how they truly are. It is far better to understand the source of these thoughts and what is fueling them, rather than suppressing them and trying to deal with the individual symptoms (Lisa and Erchull, 2015). There is a strong association seen between self-compassion and one's well being (Neff, 2003).

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For students, mindfulness is presented as an antidote to stress, anxiety and depression. And with that many misconceptions around what mindfulness is and is not, forms. Mindfulness can be more than just an antidote for the struggles of students, it can help them look at their whole well being, rather than just pressing parts of it. Mindfulness has become a buzzword for students, and many are unsure of what that really means. The importance of community of practice (*sangha*) is also often overlooked many times when presenting mindfulness to students. There surrounds a misconception that meditative practices are a method for personal self-fulfillment and that it should be done privately. Although this may be effective in becoming more aware of oneself, it sets aside the ultimate goal of meditative practice, which is to help all sentient beings. The aspect of discussion within the study design was one that students found helpful and positive, because it allowed them to further realize that they are not alone in their experiences and struggles. The experiences they have and attitudes they have towards their bodies are shared amongst their peers. Mindfulness on college campuses must be used as a social doctrine, as there exists systems of suffering in today's society. Suffering is no longer just about the individual anymore. Meaning that discussion may play a key role in helping students to understand the roots of their distress and frustration and to normalize their experiences. One doesn't have to necessarily be a Buddhist to practice Mindfulness, and that is another misconception that surrounds mindfulness on college campuses.

That being said, it is also important to consider, perhaps the ethical framework in which mindfulness comes from, as well as its roles in building resilience, developing empathy and ethics, and forming community. As mindfulness has begun to spread rapidly across the West, some like David Loy and Ron Purser are now calling it *McMindfulness*. "McMindfulness- may make it more palatable to the corporate world, decontextualizing mindfulness from its original

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transformative purpose, as well as its foundation in social ethics, amounts to a Faustian bargain. Rather than applying mindfulness as a means to awaken individuals and organizations from the unwholesome roots of greed, ill will and delusion, it is usually being refashioned into a banal, therapeutic, self-help technique that can actually reinforce those roots.” (“Beyond McMindfulness”, 2013). The challenge that integrating mindfulness on college campuses poses, presents itself in understanding the different environments that exist on campus and how to best support them using mindfulness. The word “mindfulness” itself carries a stigma of being feminine and only for the privileged based on how it was introduced and presented into the Western world. Redefining mindfulness for this campus may be worth investigating to fully understand to how to respect the culture from which it comes from, but also how it can be used for college students in this day and age.

Limitations And Future Directions

It is also important to note that the study only contained females, but that does not imply that young men do not struggle with body satisfaction. What safe spaces look like is different for each individual, and how they are created, also requires great consideration. A future study that looks at how body perceptions amongst men are influenced by mindfulness is also a field that has little to no research.

The sample size was also quite homogenous in regards to ethnicity and far too small. Future studies must look at marginalized populations and how they might benefit from such programs and mindfulness based practices, as well as how to create a space that is inclusive and supportive of their identities and experiences. Previous studies found that the effects of mindfulness were seen even three months following practices, and should also be included in future studies. Follow-ups with participants can aid in gathering more information on how

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sustainable the impacts of mindfulness may be. Brief exposure to mindfulness has been proven to be effective in multigenerational women, however brief in previous studies has been defined as mindfulness practices spread over a minimum of 2-3 weeks (Albertson, Neff, & Shackelford, 2014). This study looked at how a four-hour practice can improve body satisfaction amongst first year students, and the study found that four hours, all in one day, is not nearly enough to notice any significant differences in key variables associated with body image. That does not mean however that mindfulness may not be effective, just that the design used to explore this idea may not be the most practical. Other designs, where practices are spread out over weeks or months may result in more significant differences, but that is still something that needs to be further looked into (Schulenberg, Sameroff, and Cicchetti, 2004; Albertson, Neff, and Shackelford, 2014).

