

What is mindfulness?

- Mindfulness is Presence
- Mindfulness is Seeing Clearly

Model of Mindfulness (Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, Freedan, 2006)

Three core elements:

- Intention
 - Knowing why we are practicing mindfulness; personal vision, goal, aspiration
 - Intentions set the stage for what is possible
- Attention
 - Present moment awareness
 - 46.9% of our lives, our mind is wandering (monkey mind)
- Attitude
 - How we pay attention
 - Acceptance, openness, curiosity, non-striving, letting go, kindness, caring trust, compassion
- Attention is fundamental, but intention and attitude are necessary for mindfulness.

Defining Mindfulness

- The awareness that arises out of intentionally paying attention in an open, kind and discerning way. (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009)
- The Japanese kanji is composed of two characters: The top character is a hat-like character that means “presence.” The bottom character, *shin*, is translated as either “heart” or “mind.” The complete translation is “presence of heart.”

How is Mindfulness Helpful?

Four decades of research have shown *significant* effects on both physical & psychological health. Meditation decreases pathology.

Medical benefits: Psoriasis, chronic pain, fibromyalgia, cancer, multiple sclerosis, tension headaches, hypertension, immune functioning increased telomerase

Psychological/Behavioral benefits: Decreases in depression, anxiety, panic attacks, insomnia, binge eating, ADD, OCD, and substance abuse (including smoking)

Specific research on benefits:

- Self-awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 1996)
- Self-regulation (Shapiro, et al, 2006)
- Empathy (Lesh, 1970; Shapiro, et al, 1998)
- Self-efficacy (Kabat-Zinn, 1996)
- Happiness (Smith, Compton, & West, 1995)
- Sense of control (Shapiro, 1998; Astin, 1997)
- Spirituality (Shapiro, Schwartz, Bonner, 1998; Astin, 1997)
- Compassion for self and others (Neff, 2010; Shapiro, et al, 2008)
- Moral Development (Nidich, et al, 1983)

Research on Cognitive Capabilities:

- Attention (Jha, et al, 2007; Slagter, et al, 2007)

- Concentration (Murphy & Donovan, 1996)
- Creativity (Murphy & Donovan, 1996)
- Memory (Jha, Stanley, 2012; Cranson, et al, 1991)
- Academic Performance (Hall, 1999)
- Reduces Cognitive Rigidity (Greenberg, et al, 2012)
 - Results are discussed in light of the benefits of mindfulness practice regarding a reduced tendency to overlook novel and adaptive ways of responding due to past experience, both in and out of the clinical setting.
- Ethical Decision Making (Shapiro, Jazzeri, Goldin, 2012)

In Youth, mindfulness increases attention/concentration, ability to regulate body and emotion, self-awareness, empathy, compassion, impulse control, cognitive flexibility, perspective-taking, and social-emotional intelligence

How Mindfulness Effects the Brain

Higher activity in the left pre-frontal cortex (relative to right) relates to optimism, creativity, joy, vitality, and alertness.

Higher activity in the right PFC relates to depression, anxiety, distress, and worry.

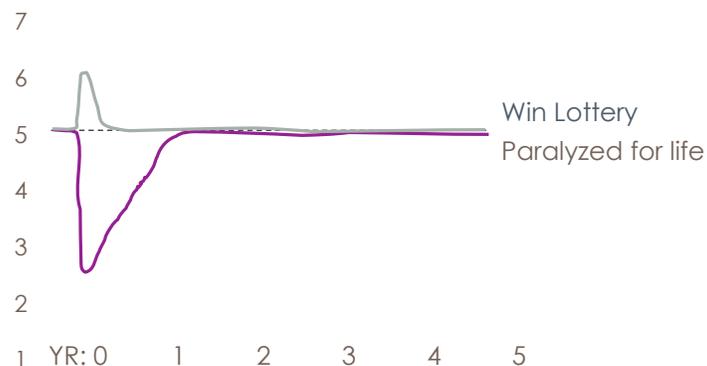
National Geographic published an article in the March 2005 titled “What’s in your mind”. In a laboratory, a Tibetan meditator had the highest left to right ratio of brain activity, compared to over 175 subjects tested, and this ratio increased while he was meditating on compassion (Davidson, also featured in Danish documentary “Free the Mind”).

