The Stressed Teens Handbook

by

Christopher Sean Thomas Goodman

B.A., Douglas College, 2014

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Supervisory Committee

Dr. Sibylle Artz, Supervisor
(School of Child and Youth Care)

Dr. Jennifer White, Member
(School of Child and Youth Care)

Lisa Ward, Outside Member
(Touchstone Family Association)

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Abstract

Stress is common among adolescent populations and is accepted as a significant contributing factor in the onset of a range of psychopathology, including depression and anxiety. One intervention that shows promise in reducing stress and increasing wellbeing is *Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for Teens*. An important aspect of *Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for Teens* assumed to be essential to increasing the therapeutic effects of this intervention, is participants engagement in regular home practice. In order to support home practice, the author has developed a take home resource entitled, *The Stressed Teens Handbook*. This resource, includes variable assignments, such as self-monitoring and the scheduling of mindfulness-based behavioural experiments. The Stressed Teens Handbook is designed to help participants continue their practice of MBSR-T interventions and extend the therapeutic sessions beyond the conclusion of the *Stressed Teen*'s group.

Keywords: Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for Teens; Stress; Home Practice; Wellbeing

Introduction

Assisting those young people who have not been able to develop successful coping strategies and resources to deal with stress is an important function for Child and Youth Care Workers. Adolescence is a time of noticeable transition characterized by major changes in both roles and responsibilities and is a lifespan stage that may be associated with personal difficulty (Geldard, Geldard & Yin Foo, 2018). This period may be seen as a time of potential stress, or at least of potential exposure to stressors, for all who must inevitably pass through it (Feldman, 2017). In this context, adolescent stress has been linked with broad psychological dysfunction, depression, anxiety and suicidal behaviour, to name a few (Byrne & Reinhart, 2011).

A manualized therapeutic approach which has the potential to facilitate improved psychological states and ultimately promote more adaptive behavioural outcomes in adolescents is *Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for Teens* (MBSR-T) (Biegel, 2009a, 2009b). MBSR-T is the practice of "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4). MBSR-T considers the cognitive and attentional abilities of adolescents aged 13-18 years, as well as the cultural life of today's adolescents, for whom changes in how they allocate their attention occur rapidly. MBSR-T can be used as a stand-alone program or as an adjunct to other forms of treatment (Biegel, 2009b). It has been shown that even brief exposure to the skills that are taught in the MBSR-T program is potentially beneficial (Lin, 2009; Madden et al., 2013; Ophir, Nass & Wagner, 2009). The intention of MBSR-T is for adolescents to learn skills and tools that will help them function more adaptively and improve their quality of life. In studies of MBSR-T, consistent engagement in mindfulness practices are associated with less reactivity to threatening emotional stimuli, stronger affect regulatory tendencies, greater awareness, understanding and acceptance of emotions, and a greater ability to correct or repair unpleasant mood states (Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007). These findings suggest that the participants in MBSRA-T learn to be more mindful in daily life, which helps to reduce their levels of depression, stress and other psychological symptoms.

Touchstone Family Association is a non-profit social service agency located in Richmond, British Columbia, Canada. Touchstone Family Association provides intervention and support to families and individuals across a wide range of programs and is funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development. Touchstone Family Association's RESET Youth Team delivers MBSR-T in a group program called *Stressed Teens*. *Stressed Teens* teaches fundamental mindfulness skills which involves cultivating an attitude of acceptance and openness to whatever arises in one's field of awareness (Shapiro, Brown, Thoresen & Plante, 2010). Home-practice is a core component of mindfulness-based interventions and MBSR-T encourages home practice to promote the development and enhancement of skills learned during group sessions. The extent to which mindfulness skills are cultivated outside of the group sessions is related to the overall therapeutic effectiveness of the intervention. *The Stressed Teen's* group facilitators therefore emphasize the importance of mindfulness practice at home as an integral part of MBSR-T efficacy.

As a graduate student and member of the RESET Youth Team I have identified a gap in the *Stressed Teens* programming. This gap is the absence of a formal take-home resource for participants post-programme. I noted this gap when I was given the opportunity to shadow a *Stressed Teens* group and put myself in the participant's place and reflect on my own group experiences as an adolescent. I remembered that when I was an adolescent that I often forgot the majority of group content if I did not have some type of resource to refer to in order to prompt my memory. I discussed my idea with the *Stressed Teens* facilitators, and they agreed that the *Stressed Teens* group may benefit from the addition of a take-home resource to help with increasing the therapeutic effects of MBSR-T interventions by promoting home practice. Thus, I have proposed to create a take-home resource called *The Stressed Teens Handbook. The Stressed Teens Handbook* will give participants the opportunity to build on the skills they have learned in *Stressed Teens* long after the group has finished.

Description and Rationale of Project

As part of Touchstone Family Association's therapeutic programming, the RESET Youth Team has offered *Stressed Teens* since 2017. *Stressed Teens* is a low barrier, 8-week group for Richmond-based adolescents ages 13-19 who may be navigating difficulties related to stress, anxiety, anger, or emotional deregulation. Referrals to *Stressed Teens* may come from any source: social workers, teachers, counsellors, outreach workers, parents, or the adolescent themselves. *Stressed Teens* utilizes MBSR-T theory to teach coping and self-regulation skills in a group setting. Participants learn simple and effective mindfulness practices and are given the opportunity to gain insight into how their thoughts, emotions and behaviours play a role in their ability to manage stress. Participants use these techniques to intentionally focus their awareness and observation of their emotions and behaviours from moment to moment.

In discussions with my clinical supervisor at Touchstone Family Association, Lisa Ward, it was noted that the *Stressed Teens* group was lacking a formal take-home post program resource. Although participants in *Stressed Teens* receive handouts and worksheets each session which are placed in binders and kept at the agency until the following session, these handouts are not further organized or accompanied by instructions. Upon the completion of the group, participants simply take the binder home and are responsible for its safe keeping. Lisa and I agreed that the *Stressed Teens* program would benefit from having an easily-accessible, concise and logical resource which reviewed the themes taught in the group. This resource, which we named '*The Stressed Teens Handbook*' will be distributed to participants on the last day of the *Stressed Teens* group as a paper copy and will also be available for download on the Touchstone Family Association website at http://www.touchstonefamily.ca.

The purpose of *The Stressed Teens Handbook* is to help clients to continue to use and develop the tools that they learned while they participated in the *Stressed Teens* group so that they will use these skills in stressful situations through home-practice after they have completed the group. All participants are introduced to home-practice, that is doing assigned homework consisting of mindfulness practices that are assigned to participants by facilitators to

be continued after the intervention has ended (Lloyd, White, Eames & Crane, 2018). The handbook complements and reviews existing materials delivered to clients over the course of the *Stressed Teens* group, and provides clients with the opportunity to re-examine MBSR-T theory, core concepts, skills and strategies. The handbook's content, which is designed to continue to cultivate the development and enhancement of MBSR-T skills, includes a variety of exercises such as guided meditation, mindful activities, grounding exercises, self-care skills, assertiveness and boundary setting, and gratitude exercises, and is designed to support clients to continue to practice emotional regulation techniques and learn how to gain self-acceptance. Other therapeutic content that is included is focused on self-assessment activities aimed to help clients engage in self-feedback. This content will support clients to become more aware of ineffective attitudes and behaviours and on areas of continued growth.