In order to further assess, and understand how female students in their first year of college look at their bodies, more studies must be done with a larger sample size. The first class happened to fall on the same day as the X-Games, a social event that many first year students partake in. Being mindful of social events on campus and gather more information on student availability may help to increase attendance and participation in mindfulness programs. The impact that mindfulness may have on CU's campus for first year students and the feasibility of setting up such programs in residence halls is an area that needs more research. Students seek spaces on that allow them to connect with others, and in doing so, they are able to build resilience through guidance and conversation (McGrath, Julie, and Caron 2009). Mindfulness can provide the basis for these conversations to begin with students and their peers. These spaces in turn may help improve student retention rates through encouraging inclusivity and compassion within the residence halls themselves. Future studies can potentially investigate this topic more

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thoroughly by looking at how sustained practices can influence body satisfaction. Instead of hosting a single Mindfulness Day, it might be more beneficial to offer weekly sessions for students throughout a semester. Having two different instructors, as well as group size ($N=4$ vs. $N=13$), also may have influenced the space created for the students. It may be that smaller groups of students working with Mindfulness instructors are more welcoming to students compared to larger groups. Vulnerability appears to be more easily established as seen in this study, and it may be that vulnerability is closely linked with self-compassion and the effectiveness of mindfulness based practices in groups of young women. Based on the qualitative data from both sessions, more themes emerged from the first session in comparison to the second, and more students were willing to share and discuss the practices. Mindfulness has great potential in increasing self-compassion amongst students and decreasing body dissatisfaction, but it must be done in a way that allows for sustainable practice to occur.

The pressures of social media, the campus atmosphere and the influence of outside factors on body image, has aided in creating environments that foster body dissatisfaction amongst the general female population who attend universities. Though the results of this study cannot be generalized to all students, the study does provide some insight into how students feel in general and how they view their bodies. Mindfulness may still be useful in improving key variables associated with body satisfaction and dissatisfaction, but further research is needed to clearly understand how mindfulness can be function at this campus. Residence halls provide a unique structure in that it provides an easily accessible place for mindfulness programs and classes to be held. This study may be the basis for looking at how mindfulness functions at this campus and how to integrate it into the first year experience of students. There may be a need for

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mindfulness on this campus, but to what extent, in what environments, and in what form, is still an area that needs to be further investigated.

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Table 1. Pre and Post Class Measures for Contingent Self Worth Based On Appearance, Body Appreciation, Self Compassion (and subscales), Body Shame, and Body Shape.

Measures	Pre-Class <i>M(SD)</i>	Post-Class <i>M(SD)</i>	Paired T-test
Contingent Self Worth Based On Appearance	4.42(0.46)	4.24(0.76)	t(16)=1.04, p= 0.31
Body Appreciation	3.60(0.69)	3.61(0.61)	t(16)=-0.04, p = 0.97
Self Compassion	2.97(0.44)	3.05(0.40)	t(16)=-1.11, p = 0.28
<i>Self Kindness</i>	3.13(0.46)	3.24(1.08)	t(16)=-0.54, p = 0.59
<i>Self Judgment</i>	2.72(0.88)	2.68(0.94)	t(16)=0.18, p = 0.86
<i>Common Humanity</i>	3.34(0.93)	3.37(1.02)	t(16)=-0.23, p =0.82
<i>Mindfulness</i>	3.48(0.85)	3.43(0.71)	t(16)= 0.35, p=0.73
<i>Over Identification</i>	2.68(0.68)	2.74(0.68)	t(16)=-0.31, p = 0.76
<i>Isolation</i>	2.56(0.85)	2.72(0.69)	t(16)=-1.40, p = 0.18
Body Shame	2.79(0.67)	2.74(0.70)	t(16)=0.25, p=0.80
Body Shape	95.5(26.3)	93.8(23.7)	t(16)=0.32, p = 0.76
<i>Note.</i> No statistically significant differences were found between pre and post class scores.			

