

Introduction to the Special Series on Mindfulness and Addiction

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Today, people struggling with addiction have more paths to recovery than ever before. They can start on a path to change using self-help resources or mutual aid groups, and they can turn to professional treatment providers for psychotherapy and medication. Many people find that a combination of these and other approaches works best for them. This month, The BASIS is exploring an approach to addiction treatment and recovery that is relatively new to the scientific literature: mindfulness meditation.

Leading researchers in this area [describe mindfulness](#) as “attending to experiences on a moment-to-moment basis with intention to cultivate nonjudgmental, non-reactive states of awareness.” Mindfulness-based treatment encourages people to relate differently to negative feelings, and identify underlying reasons for harmful behaviors, in order to learn new, more adaptive coping skills.



As Dr. Katie Witkiewitz will describe in an upcoming [behind-the-scenes editorial](#), Dr. G. Alan Marlatt launched the [first NIH-funded study of mindfulness meditation as a treatment for addiction](#) during 2000, after beginning his own mindfulness meditation practice during the late 1970s. Since then, researchers including Dr. Witkiewitz have rigorously studied the effects of mindfulness meditation both as a treatment for addiction and as a relapse prevention tool. All this month, we will review this emerging literature. We begin today with

[a study](#) demonstrating that people who are naturally more mindful than others are more likely to resist drinking as a way to cope with negative emotions. We follow next week with [a study](#) revealing that mindfulness meditation training helps smokers recover from lapses in their attempts to quit. Later in the month, we'll review [studies of mindfulness training](#) for gambling problems and substance use disorders. In addition, Dr. Zev Schuman-Olivier of the [Cambridge Health Alliance Center for Mindfulness and Compassion](#) will describe [his own experience studying mindfulness as an approach to addiction treatment and recovery](#).

We hope you will enjoy and learn from this Special Series.

— Heather Gray, Ph.D.

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