The literature on mindfulness and meditation has grown exponentially (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011, 2012; Kabat-Zinn, 2017). Mindfulness practices were mainly inspired by teaching from the Eastern World, particularly from Buddhist traditions. Mindfulness involves the training of *sati,* which means "moment to moment awareness of present events" in Pali, the common language used in northern India twenty-five centuries ago (Bodhi, 2011). In 1979, John Kabat-Zinn founded the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program at the University of Massachusetts to treat chronically ill patients (Kabat-Zinn, 1982; Kabat-Zinn, Lipworth & Burney, 1985). This program sparked the application of mindfulness ideas and practices in medicine for the treatment of a variety of conditions in healthy and unhealthy populations (Ludwig & Kabat-Zinn, 2008). Mindfulness-based therapeutic techniques such as MBSR-T have become well-researched methods for stress reduction and the treatment of anxiety, depression and trauma, to name a few (Kirmayer, 2015; Perry-Parish, et al., 2016; Hopwood & Schutte, 2017). As the literature review that follows shows, among other things, such a resource as *The Stressed Teens Handbook* will aid in increasing the therapeutic effect of MBSR-T interventions by promoting home-practice.

Literature Review

Over the last three decades, a great deal of research has been conducted to examine the phenomenon of stress in adolescents (Colten & Gore, 1991; Grant, Behling, Gipson & Ford, 2005; Yeager, Lee & Jamieson, 2016). Consequently, a great deal of research has been conducted to search for possible helpful interventions to combat stress in adolescents (Cohen et al., 2002; Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2010; McKay, Percy & Byrne, 2016). One such intervention that has met with great success is Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for Teens (Biegel, 2005, 2009a, 2009b; Biegel, Brown, Shapiro & Schubert, 2009). The review that follows draws from traditional psychological literature and uses the language of disorder to illustrate adolescent's experiences of distress. It will speak first to the current knowledge of adolescents at risk of experiencing stress states by being in an ethnic minority group, an Indigenous person or member of a sexual minority. It will then speak to various broad social and structural forces which may contribute to experiencing stress states such as colonial violence, heteronormativity

and patriarchy, police brutality, homophobia and transphobia, sexism, gender-based violence and ableism. It will then speak to how stress states may contribute to the development of trauma, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It then speaks to the current knowledge regarding mindfulness as an intervention for stress in adolescents, specifically the use of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for Teens. The MBSR-T literature that follows goes beyond traditional psychology and the pathological conceptualization of distress. *The Stressed Teens Handbook* moves towards the use of everyday language such as worry, fear, sadness and anger, etc., in order to be more accessible to the youth who utilize it. This literature review also speaks to the importance of home-practice and its role in intended MBSR-T treatment outcomes. It also speaks to culturally appropriate engagement and outlines strategies for tailoring MBSR-T interventions with diverse and marginalized populations. Finally, it discusses the limitations with home-practice and the challenges surrounding measuring the impact of home-practice as well as the complexities of measuring change.

Stress in Adolescence

Of all the life-stages adolescence is arguably the one most marked by rapid and potentially tumultuous transition (Furstenberg, 2010; Brockman, 2011). Adolescence is a time of change where the young person faces new experiences. The various environments in which they move are likely to present new and unexpected situations and events which require responses which they may never have previously used. Dealing with the unexpected and being required to use new, untested responses is certain to raise anxiety and cause stress (Feldman, 2017). Clearly, a young person is unable to escape exposure to these environments because being exposed to them is an inevitable part of living. Moreover, this exposure is needed as part of the process which enables them to make the transition from childhood to adulthood (Geldard, Geldard & Yin Foo, 2018). While the transition through adolescence is inevitable the speed and magnitude of these changes overtax the capacity of many young people to cope and the resulting phenomenon of adolescent stress is now well recognized (Byrne & Reinhart, 2011; McKay, Percy & Byrne, 2016).

In their foundational research regarding stress and coping, psychologists Lazarus and Launier (1981) and Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define stress according to the transactional model and describe it as a relational concept, in which a person needs to balance demands and his or her own abilities to meet those demands. The following sections explain various social and structural forces that which threaten adolescents and that put young people at-risk for stress states.

An Overview of the Ecology of Adolescents At-Risk for Stress States

At-risk denotes a set of presumed cause-effect dynamics that place an individual adolescent in danger of future stress states and negative outcomes. At-risk designates a situation that is not necessarily current but that can be anticipated in the absence of intervention (McWhirter, 2017). Perhaps even more important, being at-risk of experiencing

stress states must be viewed less as a discrete, unitary diagnostic category than as a series of steps along a continuum. This continuum ranges from minimal and remote risk to personal behaviour that precipitates the activities associated with being engaged in one or more types of risky behaviour. The following definitions outline some of the descriptive characteristics that correspond to different levels of risk along this continuum. Although not all characteristics in each category is always predictive of outcomes, in general these clusters of risk factors may help determine each child and adolescent's potential level of risk for stress states (Algozzine & Kaye, 2012).

Minimal Risk for Stress States

Adolescents who are subjected to few psychological stressors, who attend good and well-funded schools, who have loving, caring relationships and whose families are of higher socio-economic status are generally at minimal risk for future stress states. Because of the complex ecology of stressors that adolescents face, research does not use the term *no risk* (McWhirter, 2017). Adolescents in all circumstances may have to cope with a death, family breakdown, incapacity, or unpredictable family factors such as bankruptcy, divorce, or loss of home. Such stressors can appear at any time regardless of existing protective factors. Depending on the adolescent's age, and a host of other factors, the consequences may or may not be negative in the long term. Further, neither favourable demographics nor "good" families and schools provide invulnerability (Mitchell, 2016). Affluent adolescents may reject positive adult values and norms. Neither money nor social status guarantees meaning and purpose in life. Finally, some "perfect" families harbor secrets, for example, alcoholism, parental infidelity, incest, depression – that stem from and perpetuate dysfunction (Kumpfer & Alder, 2003).

Remote Risk for Stress States

The point of the continuum at which risk, although still remote, seems increasingly possible and reached when markers of future problems appear. The demographic characteristics of low socio-economic status, poor economic opportunity, poor access to good education, and membership in an ethic minority group are associated with greater drop-out rates, teen pregnancy, vulnerability, participation in violence, and other problems (Roy, 2011). Clearly, risk factors do not emerge *due* to a person being an ethnic minority, but membership in an ethnic minority group often suggests experiences of oppression, economic marginalization, and racism that negatively influence children and adolescents. That is, children and adolescents in an ethnic minority group who are poor are overrepresented in the at-risk behavioural categories. Of course, most poor African American, Indigenous and Latino adolescents survive such difficulties and function well. Thus, even though theses background factors are important, they are not predictive of risk for an individual child or adolescent (Lane, Gresham & O'Shaughnessy, 2012).