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Figure 1. Average means of pre and post class scores for body appreciation

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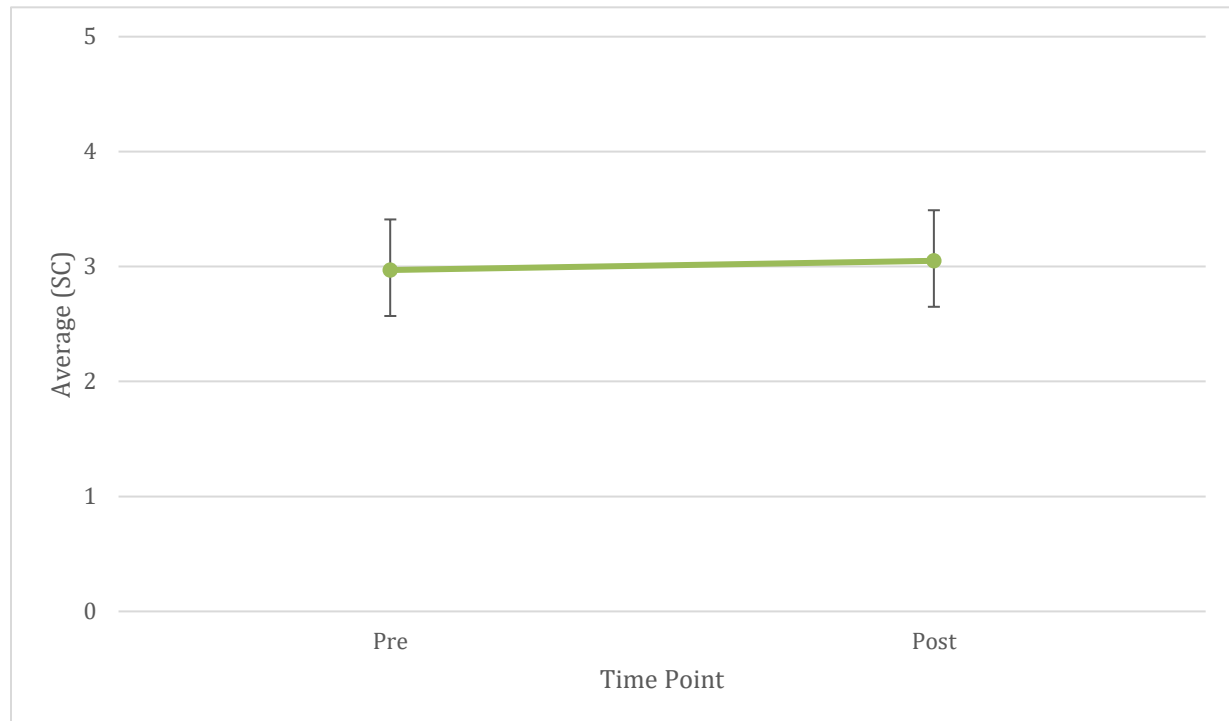


