Awaken Pittsburgh
2018-2019 Annual report

Programs and participants

Awaken Pittsburgh continued to build on our mission of bringing mindfulness to the community. We ran 20 programs at schools, non-profits, a family center, and an out-of-school program. These included our flagship Mindful Connections™ for Educators or Helping Professional, Mindful Connections™ for Classrooms, and our Path of Freedom (for youth). We also added two new train-the-trainer programs.

We reached 112 educators, 37 school support staff, 45 adolescent students, and 14 helping professionals. Awaken Pittsburgh also provided additional ongoing support to 2 previous programs, as well as introductory presentations and one-off meditation workshops.

> **2018-19 Programs**
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> 11 program sites
>
> 20 programs delivered
>
> 208 participants reached
>
> 343 hours of programing

Primary impacts

Pre- and post-program data from our adult participants allowed us to do a number of analyses to gauge our success against our aims and to collect feedback with which to evaluate the structure and enjoyment of our courses.

Across the 5 comparable analyses of Mindful Connections™ programs (for Educators and Helping Professionals), mindfulness measures increased on average by 6% to 13%, perceived stress fell by an average of 17%, burnout reduced by an average of 10% and secondary traumatic stress reduced by an average of 8% (Figure 1).
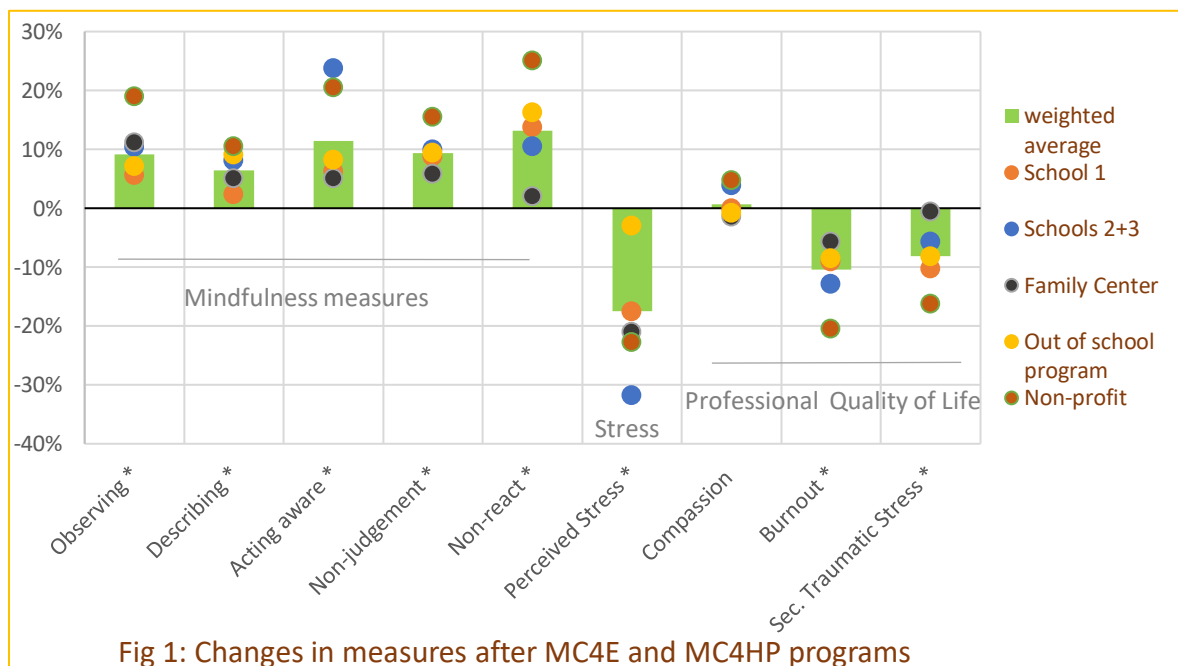

Fig 1: Changes in measures after MC4E and MC4HP programs

An analysis of the data across these 5 sites (including a total of 47 participants)[i] confirmed that the changes were not significantly different across sites. Then we looked for significant changes for each of the nine subscales measured. The results showed highly significant improvements for all measures, except for the compassion satisfaction[ii], as indicated by asterisks in the Figure.

Analyses at the completion of the three Mindful Connections™ for Classrooms programs suggested that improvements in those participants' scores from their initial courses were maintained, or improved on over time (Figure 2).