It is important to note that risk factors are also multiplicative. An adolescent who is from an impoverished, dysfunctional family and who attends a poor school in an economically marginalized neighbourhood is potentially farther along the at-risk continuum than children who do not experience these conditions, especially if there are additional major psychosocial stressors (McWhirter, 2017).

High Risk for Stress States

Characteristics that suggest a child or adolescent is at "high risk" include aggression and conduct problems, impulsivity, affective problems such as depression or anxiety, and hopelessness, as well as deficits in social skills and coping behaviours (McWhirter, 2017). Of course, these characteristics both emerge from and enhance the negativity of the environment around the child or adolescent; the causal pathway is dynamic. These negative attitudes, emotions and behaviours are the result of a culmination of the child or adolescent's personal history and present environment. They signal the internalization of child and adolescent stress states and set the stage for difficulties in adulthood (Lee, Draper, & Lee, 2011).

The Context of Stress States

Problematic is the fact that children and adolescents labelled "at-risk" frequently are those in ethnic minority groups, those of Indigenous ancestry, and those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning and two-spirited (LGBTQQT-S) (McWhirter, 2017). Members in these groups are often subjected to racism, police brutality, colonial violence, homophobia and transphobia, gender-based violence, sexism, ableism as well as heteronormativity and patriarchy; and are often from low socio-economic backgrounds (McWhirter, 2017). Rearing children and adolescents in the context of economic disparities, political marginalization, and a cultural and social milieu steeped in racism provide the soil to nurture risk (Swadener & Lubeck, 2015). These broad social and structural contexts have contributed to adolescents being "at-risk" for stress states and the scope of such problems are enormous (McWhirter, 2017).

One of the difficulties of trying to understand at-risk problems is fragmentation of knowledge. School dropout, drug and alcohol abuse, risky sexual activity, juvenile delinquency, adolescent suicide, and other problems are usually studied separately. In the real world, however, they interact, reinforce one another and cluster together. Not only do problems cluster but so do the young people who have these problems; they tend to live in the same neighbourhood, and to be exposed to many of the same influences. In addition, the problems reverberate within the community and frequently are intergenerational (McWhirter, 2017).

Ethnic Minority, Indigenous and LGBTQQT-S Adolescents

The mental health needs of many adolescents in North America in general are underserved, but some adolescents are treated even less equitably than others (Garbarino, 2018). There are three groups of adolescents which are particularly vulnerable, marginalized and underserved. Adolescents in ethnic minority groups usually do not receive culturally sensitive, relevant and appropriate interventions and are more likely to be educationally and economically marginalized. Adolescents in ethnic minority groups also often must manage issues of acculturation, ethnic identity, and second language challenges along with all other challenges of adolescence. The second are Indigenous adolescents, especially girls and women,

who find themselves in settler colonial structures of domination which renders them vulnerable to gender violence and policing. The third are LGBTQQT-S adolescents, who are particularly vulnerable to misunderstanding and bias and then subsequent marginalization and violence (McWhirter, 2017).

Ethnic Minority Adolescents

The historical and contemporary marginalization of adolescent in ethnic minority groups continues as an ethos of racism and inequitable opportunity in North America (McWhirter, 2017). Racisms' effects continue to be insidious and far reaching, with large portions of ethnically diverse communities experiencing serious violent crime, and continued economic, social and educational marginalization. Such marginalization is associated with poorer parenting, lower levels of parental monitoring, and less-integrated family structures all of which have been associated with criminal behaviour (Tolan & Guerra, 2014). Many of the conditions that predict negative outcomes for adolescents, such as poor living conditions, poor quality and underfunded schools and lack of economic opportunity, are correlated with being an adolescent in an ethnic minority group (McWhirter, 2017).

Indigenous Adolescents and Colonial Violence

Settler colonialism targets Indigenous adolescent females in specific ways (Dorries & Harjo, 2020). The imposition of sexist and heteropatriarchal logics are central to settler colonial governance and purposefully produce the vulnerability of Indigenous adolescent females. Violence that targets Indigenous females can be traced to the ability of Indigenous women to reproduce Indigenous peoples and political orders. Simpson (2016) explains that due to their role in reproduction of social and political orders, Indigenous women are signifiers of Indigenous sovereignty and as such threaten the settler colonial regime. Consequently, as Dian Million notes "it is actually gender violence that marks the evisceration of Indigenous nations" (Million, 2013, p. 7). The violence experienced by Indigenous girls and women, including the problem of missing and murdered women and girls, is symptomatic of processes of settler colonial dispossession and the erasure of Indigenous political orders. Yet, the violence faced by Indigenous women and girls has often been positioned as a safety issue, rather than a consequence of ongoing settler colonialism. For instance, Canada's 2010 federal budget included $10 million CAD to address violence against Indigenous girls and women. However, much of this funding was directed toward programs that would better track missing persons and increase police surveillance, rather than addressing the root cause of violence (Dorries & Harjo, 2020).

Settler colonialism is by nature a violent process, with settler colonial violence often directed towards girls and women. Hunt (2015) observes that colonialism has been "facilitated by, and worked to entrench, racist and sexist ideologies in which Indigenous people are dehumanized in ways that excuse or even encourage violence against Indigenous girls and women." (p. 7). Consequently, sexual violence is "a hallmark of colonial progress and is a

central force in creating racial and gendered hierarchies through colonial legal categories" (Hunt, 2015, p. 32). In the context of settler colonialism, Indigenous girls and women face both public and private forms of violence, perpetuated by individuals as well as institutions (Dorries & Harjo, 2020).

A colonial legal framework structures the vulnerability of Indigenous girls and women and shape their experiences of violence. This legal infrastructure can be traced back to the founding of Canada and the United States. In Canada, the Indian Act was created in 1876 as a legal mechanism for facilitating the assimilation and dispossession of Indigenous peoples, by determining who has the right to claim Indian legal status as well as rights to territory. As federal legislation that survives to this day, the Indian Act operates by determining who is legally entitled to Indian status and community membership. These arbitrary legal distinctions between Indian and non-Indian created by the Act to expedite land transfers and resource extraction now also dictate the ability of people to participate in Indigenous political and community life (Lawrence, 2003). For instance, as a consequence of sexist provisions within the act, Indigenous women who married non-Indigenous men were stripped of their status, as were their children. While Indigenous women successfully fought to have this provision of the Act removed, the Act continues to strip status from children if both parents are not "status" Indians. These provisions undermine Indigenous governance structures and principles such as kinship, which have traditionally formed the basis for community membership and belonging. Through these provisions, the Indian Act limits the ability of Indigenous women to decide for themselves where they will live and the extent to which they can participate in the governance of their community (Dorries & Harjo, 2020).

Civil statistics tell a story about the multiple forms of violence which Indigenous girls and women endure. In both Canada and the United States, Indigenous women face domestic violence and sexual assault at rates higher than the rest of the population. In 2015, 24 percent of homicide victims in Canada were Indigenous women. Indigenous women are more likely to be murdered or missing that other women in Canada (The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2017). The cumulative effects of this violence are striking. It has been estimated that between 800 and 1,200 Indigenous girls and women have been murdered or gone missing between 1946 and 2012. As the Interim Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2017) notes, Indigenous girls and women experience violence at far higher rates than other girls and women and determined that "simply being an Indigenous and female is a risk" (p. 7).

