A Narrative Study of the Five Senses Meditation of the Adolescent Suffering from Abandonment Anxiety

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate on the effect of the Five Senses Meditation to an adolescent suffering from abandonment anxiety. The subject of the study is a student attending a high school in P-city and has an experience of being raised by several foster parents from childhood. This study focused on searching for the root and context of the pain by facing, discerning, and accepting abandonment anxiety through the Five Senses Meditation. It also explored the process of making changes in life by the positive diversion of thoughts. The Five Senses Meditation consists of eight sessions of breathing meditation, specifically, the five sensory meditation the five sensory meditation. Through the sessions, the adolescent suffering from abandonment anxiety narrated her fears, sense of isolation, depression, and lethargy that she has experienced in her psychological and environmental contexts. While the subject narrated such experiences in detail, she was sympathized and supported, which led to the positive changes to face the causes of her anxiety and pain, opened her heart to the world, realized her value of existence, and used social words such as "together" and "we". For the adolescent suffering from abandonment anxiety, this study was a process of gaining insights through the Five Senses Meditation, learn causal changes that appears and disappears every moment, and accept the pains inherent in life. This study has significantly helped the subject to recover flexible emotions and thinking and overcome anxiety and stress to build an active, positive, and mature attitude towards life.

Keywords: Abandonment Anxiety, Adolescent, Narrative Study, Five Senses Meditation, Breathing Meditation

1. Introduction

According to Statistics Korea in 2018, the "1388 Adolescent Call," which is about taking care of the adolescent issues from urgent emergencies to basic counseling, the adolescent counseling welfare centers conducted adolescent counseling on family issues (7.7%), mental health (12.2%), and interpersonal relationship (27.1%). Going through the emotional confusion, adolescents challenge the traditional value and authority of the society and their parents. They think they need to be recognized as an independent being in the family despite experiencing physical and

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mental changes.

They tend to consider the instructions and education from their parents to be authoritative, hence, rejecting their decisions[1]. Therefore, the psychological importance among the youth means the importance of self-worth related to oneself[2]. Referring to the story of "Hansel and Gretel," Nam-kyung Oh states that children have a fear and anxiety of being abandoned by someone they trust[3]. Early childhood is an important time in various aspects of development [4][5]. The abandonment anxiety formed in the relationship between children and their caregivers at the early stage of life. is something everyone experiences. However, the experience of loss causes a complex sense of abandonment, for example, depression, attachment, resentment, lethargy, and submission. When they re-experience them involuntarily, they develop distrust on human relations, repetitive behavior problems, obsession, avoidance, and immature interpersonal relationships. The existing studies report that these factors cause insecure interpersonal relationship in general and social maladaptation.

Hee-baek Lee suggested that the symptoms caused by the emotion patterns and the key emotions of negative thinking that were learned through the growth and development process may rise to the surface any time when both the internal and external pressures stimulate the inner conflict structure[6]. He concluded that this is because the sense of abandonment is reproduced consistently through the monotonous responding pattern in the interpersonal relationships during the process of growth and development. When facing the abandonment anxiety that lays behind the interpersonal conflicts, experiencing the Five Senses Meditation may help building and maintaining sound and healthy relationships by accepting one's pattern of relationships and fixing the unhealthy pattern.

There are precedent researches on the abandonment anxiety of adolescents. Based on the quantitative statistical methodology, they studied the mediated effects of each variables, interpersonal relationship, scale development and validation, image expression, program, physical reaction, and so on. Regarding the qualitative studies, on the other hand, a case study[7] on the peer relation between runaway teenagers[8] concluded that the difference between the parenting styles causes difference between the types of abandonment anxiety, which means that there is a limit to reveal the inner side of the individual adolescent suffering from abandonment anxiety.

Though it applies the counseling techniques developed in the West to diagnose the symptoms, the conceptualized meditation counseling as an inclusive alternative psychotherapy defines the problems and analyzes the causes, regarding the intervention in the changes of the problem, and focuses on the meditative approaches[9]. Through the meditative approach, one can break free from unconscious, automatic cognitive error and mindsets, correct the cognitive

distortion of the fixed idea and invariability of a phenomenon and existence, and form an attitude to accept changes by observing the process of rising and falling objectively during the breathing meditation and the process of being mindful of thoughts and staying and watching the thoughts. In the Five Senses Meditation, one faces how his or her five senses make versatile changes by only contacting the objects as it appears and passes away "now and here" without judging, choosing, or paying attention to the object[10]. By doing that, one can realize that the logic of his or her anguishes and pains are what rises and falls as well. Such nonverbal realization and insight lead to the changes in the attitude and cognition about life by breaking from the cognitive errors due to past experiences.

