

Abstract

Nonattachment, which is a relatively new construct in mindfulness literature, is defined as a flexible way of relating to oneself and experience without craving for or avoiding them. It is a path and mind state to end suffering in Buddhism. Research found that nonattachment was correlated with personal benefits, but few studies have investigated the social benefits of nonattachment. The present study investigated the effects of short self-guided didactic and/or experiential videos in raising the understanding of nonattachment and attaining the personal experience of letting go of fixations, and whether they can increase compassion and prosociality. A total of 153 participants were randomly assigned into 4 conditions (didactic only, experiential only, didactic + experiential, control) and were included in data analysis. Results showed that all three active experimental conditions significantly increased nonattachment level, as well as compassion and prosocial outcomes. The combined didactic and experiential condition cultivated the highest levels of nonattachment, compassion, and prosocial intentions. The experiential only condition performed better than the didactic only condition in inducing nonattachment, compassion, and prosociality. The present study provided empirical evidence that nonattachment can be enhanced independently from mindfulness, and nonattachment itself is related to compassion and prosociality. Implications for secular mindfulness-based interventions were discussed.

1. Introduction

1.1 Nonattachment

Nonattachment is “the subjective quality of not being stuck or fixated on ideas, images, or sensory objects and not feeling an internal pressure to acquire, hold, avoid, or change”(Sahdra et al., 2010, p.118). It allows one to see the emptiness of things, respond in a flexible and balanced way without clinging to the pleasant aspects or suppressing the unpleasant aspects of one’s experience (Twemlow, 2001; Sahdra et al., 2010; Sahdra et al., 2015). In other words, nonattachment is both the ability and a means to accept the experience as it is and to let go of it. The research found that nonattachment was positively related to individual well-being, including fewer depressive symptoms (Lamis and Dvorak, 2014), reduced stress, anxiety, and depression (Whitehead et al., 2020), increased positive