



Effectiveness of a 4-Week Mindfulness Meditation Class Developed for College Students



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ABSTRACT

Objective: To evaluate the effectiveness of Koru, a mindfulness training program for college students and other emerging adults. Participants: Ninety students (66% female, 62% white, 71% graduate students) participated between Fall 2012 and Spring 2013. **Methods:** Randomized controlled trial. We hypothesized that Koru, compared to a wait-list control group, would reduce perceived stress and sleep problems, and increase mindfulness, self-compassion, and gratitude. **Results:** As hypothesized, results showed significant Group (Koru, wait-list) X Time (pre, post) interactions for improvements in perceived stress ($F=4.50$, $df [1, 76.40]$, $p=.037$, $d=.45$), sleep problems ($F= 4.71$, $df [1,79.49]$, $p=.033$, $d=.52$), mindfulness ($F=26.80$, $df [1, 79.09]$, $p<.001$, $d=.95$), and self-compassion ($F=18.08$, $df [1, 74.77]$, $p<.001$, $d=.75$). All significant effects were replicated in the wait-list group. Significant correlations were observed among changes in perceived stress, sleep problems, mindfulness, and self-compassion. **Conclusions:** Results support the effectiveness of the Koru program for emerging adults in the university setting.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, college and university counseling centers have seen an increase in the number of students presenting with significant mental health concerns¹⁻³. Mindfulness meditation has been shown to reduce stress and improve mood, sleep quality and academic performance in both college and graduate students⁴⁻⁷. Standard Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) courses are designed to deliver a mindfulness curriculum over an 8-week period with 45 minutes of home practice every day. However, this format may not take into account the characteristic attitudes, perspectives, needs, and goals of typical university students. Hence, the Koru program and the program manual, *Mindfulness for the Next Generation*⁸, were developed to provide developmentally targeted mindfulness training to emerging adults. This research study examined the effectiveness of the Koru program in reducing stress, building a variety of mindful coping skills, and facilitating greater emotional balance and mental health.

METHODS

Participants
 90 undergraduate and graduate students from a large private university
 • Mean (SD) age = 25 (6) yrs, 66% women, 62% white, 71% graduate students

Randomized Control Trial (RCT)

Koru Group (n= 45)

- Group met 1x week, 4 consecutive weeks, 75 minute sessions, 8-14 participants per group
- Learned mindfulness meditation practice incorporated with mind-body skills such as belly breathing and guided imagery.
- Daily home practice required.

Wait-list Control Group (n= 45)

Survey Measures

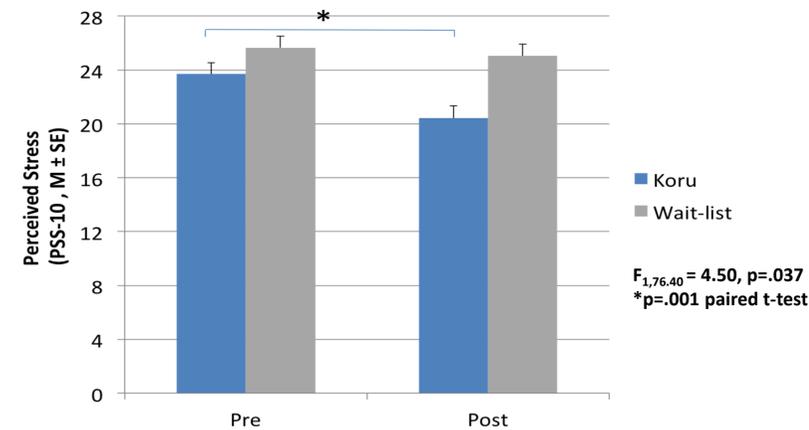
- Perceived Stress Scale-10 item (PSS)
- Medical Outcome Study (MOS) Sleep Scale
- Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale- Revised (CAMS-R)
- Self-Compassion Scale (SCS)
- Gratitude Questionnaire-6 Item (GQ-6)