The precedent researches based on the meditative counseling started to be proven effective through the studies on many different family issues such as family dissolution and Hwabyeong of elderly women[11], and other issues of school maladjustment, addiction, depression, somatization, anxiety, panic disorder, pananxiety, and anxiety of college entrance repeaters. Jeong-eun Chun[12] reported the physical reaction that works as a the instinct of self-preservation in a conflict with a case of a participant who has been abandoned, using breathing and body scanning. Through a life historical narrative of a single mother, K. H. Ahn[13] reported how the Five Senses Meditation improves the balanced quality of life and its benefits to the social relationships. Inkyung[14] reported how it was used specifically in educational programs, meditation training, and counseling and that it reduced the symptoms of anxiety and depression.

This study is the first attempt to approach the healing process for an adolescent suffering from abandonment anxiety based on the Five Senses Meditation in the form of a narrative inquiry. In narrative studies based on the meditative counseling, there has not been a discussion with regard to the emotional cure for an individual adolescent suffering from abandonment anxiety. Therefore, this study analyzed the causes of anxiety and pains in the life aspects of an adolescent suffering from abandonment anxiety through the Five Senses Meditation. It is assumed that a narrative study is necessary to understand how the adolescent suffering from abandonment anxiety re-experienced her life's ordeal and what she newly realized, gained an insight, and accepted through the Five Senses Meditation.

2. Methods of Study

2.1 Research Procedure

This study is intended to inquire into the effect of the Five Senses Meditation on the adolescent suffering from abandonment anxiety, carried out from September 5, 2019 to January 10, 2020.

In September, a group of experts held a meeting to discuss the research possibility, and evaluated that the qualitative study can be conducted. After inquiring into the literatures about abandonment anxiety, it was agreed that a narrative inquiry is suited to analyze the qualitative data. In October, the researcher collected the data, set up the program, and posted the advertisement for the participants. The senior teacher of J High School collected the written agreements from the participants' parents."

The research program was carried out from November 5, 2019 to December 24, 2019 consisting of eight sessions. The session was held every Monday after school for 120 minutes from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm. At the first and second session, "the goal of the counselling was set by interviewing the last qualified participant, the pretest was conducted, and the said participant was assisted in learning the Five Senses Meditation and the breathing meditation." The third to eight sessions followed the healing stages of facing, insight, and accepting through the Five Senses Meditation.

The contents of the program are as follows. In the first session, the participant learned the posture, method and effects of the breathing meditation, relaxed her stiff body and mind by practicing the meditation, and went through the abandonment Anxiety Scale and the BDI. In the second session, she experienced the mindfulness of the constant change in her senses and feelings through the breathing meditation. From the third to the seventh session, through the Five Senses Meditation (using her eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin) she faced the stalled pains and anxiety that she got throughout her life experiences, noticed the changes coming from the insights, and shared how she can accept them and have positive thoughts. In the 8th session, she took the Abandonment Anxiety scale and the posttest of Beck Depression Inventory (BDI).

2.2 Subject

The study on the experience of the Five Senses Meditation was advertised on the school hallway. Initially, five signed up as volunteers, consisting of three girls and two boys. They were all willing to participate in the program, submitting the research participation pledge and the written agreement from their parents. Among them, a boy dropped out the program because he had a car accident, and the other boy was absent without excuse and therefore was removed from the program automatically. Two girls dropped out due to admission to college

and school violence, respectively. The last and only student left was Neo.

[Table 1] General Demographical Information of the Participant

Nickname	Age	Sex	Educatio n	No. of caregiver	Family status	Family members	Siblings
Neo	19	Fem ale	High School senior	9	remarried parents	Step father: Two sons Mother: Neo (herself)	Neo has an elder brother and a younger brother who are not her kinship.

2.3 Measurement Tool

This study used the Abandonment Anxiety Scale and the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI). As for the Abandonment Anxiety Scale, the study used the one developed and validated by Nam-kyuong Oh and Young-soon Lee (2015). The Abandonment Anxiety Scale includes a total 27 questions - ten questions about abandonment, which is feeling that you are going to be abandoned by others, nine questions about rejection/denial, which is showing differentiated attitude and characteristics of human relations due to abandonment anxiety, and eight questions about dependence/clinging, which is showing undifferentiated attitude and characteristics of human relations due to abandonment anxiety. The questions are to be answered by the five-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree, 5: strongly agree), and the higher point of each factor signifies that the subject feels the stronger abandonment anxiety under stress. The Cronbach's of the Abandonment Anxiety Scale is .93, and the item of abandonment is .91 while rejection/denial is .88 and dependence/clinging is .85.

The Beck Depressions Inventory (BDI) is an assessment for measuring depression severity developed by Beck (1967). The Korean version was developed by Young-ho Lee (1991), including 21 items on emotional, cognitive, motivational, and physiological syndromes. The score ranges from 0 to 63 to indicate mild depression (10-15), moderate depression (16-23), and severe depression (24-63). The Cronbach's alpha value is .85.

