

Mindfulness - Promoting Mental Health for University Students in China through Mindfulness

Rural Education Action Program

Stanford Center on China's Economy and Institutions

Stanford University



Mental health issues are increasingly prevalent among university students in China

Meta-analyses including over one million university students in China found that:

- 20% to 28% have depression
- 15% to 20% suffer from anxiety
- 11% suicide ideation

University students are a high-risk population for developing mental health problems, as they are facing more challenges:

- Changes in residence place and lifestyle, economic pressure, employment pressure, etc.
- Disruptions due to academic work and daily life caused by COVID-19.

- Gao, L., Xie, Y., Jia, C. et al. Prevalence of depression among Chinese university students: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Sci Rep* 10, 15897 (2020).
- CHEN, Yumeng, Yali ZHANG, and Guoliang YU. "Prevalence of mental health problems among college students in mainland China from 2010 to 2020: A meta-analysis." *Advances in Psychological Science* 30, no. 5 (2022): 991.

Mental health issues among university students affect both individuals and society

- Left untreated, mental health issues can lead to social isolation and reduced social participation, contributing to a decline in overall social wellbeing.
- Untreated mental health problems can also lead to decreased productivity, increased healthcare costs, and decreased earning potential.
- Unfortunately, the stigma associated with mental illness, coupled with the shortage of mental health resources in Chinese universities, creates significant barriers for students in accessing the help they need.

Objectives

Our goal for this project is to promote wellness and prevent mental health problems among Chinese university students.

We will evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of providing mindfulness-based training with two specific objectives:

- 1) Develop an MBP curriculum that is suited to Chinese college students**
- 2) Evaluate the curriculum scientifically to measure its effectiveness**

Milestones Achieved (Development Phase)

- 50 students interviewed across universities to inform curriculum development.
- Mental health questions show students struggling with:
 - **Academic pressure, career uncertainty, interpersonal conflict, and decision fatigue.**
 - Lack of mental health resources and uptake of existing resources. Most rely on **friends** or **independent coping**; professional services are **underused** due to **stigma** and privacy concerns.
- Mindfulness Awareness & Perception:
 - **Low baseline knowledge**; some confuse it with meditation or see it as "chicken soup for the soul".
 - Students open to mindfulness see it as a tool for **focus**, **relaxation**, and **self-exploration**.



Interviews Informed Mindfulness Intervention Design

Promotion & Recruitment Strategy

- Build awareness first: Host talks/events to introduce mindfulness.
- Leverage student mentors (辅导员), WeChat official accounts and departmental channels.
- Incentivize pilot participation (e.g., monetary rewards or gifts).

Course Design

- Favor interactive practices over passive lectures → aligned with MBSR design.
- Design short (15–30 min) home practices and balance accountability with flexibility (light or no grading).



Instructor Training & Pilot Launch

Winter 2024 - 12 instructors trained via 8-week program + 20-hour curriculum focus

February 2025 - Pilot launched at Fudan University and Beijing Normal University

2025大学生正念研究项目 成员合影留念

2025年2月9日 北京时间 / 2025年2月8日 美东时间

新 春 快 乐



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Evaluation in Progress

- Pre-intervention surveys conducted
- Post-intervention surveys scheduled
- Objective metrics (e.g., saliva cortisol) and psychological scales used
- Final analysis to begin Summer 2025

2025大学生正念研究项目 成员合影留念

2025年2月15日 北京时间 / 2025年2月14日 美东时间



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Next Steps

- Weekly data collection on adherence and intensity
- Surveys at 0, 1, and 3 months post-intervention
- Curriculum refinement for main trial

Giving Back Initiatives

- Public access to MBP curriculum
- Girls for Girls Monthly Meditation Meeting
- Mindfulness Parenting Talks with Stanford collaboration

Stanford | Department of Psychiatry
MEDICINE and Behavioral Sciences



Session 5: Mindful Parenting and Mental Health Resources

When: 10am-noon, June 9th, Sunday
What: Interactive lecture followed by Q&A session
Who: Parents, adults only (please do NOT take your kids along)

This group offers a safe space for parents to practice and learn new skills for family well-being and mental health. We will discuss concepts and skills involved in mindful parenting, parenting as a team, how to deal with video addiction, how to improve sleep, etc. We will also discuss how to look for mental health resources for you and your family.

English (Mandarin Chinese interpreters available on site)



Location
Building: Li Ka Shing Center, 291 Campus Drive, Palo Alto, CA 94305
Room: LK101/102

Stanford parking is free on weekends. Please be aware that parking can be difficult on campus, so planning extra time is recommended. Nearest garage:

We appreciate if you could register (registration is optional and please use phone camera to scan the code below):



日期	时间	分享与对话	主题
2023年9月29日 星期五	10:00 am - 12:00 pm	Trudy Goodman	女性智慧
2023年10月29日 星期日	10:00 am - 12:00 pm	卓慧琦 戴宁红	正念的大学英语: 在大学里, 我们学到了什么?
2023年11月27日 星期一	10:00 am - 12:00 pm	曹昱 董慧琦	女性与灵性
2023年12月27日 星期三	10:00 am - 12:00 pm	卓慧琦 戴宁红	正念的大学英语: 女性成长, 礼教与改变
2024年1月25日 星期四	10:00 am - 12:00 pm	杨丽 董慧琦	什么阻碍了我们的成长——女性成长的力量
2024年1月24日 星期三	10:00 am - 12:00 pm	卓慧琦 戴宁红	正念的大学英语: 正念的力量
2024年3月24日 星期日	10:00 am - 12:00 pm	杨昱 董慧琦	我们读了那本书, 但却无法付诸行动——青少年群体
2024年4月23日 星期二	10:00 am - 12:00 pm	卓慧琦 戴宁红	正念的大学英语: 心之距离, 连接的力量1
2024年5月22日 星期三	10:00 am - 12:00 pm	刘丹 董慧琦	家庭的痛苦与疗愈
2024年6月20日 星期四	10:00 am - 12:00 pm	卓慧琦 戴宁红	正念的大学英语: 心之距离, 连接的力量2
2024年7月20日 星期六	10:00 am - 12:00 pm		神经科学
2024年8月18日 星期日	10:00 am - 12:00 pm	卓慧琦 戴宁红	正念的大学英语: 生命课堂中本国的女大学生