Meditation 101: Simple Practices for Maintaining Wellbeing and Fostering Resilience

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Overview

- Mind Wandering, Negative Thoughts and Stress
- Meditation and its Benefits
- Forms of Meditation
- The Importance of Physician Wellbeing
Objectives

- Recognize that modest evidence-based research exists for the utility of mindfulness and understand why it is theorized to be beneficial

- Identify everyday practices that can be incorporated into other activities

- Compare several example practices

- Specify at least one mindfulness practice experiment with in daily life
Thought Management

- Recent research study estimates that the average person has 6200 thoughts per day. (Tseng and Poppenek, 2020)
- Many of our thoughts are not new (repetitive thoughts)
- If most of our repetitive thoughts are negative ones, what could that do to our frame of mind?
- Our thoughts can create toxic stress if we let them!
- The greatest weapon against stress is to choose 1 thought over another. William James

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“A human mind is a wandering mind, and a wandering mind is an unhappy mind.”

“The ability to think about what is not happening is a cognitive achievement that comes at an emotional cost.”

Harvard Happiness Study - Killingsworth & Gilbert 2011
Stress is not always bad. When optimal, it can drive us to even greater performance.
The Physiological Effect of Toxic Stress

- **Allosteric Overload** - when the normal stress response becomes dysfunctional and leads to disease.
Crash Course: Your Brain on Overwhelm

Prefrontal Cortex - executive/high order functioning - planning, problem solving, concentration/focus, regulation of thoughts, emotions and behaviors. The more stress the smaller the volume of the PFC.

Amygdala controls emotional responses—“fight or flight”. Associated with fear, anxiety, aggression, learned fear response, addiction. Important in forming and storing memories of emotional events. The more stress the larger it gets.

Hippocampus plays a role in formation of memories including spatial and navigation memories. The more stress the smaller it gets.
We Tend to Care for Everything but Our Minds
Why Meditate?

• Unless we train our minds with mental exercise in the way that we train our bodies with physical exercise, there can be unhealthy outcomes that impact the quality of our lives.

• The inability to manage stress can lead to negative mental and/or physical consequences that affect patient care.

• More Incentive? Many CEOs from Fortune 500 Companies Meditate Daily!

https://www.billgeorge.org/articles/wall-street-bosses-tiger-woods-meditate-to-focus-stay-calm/
Benefits of Meditation

Physical Health Benefits
► Decreases levels of cortisol
► Lowers blood pressure
► Reduces cardiovascular disease
► Improves immune functioning

Mental Health Benefits
► Improves working memory capacity
► Increases empathy
► Increases ability to focus attention
► Induces higher levels of satisfaction
► Improves sleep quality
► Increases brain plasticity
► Induces greater productivity/efficiency

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Mindfulness meditation and immune system biomarkers: A systematic review of 20 randomized controlled trials, comprising more than 1600 participants, revealed replicated, yet tentative, evidence that mindfulness meditation is associated with changes in select immune system processes involved in inflammation, immunity, and biological aging. (Black and Slavich, 2016)
Your Brain on Meditation

**Frontal Cortex** - becomes larger with a greater volume of gray matter, self-regulation improves and brain plasticity increases

**Amygdala** - smaller and less reactive/sensitive

Meditation is used for chronic pain management, stress management, as part of a treatment regimen for addiction, anxiety and depression, and as a performance-enhancement tool.
So..... What is Meditation?

A mental discipline in which the practitioner attempts to move beyond reflexive thinking into a deeper state of awareness (or relaxation) by intentional focus.

While there are many types of meditation, they all share several of the same characteristics:

- Focused attention/awareness
- Paced breathing
- Comfortable posture
Misperceptions

- Meditation is clearing the mind
- Meditation is relaxing
- Meditation is good for everyone (mindfulness is though)
- Meditation is a replacement for other self-care behaviors
Meditation Can Take Many Forms

- Mindfulness (focus attention on breath, sensations, candle)
- Body Scan
- Guided (Visualization/Virtual Reality)
- Mantra Meditation (including Transcendental)
- Walking/Movement (focus on movements of walking)
- Journaling/gratitude
- Prayer (Contemplative or Meditative)
Mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally.

