Mindfulness and Meditation

Tools to Relieve Stress, Overcome Negative Thoughts and Emotions and Prevent Burnout

TCC 40th Annual Hospice & Palliative Care Conference
Charlotte, NC
August 29, 2016
Behavioral/Learning Objectives

• Identify stressful situations, negative thoughts, and emotional outbursts BEFORE they occur.

• Learn how mindfulness and meditation practices can help create positive options to stress, negative thought patterns, and emotional outbursts.

• Learn how to use mindfulness practices to avoid burnout. Identify ways to apply mindfulness practices at work and in your personal life.
What are the stresses in your job?

What are the stresses in your life?
What is mindfulness?

“Mindfulness is paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally.”

“It is not a state of being. It just allows us to be present and aware.”

Jon Kabat-Zinn, M.D.
Founder of MBSR
PICKLES

I'M LEARNING TO
CONSIDER YOURSELF,
APPROPRIATE EVEN
TURNING AROUND ME.

OH! SHOULDN'T
THAT BE, EASY.

I AM.

I'M CONTEMPLATING
AND APPRECIATING
THIS LITTLE BOTTLE
BEING MY NOSE IN IT.
DON'T BOTHER ME, EARL. I'M TRYING TO LIVE IN THE MOMENT.

OKAY!

WHY ARE YOU STARING AT YOUR WATCH?

I'VE ALWAYS WONDERED HOW LONG A MOMENT IS. I'VE NEVER BEEN SURE.

GRR! YOU ARE SUCH A PAIN SOMETIMES!

5.4 SECONDS.
FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, YOU WERE OUTSTANDING IN THAT MEETING TODAY!

THANK YOU, JORDAN! I WAS FRIGHTENED TO DEATH! MY MOUTH WAS DRY AS A BONE!

FEAR INCREASES HEART RATE AND TRIGGERS DISTRESSED BREATHING THROUGH THE MOUTH!

ONCE YOU STARTED BREATHING NORMALLY, YOU WERE IN COMPLETE COMMAND!
MINDFULNESS is an evidenced-based practice:

Researchers from the University of Tasmania’s Rural Clinical School have carried the first systematic literature review on the usefulness of mindfulness-based interventions for informal palliative caregivers. The research paper, published in the international journal Palliative Medicine, found that mindfulness activities are a “...feasible and potentially approach for reducing the caregiver burden, depression and enhancing quality of life for family caregivers caring at the end of life.”
How does it work?

• We are hard-wired for survival...for dealing with negativity and fear
• This is our habitual stress reaction (fight or flight)

• We used to think our brains were static—unchangeable
• Now we know that our brains can change—neuroplasticity
• By changing our habits (mindfulness) we can change our brains
• We don’t have to have a negative reaction to stress; we can choose how to respond
• Mindfulness does not stop the stress, it just allows us to make a choice of how to respond
Coping with Stress
Responding vs. Reacting

External Events
Physical, Social, Environmental

Internal Stressors
Thoughts, Emotions, Pain

Automatic / Habitual Stress Reaction
Acute hyperarousal

Internalization
Inhibition of the stress reaction, chronic hyperarousal

Fight or flight, alarm reactivity

Nervous, cardiovascular, digestive, immune, and musculoskeletal systems

Maladaptive Coping
Self-destructive behaviors, substance dependency

Breakdown
Exhaustion, depression, genetic predispositions, illness

Mindfulness-Mediated Stress Response
Possible arousal, but also:
• Awareness of the body
• Awareness of context
• Strategies and options
  – Emotion-focused strategies
  – Problem-focused strategies
  – Meaning-focused strategies
  – Seeing new options
• Quicker recovery
Benefits of mindfulness:

• Presence
• Awareness
• Focus
• Positive response to negative situations
• Acceptance
• Health (response to chronic pain, trouble sleeping etc..)
• Gratitude
• Addiction recovery
What does it look like?

**Formal practice:** longer periods of time doing certain activities (breathing, body scan, emotions, feelings etc..)

**Informal practice:** --can be done anytime, anywhere (sitting or walking...even in a group)
When can you practice mindfulness?

• Upon awakening (set your positive intention for the day)
• Preparing to go to work (practice being present)
• At work (before, during and after stressful situations)
• At breaks and lunch (just a few deep breaths)
• On the way home (reflection on work—positive responses)
• At home with family (being present with everyone)
• Before bed (gratitude, deep breathing assists sleep)
• ANYTIME
Story of the Day

There are times when I have no idea what comes next & it’s the thing I’ve come to love most about being alive: leaning in to hear the invitation of each day & feeling my whole body melt when I say yes, yes, yes.
A few mindfulness practices:

--upon awakening: just focus on your breath...if nay thoughts about the day arise, just let them go and return to your breath---close with setting a positive intention for the day.

--at work, before any activity: take a few minutes to focus on your breath...put off thoughts about what you have to do that day...(you can always return to the breath at any time during the day...focusing on your breath creates a habit of sharper focus, greater awareness of the present situation...

--go to a safe, peaceful place: in another practice, after relaxing with breathing, visualize a safe, peaceful place...imagine you can go there anytime...when stressful situations arise you can take yourself there quickly to calm yourself before re-entering the fray...

--at home, before bed: breathing, gratitude for the day, intention of a good night’s rest
QUESTIONS?

COMMENTS?
Closing:

• Song: “Peace” by Norah Jones

• Poem: “The Summer Day” by Mary Oliver
Please contact me if you are interested in additional workshops or retreats on mindfulness meditation, mindfulness at work, or mindful leadership.

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Resources

Books
Mindfulness for Beginners by Jon Kabat-Zinn, M.D.
Wherever You Go, There You Are by Jon Kabat-Zinn, M.D.

Calming You Anxious Mind by Jeff Brantley, M.D.
Five Good Minutes at Work by Jeff Brantley, M.D.
Note: there are a series of the Five Good Minute books

The Miracle of Mindfulness by Thich Nhat Hanh
Present Moment Wonderful Moment by Thich Nhat Hanh

Grieving Mindfully by Sameet M. Kumar, Ph.D.

Mindfulness by Joseph Goldstein

Online
The Mindfulness Summit—free
MBSR Online Course—fee attached
Soundstrue.com—mixed...some free and some are fee-based

CDs
Awareness of Breathing Meditation (Duke Center for Integrative Medicine)
Breathing Meditations by Andrew Weil and others (Soundstrue.com)