Figure 2. Average means of pre and post class scores for self-compassion

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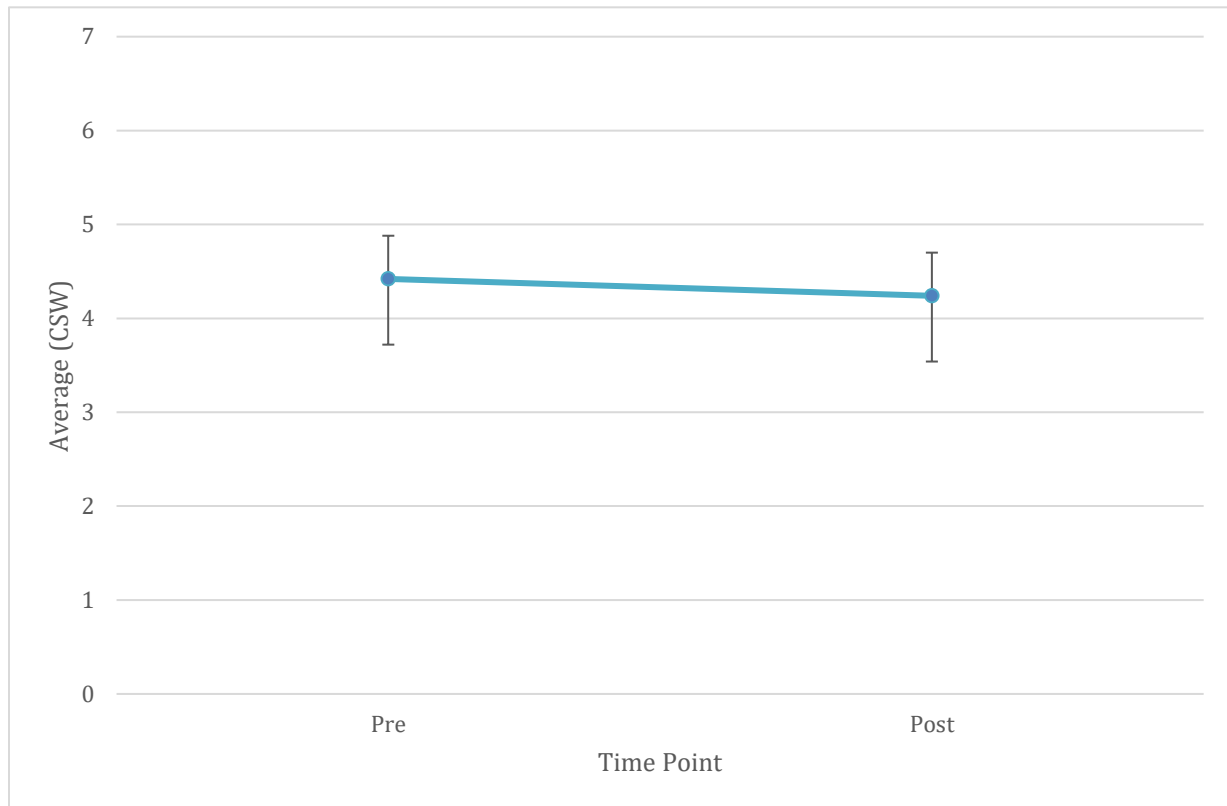


Figure 3. Average means of pre and post class scores for contingent self worth based on appearance.

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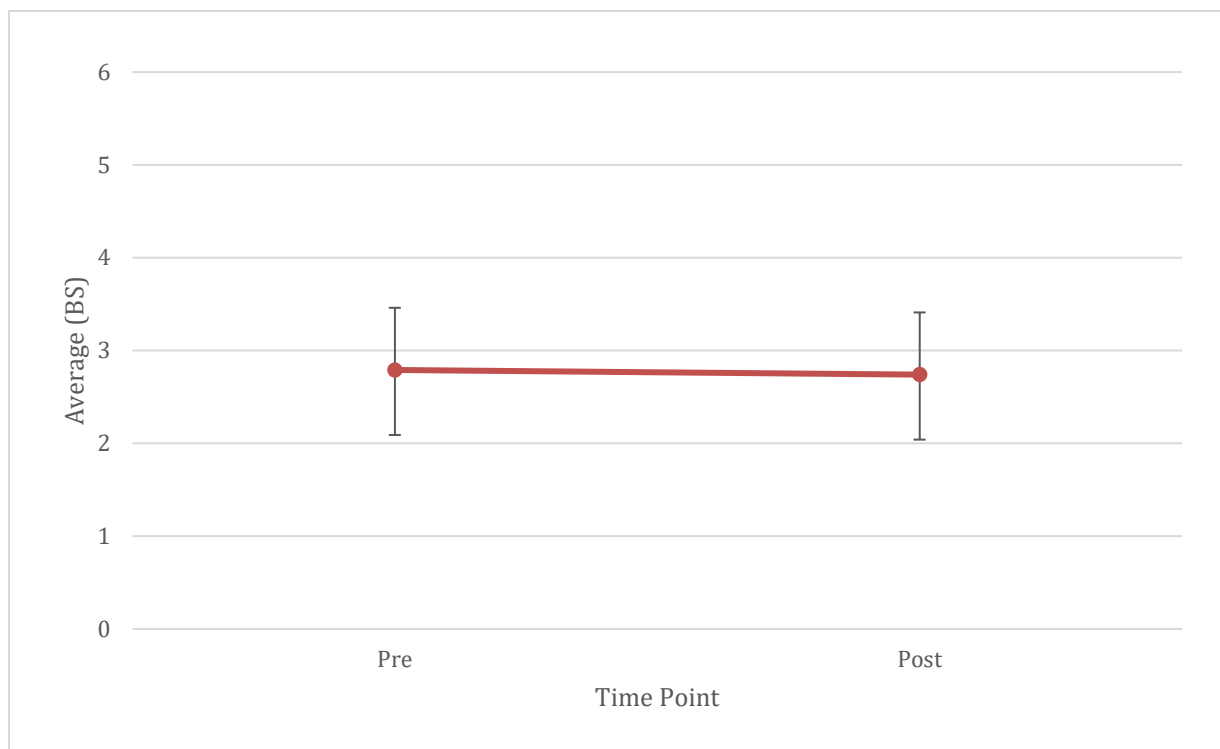