- Jon Kabat-Zinn
Cultural Roots of Mindfulness

- 5,000 year history with roots in India, Buddhism
- Diverse human usage across time, geography, and religion
- Historical/religious vs. Western/secular
- Gained popularity in US
  - Arrival of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction in the 1980s
  - Received attention in medicine with Ronald Epstein’s 1999 article *Mindful Practice* in JAMA
- My limitations
Key Concepts: Mindfulness

- Here and now focus
- Beginner’s mind
- Attempting non-judgment
- NOT: relaxation or clearing the mind
Continuum of Awareness (Niemiec, 2013)

**Mindfulness**

- Here, now
- Skillful responding
- Aware, present
- Mode of being
- Allowing/letting be
- Accepting/Facing reality

**Mindlessness**

- Then, later
- Habitual reacting
- Distracted *(monkey mind)*
- Mode of doing
- Fighting *(the experience)*
- Avoiding

Self-consciousness vs. Self-awareness

- **Self-consciousness** is the undue awareness of oneself, one’s appearance or one’s actions
  - Judgmental and unpleasant

- **Self-awareness** is the conscious understanding of oneself and one’s feelings, motives, desires, and actions
  - Non-judgmental and neutral or pleasant

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Features of Mindfulness

- “Clear”
- Nonconceptual, nondiscriminatory
- Flexible
- Empirical
- Stable
We Can be Mindful of:

- Sensory input (information coming in through sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch)
- Body (breath, movements, pain, pleasure)
- Mind (thoughts, attitudes, beliefs)
- Emotions (actually just a combination of body + mind!)
Breath Meditation (Possible Activity)
One Breath
(Possible Activity)
Mindfulness in 0 Seconds (for busy people):
12 Practices that can be paired with other activities

- Mindful eating (sensory experience, origin of food -can extend into cooking)
- Mindful walking (especially while outside en route to school etc.)
- Shifting up one’s pace with activities (slow/fast approaches)
- Mindful emailing/texting (with gratitude/”loving-kindness”)
- Anchoring mindfulness pauses with everyday events (red lights, brushing teeth)
- Looking around when you have to wait (bank, appointments, checkout lines)
- Imagine taking a picture (or take it) of something ordinary & something extraordinary
- Feeling gratitude (when it naturally arises) evokes mindfulness
- Bringing curiosity to an object (consider the care/intelligence that went into designing it)
- Picking a color: notice it throughout the day—imagine describing it to someone
- Noticing your inbreath and outbreak as you’re falling asleep
- Creating a mindfulness practice no one has ever thought of—don’t tell anyone
Body Scan Meditation

- Can be performed while sitting or lying down
- Involves the focus on the sensations of each part of the body (either top to bottom or bottom to top) followed by a relaxation of that body part.
- As the practitioner progresses from 1 part of the body to the next, the goal is to maintain the relaxation of the previous sections of the body (progressive relaxation).
- The practice trains you to become aware of all sensations - whether pleasant or unpleasant - that are present in the body.
- Often requires 15-30 minutes to complete, although guided meditations are available for 5-10 minutes of practice (https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/body_scan_meditation).
Simple Body Scan Meditation

FEEL CALM ALL OVER

This Monday, try a mindfulness body scan to ease tense muscles and let stress drift away.

1. Sit quietly or lie down.
2. Start at one end of your body and focus on each body part.
3. Notice any areas of tension then soften and relax.
4. Continue until your whole body feels completely relaxed.


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Mantra Meditation

- Just a word, phrase, or prayer with a long history of use that is considered “sacred/holy” by the tradition/culture from which it originated.

- The mantra can be spoken, chanted or repeated silently in the mind continuously for some period of time, and often used in conjunction with the breath.