Indigenous Adolescents and Heteronormativity and Patriarchy

Processes of assimilation that focus on governing Indigenous identity and citizenship also reshaped the ordering of Indigenous communities away from a wide range of gendered consciousness and practices and toward policies that enforced a gender hierarchy predicated on heteronormativity and patriarchy (Dorries & Harjo, 2020). The ability of Indigenous women to reproduce Indigenous peoples and political order has meant that the imposition of sexist and heterosexism can be found in allotment records, where men are identified as the head of

household, a source of tension in those Indigenous communities where women have domain over the household and agricultural land. These structures are also reflected in imposed property regimes. According to Perdue (1989) Cherokee women were the primary farmers and the produce they farmed belonged to them and shared at various Cherokee ceremonies. However, through the imposition of land privatization and signing deeds conveying title to the state of Carolina, Cherokee women were slowly shut out of the treaty, and land negotiations and the nation-state looked to the men regarding land decisions (Perdue, 1989). In this way, gender has been mobilized in law to weaken Indigenous political and territorial authority, while producing women's vulnerabilities to violence (Dorries & Harjo, 2020).

Ethnic Minorities and Police Brutality

The physical injuries of police harassment and use of excessive force against ethnic and Indigenous community members in North America have been highlighted in the media and popular publications (Butler, 2017, Hayes, 2017). Ultimately, these publications conclude that something could and should be done to alter the socio-political forces within North America that permit and even encourage the current deleterious practices within the criminal justice system, specifically with the aggressive, proactive policing practices that disproportionately affect ethnic and Indigenous community members (Graham, et al., 2019). Even more troubling, these aggressive, proactive police practices, have, on occasion, escalated to involve excessive uses of force, including police killings of unarmed ethnic and Indigenous citizens (Zimring, 2017).

Although receiving close scrutiny, the current tension between police and ethnic minority and Indigenous communities is not new. Rather, this relationship is marred with a long and disquieting past. In fact, for the Black community, in particular, Butler (2017) notes, "There has never, not for one minute in [North American] history, been peace between black people and the police" (p. 2). As such, generations of Black adolescents, as well as other ethnic minorities and Indigenous peoples, have been socialized with this longstanding tension as the backdrop of their parents' advice, expectations, and perception for the relationship between ethnic community members and the police – undoubtedly influencing these adolescent's perceptions of the police.

However, the worry of ethnic and Indigenous parents conveyed via "the talk" to their adolescent children has substantial collateral consequences to reduce contact with police inhibits general social interactions more broadly, which can harm not only the individual but also the community through the reduction of informal social control (Stuart, 2016). Additionally, "the talk" risks signaling to ethnic and Indigenous adolescent's that their parents are powerless to protect them, that they are inferior in society and therefore do not garner the full protection of the law, and that they must prepare to take responsibility for the actions of adults (e.g., avoid being perceived as engaging in criminal activity) (Whitaker & Snell, 2016). Commentators suggest that such messages may have damning effects on an adolescent's self-esteem, especially through the turbulent phase of adolescence in which youth seek to define their identity through their own eyes and others' (Erikson, 1968; Whitaker & Snell, 2016; Boyd & Clampet-Lundquist, 2019). Notably, these injuries inflicted by simply being ethnic in North

American society are "hidden" – they lack visibility of the physical effects of police violence such as bodily injury or death. These hidden injuries' effects are silent and potentially experienced without notice. These hidden injuries of race, which include feelings of inadequacy, powerlessness, and a loss of dignity, are a result of worrying about police brutality (Graham, et al., 2019).

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual, Queer, Questioning and Two-Spirited Adolescents

Although considerably fewer in number than children and adolescents in ethnic minority and Indigenous groups, adolescents who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual, queer, questioning or two-spirited are particularly vulnerable to stress states (McWhirter, 2017). Anderson (2012) and Savin-Williams (2014) argue that gay, lesbian and trans adolescents are underrepresented in most professional writing about children and adolescents. The increased social visibility of homosexuality and trans-sexuality has not been paralleled by greater attention to LGBTQQT-S adolescents in the research or treatment literature. This lack of attention is particularly problematic because adolescents who are "sexual minorities" are disproportionately at-risk for negative outcomes.

Many LGBTQQT-S adolescents experience stress associated with their sexual orientations (Dorries & Harjo, 2020). They commonly experience disapproval, anger and rejection from family and peers when they disclose same-sex attraction or identify as a different gender (or no gender) than that of their birth. Denial of same-sex attraction directly interferes with self-exploration and the ability to form healthy relationships critical to identity formation. That is, "living a lie" or "passing" can lead to incredible isolation and loneliness.

LGBTQQT-S adolescents are particularly vulnerable to alcohol and drug abuse, depression and a higher rate of suicide than heterosexual adolescents as they seek to cope with the isolation and rejection they experience (Whisman & Kwon, 2013). For many of these adolescents, family life is not a very safe life. Significant numbers of LGBTQQT-S adolescents report that they have been verbally and physically assaulted at home (Sullivan & Wodarski, 2002) Many adolescents are rejected and become the focus of the family's dysfunction. In fact, the process of "coming out" or "transitioning" is a major developmental task of homosexual and transexual adolescents (Dorries & Harjo, 2020) and LGBTQQT-S adolescents often have a difficult time finding appropriate strategies for the coming-out process (Whisman & Kwon, 2013). Transgendered adolescents are those whose "innate, deeply-felt psychological identification as male or female … may not correspond with the person's body or assigned sex at birth" (Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2018, p. 2). Society's lack of understanding of transgender individuals contributes to the enormous challenges faced by families of transgendered adolescents, and these adolescents are at high risk for being rejected, shamed, and shunned (McWhirter, 2017).

Even more problematic is the lack of support and acceptance at home usually leads to other problems. Many LGBTQQT-S adolescents run away; others are thrown out of the home when their sexual orientation or gender identity is revealed. Life on the streets brings even

more severe problems. Adolescents on the streets are often not attending school; many are also using alcohol and drugs; many adolescents become involved in the sex trade to support addictions, secure a place to stay, or ensure their "protection." Among runaways, LGBTQQT-S adolescents have higher levels of early onset sex and drug use and are at exceptionally high risk for HIV infection (Moon et al, 2012). Most studies suggest that LGBTQQT-S adolescents have a higher incidence of negative encounters with police, including jail, than do heterosexual adolescents (Rotheram-Borus & Langabeer, 2011). But more important than crime done by LGBTQQT-S adolescents is the violence done to them. LGBTQQT-S adolescents are uniquely subject to violence resulting from societal homophobia and transphobia. Forms of violence in school and in community range from name-calling to "gay bashing" to physical attacks, and there is a high and increasing number of hate crimes directed toward LGBTQQT-S persons in North America (Whisman & Kwon, 2013). As a result, LGBTQQT-S adolescents often leave school before graduation (McWhirter, 2017). This amplified vulnerability to victimization of LGBTQQT-S adolescents is especially problematic because of the distinct developmental struggles reported by LGBTQQT-S adolescents during their formative years (Whisman & Kwon, 2013).

