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# Everyday mindfulness and mindfulness meditation: Overlapping constructs or not?

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## Abstract

Elaborating on our understanding of the construct of mindfulness is currently a priority as mindfulness-based therapeutic interventions proliferate (Bishop et al., 2004). Two studies examined the relationship between measures of everyday mindfulness, mindfulness during meditation, and the five-factor model personality domains. These studies also investigated the effect of sitting meditation on mood. Two samples were largely naïve to formal sitting meditation, and the third sample was screened for meditation experience. The first study found that everyday mindfulness correlated positively with agreeableness and conscientiousness, and correlated negatively with neuroticism. Little to no relationship was found between mindfulness during meditation and everyday mindfulness across all three samples. Changes in mood following meditation varied across studies.

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## 1. Introduction

“Mindfulness” refers to a way of orienting one’s self to the present moment. Definitions of mindfulness commonly emphasize that it involves maintaining awareness on one’s immediate

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experience, as opposed to being distracted by past or future oriented thoughts, or engaged in avoidance of one's experience. It also involves maintaining an attitude of "nonjudgment" (Bishop et al., 2004; Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

The past two decades have seen a proliferation of mindfulness-based psychotherapeutic treatments (e.g., Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Linehan, 1993; Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002). Two in particular, mindfulness-based stress reduction (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (Segal et al., 2002), emphasize sitting and walking meditation and yoga practices. These interventions involve regular, concentrated practice in which the participant focuses attention on a particular stimulus, such as his/her breath, sensations in the body, etc., during a particular period of time. These practices are intended to help cultivate "everyday mindfulness." Everyday mindfulness involves maintaining the open, accepting, present focus of attention during day-to-day life. Interestingly, the relationship between one's ability to stay focused and mindful during mindfulness practice, and one's degree of mindfulness in everyday life remains unclear.

Self-report measures of mindfulness have focused on either everyday mindfulness or mindfulness during sitting meditation. Little research has examined the relationship between these two constructs. Bishop et al. (2005), for example, created the Toronto Mindfulness Scale (TMS), a measure of mindfulness during formal sitting meditation. By contrast, Brown and Ryan's (2003) Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) and Feldman, Hayes, Kumar, and Greeson's (2003) Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale-Revised (CAMS-R) both assess how mindful individuals are during their everyday lives. It appears that to date no one has empirically examined whether there is a relationship between these two constructs.

That everyday mindfulness can be measured presumes that it is a semi-consistent trait or tendency that exists across situations; it thus may be related to specific personality traits. It is unclear whether everyday mindfulness may shape personality or personality may shape everyday mindfulness or whether both are shaped by other factors. In exploring the construct validity of their scales, the developers of the MAAS and the TMS examined correlations between the mindfulness scales and some of the five-factor model personality characteristics, the five domains being neuroticism, openness to experience, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Openness to experience, a tendency to seek and appreciate experience for its own sake, was positively correlated with everyday mindfulness as measured by the MAAS and the CAMS-R, and with mindfulness during meditation as measured by the TMS (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006; Bishop et al., 2005; Brown & Ryan, 2003). Neuroticism, proneness towards worry and irritability, was negatively correlated with the MAAS and the CAMS-R (Baer et al., 2006; Brown & Ryan, 2003). Extraversion exhibited no significant relationship with the MAAS or CAMS-R (Baer et al., 2006); however, there has not been any research that has compared these mindfulness measures on the remaining five-factor model domains: conscientiousness and agreeableness.

The primary goals of this study were to examine the relationships between measures of everyday mindfulness and mindfulness during meditation, and between measures of mindfulness and personality characteristics. Study 1 examined the relationships between everyday mindfulness, mindfulness during meditation, and personality characteristics. Following completion of the first study, a new measure, the Five-Factor Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ; Baer et al., 2006), that assessed everyday mindfulness as a multidimensional construct was published. Study 2 was conducted to examine the relationship between the multidimensional conceptualization of everyday

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