Mindfulness and Health

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What is mindfulness?

“The awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment to moment.”

(Kabat-Zinn, 2003)
Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

• Stress reduction clinic at Umass founded in 1979 by Jon Kabat-Zinn

• 8 weekly 2 ½ hour classes and a single 6 hour retreat

• Classroom format with guided practice and group discussion
Mindfulness practices

Formal meditation practices

Awareness of everyday activities
How is mindfulness different than relaxation techniques?

• Not trying to produce a special state

• Greater awareness of the mind as it is in the present moment

• Applicable to any situation
Health benefits

• Increased awareness:
  – Mind and body
  – Thoughts as passing events and conditioned
  – Relationship between thoughts and emotions

• Leads to decreased:
  – Automatic reactions
  – Stress
Clinical research

• MBSR effective for chronic pain, anxiety, depression, and other complaints

• Reduced psychological stress, increased well-being

• Reduced physiologic response to stress
Mindfulness-based approach to wellness

- Holistic – physical, mental and spiritual

- Strength-based – vast potential of inner resources to promote one’s own well-being

- Supports a “culture of wellness” for all stakeholders involved in the person-centered planning partnership
MINDFULNESS-INDUCED NEUROPLASTICITY
MBSR increases left-sided cortical activation

Davidson, et al. Alterations in brain and immune function produced by mindfulness meditation
Psychosomatic Medicine 65(4):564-70, 2003 Jul-Aug
Increased immune response

Davidson, et al. Alterations in brain and immune function produced by mindfulness meditation
Psychosomatic Medicine 65(4):564-70, 2003 Jul-Aug
Immune changes correlate with shift in prefrontal activation

Davidson, et al. Alterations in brain and immune function produced by mindfulness meditation
Psychosomatic Medicine  65(4):564-70, 2003 Jul-Aug
CHANGES IN NEURAL CIRCUITRY
Limbic system

- Frontal lobe
- Thalamus
- Hippocampus
- Amygdala
- Hypothalamus
- Olfactory bulb
Amygdala connectivity correlates with mindfulness
MBSR changes amygdala connectivity

OFC

ACC

PreMBSR

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PostMBSR
Collaborators

• fMRI
  – Umass: Nanyin Zhang, Jean King, Ali Bourisly
  – Suffolk: David Gansler & Matt Jerram

• Mindfulness
  – Fernando de Torrijos, Doug Ziedonis, Saki Santorelli

• Students
  – Umass: Rashad Hardaway, Liz Apkin
  – Suffolk: Athene Lee
Mindfulness as Wellness in Psychiatry
A Clinical Experience

Mindfulness:
“Lifejacket of emotional intelligence”

Helping overcome emotional distress
Mindfulness in Psychiatry
A Clinical Experience

The “MIND” healing the “mind”

or bringing our attention from

the “head” to the “HEART”
Mindfulness in Psychiatry
A Clinical Experience

A taste of harmony

🎵 in the midst of chaos

The story -- personal

The grounding -- physical

The silencing -- integral
Mindfulness in Psychiatry
A Clinical Experience

The Bloom of the Present Moment

Past \rightarrow Present \rightarrow Future

Depression \downarrow Passive \rightarrow Assertive \rightarrow Aggressive
Stability
Anxiety
Mindfulness and Acceptance

“Lost in the middle of the dark woods of my life”

A situation: I am lost
(an opportunity to find myself)

An invitation: embracing wellness
(taking care of myself)

A practice: the cultivation of mindfulness
(taking responsibility for my own life)
Lost

Stand still. The trees ahead and bushes beside you are not lost. Wherever you are is called Here. And you must treat it as a powerful stranger, must ask permission to know it and be known. The forest breathes. Listen. It answers, I have made this place around you, if you leave it you may come back again, saying Here. No two trees are the same to Raven. No two branches are the same to Wren. If what a tree or a bush does is lost on you, you are surely lost. Stand still. The forest knows where you are. You must let it find you.

-David Wagoner
(from the words of a Native American elder)
“Only that day dawn to which we are awake”

H. Thoreau