Sexism

The construct of sexism encompasses stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination on the basis of gender or gender expression (Brown, 2017). This can include generalized beliefs or cognitions about individuals based on their gender category or expression (e.g., only girls wear nail polish). When generalized beliefs affect individual's emotional reactions and behaviours, sexism may ensue in the forms of gender-based prejudice and discrimination (Brown, 2017). Gender-based prejudice occurs when people hold positive or negative attitudes toward those who conform to or violate their gender-stereotyped expectations (e.g., it is good for boys – but not for girls – to play football). Prejudice can be unconscious, whereby individuals are unaware of their automatic or implicit associations toward others based on gender. Discrimination arises when individuals' behaviour toward others is biased positively or negatively based on people's gender or gender expressions (e.g., boys are teased for appearing feminine) (Brown, 2017).

Among Adolescent Females

Gender-based discrimination among females during adolescence can include both sexual harassment as well as gender bias in academic and athletic contexts. Sexual harassment occurs in the form of unwanted sexual behaviour and sexist comments (American Association of University Women, 2011). Repeated sexual harassment can negatively affect females' self-esteem, body image, adjustment, achievement, and beliefs about others (Felix & McMahon, 2006; Goldstein, Malanchuk, Davis-Kean & Eccles, 2007). In addition, females are often treated unfairly in nontraditional achievement contexts (Leaper & Friedman, 2007). Many parents tend to have higher expectations of sons over daughters in math, science, computers, and sports (Jacobs, Davis-Kean, Bleeker, Eccles & Malanchuk, 2005). Several individual, interpersonal and institutional factors undermine females' motivation and achievement in these subjects (Cheryan, Ziegler, Montoya & Jiang, 2017). Among these influences, internalizing negative

stereotypes regarding females' abilities in math and other technical subjects can undercut females' confidence (Cheryan et al., 2017; Dasgupta & Stout, 2014). These gender-type expectations are also reinforced in adolescent's peer groups (see Leaper & Friedman, 2007) and in classrooms (Meece & Scantlebury, 2006). In turn, because females often internalize these lower expectations, gender-biased treatment is believed to affect females' self-concepts, socioemotional adjustment, achievement, and career choices (see Hyde & Kling, 2011).

Among Adolescent Males

In North America, adolescent males tend to attain lower average grades and adjust less successfully to school than females (Leaper, 2015). This gender disparity in academic achievement extends into later years when fewer men than women graduate from college. Moreover, in the United States, these average gender differences in academic achievement are larger among Black, Indigenous and Latino adolescents than among White European American and Asian American adolescents (Leaper, 2015). Males internalization of traditional gender ideologies may partly account for this trend. In research, when adolescent males endorsed traditional notions of masculinity, such as appearing tough and being self-reliant, they were less willing to seek help, comply with teachers, and aspire for educational success (Morris, 2012; Rogers, Updegraff, Santos & Martin, 2017). In addition, gender-stereotyped beliefs may lead some males to avoid subjects viewed as feminine, such as reading or the arts (Plante, de la Sablonniere, Arnson & Theoret, 2013). In some communities, males who violate these traditional masculine norms may be teased by peers (Sheriff, 2007). Furthermore, norms of masculinity may lead some males to be disruptive and noncompliant in the classroom (Morris et al, 2017). In turn, these misbehaviors may lead males to be suspended or expelled from school. In the United States, these consequences are often more severe for males in ethnic minority groups from backgrounds of lower socioeconomic status than for other adolescents (Leaper & Brown, 2018).

Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a significant well-recognized threat to public health and human rights across North America (World Health Organization, 2013). The UN General Assembly Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women defines GBV, or violence against women, broadly to include any act that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering, whether occurring in public or private life (United Nations General Assembly, 1993). GBV research, prevention and intervention efforts focus heavily on physical and sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) and sexual assault, given the prevalence and demonstrated negative health implications, which include injury, sexually transmitted infections and human immunodeficiency virus, unintended pregnancy, addiction, and mental health issues (Campbell, 2002; Glass, Fredland & Campbell, 2003; Koenig, Zablotska, Lutalo, 2004; Decker, Silverman & Raj, 2005; World Health Organization, 2005; Maharaj & Munthree, 2007; Ellsberg, et al., 2008), in addition to homicide (Stockl, Devries & Rotstein, 2013).

GBV is considered to be perpetrated by macrolevel forces including male entitlement or ownership of women, rigid gender roles, and acceptance of interpersonal violence at a social level (Heise, 1998), which can be reinforced by law and practice. Evidence supports the influence and contextual factors of GBV, for example, community-level tolerance of violence is associated with experiences of IPV (Linos, Slopen & Subramanian, 2013). The influence of social norms is also felt at the in-policy or practice at the macro-level, for example, the intensity with which police reports of IPV or sexual assault are pursued. Thus, national context is highly relevant in understanding social determinants and national patterns of IPV and sexual assault (Decker et al., 2015).

At the individual level, adolescents are considered uniquely impacted by GBV. Their young age and relative inexperience with relationships can heighten their risk for physical and sexual IPV (Glass, 2003). Those involved in romantic relationships at a very young age can face IPV and other dimensions of limited relationship power (Raj, 2010; Akintola, Ngubane & Makhaba, 2012). Abuse during adolescence imparts risk for subsequent health concerns, including depression, suicidal ideation (Bertone-Johnson, Whitcomb & Missmer, 2012) and can set young women on a trajectory for subsequent abuse (Exner-Cortens, Eckenrode & Rothman, 2013). Adolescents are also at high risk for sexual assault. The sexual initiation marking the transition into adulthood is sometimes characterized by violence and coercion. Qualitative data illustrates coercive dynamics underpinning sexual initiation for young women (Akintola et al., 2012), and qualitative evidence demonstrates that the first sexual experience of many adolescent women is forced or coerced (Koenig, 2004; World Health Organization, 2005; Maharaj & Munthree, 2007). Forced and coerced sexual initiation is linked with contraceptive nonuse, condom nonuse, unintended pregnancy, and sexually transmitted infection symptoms (Koenig, 2004; Maharaj & Munthree, 2007) suggestive of a sexual trajectory of disempowerment stemming from trauma and lack of control at initiation. Violence, limited control, and sexual coercion and force continue to affect women as they transition into early adulthood, through many of the same pathways (Nasrullah, Zakar & Zakar, 2014; Stockl, March, Pallitto & Garcia-Moreno, 2014).

