

Mindfulness



What is mindfulness?

“Mindfulness is simply paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment and non judgmentally to the unfolding of experience”

Jon Kabat-Zinn (founder MBSR)

General Definition

Mindfulness is often referred to as generally paying attention to life including the human capability of being aware of one's own mind, body and surroundings, as well as practices to cultivate that capability.

Mindful Magazine p55, December 2017

Relaxation Response

- Goal: Respond vs. React
- When eliciting the relaxation response:

Your metabolism decreases

Your heart beats slower and your muscles relax

Your breathing becomes slower

Your blood pressure decreases



Some Benefits of Mindfulness

- Recovery time for stressful events lessened
- Disrupts process of mind wandering
- Changes our relationship to mind's NARRATIVE
- Mindful meditation increases gray matter pre-frontal cortex: increasing executive functioning and memory; increases neuroplasticity
- Decreased psychological stress (changes perception to pain)
- Yoga, meditation and exercise=rapid calmness of mind
- Increased compassion and empathy

Types of Practice

Formal:

Yoga, Meditation, Body Scan, Mindful Movement

Informal: Mindful Moments

- A walk noticing surroundings, sounds, feet touching the ground
- Watching a sunset/sunrise

Mindful Moments

- Brushing your teeth
- Eating a meal/snack without conversation or reading
- Eye contact with a loved one
- A one minute pause to breathe
- Watching a candle burn

Meditation

- Not relaxation spelled differently (Jon Kabat-Zinn)
- Way of being vs. a technique
- Mindfulness Meditation encourages awareness of thoughts feelings, body sensation, and awareness of surroundings
- Offers ability to “be with” thoughts, emotions, pain and discomfort
- Not always blissful
- Brain Neuroplasticity (shaping of the brain/repeated experiences)

Basic Research

Beginners (less than 300 hours of practice)

- Notice decreased mind wandering after 8 minutes
- Decreased levels of cortisol
- After 2 weeks, less mind wandering, better focus and working memory

Long Term Practice

- Increased attention
- Decreased breathing after *thousands* of hours of practice
- Greater working connection between the amygdala and prefrontal cortex

Some Research

Traits that meditation produces go beyond heightened *states* on experiences in meditation session

Davidson and Goleman ongoing research

Davidson and Goleman looking at previous studies for rigor, and need for replication

Altered Traits; Science reveals How meditation Changes your Mind, Body and Brain 2017

Research

In 2003 Davidson, Jon Kabat-Zinn and others offered an 8 week MBSR program to highly stressed biotech workers.

After 8 weeks the MBSR group had a significant shift in activity in the pre-frontal cortex

The activity sifted from the right side (equated with negative thinking), to the left side (associated with more contentment at work, decreased anxiety and increased energy and happiness)

Source: *“Alterations in brain and immune function produced by Mindfulness Meditation”*

Psychosomatic Medicine 65 pp564-70.

Research

2005 Sarah Lazar and colleagues noted positive changes in the physical structure of the brain (increased gray matter in pre-frontal cortex which assisted with memory and executive functioning) “Meditation experience is associated with increased cortical thickness”

NeuroReport 16, (pp1893-7)

Another Strategy.....

S STOP

T Take a Deep Breath

O Observe

P Proceed

Pam Ressler: [Stress Resources.com](http://StressResources.com)