Fig 2: Positive impacts of the MC4C programs across 3 sites in 2018-19
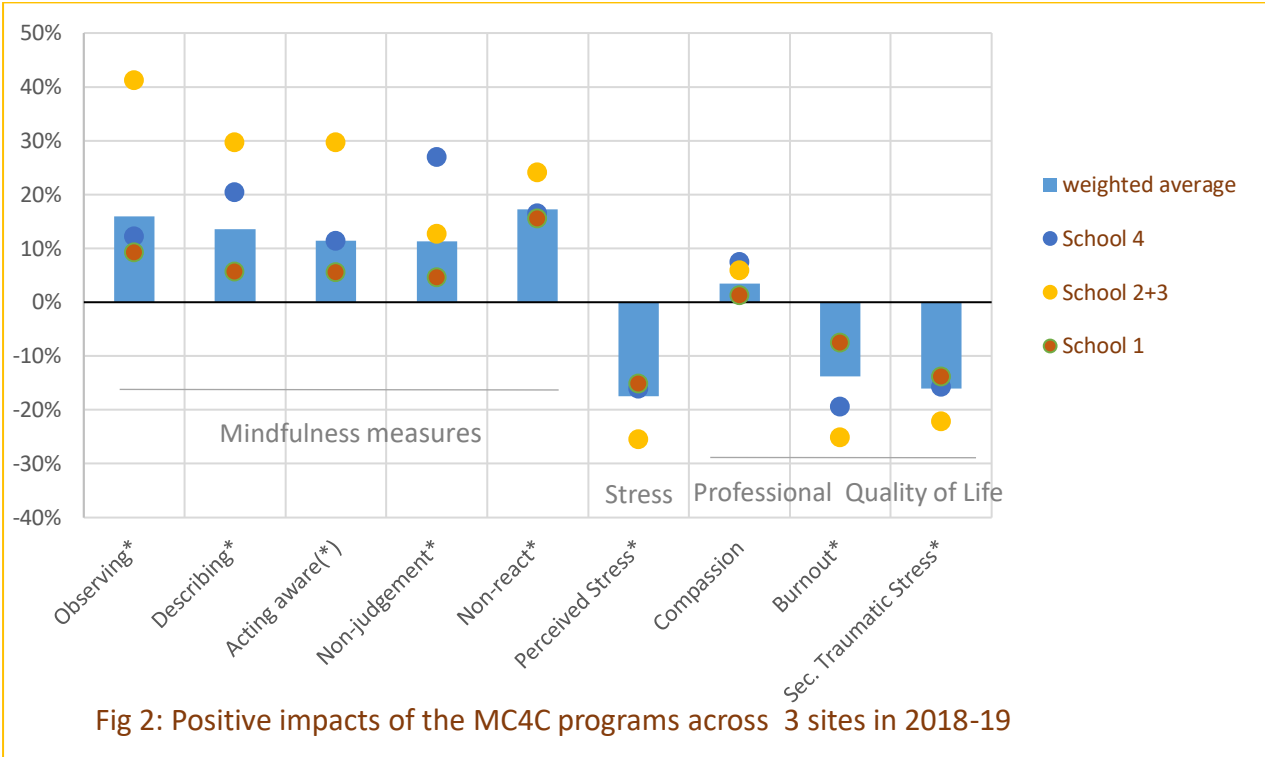
Across the three programs, we found that the differences in pre and post scores across scales were not significantly different across sites[iii]. Importantly, despite the small sample size, we found significant or highly significant improvements in all measures, apart from Compassion satisfaction and Acting with Awareness (which was almost significant) as indicated by the asterisks in the Figure.[iv]

Mindfulness improves quality of life

Fig 3: Mindfulness and Perceived Stress
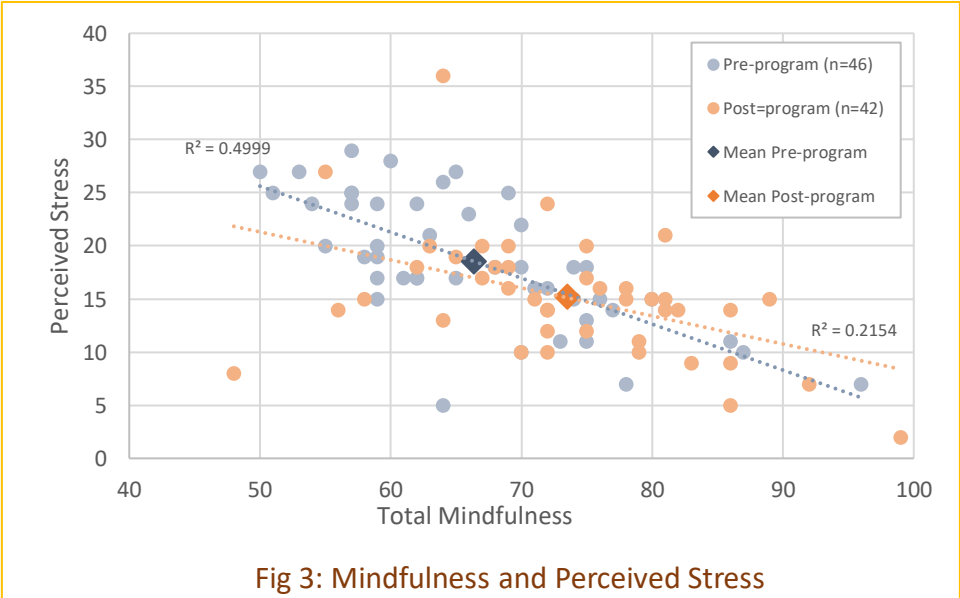
The data collected from our participants in the MC4E and MC4HP programs, show a clear relationship that participants with higher total mindfulness scores suffer lower stress, burnout and secondary trauma (See Figures 3 for an example). The same relationship is demonstrated within the pre-program data and within the post-program data. Thus, the effect of our programming is to shift the mean values of our participant groups towards higher mindfulness and lower perceived stress, burnout and secondary trauma scores.