Figure 4. Average means of pre and post class scores for body shame

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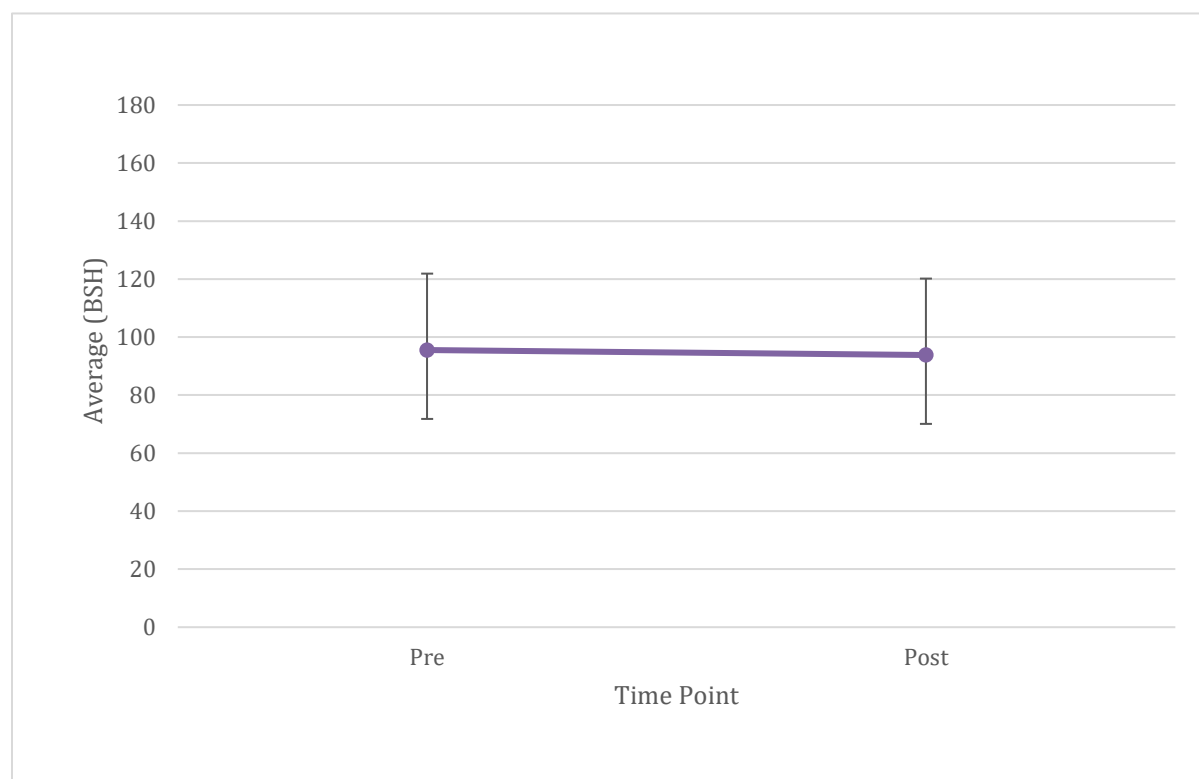


