

Protection against the Hazards of Stress on Health in Older Adults through Mindfulness

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Abstract : Objectives: The current study examined whether the link between stress and health-related quality of life was buffered by protective factors, namely mindfulness, in a sample of middle-aged and older adults. Method: In this cross-sectional study, 134 healthy, community-dwelling adults (aged 50–85 years) were recruited from Dallas, Texas. The participants were screened for depressive symptoms and severity (using the Patient Health Questionnaire [PHQ-9]). All participants completed measures of self-reported health status (i.e., SF-36v2: mental and physical health composites), life stress (using the Elder's Life Stress Inventory [ELSI]), and trait mindfulness (i.e., Mindful Attention Awareness Scale). Results: Hierarchical regressions (covarying for age, gender, and education) showed that life stress was inversely related to physical and mental health. Mindfulness was positively related to mental health. The negative effect of life stress on mental health was weakened for those individuals with greater trait mindfulness. Discussion: The results suggest that mindfulness is a powerful, adaptive strategy that may protect middle-aged and older adults from the well-known harmful effects of stress on healthy aging.

Keywords : health, stress, mindfulness, aging

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