The Effect of Program structure

Finally we compared whether our initial (ie. Educators or Helping Professional) programs structured into four 3 hour classes differed in their effectiveness from those structured into our normal eight, 1.5 hour classes. Splitting the data into the two course structures showed that both types of courses produced improvements in all of the measures, but since sample sizes were low, some changes previously found significant were no longer. There was a suggestion that the size of the improvement was larger for the 1.5 hour classes compared to the 3hour classes, but with the data we collected this year, this was not found to be significant. [v]

Key developments in 2018-19

Notable this year was the continuity of several of our partnerships. We continued our partnership with two schools, extended our programming to new schools within an existing school district, and more of our schools undertook both the programming for Educators and for Classrooms. This allowed us to conduct a more thorough analysis of the impacts of our programs and how they are maintained than we have been able to before.

We also took a big step towards allowing our schools to establish sustainability of their program delivery by piloting two train-the-trainer programs. The eleven graduates of these programs are now equipped with the skills to train others in their schools or districts to deliver mindfulness programs without the need for external support. This makes an enormous difference to the reach and cost-effectiveness of all our programming going forwards as this more sustainable program model rolls out.

In our participants' own words:

"my leader in me class is my favorite" "Pay attention and listen because this class can really help you." High school student

"Everyday has a challenge, these techniques will help keep a certain level of balance to my life"   Helping professional

"Mindfulness allows me to be present and self-regulate. It is also more professional to respond appropriately to situations." Educator

Statistical supporting notes

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[i] A MANOVA was carried out to test the null hypotheses that the differences in pre and post scores across all the scales were similar across sites, using a MANOVA test. Results indicated no significant difference across sites ($F_{(50,230)}$=0.696, p=0.936).

[ii] Results from paired t-tests, Observing: t=4.27, d.f.=46, p<0.001, Describing: t=2.77,d.f.=46, p=0.008, Acting aware: t=2.75, d.f.=45, p=0.009, Non-judgement: t=2.77, d.f.=45, p=0.008, Non-react: t=5.25,d.f.=45, p<0.001, Perceived Stress: t=-3.05, d.f.=43, p=0.004, Compassion: t=0.92, d.f.=44, p=0.360, Burnout: t=-4.13, d.f.=45, p<0.001, Sec. Traumatic Stress: t=-3.65, d.f.=44, p=0.001.

[iii] With a total of 21 post program surveys that could be paired with pre-program data, we tested the null hypotheses that pre and post scores across scales were similar across programs using a MANOVA. No significant differences across sites were found ($F_{9,47}$=0.317, p=0.965).

[iv] Results from paired t-tests. Observing: t=4.14, d.f.=20, p=0.001, Describing: t=3.40,d.f.=20, p=0.003, Acting aware: t=2.02, d.f.=20, p=0.057, Non-judgement: t=2.77, d.f.=20, p=0.012, Non-react: t=4.21,d.f.=20, p<0.001, Perceived Stress: t=-2.90, d.f.=19, p=0.009, Compassion: t=1.12, d.f.=18, p=0.276, Burnout: t=-2.69, d.f.=18, p=0.015, Sec. Traumatic Stress: t=-4.22, d.f.=18, p=0.001.

[v] Considering just the Educator and Helping Professionals programs, 20 of our participants received 3 hour sessions, and 27 received the 1.5 hour sessions. A MANOVA confirmed that the changes were not significantly different across these program schedules ($F_{(9.29)}$=0.734, p=0.67). The significance levels from 2 sample t-tests (assuming normality) ranged from p=0.937 (t=-0.079, d.f.=39.78 for Perceived Stress) to p=0.055 (t=1.976, d.f.=38.98 for Non-react). Significance levels from Wilcoxon signed rank tests (relaxing the assumption of normality) ranged from p=0.879 (W=277.5 for Describing) to p=0.056 (W=341.5 for Non-reactivity).