Figure 5. Average means of pre and post class scores for body shape

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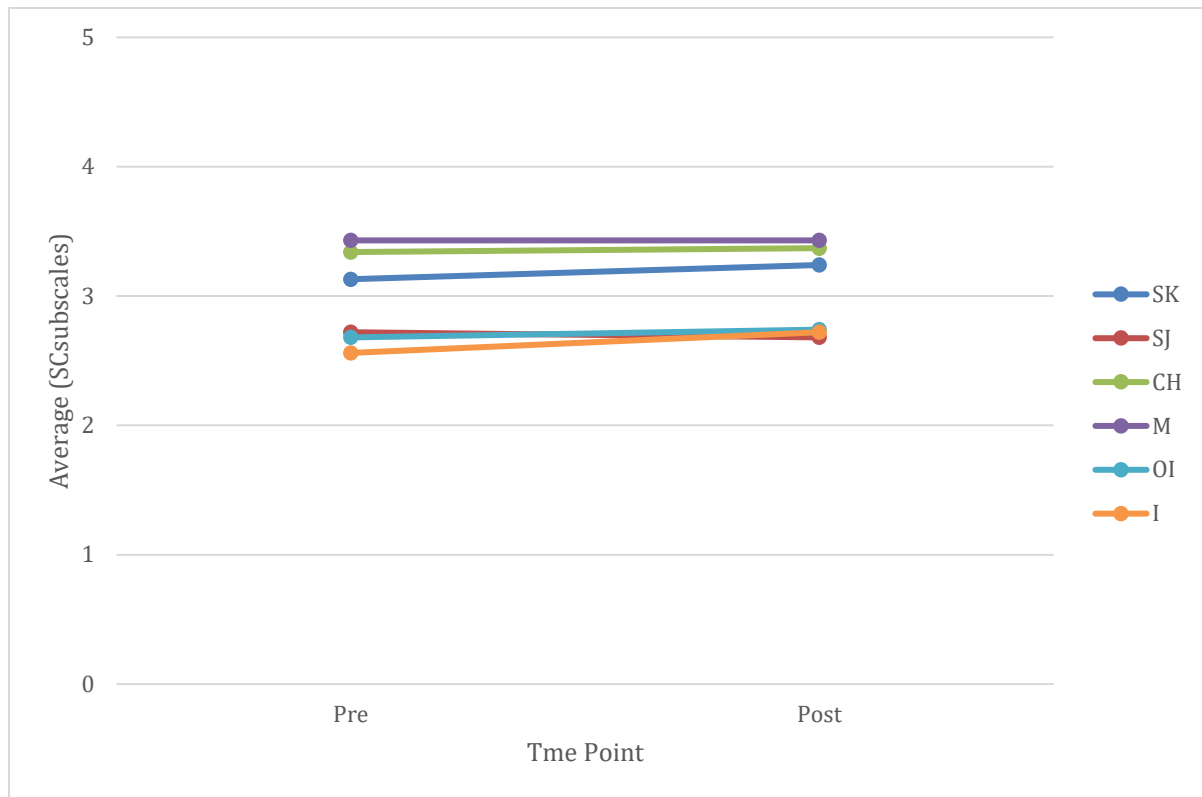


Figure 6. Average scores of self-compassion subscale (SK=self kindness, SJ= self judgment, CH=common humanity, M=mindfulness, OI= over identification, and I= isolation)

Appendix A

Mindfulness Day Agenda

1. Surveys/Consent (~15-20 Minutes)
2. Introduction To Mindfulness (~10 Minutes)
3. Self Compassion Meditation (~5-10 Minutes)
4. Discussion (~25 Minutes)
5. Loving Kindness Meditation (~5-10 Minutes)
6. Discussion (~25 Minutes)
7. Mindful Eating → Lunch Break & Discussion (~30 Minutes)
8. Body Scan Meditation (~5-10 Minutes)
9. Discussion (~25 Minutes)
10. Conclusions/Surveys (~15-20 Minutes)
11. Final Audio Recording (~ 20 Minutes)

Appendix B

Contingent Self Worth Based On Appearance (Crocker et al. 2003)