Ableism

A person's perceived distance from dominant, idealized identity categories, - such as able-bodied, white, Anglo-Saxon, upper middle class, adult, male and heterosexual – influences their likelihood of experiencing prejudice, discrimination and exclusion of various kinds (Calder-Dawe, Witten & Carroll, 2020). It is well established that the presence of a visible difference or disability – that is, a variation from the norm in the body form, mobility or communication style that is readily perceived – often elicits intense and stigmatizing scrutiny from others (Harcourt & Firth, 2008; Garland-Thompson, 2009). Campbell (2001), a leading figure in disability research, defines ableism as the "network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces, a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, special-typical … human" (p. 44). Other researchers have highlighted discursive, representational and relational processes that perpetuate the abled/disabled binary and able-bodied privilege (Loja, Costa, Hughes & Menezes, 2013; McLaughlin, 2017). Measured against

the cultural friction of the 'normate', disability and disabled embodiment are understood as a "diminished state of being" (Campbell, 2001, p. 44).). As a theoretical lens, ableism makes apparent the discursive connections between contemporary medical and therapeutic appraisals of human bodies and older cultural forms of discriminatory visual parsing, whereby a person's physical exterior – skin, physique, skull shape, beauty, genitalia – is interpreted as a marker of moral worth, character and potential (Garland-Thompson, 2009; Davis, 2013; Stephens & Cryle, 2017).

Everyday ableism refers to mundane enactments of ableist prejudice and privilege. Paralleling everyday racism (Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald & Bylsma, 2003; Moewaka-Barnes, Taiapa, Borell, & McCreanor, 2013), everyday sexism (Bates, 2012; Clader-Dawe & Gavey, 2016) and everyday homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism (Peel, 2001; Clark & Kitzinger, 2004), everyday ableism reflects broader sociocultural relations of power, while also being a profoundly personal, relational and embodied experience (Garland-Thompson, 2009). While legislative changes can often offer redress for the most deliberate and overt forms of identity-based discrimination and exclusion, subtler forms of discrimination are often protected from criticism by its plausible deniability: in these situations, there is often some degree of ambiguity of intention, and/or the perpetrator may deny or be unaware of the prejudicial thrust of their actions (Calder-Dawn, 2015). The difficulty of calling out everyday forms of discrimination is concerning given that they are day-to-day reality for many, including those with disabilities and visible differences (Kelly & Galgay, 2010; Conover, Israel & Nylund-Gibson, 2017).

The enactment of everyday ableism is intimately entangled with visual processes of diagnostic and classification, where the body is read – and produced – as either normal or abnormal (Focault, 1973; Davis, 2013; McLaughlin, 2017). This binary mode of social organization indexes a wider Western tradition of dualistic thinking (including self/other, masculinity/femininity, nature/culture, West/East, reason/emotion, etc.). Accordingly, everyday perceptions of disability are binarized (e.g., disability is assumed to be either present or absent) and are reliant on a cultural corpus of knowledge about what disability 'looks like' (Scully, 2010). Those with readily visible impairments are typically evaluated against a package of culturally dominant ableist representations of disability that depend on visual cues to parse bodies into two rigid groups: "'visible normal, abled' and 'visibly different, disabled.' This process of classification draws on bodily morphology and comportment, and also on 'visible signifiers' of disability" (van Amsterdam, Knoppers & Jongmans, 2015, p. 152) such as canes, guide dogs and wheelchairs. The effect is to install a strict divide between abled bodies and disabled bodies, based on the assumption that disability is either immediately apparent or else absent. Those whose bodies are read as disabled within a broad ableist representational regime: these include frailty, asexuality, low intelligence, extraordinary giftedness, immobility or inspirational courage in the face of personal tragedy (Keller & Galgay, 2010; McLaughlin & Coleman-Fountain, 2018). Conversely, those with disabilities that do not fit cultural imaginings of disability are judged – at least initially – as able-bodies by default (Samuels, 2013).

The concept of the at-risk continuum is useful to counsellors and facilitators interested in identifying the nature and level of stresses faced by the adolescents with whom they work.

These troubling social, historical, and political environments provide the structure through which adolescents assimilate their experiences. To respond to this, existing prevention, early intervention and treatment efforts need to be adapted to be valid for young people in ethnic minority groups, Indigenous groups and members of sexual minorities. New intervention strategies need to be developed that take into consideration such issues as the cultural and linguistic needs of specific communities, acculturation, racism, police brutality, colonial violence, homophobia and transphobia, gender-based violence, sexism, ableism as well as heteronormativity and patriarchy. As mentioned above, experiencing a higher load of stressors and stress states correlates with experiencing a higher number of internalizing and externalizing disorders during adolescence (Grant et al., 2014).

Stress and Internalizing and Externalizing Disorders

Internalizing disorders are physical and psychological problems that are turned inward and primarily affect only the adolescent in question: they include such problems as depression, anxiety and phobias. In contrast, externalizing disorders are problems that are directed outward, towards others, and typically are displayed as behavioural problems (Di Giunta et al., 2018). These externalizing disorders include aggression, fighting, destructiveness, truancy and other conduct disorders in which adolescents act out their problems (Feldman, 2017).

There is pervasive evidence that the experience of adolescent stress relates consistently to the occurrence of internalizing and externalizing disorders (Di Giunta et al., 2018; Mastrotheodoros, 2020) and psychiatric symptomology of clinical significance include depression, suicidal ideation and suicide (McKay, Percy & Byrne, 2016). Consequently, the experience of adolescent stress has been systematically associated with a range of health compromising lifestyles and behaviours including failure to control obesity (Darling et al., 2019), physical inactivity (Beauchamp, Puterman & Lubans, 2018), early and possible heavy alcohol use (Charles et al., 2017; Elsayed et al., 2018) and the onset of electronic and combustible cigarette smoking (Lechner et al., 2017). Researchers Mendelson et al. (2010) posit that:

> Adversity and prolonged stress may be associated with changes in brain development that can impair an individual's capacity for self-regulation. Major categories of risk behaviours in adolescents include *(a)* drug use and abuse; *(b)* unsafe sex, teenage pregnancy and teen parenting; *(c)* school underachievement, school failure and/or dropping out; and *(d)* delinquency, crime and violence. As many as 25% of adolescents also experience symptoms of anxiety and depression, which can negatively affect academic, social and family functioning with long-term detrimental outcomes. (p. 580)

There can be no doubt therefore that the experience of adolescent stress constitutes an issue of central importance to the broader understanding of adolescent health. Where adolescents are not able to deal adaptively with stressors, pathology, such as the development of trauma, is likely to occur (McKay, Percy & Byrne, 2016).

Stress and Trauma in Adolescents

The term stress has been defined in multiple ways throughout academic literature (Byrne & Reinhart, 2011; McKay, Percy & Byrne, 2016), yielding environmental and psychological models of stress (Suldo, Shaunessy & Hardesty, 2018). In the environmental model, stress is defined as external to an adolescent including threats of immediate harm or aversive environmental conditions. Stress of this type is typically measured using stress inventories, such as the Stress Indicators Questionnaire (The Counseling Team International, 2015), which are checklists of events believed to be especially onerous to an individual. External stress has been linked to such negative outcomes as anxiety, depression, and aggression (Jaser et al., 2015), academic underachievement (Cunnigham, Hurey, Foney & Hayes, 2012), substance abuse (Chassin et al., 2013), and compromised life satisfaction (McKnight, Huebner & Suldo, 2012). Psychological models focus on the concept of perceived stress, which refers to interactions between environmental precipitant (external stress); the physiological reactions of the body (distress); and an adolescent's cognitive, emotional and behavioural response to this interaction. Stress is perceived when an external event causes aversive physiological and cognitive distress in an individual that exceeds his or her emotional and behavioural repertoire designed to negate the harmful effects of external stressors (Suldo et al., 2018).