2.4 Data Collection & Analysis

This study used the verbatim of the eight sessions of personal meditation and the field note as the main field text. Other various data including the test result, e-mails, and cell-phone textsof the participants and the field note of the researcher were also used as field texts. Since

the participant has been surrounded by various irregular environments, collecting data was focused on understanding the context of the narrative. To understand the general growth phase of the participant through the data, she reexperience her life by narrating her life experiences. The study chose a narrative study by "narrating it again".

3. Result

3.1 Neo's Story

Neo had nine caregivers until she was in fourth grade. To adapt to her ever-changing caregivers, she was always anxious, trying to read their faces, and having stomachaches.

I was sweating all the time, and I had stomach ache every single day. But they told me that I was pretending to be sick. My mom was angry at me and told me that I lie when she was busy. But I really was sick. (The 1st session)

Neo was incapable of expressing herself. She could neither understand what her mother meant nor find the answer her erratic mother wanted. When her mother scolded her, Neo started to wail, and their neighbor called the police, suspecting her parents of child abuse. The police said that the child and the mother must be separated if the same report is called in one more time.

When I was a third grader, I yelled and cried so loudly that the people who live downstairs called the police... Mom told the police, "Take her." That's when I stopped crying. (The 4th session - hearing)

When her mother got re-married, Neo met her stepfather, an elder brother (24-year-old, an office worker) and a younger brother (17-year-old, a junior at Neo's school). Neo thought that her mother abandoned her. She started to feel that she was alone, being pessimistic and depressed. She started to sleep a lot.

They said it was my fault. They didn't even ask my opinion... So, I was just so upset and I didn't want to talk. That's why I just went to bed. I was so frustrated and getting headaches and even rash all over my body. (The 7th session - touching)

Her grade was so low that she had to go to J High School in P city, which is on the outskirts of where she lives and no connection to anyone.

Mom had a phone call with my teacher to decide which high school I should go. I had no chance to speak up so I just came. The grade was an excuse for her to send me away. She abandoned me. (The 2nd session)

3.2 The Story of How Neo Experienced the Five Senses Meditation

3.2.1 Breathing Meditation

Whenever she felt anguished, Neo straightened herself by breathing. Although she was not able to focus hard because of all the distracting thoughts keep coming into her mind, she felt that she could have more spaces between thoughts and calm down her troubled feelings while breathing. She recognized that her body was being relaxed and her negative thoughts were being turned into positive ones.

At first, it was frustrating to "watch" my breathing but I kept trying and later, it started to feel refreshing. I think I was able to have less sadness and frustrations. And since I had to "watch" my breathing, I think I could pay more attention to myself. (The 8th session)

3.2.2 The Five Senses Meditation

In the Five Senses Meditation, Neo touched an object and watched how it changes, but she found the process highly strange and awkward. It was because the learned experiences of "listening" and "looking" were predominating over "hearing" and "seeing." Through the reflection of the reproduced experiences, the participant who could not stay "now and here" before started to gain an insight into the changes of rising and falling. She started to be aware of the cognitive distortions due to the fixed mindset and to form an inclusive and active attitude with flexible thoughts.

When I use the effects in this photo editing app, the image of myself seems different on every picture. I am just who I am but in the pictures, I look different depending on which app I use. So, when the environment changes, I change, too... but I am just me being here. (The 3rd session - seeing)

The faster rhythm makes me move more and I don't really get tired. When I listen to the classic music, it's different than listening to the rap music. Depending on the beats, dance moves are different and so are my thoughts. Right now, I am following the bell sound of the meditation app. I guess being "now and here" means that I move along the change when it rises and falls. (The 4th session - hearing)

I remember the mist spray smelled so good. Then, when we made coffee, all I could smell was coffee and the fragrance of the mist was gone. But now that we opened the window, all the aroma is gone. I was like, "Oh, I can smell the mist" and "Oh, I can smell coffee" but as

there is no more smell, my thoughts are gone, too. (The 5th session - smelling)

When I think of a hamburger, I want to eat it. The taste of meat, you know? I had a burger day before yesterday but I still remember the taste. But now that I am drinking coke, I don't really remember the taste of the burger in my mouth. Well, actually it's not like I was eating that but anyway, the taste of coke is all I can feel right now but no taste of a burger at all. I guess I will lose the taste of coke once I eat something else. It's like, I am remembering the taste only through my mouth and thoughts. (The 6th session - tasting)

3.2.3 Changes of Neo

The lifestyle and fixed mindset that Neo had to choose to survive started to change gradually through the process of facing. She used to have false belief of herself that she was worthless, everyone hates her, and she was an abandoned kid - a failure. She used to neglect herself but finally she started to embrace her delicate self-being. Neo used to be anxious, being buried under self-depreciation and inferiority complex, but she started to recover her balance through flying yoga. Trying to find the balance of the relaxed body and mind in the air, her perception started to change, and she was able to look into her inner mind seriously, step by step, to set a new goal. As the process of facing and discerning improved her pride, she could pay more attention to herself.

