

## Research

# Growing up and Waking up - New Perspectives in Mind-Body Medicine Illustrated by the Model of Meditation-Based Lifestyle Modification (MBLM)

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.61936/themind/202406042>

Ken Wilber's concept of "waking up" and "growing up" emphasizes the dual paths of spiritual enlightenment and psychological development (Wilber, 2000). In the context of Mind-Body Medicine, this framework can offer a comprehensive approach to healing, addressing both the spiritual and psychological aspects of health. By incorporating practices that promote both spiritual awareness ("waking up") as well as emotional and cognitive maturity ("growing up"), Mind-Body Medicine can facilitate holistic well-being by enhancing the therapeutic outcomes for individuals.

Related to more holistic mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs), Van Gordon et al. (2020) initiated a profound exploration into their evolution, advocating for the transition towards a second generation that more authentically embodies traditional Buddhist practices. Their discussion critically distinguishes between first-generation MBIs, such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, and the emergent second-generation MBIs, which explicitly integrate spiritual components and traditional meditative practices beyond mere moment-to-moment awareness to improve health, productivity, and emotional well-being. These second-generation programs aim to rectify what the authors perceive as dilutions or misinterpretations of mindfulness within first-generation MBIs, proposing a more comprehensive approach that includes ethical mindfulness practices, *The Mind* 2024, 4 ISSN: 2940-3243

impermanence, and compassion as central to the therapeutic process. Their rigorous examination underscores a pivotal shift towards interventions that not only address psychological distress but also foster a deeper spiritual well-being, setting a new direction for mindfulness research and practice (Van Gordon and Shonin, 2020).

The Meditation-Based Lifestyle Modification (MBLM) program marks a significant evolution in mind-body interventions, aligning with the inspiration of second-generation MBIs through its deep integration of ethical and spiritual aspects derived from Yoga and Ayurveda philosophy (Bringmann et al., 2021a). Unlike its predecessors, MBLM is intricately designed to address mental and stress-related disorders by weaving together classical Yoga's holistic teachings (which essentially aims to develop a deep meditation practice) with basic Ayurvedic principles to foster physical, mental, and spiritual health. This integration is deeply rooted in the traditional frameworks of both Yoga and Ayurveda, which emphasize balance, ethical living, and spiritual growth as pathways to eudaimonic well-being. Eudaimonic well-being, emphasizing the fulfillment of one's true potential and adherence to deeply held values, mirrors the soul's intrinsic pursuit of purpose and connection, underscoring the soul as the essence of our being that seeks alignment with the universal truths and meaningful existence. Central to MBLM is its foundation on

Patanjali's eightfold path of Yoga, a comprehensive approach that moves beyond physical postures to include ethical principles (Yamas and Niyamas), breath control (Pranayama), and meditative techniques (Prathyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi), aiming at the cessation of mental fluctuations and the realization of pure consciousness, one's "Higher Self", or immortal soul (Bryant, 2009). This theoretical underpinning positions MBLM as a complex intervention tailored to facilitate spiritual awareness on the basis of self-regulation and stress response modulation through both top-down (higher faculties of the mind) and bottom-up (neurophysiological) processes (Bringmann et al., 2021a).

Empirical evidence supports MBLM's effectiveness across various populations, including healthy adults, individuals with depression, and those suffering from chronic pain:

- For healthy participants, Matko et al. (2021) utilized a single-case multiple-baseline design to explore the incremental effects of core MBLM's components (ethical living practice, physical Hatha yoga, and spiritual mantra meditation) on well-being and stress. Participants showed a longitudinal increase in well-being, with the largest increases observed in those implementing ethical living practice. Stress levels tended to decrease, especially in conditions combining treatment conditions with physical Yoga. This research underscores the differential and synergistic benefits of combining meditation with ethical education and physical Yoga, offering valuable insights for tailoring complex MBIs.
- In outpatients with mild to moderate depression, MBLM showed significant improvements in depressive symptoms. A qualitative sub-group analysis highlighted themes of reappraisal, serenity, and mindful living in participants' experiences, indicating enhanced well-being and ethical living awareness. In the 6-month follow-up

results, the outcomes for patients who participated in the MBLM program showed significant and sustained improvements in self-rated depression, psychosomatic symptoms, and stress with medium to large effect sizes compared to other treatment groups. Notably, after 8 weeks, the MBLM group exhibited a 49% reduction in depression levels, compared to a 13% reduction in the Treatment as Usual (TAU) group. This significant reduction persisted at the 6-month follow-up, with the MBLM group maintaining a 47% reduction in depression levels versus a 19% reduction in the TAU group. These results underscore the clinical relevance and sustained benefits of MBLM in managing depression, highlighting its superiority not only over conventional body-oriented Yoga and meditative movements but also over standard multimodal treatments for depression (Bringmann et al., 2021b; Bringmann et al., 2022).

- A study on MBLM for chronic pain showed varied results across measures of pain intensity, self-efficacy, and quality of life. Participants, mostly suffering from chronic back pain, fibromyalgia, or chronic migraines, demonstrated high adherence to the program, with notable daily engagement in ethical living practices, Yoga and meditation. The study showed a small but significant improvement over time and small to very large reductions in their strongest pain levels. Pain self-efficacy saw a significant medium-sized improvement, and overall well-being improved to a moderate extent with a significant medium effect size (Matko et al., 2023).

MBLM incorporates Yoga's ethical principles, which align with positive psychology's focus on fostering virtues and strengths. By emphasizing values like non-violence, truthfulness, contentment, and self-discipline, MBLM leverages these values to enhance well-being and resilience, connecting the practice of yoga

with the goals of positive psychology interventions to improve life satisfaction and happiness. Its foundation in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras offers a pathway to self-realization and transcendent states through systematically preparing for and refining the practice of meditation, leading to the stilling of the mind. This process is integral to transpersonal psychology, which explores the spiritual aspects of human experience, suggesting that MBLM can facilitate profound psychological growth and an expanded sense of identity beyond the individual self. Ken Wilber's framework of "waking up" and "growing up" is mirrored in MBLM through the integration of Yoga's ethical values and meditation practices. The program supports "growing up" by fostering personal virtues and "waking up"

through meditative practices that encourage spiritual awareness and enlightenment, thus contributing to holistic human development.

Yoga and Ayurveda offer profound insights into the nature of consciousness and the soul, blending theoretical knowledge with practical application. These ancient systems present a cohesive framework for understanding the interplay between body, mind, and the eternal facets of the soul, advocating for practices that promote health, balance, and spiritual growth. Their emphasis on holistic well-being and the pursuit of higher states of consciousness makes them foundational to the philosophy underlying MBLM and future second-generation MBIs with the scope of human flourishing.

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