

A Mindful Practice - More than just Meditation

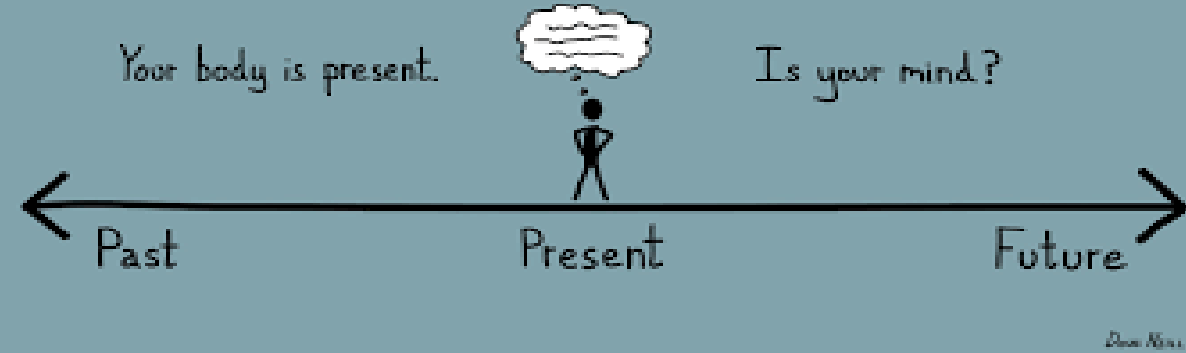
Tim Wong
AAPM National Conference
2017

What is Mindfulness?

“Non elaborative, non judgemental, present centered awareness in which each thought, feeling or sensation that arises in the attentional field is acknowledged and accepted as it is.”

(Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 1998; Shapiro & Scwartz, 1999, 2000)

What does that mean?



- Self regulation of attention on the present moment - being in the “Here and Now”
- Orientation to Experience - Maintaining Curiosity, Stance of Acceptance, NON JUDGEMENTAL
- Self awareness - Awareness of thoughts, emotions etc, as passing events, not inherent qualities



Mind Full, or Mindful?

Let's try some mindfulness...

- Eyes closed
- Eyes open
- Eating!

A quick neuroanatomy lesson

Amygdala - a part of the limbic system mainly involved in emotional responses.

The amygdala is hard wired to be able to react quickly to danger signals and keep us safe. In modern days, its direct path to behavioural centres of the lower brain can cause issues with the amygdala being hijacked by unthreatening stimuli.

What is Amygdala Hijack?

One of amygdala's main functions is to prevent us from threats.

In low to moderate stress level, the prefrontal cortex calms amygdala down and consider the pros and cons of the intended behavior.

However, with extreme stimulus the activation of the amygdala shuts off the prefrontal cortex function. The prefrontal cortex is the part of the brain where conscious control and decision making processes occur. Hence, when amygdala perceive stimulus as a threat, the conscious part of the brain automatically gets turned off. The following response is purely controlled by the amygdala hence the name “amygdala hijack”.

What can mindfulness do for me?

- Increases in density of grey matter in region of brain associated with
 - Emotional regulation
 - Learning from past experience (optimal decision making)
 - Mental flexibility
 - Introspection

Young Woman or Old Woman?



What can mindfulness do for me at work?

What are skills you see in good leaders?

- Attention to detail
- Negotiation and persuasion
- Social Perceptiveness
- Analytical thinking as opposed to automatic processing
- Resilience,
- Capacity for collaboration,
- Ability to lead in complex conditions.

What do I need to be able to do that?

- Attention
- Flexibility
- Self assessment
- Emotional Regulation
- Empathy
- Compassion
- Non judgemental approach

How do I do that?

Three Leadership Capacities Developed by Mindfulness Practice

- **Metacognition**
- **Allowing**
- **Curiosity**

This creates more opportunities for “choice”.

What can mindfulness do for me as a leader?

- Mindfulness does not have to be practiced sitting still on a square cushion in a quiet room. The ultimate goal is to experience each day as mindfully as possible.

Do I need to practice?

The more practice, the better. In a study, the leaders who practiced for at least 10 minutes every day progressed significantly more than others who did not..

How can I practice mindfulness at work?

- Mindful coffee break
- Mindful minute to start the day
- Take a breath
- Walk between two rooms - let's try it: change seats.

How can I bring mindfulness to staff?- some tips

- If you want to affect your workplace, start with yourself!
- Just as with any other intervention, for a mindfulness program to enable genuine change, significant parts of the organizational system need to support it.
- A formal “taster session” is often a good starting point: It gauges interest and can build commitment to a program. But it is just that—a start. If you are keen on attaining the impacts reported in our research project, offer an extended mindfulness intervention, which supports practice over a sustained period.

How can I bring mindfulness to staff?- some tips

- Allocate a space for people to practice in the workplace— somewhere quiet and private.
- You can even facilitate group-based, audio-instruction-guided meditation at a particular time of the day.
- Start your meetings with a “mindful minute” (60 seconds where people bring their attention to their breath by counting them in silence) or a similar process that helps attendees choose the quality of their attention and focus on the others present and the issue at hand.

Let's try it again



Questions?



Thanks for participating

Take a deep breath!