Trauma is an experience that occurs when an individual is exposed to or directly experiences an extremely stressful event that threatens their life or safety. Trauma is often the result of an overwhelming amount of stress that exceeds an adolescent's ability to cope or integrate the emotions involved with that experience. Trauma may result from a single distressing experience or recurring event of being overwhelmed that can be precipitated in weeks, months or years as the individual struggles to cope with the immediate circumstances, eventually leading to serious, long-term consequences (Arnsten et al., 2015).

Although the experience of stress at whatever age is acutely uncomfortable (Brockman, 2011); what is more important however is the capacity of stress to adversely affect individual states of health either through direct impact or through the mediation of health risk behaviours (Frounfelker, Klodnick, Mueser & Todd, 2013; Vohra et al., 2019). A major contributing factor to the development of trauma via stress states and health risk behaviour during adolescents is the number of occurrences of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in childhood (Mosley-Johnson et al., 2019). Over the past few decades, researchers have produced a large and growing body of evidence indicating that children who experienced ACEs encounter more physical and mental health problems in adolescence and have a greater risk of premature mortality compared to children who have not experienced ACEs (Felitti et al., 1998; Anda et al., 2005; Brown et al., 2009; Bellis et al., 2015; Hughes et al., 2017). As an umbrella term, ACE captures various types of abuse and neglect as well as aspects of a child's living environment that may have caused trauma or chronic stress within the first 18 years of life (Hughes et al., 2017). ACEs are childhood traumatic events, such as maltreatment and witnessing family violence; parental divorce or separation; exposure to parental incarceration, substance abuse or mental illness; living in unsafe neighborhoods, in poverty, or in financial hardship; and experiencing bullying or discrimination (Cronholm et al., 2015; Bethell, Simpson & Solloway, 2017; Mersky, Janczeewski & Topitzes, 2017) to name a few. Among the United States population, the prevalence of

childhood adversity is high, with more than 50% of adolescents reporting at least one ACE (Kessler, Davis & Kendler, 1997; Green et al., 2010; Hughes, et al., 2017). Minority groups and those who are low-income have been found to experience ACEs at higher rates relative to the general population and, thus, may require tailored interventions to mitigate the effects of childhood adversity in adolescence (Mosley-Johnson et al., 2019).

Adolescence is also a time when risks are laid down for chronic conditions which will only become manifested in later adulthood (McKay, Percy & Byrne, 2016). In severe cases where adolescents are unable to cope adaptively with the psychological impact of ACEs and trauma, they may present with a wide variety of reactions such as the development of somatic symptoms, panic attacks, obsessive-compulsive behaviour, or a process of fragmentation with behaviour becoming automatic, ritualized and irrational. Instead of responding adaptively, some adolescents subjected to multi traumas switch into dysfunctional pathology, such as PTSD (Geldard, Geldard & Yin Foo, 2018).

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Adolescence

Repeated exposure to traumatic events often entails severe psychopathological implications, the most common of which is PTSD. PTSD is a chronic stress disorder, consisting of four main symptom clusters (American Psychiatric Association, 2019): (a) reexperiencing of the traumatic event, (b) cognitive and behavioural avoidance of traumatic reminders, (c) hyperarousal, (d) negative alterations in mood and cognition. Researchers Finklehor et al. (2015)'s National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence provides data on both one-year and lifetime prevalence of childhood victimization in a nationally representative sample of 4,549 children aged 0-17. More than half (60.6%) of the participants experienced or witnessed victimization in the year preceding the study. As children age, traumatic exposure tends to increase, and thus lifetime exposure was one third to one half higher than past-year exposure. As an example, among 14-17-year-old girls, 18.7% experienced a completed or attempted sexual assault in their lifetime and more than a third had witnessed parental assault (Horesh & Gordon, 2018).

Trauma comes in many forms and its effects are expressed differently during different life stages, thus when compared to traumatized young children, adolescence with PTSD may begin to more closely resemble adults (Wesner, 2017). However, several clinical features seem to be particularly characteristic of adolescents. For example, adolescents are more likely to engage in traumatic reenactment, as both victims and assailants. In addition, adolescents are more likely than younger children or adults to exhibit impulsive and aggressive behaviours, including non-suicidal self-injury (Taft, Creech & Murphy, 2017). Traumatized adolescents, particularly following sexual abuse, may also become isolated from family and friends who they feel cannot relate to their feelings, and may attempt running away from home (Horesh & Gordon, 2018). Sexual fears may also lead to avoidance of dating and other intimate encounters. Finally, sexual acting out, promiscuity and involvement with older or abusive partners are also sometimes reported (McLean et al., 2017).

In light of the unique characteristics of trauma-affected adolescents, there is a need for specialized interventions tailored to fit this age group. Mindfulness-based interventions, such as MBSR-T, has been shown to be effective in reducing symptoms of various psychiatric disorders, including major depressive disorder, generalized anxiety disorder and PTSD (Hofmann et al., 2010). Mindfulness practice systematically works on fostering one's ability to accept, rather than to ward off, negative cognitions (Horesh & Gordon, 2018).

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

Having received significant attention in both medical and mental health contexts over the last several decades (Shapiro, Schwartz & Bonner, 1998; Carmody & Baer, 2008; Stefan, Capraru & Szilagyi, 2018), Kabat-Zinn's mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) curriculum was originally designed in 1979 to help patients manage chronic physical pain (Kabat-Zinn, 1982; Kabat-Zinn, Lipworth & Burney, 1985;). The program focuses on mind-body connections and a series of attentional practices that help participants to experience their thoughts and feelings with a level of detachment. Mindfulness has been described as "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experiences moment by moment." (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4). Kabat-Zinn (1990) explains: "Mindfulness adds value to [adolescent stress-reduction] because it goes beyond cognitive understanding and is grounded in an actual practice that can be used or sustained throughout the day" (p. x). Mindfulness training distinguishes itself through embodied exercises that foster a greater understanding of one's emotions and moods. These meditative tools form a continuously accessible "living practice repertoire" that may be regularly utilized. Adolescents can benefit from mindfulness and other contemplative techniques in an effort to become more responsive and less reactive, more focused and less distracted, more calm and less stressed (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). According to numerous studies (Himelstein, 2011; Cook-Cottone, 2015; Kaunhoven & Dorjee, 2017), improved self-regulation may result from an increased self-awareness and acceptance of emotions rather than impulsive emotional reactions, rumination or chronic avoidance of emotions (Kavanagh, Andrade & May, 2004).

In their creation of an operational definition of mindfulness, psychologists Bishop et al. (2004) proposed a two-component model of mindfulness that features *(a)* the self-regulation of attention so that it is maintained on immediate experiences and *(b)* adopting a particular orientation toward one's experiences in the present moment, an orientation that is characterized by curiosity, openness and acceptance. They described mindfulness as a form of mental training that develops a reflective rather than reflexive mode of responding to internal and external events. Researchers Shapiro, Carlson, Astin and Freedman (2006) later extended the model to include a third component: intention, which links back to the earlier notion of "remembering" in addition to attention and attitude. These authors referred to John Kabat-Zinn's (1994) description of mindfulness to explain their three axioms – paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally.

