

On Mindfulness By Dr. Margaret Rea

We are heading into the second month of the Year of Health and Wellness and this month's theme is Mindfulness. There will be many Mindfulness events here on the Sacramento campus so keep an eye out for the announcements and please check out the Events listed in this Newsletter.

Let's discuss what Mindfulness is and why we are dedicating a whole month to this topic. Even though we hear so much about mindfulness, it is not a new concept and references to mindfulness can be found going back over 2,500 years. More recently, an American doctor, Jon Kabat-Zinn took a course by Thich Nhat Hanh a Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk and Nobel Peace Prize nominee and embraced the practice and then went on to disseminate the concept of mindfulness.

Mindfulness is a very simple concept- it means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. The practice of mindfulness has been shown to have a powerful influence on one's health, well-being, and happiness as attested to by the scientific and medical evidence." - Jon Kabat-Zinn

The practice of Mindfulness encourages us to focus on the present moment, quiet our mind and be patient and compassionate with our self. Incorporating Mindfulness practices can help us stay emotionally balanced, but also help us increase our focus. Today's world can often pull our attention in many directions (our phone, the computer, our worries) and we find we can be missing out on truly experiencing the world. I have found myself talking with someone and having missed much of the conversation because I was distracted by what happened in my earlier meeting or what is on my to-do list for the next hour. I realized I missed out on the moment. I finished my meal and then I can't remember what I ate. I missed out on truly enjoying the tastes and smells of my delicious food. There are also times when we are distracted by our negative thoughts about our self or our anger about a past wrong doing. Practicing mindfulness can help us compassionately detach from the thoughts and emotions and be present for what is happening now.

Practicing Mindfulness has been shown to decrease burnout, depressive symptoms and anxiety and to influence the impact of chronic health conditions and pain management. It has also been shown to improve our interpersonal relationships as we are more present and engaged in our interactions with others.

We have our own Mindfulness expert here at UCDMC, Philippe Goldin, PhD, who is a clinical psychologist and cognitive neuroscientist at the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing. When asked to



describe Mindfulness he stated:

"To be healthy is to be emotionally balanced. One of the most powerful ways to cultivate well-being is to develop the skills of emotional awareness, emotion regulation and a kind heart. There is a growing body of research demonstrating that brief daily practice of mindfulness and compassion can modify immune functioning, neural circuits, self-regulation, interpersonal functioning. A recent review on the neuroscience of mindfulness meditation in Nature Review in 2015 by Tang and colleagues examines evidence that suggest that mindfulness meditation practice can reduce stress and promote mental and physical health by training brain systems related to attention, emotion and cognitive control. However, the key issue is to develop the habit and the skill which of course takes sustained practice. Fortunately there are many resources available at UC Davis and online. If you are interested, consider trying out a meditation at <http://www.stopbreathethink.org/> or watching a 5 minute video on gratitude <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4115qFsdWKQ>."

The helpful news is that we don't need special locations or equipment to practice Mindfulness just our willingness to slow down and be present for just one thing.

Wellness Events

Mindfulness and Compassion for Health Care Providers

ACSU Auditorium
November 17th
12:00-1:00 pm
Philippe Goldin, PhD

Mindful Walking Event Education Building Lobby

November 23rd
12:00 pm
Step away from work and join us on a short walk through the Health System campus.

How to Incorporate Mindfulness at Work

Education Building
November 30th
12:00-1:00 pm
Maggie Rea, PhD

Mindful Yoga

ACC
Wednesdays 5:15
Maureen Craig, RN, MSN, CNN

Adding Self-Care to Your Tool Kit for Step 1: Making the Most of the BSE

Medical Education 3225
November 30th

Living Fit Forever Classes

http://intranet.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/clinops/resources/living_fit_forever.shtml

Work Life and Wellness Events

ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/hr/wellness/brownbags.html

UCDMC Yoga

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Gz23GMJbZJDI-wzn9g8NxUnia4IFuVsHah40lav7Ow0/edit#>

Mindful Breathing

My wellness tip of the month is Mindful Breathing. The steps for this meditation come from a wonderful resource, Berkeley's Greater Good in Action which contains amazing information and links to practices about "building the good in life." <http://ggia.berkeley.edu/>

HOW TO DO IT

"The most basic way to do mindful breathing is simply to focus your attention on your breath, the inhale and exhale. You can do this while standing, but ideally you'll be sitting or even lying in a comfortable position. Your eyes may be open or closed, but you may find it easier to maintain your focus if you close your eyes. It can help to set aside a designated time for this exercise, but it can also help to practice it when you're feeling particularly stressed or anxious. Experts believe a regular practice of mindful breathing can make it easier to do it in difficult situations.

Sometimes, especially when trying to calm yourself in a stressful moment, it might help to start by taking an exaggerated breath: a deep inhale through your nostrils (3 seconds), hold your breath (2 seconds), and a long exhale through your mouth (4 seconds). Otherwise, simply observe each breath without trying to adjust it; it may help to focus on the rise and fall of your chest or the sensation through your nostrils. As you do so, you may find that your mind wanders, distracted by thoughts or bodily sensations. That's OK. Just notice that this is happening

and gently bring your attention back to your breath.

To provide even more structure, and help you lead this practice for others, below are steps for a short guided meditation. You can listen to audio of this guided meditation, produced by UCLA's Mindful Awareness Research Center (MARC).

1. Find a relaxed, comfortable position. You could be seated on a chair or on the floor on a cushion. Keep your back upright, but not too tight. Hands resting wherever they're comfortable. Tongue on the roof of your mouth or wherever it's comfortable.
2. Notice and relax your body. Try to notice the shape of your body, its weight. Let yourself relax and become curious about your body seated here—the sensations it experiences, the touch, the connection with the floor or the chair. Relax any areas of tightness or tension. Just breathe.
3. Tune into your breath. Feel the natural flow of breath—in, out. You don't need to do anything to your breath. Not long, not short, just natural. Notice where you feel your breath in your body. It might be in your



abdomen. It may be in your chest or throat or in your nostrils. See if you can feel the sensations of breath, one breath at a time. When one breath ends, the next breath begins.

4. Now as you do this, you might notice that your mind may start to wander. You may start thinking about other things. If this happens, it is not a problem. It's very natural. Just notice that your mind has wandered. You can say "thinking" or "wandering" in your head softly. And then gently redirect your attention right back to the breathing.
5. Stay here for five to seven minutes. Notice your breath, in silence. From time to time, you'll get lost in thought, then return to your breath.
6. After a few minutes, once again notice your body, your whole body, seated here. Let yourself relax even more deeply and then offer yourself some appreciation for doing this practice today.

Monthly Recipe: Pumpkins

This month from Dr. Oliveira and the UC Davis Department of Integrative Medicine is a recipe using pumpkins- just right for this season- "Perfect Pumpkin Bread." Dr Oliveirs writes, "Nothing says fall quite like a slice of our Perfect Pumpkin Bread! Our simple recipe uses all plant-based ingredients, including the healthful swap out of oil for applesauce." <http://ucdintegrativemedicine.com/recipes/perfect-pumpkin-bread/#gs.FjJU8T8>

Wellness App: Smiling Mind

Smiling Mind is modern meditation, a unique web and app-based program developed by psychologists and educators to help bring balance to people's lives. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/smiling-mind/id560442518?mt=8>