	Strongly Disagree	Agree	More or Less Agree	Undecided	More or Less Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. My self-esteem does not depend on whether or not I feel attractive.							
2. My self-esteem is influenced by how attractive I think my face or facial features are.							
3. My sense of self-worth suffers whenever I think I don't look good.							
4. My self-esteem is unrelated to how I feel about the way my body looks.							
5. When I think I look attractive, I feel good about myself							

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Body Appreciation (Avalos, Tylka, and Wood-Barcalow, 2005)

	Never 1	Seldom 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5
1. I respect my body					
2. I feel good about my body					
3. On the whole, I am satisfied with my body					
4. Despite its flaws, I accept my body for what it is					
5. I feel that my body has at least some good qualities					
6. I take a positive attitude toward my body					
7. I am attentive to my body's needs					
8. My self-worth is independent of my body shape or weight					
9. I do not focus a lot of energy being concerned with my body shape or weight					
10. My feelings towards my body are positive for the most part					
11. I engage in healthy behaviors to take care of my body					
12. I do not allow unrealistic thin images of women presented in the media to affect my attitudes toward my body					
13. Despite its imperfections, I still like my body					

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Self Compassion Scale (SCS; Neff 2003)

	Almost Never 1	Seldom 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Almost Always 5
1. I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.					
2. When I'm feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong.					
3. When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through.					
4. When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world					
5. I try to be loving towards myself when I'm feeling emotional pain.					
6. When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.					
7. When I'm down and out, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am.					
8. When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself					
9. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.					
10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.					
11. I'm intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.					

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12. When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need					
13. When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.					
14. When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation					
15. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition					
16. When I see aspects of myself that I don't like, I get down on myself					
17. When I fail at something important to me I try to keep things in perspective.					
18. When I'm really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it.					
19. I'm kind to myself when I'm experiencing suffering					
20. When something upsets me I get carried away with my feelings.					
21. I can be a bit cold-hearted towards myself when I'm experiencing suffering.					
22. When I'm feeling down I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness.					
23. I'm tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies					
24. When something painful happens I tend to blow the incident out of proportion.					
25. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.					
26. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.					

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Body Shame Questionnaire (McKinley & Hyde 1996)

	Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Very Often 5	Always 6
1. When I can't control my weight, I feel like something must be wrong with me.						
2. I feel ashamed of myself when I haven't made the effort to look my best.						
3. I feel like I must be a bad person when I don't look as good as I could.						
4. I would be ashamed for people to know what I really weigh.						
5. I never worry that something is wrong with me when I am not exercising as much as I should.						
6. When I'm not exercising enough, I question whether I am a good enough person.						
7. Even when I can't control my weight, I think I am an okay person.						
8. When I'm not the size I think I should be, I feel ashamed.						

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Body Shape Questionnaire (Cooper et al. 1987)

	Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Very Often 5	Always 6
1. Have you been so worried about your shape that you have been feeling that you ought to diet?						
2. Have you been afraid that you might become fat or fatter?						
3. Has feeling full (e.g., after eating a large meal) made you feel fat?						
4. Have you noticed the shape of other women and felt that your own shape compared unfavorably?						
5. Has thinking about your shape interfered with your ability to concentrate (e.g., while watching television, reading, listening to conversations)?						
6. Has being naked, such as when taking a bath, made you feel fat?						
7. Have you imagined cutting off fleshy areas of your body?						
8. Have you not gone out to social occasions (e.g., parties) because you have felt bad about your shape?						
9. Have you felt excessively large and rounded?						
10. Have you thought that you are the shape you are because you lack self-control?						
11. Have you worried about other people seeing rolls of flesh around your waist or stomach?						

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12. When in company have you worried about taking up too much room (e.g., sitting on a sofa or a bus seat)?						
13. Has seeing your reflection (e.g., in a mirror or shop window) made you feel bad about your shape?						
14. Have you pinched areas of your body to see how much fat there is?						
15. Have you avoided situations where people could see your body (e.g., communal changing rooms or swimming baths)?						
16. Have you been particularly self-conscious about your shape when in the company of other people?						