Choose 1 mantra that resonates for you and it can be used to immediately connect to your center - be that God/Spirit/Beloved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mantra</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Translation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maranatha</td>
<td>Aramaic</td>
<td>Lord of the heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Om Mani Padme Hum</td>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>Behold! The jewel in the lotus within!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My God and My All</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>Source: Prayer words of Saint Francis of Assisi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrie Eleison</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>Lord have mercy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>Son of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hail Mary/Ave Maria</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>From the Rosary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O Maria Madre Maria</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>Oh Mary my mother; Source: Prayer words of Pope John Paul II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>Prayer name: The Jesus Prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be Still and Know That I Am</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>From the Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am God</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rama (Ro-mah)</td>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>Translation: Blissful, pleasing; Source: Mantra of Mahatma Gandhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hare Rama Hare Krishna</td>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>O Lord take away all my sorrows, pain, and short-comings; give me bliss and joy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Om Nama Shivaya (Aum Naum-ah Shi-why)</td>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>I bow to Shiva—the name of your true identity; self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Om Shanti</td>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>Lasting peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So Hum</td>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>I am that Self within</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Om Prema</td>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>A call for universal love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Om Sri Ram, Jai Ram, Jai</td>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>May the Lord as light and virtue that dwells in my heart be victorious over all; Source: Mantra of Swami Ramdas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jai (Aum Shree Ram, Jay Ram, Jay Ram)</td>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allah</td>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allahu Akbar (Ah-lah-oo Ah-bahr)</td>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>God is greatest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisnumallah ir-rahman In-rahim (Rez-e-moh-ah ir-rah-un ir-rah-heim)</td>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>In the name of Allah, the Most Beneficial and the Most Merciful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barukh Hashem (Bah-rookh ha shem)</td>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>Blessed is the name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ribono Shel Olam</td>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>Lord of the universe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shalom</td>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>Lasting peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elohim (e-loh-im)</td>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>Hebrew name for God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheheena</td>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>Feminine aspect of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wakan Tanka</td>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>Tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Great Spirit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample Mantras

OM MANI PADME HUM
pure body jewel wisdom unity

SHAPE
I AM ENOUGH. I HAVE ENOUGH, AND I AM DOING ENOUGH. I ACCEPT MYSELF AND MY LIFE FULLY RIGHT NOW.
sat nam

I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH Christ WHO STRENGTHENS me.
Philippians 4:13

I am grounded, centered and present.

be STILL, and KNOW that I AM GOD
Psalm 46:10

I am strong.
I am beautiful.
I am enough.
Vanessa Pawlowski

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Walking Meditation

- Is NOT the type of brisk walking that you do for exercise.
- It is intentional walking paying attention to your feet stepping, your arms swinging and how your body feels as you move in silence.
- Can be a good place to start because it presents less of a challenge than sitting still.

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Let’s Play a Game.. (Optional Activity)

► How good is your awareness and perception....?
Recall test…

➤ How good is your awareness and perception….?
Gratitude/Journaling

- Centers on remembering the positive things that happen to us daily, rather than the negative.
- At the end of each day, you will need to write down at least 3 good things that happened that day.
- After a short time, we begin to NOTICE the moments in our day that we are grateful for as they happen.
- This leads to a mental stance of gratitude throughout the day.
- Journaling can also help us to “mind dump” negative feelings or traumatic events at the end of each day so that we can release them.

Gratitude Journal Prompts

1. What was the best thing that happened today?
2. Who makes you feel loved and why?
3. Name something that makes you happy.
4. What is your favorite outdoor activity?
5. Name someone that helps you.
6. Name someone that is nice to you.
7. What is your favorite thing to do on the weekend?
8. Name something that you are grateful to have.
9. What do you like to do with your family and why?
10. Where is your favorite place to go?
11. Name someone that makes you smile.
12. Who is your best friend and why?
13. What do you like most about your school or job?
14. What do you like most about your favorite subject?
15. Who was the last person to give you something?
16. What is the best gift that you have ever received?
17. Name the best thing that has ever happened to you.
18. What is your favorite game or sport and why?
19. Where is your favorite place to play or relax?
20. What do you like most about your family?
21. Name an animal that you feel thankful for.
22. What is your favorite thing to do at home?
23. Name a person that you love and why?
24. What is your favorite hobby and why?
25. Who do you like to spend time with?
26. Name someone that you feel grateful for.
Prayer

- Communing with your higher power as you know him/her/them.