3.3 Re-narrating the Experience of the Five Senses Meditation

The participant was instinctively protecting herself by the excessive love, obsession, and submission toward her mother. Although the environmental contexts of the society and family differ from each other, the relationship between a child and the caregiver in the early stage of one's life forms the foundation of interpersonal relationship afterwards. The participant did not say "No" to anything but was always nervous, being hungry for attention. She thoroughly followed the preference and motivation of other people because she did not want to be rejected and she did not try to initiate a communication with others. Although she was always tired and often had headaches and a feeling of pressure on her chest, she managed to hold them back. As her mother's illness is getting worse and she cannot even imagine the absence of her mother, she had no idea of how her life would turn and the regrets and guilt of deviation grew worse. She got more anxious, depressed, and lethargic every day.

3.3.1 Breathing Meditation: Existence. "Now and Here"

When the participant faced her physical and psychological changes and tried to straighten herself through long and deep breathing, she noticed that she breathes harder whenever she feels uncomfortable. Recognizing that she was trying to avoid the uncomfortable and painful emotions, she came back to breathing, maintained the ease, and developed the power to face such unpleasant emotions. Through the process, she was able to be aware of herself being in existence at "now and here."

3.3.2 The Five Senses Meditation: Changes, Cycle, and Insight

Watching the changes caused by the five sensory organs and touching an object, the participant realized that her obstinacy and fixed mindset put herself in pain. She watched the countless problems of the moment and maintain the homeostasis through the cycle of rising and falling. However, their essentials were changing according to the cognitive limit and the conditions of the connection. Such understanding of the individual phenomenon and preceded observation may be interpreted to be the driving force of the changes.

3.3.3 Changes of Neo

Neo's resiliency improved. She started to consider herself as an independent person, embrace irregular changes, and accept the unpredictable speed of her life and changes of direction positively and optimistically. Her balance was recovered. As she got a higher self-esteem and pride, positive thinking enlarged, achieving balance, flexible life. She could have better relationships with other people. Through sympathy and support, she started trying to accept the concept of community in horizontal relationship of "together and us" and it served as a momentum for her to be more active and friendly to others.

4. Conclusion

In order to investigate on the effect of the Five Senses Meditation on the adolescent suffering from abandonment anxiety, this study examined what caused the adolescent pains 10 through her period of growth, and how the Five Senses Meditation healed and changed her in the form of a narrative study. The researcher's sympathy and support towards the participant built mutual trust and close rapport. By listening carefully to the participant's story, the researcher was able to identify the problems and the causes together with the participant and intervened through the breathing meditation and the Five Senses Meditation.

The Five Senses Meditation did not heal the participant's environmental contexts and inner

pains but it helped her recognizing that her thoughts and feelings are not fixed and having a more flexible attitude toward life, and having various relationships among social members[15].

The study concluded the following: 1. It demonstrates an adolescent suffering from abandonment anxiety facing and accepting her negative thoughts and changing in a positive way; 2. it implies that the sociality of the participant had a close relationship between the experiences learned from the relationship between her caregiver, and; 3. it describes the experience of how the Five Senses Meditation affects as adolescent suffering from abandonment anxiety in the form of a narrative study.

Through the Five Senses Meditation experiences, In conclusion, through the Five Senses Meditation experiences, the participant was able to recognize her own fixed social patterns that originated from the relationships with her family members and were built during her period of growth. She could break herself free from the restrains and limitations that she had bound herself, and search for an active and positive attitude of life by understanding herself, having insights into others, and experiencing the healing that comes from acceptance.

To discuss the effect of the Five Senses Meditation on the participant regarding the conclusion, the Five Senses Meditation can be defined as "a pure, nonverbal awareness of the present individual experience of the five senses[13][14]. From the process of contacting the external environment, the participant recognized and faced the present changes and, in turn, recovered positivity. It supports the existing study that suggests that it helps you overcoming negative feelings, stopping emotional behaviors, gaining self-confidence, building better relationship with others, and enriching the life[14][16].

To further improve the study, the following recommendations are suggested. First, this study does not generalize the research since its participant was only a single adolescent suffering from abandonment anxiety. Subsequent studies need to be carried out on participants of different ages, considering the gender ratio, as well. Secondly, this study carried out counseling to the adolescent herself only. Since abandonment anxiety stems from the relationship with the caregivers from childhood, the family counseling is necessary. A systematic means of supplementation needs to be established to make programs for the emotional support and recovery of the adolescents suffering from abandonment anxiety.

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