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The potential role of mindful eating as a treatment model for addressing the obesity epidemic

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Overweight and obesity is one of the major global health challenges of the 21st century. Few enduring treatment strategies have been identified and a critical need exists to expand treatment development efforts beyond traditional education and diet-based programs and to explore alternative models. Meditation-based mindful eating programs are growing in popularity as interventions for disordered eating and weight loss and could advance treatment and prevention efforts by providing a unique relevancy in addressing key psychological risk factors that prior to have been missing from traditional weight loss programs. Specifically, the discussion will focus on how mindful eating corresponds directly to two intervention targets implicated in both the development and maintenance of overweight and obesity. These include reduced psychosocial functioning including depression and body dissatisfaction and disordered eating behaviors including unhealthy weight control practices (UWCP), frequent dieting and emotional binge eating. In this presentation, an introduction to the principles of mindful eating will be given along with a discussion on how mindful eating differs from traditional diet-based approaches to eating behavior change. In addition, recent research findings in this area will be highlighted and a framework for using mindful eating interventions with families will be presented.

Biography

Jeanne Dalen completed her PhD in 2008 in Clinical Psychology at the University of New Mexico (UNM). She is currently a Research Assistant Professor in the UNM Department of Pediatrics and a Research Scientist at the Oregon Research Institute; Center for Family and Adolescent Research (ORI-CFAR). Her expertise in Health Psychology and Behavioral Medicine is informed by over 15 years' experience conducting both research and clinical work in obesity and diabetes populations. She is currently Principal Investigator for a National Institutes of Health funded clinical research study to adapt and pilot a family-based mindful eating intervention for overweight adolescents.

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