- **Contemplative prayer** is the opening of the mind and heart to God/Beloved/Universe beyond emotions, thoughts and words - just being in His/Her/Their presence.

- **Meditative prayer** involves silently meditating on sacred texts, devotionals, sunrises/sunsets etc in order to experience their deeper meaning.
Obstacles During Meditation

Sleepiness
An energy imbalance (not enough alertness)

Restlessness
An energy imbalance (not enough peace)

Doubt
Includes comparisons and excuses

Boredom
Signals a lack of attention

Irritation
Resistance to what is

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Recap: Types of Meditation Discussed

- Mindfulness (focus attention on breath, sensations, candle)
- Body Scan
- Mantra Meditation
- Walking/Movement (focus on movements)
- Journaling/gratitude
- Prayer (Contemplative or Meditative)
Specific Benefits for Medical Students, Residents, Physicians

- Higher resilience in residents (Romcevich 2018)
- Less burnout in physicians 3 months after (Schroeder 2016)
- Less exhaustion and more self-compassion for physicians and nurses in the ICU (Gozalo 2018)
- Higher distress tolerance in med students (Kraemer 2016)
- More skill in delivering bad news in ENT residents (Mengin 2017)
Physician Well-being and Resilience

A patient care issue
Physician well-being (resilient/burned out)  

Quality of care (safety/errors)  

Quality of caring (empathy/detachment)  


Physician well-being (resilient/burned out)

Mindful practice

Quality of care (safety/errors)

Quality of caring (empathy/detachment)


Psychological strengths of physicians

- Thoroughness
- Commitment
- Perfectionism
- Healthy skepticism
- Altruism, stoicism, hard work
- Caring
- Rationality
- Self-critical

Psychological vulnerabilities of physicians

- Over-compulsiveness
- Over-commitment
- Inability to admit mistakes
- Need for certainty
- Neglecting self-care and family
- Compassion fatigue
- Emotional distance
- Self-deprecation
Physician well-being (resilient/burned out) → Quality of care (safety/errors) → Quality of caring (empathy/detachment) → Physician well-being (resilient/burned out)


Mindful practice

Physician well-being (resilient/burned out)

Quality of care (safety/errors)

Quality of caring (empathy/detachment)

How We Typically Cope

Avoidance
Mindful coping: Pain vs. Suffering

- Pain is inevitable, but suffering is optional
- Pain x Resistance = Suffering
- Reduce suffering by accepting and relaxing in response to pain

Acceptance
We regard our thoughts as **important!!!**

- We believe they define who we are
- We think they have authority and are true
- We get hooked into the content of our thoughts
- “Don’t believe everything you think”
Anxiety

- A kind of addiction
- Worry is a “mental behavior” to cope with uncertainty
- Mindfulness helps us just be with uncertainty
Mindful Communication

- Helps us migrate from habitual ways of interacting to more skillful ways based on mutuality and authenticity
- Allows us to gather crucial information we might have otherwise missed
- Key skills
  - Not being in a rush
  - Relax
  - Open to the other
  - Trust emergence
  - Listen deeply
What is a practice?

- A habit is an action (physical or mental) that you choose and repeat.
- Mindfulness is like going to the “existence gym”.
- We cannot fail at mindfulness, we can only fail to practice.
- Don’t take it too seriously!

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Choose Your Practice and Make a Routine

► There is no right or wrong way to meditate and it doesn’t have to take any prescribed amount of time.

► Like any medication that you take every day, the important thing is to be consistent. Just do it- don’t judge it - like brushing your teeth.

► Start with 2-5 minutes, work up to 10 minutes. Do it 1st thing in the morning and then briefly before bed.