Statistics

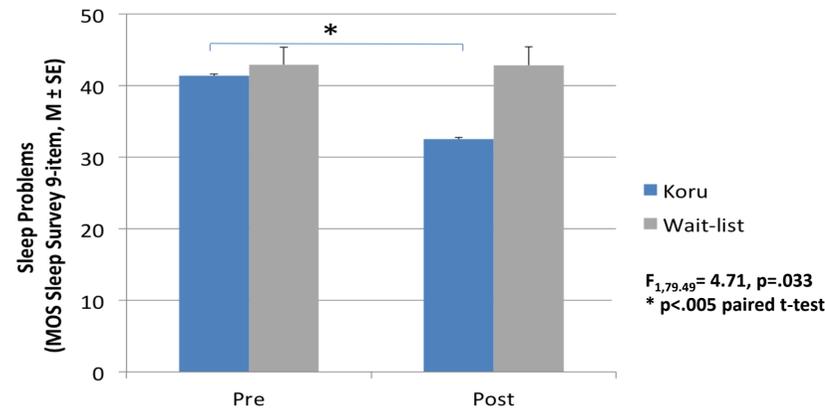
Mixed-effects models assessed Group x Time interactions.
 Paired t-tests assessed within-group changes.

RESULTS

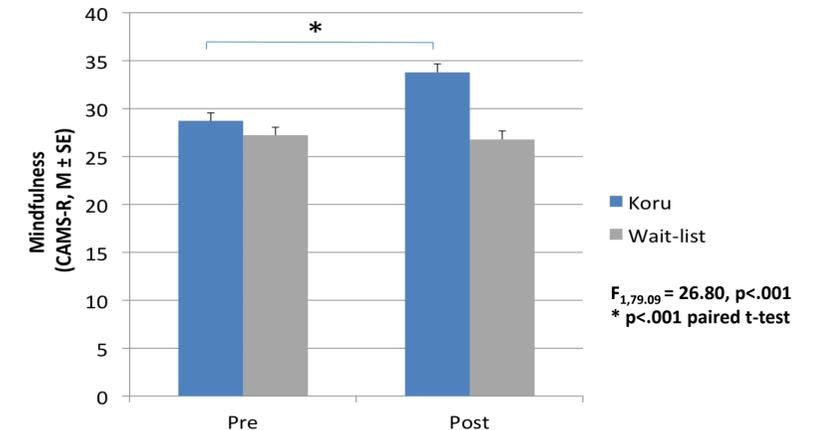
A. Change in Perceived Stress



B. Change in Sleep Problems



C. Change in Mindfulness



D. Change in Self-Compassion

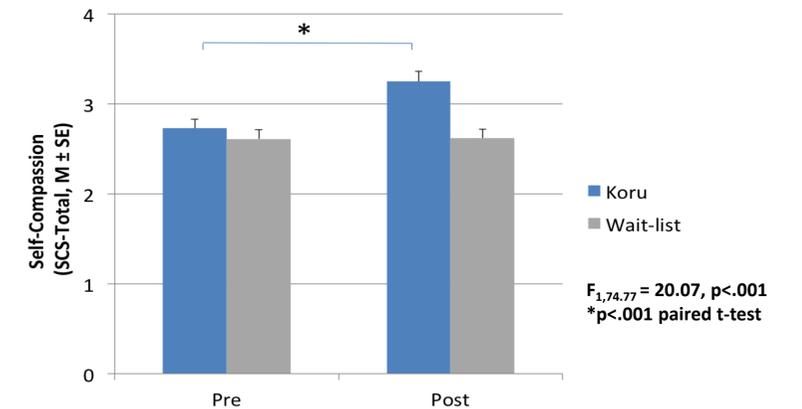


Figure 1. Mixed-effects models for Group X Time interactions showed Koru group participants, compared to a wait-list group, had significant decreases in (A) perceived stress and (B) sleep problems, and increases in levels of (C) mindfulness and (D) self-compassion. No changes in gratitude were observed in either group. Significant within-group changes for Koru are indicated by asterisks.

CONCLUSIONS

- Koru could be an effective program to help emerging adults in college manage stress, improve sleep, and achieve greater emotional balance during this developmental period.
- Positive effects were observed in 4 weeks, which suggests developmentally appropriate mindfulness training may be effective and efficient for college students.

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