

Monestès, J.L., Villatte, M., & Loas, G. (2009). Short web-based manipulation of self-focused attention: a comparison of Attention Training and mindfulness. Paper presented at the World-Conference III of the Association for Behavioral and Contextual Science, Enschede, Netherlands.

Self-focused attention is “an awareness of self-referent, internally generated information that stands in contrast to an awareness of externally generated information derived through sensory receptors” (Ingram, 1990). High self-focused attention is correlated with anxiety and depression (Mor & Winquist, 2002, for a review). Modifying the relationships to external and internal cues is a key process of acceptance and commitment therapy.

Two methods have been explored to modify self-focused attention. Attention Training Treatment (ATT- Wells, 1990) aims at decreasing self-focus attention by training attention to external stimulus. Patients are proposed auditory attentional exercises involving selective attention. The proposition of mindfulness techniques is to modify the interaction with internal stimulus (thoughts, memories, sensations, emotions) and external stimulus.

We compare these approaches in a short web-based experiment. On a website, subjects are proposed to listen to 4 audio files of 3 minutes, one each day. In the ATT group, the audio files are composed of ambiance sounds (street, restaurant, countryside, shop). The subjects are asked to track a sound event (for ex, a ring phone) among the other sounds. In the Mindfulness group, the audio files are mindfulness meditation exercises.

Subjects fill the AAQ-II, MAAS, BDI, Situational Self-Awareness Scale (SSAS-Govern & Marsch, 2001) and Linguistic Implications Form E2 (LIFE2, Wegner & Giuliano, 1983).

Subjects must respond to all the scales twice, before the listening of the first audio file, and after the listening of the last one. Our goal is to see if any change in psychological flexibility, mindfulness, depression and self-focused attention occurs after a short manipulation of this sort, and if any difference appears between mindfulness and ATT.

Keywords: self-focused attention, attention training treatment, mindfulness, psychological flexibility, web-based experiment