► Pick a mantra. Use a meditation app, guided meditations are available for download.

► Do something every single day for your own pleasure - schedule it like any other priority and focus on just doing that 1 thing during that time (uni-task).

Keep a gratitude journal - write 3 things at the end of the day for which you are grateful.
Consider if you want to practice with others or alone
  ➤ Take a class
  ➤ Maybe an app? (HeadSpace, Calm)
  ➤ Create a contemplative space

Take one mindful breath whenever you...
  ➤ Stop at a red light
  ➤ Enter a room
  ➤ Hear a phone notification

Or can you do “20 Breaths”?

Pick one task or activity a week to bring your mindfulness to. Shower Brush Teeth Walk Dog Eat Wash Hands Laundry Open Doors Prepare Meals Stretch Your Body...
Taking Action!

- What is 1 thing that was presented that you can commit to doing every day for the next week that will help decrease your stress/anxiety?

- Write down 3 things that are gifts/talents that you think you have been given and how you will work to develop them or share them with others?

- Journal of gratitude - what 3 things happened to you today for which you are grateful?

- Write someone else a note letting them know how grateful you are for something that they did - can be something small. Not only will you make their day, but some studies suggest it will boost your morale also.

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A farewell meditation
Resources for Mindfulness

- Headspace app, 10 Percent Happier app, etc [http://peacefulmindpeacefullife.org/](http://peacefulmindpeacefullife.org/) - free series

- “The Practice” - by Barb Schmidt

- [www.calm.com](http://www.calm.com)

- Greater Good In Action Website - all kinds of free meditations: [https://ggia.berkeley.edu/](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/)


- Assorted free meditations on YouTube

  “Freedom From Anxious Thoughts and Feelings: A Two-Step Mindfulness Approach for Moving Beyond Fear and Worry” by Scott Symington, PhD
What you practice grows stronger

- Practice Practice Practice
- 2-5 minutes per day: log your progress
- Do it for 30 days and notice what positive changes you see. Document them to keep you on track!
Breath Meditation Checklist

☐ Find a quiet place in your home to practice your meditation. Put your phone on silent and leave any other distractions out of sight.

☐ Set a timer for how long you plan to meditate (1-5 minutes to start).

☐ Close your eyes or lower your gaze.

☐ Gather your attention on your breath. Allow yourself to breathe naturally without trying to control your breathing. Tune into where you feel the breath in your body (belly, chest, or nose). Notice the sensation of each inhalation, exhalation, and the pause between the two.

☐ When you catch yourself thinking about something other than your breath, notice the thought.

☐ Gently redirect your attention back to your breath. Repeat this step each time your mind wanders.

☐ When the time goes off, take a moment to pause, notice how you feel in your body, and name one thing that you are grateful for in this moment.
Body Scan Meditation

1. Set aside a time and place in your day where you can sit comfortably and you won’t be distracted or disturbed.

2. Find a comfortable but attentive seated position, close your eyes, and bring your attention to your toes.

3. Working up from your toes, bring awareness to each body part in turn: your feet, ankles, calves, knees, etc. up to your head.

Health Benefits:
- Reduced stress
- Decreased muscle tension
- Increased pain tolerance

Why it works to reduce stress:
Body scan meditations encourage self-awareness of sensations we might otherwise be ignoring.
At WMU Homer Stryker School of Medicine, we have found the inclusion of experiential breakout sessions to be helpful in motivating students to want to adopt or increase their mindfulness practice. Details regarding how we structured these peer-led sessions and assessed our teaching event can be found in APPENDIX A in the “Notes” Section of this Slide.

### Aspects of the Teaching Session that Motivated Students to Want to Adopt or Increase Their Mindfulness Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Component</th>
<th>Frequency—rating component as moderately or very motivational</th>
<th>Percentage—rating component as moderately or very motivational</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having their own choice of breakout sessions</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The inclusion of experiential breakout sessions</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having the sessions be student-led</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>55%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zero-second mindfulness part of presentation</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>37%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research overview part of presentation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19%</td>
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