A Randomized Controlled Trial (Davidson, Kabat-Zinn, et al, 2003) - Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction compared to Wait-List control with biotech employees. This study wanted to see what happens to the immune response when instead of stressing subjects out, you teach them how to better cope with stress.

Happiness Set Point

Western psychology has typically thought of happiness as set, relatively stable and biologically determined. Research shows that irrespective of our external environment, whether we win the lottery or become paralyzed, we return to our happiness set point...to our baseline. I was concluded that we have little control over our level of happiness. However, Buddhism offers a different perspective, suggesting that we can train our internal environment to change or levels of happiness. The study above is preliminary confirmation of our ability to change our happiness set point.

Happiness can be trained because the very structure of our brain can be modified.



Neuroplasticity

Neurons are connected by synapses - each neuron has about 5000 synapses.

Thoughts, feelings, and sense perceptions are neural signals (mostly electrical) that move around within the brain.

Mindfulness practice increases grey matter density in areas associated with attention, learning, self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and compassion. This cortical thickening is correlated with practice. (Lazar, 2005; Britta Hölzel, 2011).

What we practice becomes stronger. What do you want to practice?

Four Essential Themes of Mindfulness:

- Slowing Down
- Acceptance vs. Resistance
- Suspend Judgment
- Self-Compassion

1) Slowing Down - Good Samaritan Study (Darley and Batson, 1973) at Princeton Univ.

When we are hurried, stressed, scared, we lose touch with our natural compassion.

Mindfulness helps us slow down, see clearly, and stay connected to our deepest values.

2) Acceptance vs. Resistance $S = P \times R$

- Suffering arises when we resist what is. (Suffering is pain times resistance)
- Mindfulness, instead of trying to change our experience, simply adds the “resonance of awareness” to what is already here.
- We can accept what is here, see it clearly, and consciously respond.

3) Suspend Judgment

- Steven Covey story of father on subway (“The Power of a Paradigm Shift” from *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*)

4) Self-Compassion

- PTSD group led by Shauna Shapiro with veterans.
- Feelings of “I don’t want to get better. I don’t deserve to get better.”
- While telling story everyone else was compassionate. The men understood and were able to see underneath the horror of the actions.
- Acknowledgement and acceptance of what had been done was the key to recovery.
- No matter the circumstances, everyone shares an inherent goodness of heart that is available

The word “Compassion” in Tibetan is considered incomplete if it does not include oneself.

True compassion always includes ourselves.

Live in the Present by Jack Kornfield (<https://www.jackkornfield.com/live-present/>)

If you can sit quietly after difficult news...
If in financial downturns you remain perfectly calm...
If you see your neighbors travel to favorite places without a tinge of jealousy...
If you can happily eat whatever is put on your plate...
If you can love everyone around you unconditionally...
If you can always find contentment just where you are...
You are probably...



Metta Meditation

May I be peaceful,
May I be happy,
May I be healthy,
May I be free.

From “Saint Francis and the Sow” by Galway Kinnell

The bud
stands for all things,
even for those things that don't flower,
for everything flowers, from within, of self-blessing;
though sometimes it is necessary
to reteach a thing its loveliness,
to put a hand on its brow
of the flower
and retell it in words and in touch
it is lovely
until it flowers again from within, of self-blessing.

Mindful Parenting and Education

The foundation of mindful parenting and education is awareness and compassion, for ourselves, and our children.

Shauna Shapiro website: <http://www.drshaunashapiro.com/>

• Bio • Books • Meditations • Articles & Videos

Greater Good Science Center - <http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/>

Presentation videos: Dr. Shauna Shapiro, Dr. Richard Davidson, Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, and more.