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Mindful About Life

Focus, Flourish and Fly
using the science of positive psychology

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One cure for aggression - mindfulness

We all know that aggression exists and we all know that it is healthier to control your aggression rather than have your aggression control you. But how can we do that? What clues has research given us for controlling our anger and aggression? (By the way, if you think this doesn't apply to you, read through until the end!)

In a word – mindfulness. Many studies have shown a correlation between more mindfulness and less aggression.

At one extreme, Dr. Ryan Shorey and his colleagues found that men who needed help with substance abuse were less aggressive if they were more mindful. Even in this extreme population of men about 25 years old, some were generally more mindful while others were generally less mindful. And those men who were more mindful were less verbally and less physically aggressive.

In a less extreme example, Dr. Ashley Borders and her colleagues found that men and women undergraduates were also less

aggressive when they were more mindful. Again, this included both less physical aggression and less verbal aggression.

And in another extreme situation, Dr. Nirbhay N. Singh taught a man with mental illness and cognitive impairment to meditate on the soles of his feet when he felt aggressive feelings coming on. The man was able to “graduate” from an inpatient facility to living in the community. Dr. Singh showed that a mindfulness meditation was able to “short-circuit” the aggressive feelings and calm the man down.

Many, many people are victims of verbal or physical aggression in many different forms. If we could increase mindfulness in the aggressors, perhaps we could also decrease the aggression.

Now, I am sure, that most of you, my readers, think that this doesn't apply to you. After all, you have never hit anyone, you rarely scream at others, you are not aggressive. Right? While these research studies did not show how mindfulness helps



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with aggression in the population at large, I have one more study to share.

What about your driving? Dr. Amanda Stephens did a study in 2018 and found that aggressive driving was correlated with being less mindful. Does your blood boil sometimes when you are driving? Would mindfulness help you calm down a bit on the road?

Mindfulness can help us all calm down. Whether we are calming down from upsetting day at work or an upsetting commute on the road. Whether that upset will come out as an aggressive word or an aggressive rant or worse. So be mindful.

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