Theoretical Foundations of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

The capacity to evoke mindfulness is developed using various meditation techniques that originate from Buddhist spiritual practices (Hanh, 1976). Mindfulness in Buddhist traditions occupies a central role in a system that was developed as a path leading to the cessation of personal suffering (Thera, 1962; Silananda, 1990).

In the Buddhist psychological context, the term "mindfulness" is a translation of the Pali term *sati*. Pali was the common language used in northern India during the time of the Buddha, over twenty-five centuries ago. *Sati* has been interpreted by various monastic and lay teachers as "awareness" (Goenka, 2000, p. 135), "mindfulness or awareness" (Narada, 1988, p. 183; Rahula, 1974, p. 48) and as "remembering or bearing in mind" (Rhys Davis, 1881, p. 107; Sharf, 2014, p. 942). Gethin (1992) explains that *sati* should be understood as that which allows us to be aware of the full range and extent of phenomena – as an awareness of phenomena and their relative value – and is therefore what causes the mindfulness practitioners to "remember" that any experience exists in relation to a whole variety of experiences that may be skillful or unskillful, wholesome or unwholesome, ethical or unethical. The traditional purpose of mindfulness practice since its origination in Buddhist teaching is to develop wisdom and reduce suffering (Cayoun, Francis & Shires, 2018).

Unlike some of the current Western teaching models, the traditional Buddhist approach teaches mindfulness as a quality of mind to be cultivated at all levels of experience. In particular, it involves developing mindfulness skills across four modalities so that mindfulness permeates through all domains of functioning. This encompasses "the constant mindfulness with regard to body *(káyánupassaná*), feelings (*vedanánupassaná*), thoughts (*cittánupassaná*), and mind objects (*dhammánupassaná*)" (Narada, 1988, p. 182). "Feelings" (*vedanánupassaná*) is meant to signify "interoception" and the associated pleasant, unpleasant or neutral hedonic tone, and is frequently used interchangeably with "body sensations" in the literature (Rahula, 1974, p. 48). Hence, *vedanánupassaná* has more to do with "feelings" (the verb) than with "feelings" (the noun).

In particular, it is important to understand the differences between attentiveness, awareness and mindfulness. In brief, attention is understood to be the mental effort that directs awareness to an object or stimulus and awareness is the action of conscious apprehension of the object (Sharf, 2014). While mindfulness requires both attentional effort and awareness of what is occurring in the present moment, and must be free from any bias, such as liking or disliking what we attend to, and the propensity to desire or resent the object (Cayoun, Francis & Shires, 2018). Mindfulness meditation needs to be understood as a training in giving unbiased attention to our ongoing experience, preventing any personal interpretation or interference with the object of observation. Mindfulness must, therefore, include a sense of detachment from, and non-identification with, the object that we attend to.

For this reason, mindfulness practice must be accompanied by equanimity (*upekka*), which is a detached, neutral and balanced mental state that is neither elated nor depressed, which enables a non-reactive attitude irrespective of the type of experience being encountered (Desbordes et al., 2014). Research is noting the importance of equanimity in mindfulness

practice (Shapiro, et al., 2006; Siegel, Germer & Olendzki, 2008). Mindfulness practice requires mental neutrality, which allows us to investigate and experience safely, objectively, and with healthy curiosity. Hence, to use the term mindfulness accurately, it must be understood as a tool, not as a goal (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). As we progressively acquire the ability to stabilize attention, our observation deepens and we notice that all things change, including our thoughts, emotions, physical body and the entire world around us – nothing remains the same, including what we call "the self." Thus, mindfulness is a tool for both self-investigation and "self-desensitization" through direct exposure to whatever we call "I," "my," or "mine" while preventing the reinforcement of a sense of self (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Cayoun, Francis & Shires, 2018).

Buddhism in Western Pedagogy

In practice, mindfulness meditation requires remembering one's purpose in meditation, in terms of ethical and spiritual goals of eliminating greed, hatred and delusion while cultivating wisdom, compassion and lovingkindness (Gethin, 2011). It is the coupling of Buddhism and mental health that may seem at odds with the origins and goals of mindfulness within Buddhism. Historically, monastic Buddhism was not directed towards mental health and well-being. The goals of happiness and self-efficacy that dominate current discussions in mental health are far from the original concerns of meditation with enlightenment. Taking refuge in the monastic community (*samgha* or *sangha*) required letting go of the mundane goals of getting ahead – indeed, the renunciation of family, social status and other attachments – and – indeed, the renunciation of family, social status and other attachments – and resocialization into a different moral order that would ground meditative practice and the pursuit of earthly liberation. The focus of study, ritual observance and meditative practice within monastic institutional context was the achievement of spiritual insight (Samuel, 2015).

In the transition of these practices to the West, meditative practices have undergone a shift towards a clear framework of goals and values and a socially grounded interpretative system that helps give experience meaning and moral significance. With regard to this, Sharf (2015) concludes:

> In short, there is little "bare" about the faculty of sati, since it entails, among other things, the proper discrimination of the moral valence of phenomena as they arise … Just as there is a set of metaphysical commitments that undergird the modern mindfulness movements, there are also ethical and political commitments. The problem is that, in America at least, these commitments so resemble those of mainstream consumer culture as they go largely unnoticed (p. 474, 478).

Samuel (2015) discusses some other strands in the transmission of Buddhism to the West that have led to the current focus on mindfulness that is based on a relative exclusion of other key Buddhist doctrines. In particular, he emphasizes the lack of attention to the doctrine of no-self in the ways that mindfulness has been elaborated in the West. The doctrine of no-self, originally formulated in ways that challenged the Hindu concept of *atman*, is central to Buddhist

understanding of the origins of suffering and its dissolution. Samuel suggests, however, that this notion of no-self is in unavoidable tension with Western values of individualism that seek to cultivate, amplify, enable and aggrandize the personal self. Hence, the relative lack of attention to the doctrine of no-self is not accidental but reflects the larger cultural context in which Buddhist ideas are being introduced. The values of individualism are pervasive in mental health theory and practice and influence the ways in which Buddhism translated and applied in clinical settings.

Buddhism in Mindfulness Based Stress-Reduction Theory

In its current clinical applications, mindfulness usually refers to present-centered, nonjudgmental or nonevaluative attention based on *vipassana* meditation, but this may be mixed with other practices. MBSR devised by Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994) draws from Zen, Theravada Buddhism and Hatha Yoga as well as Tibetan and Vietnamese Mahayana Buddhism. Kabat-Zinn wanted to create an intervention that would be accessible and acceptable in mainstream medical settings, so he downplayed the Buddhist origins and trappings of meditation in MBSR. However, although presented as a treatment for chronic stress-related medical and psychological conditions, the focus of MBSR is less on symptom reduction than a transformation of the person's attitude towards the illness.

The spread of Buddhist meditation techniques provides a compelling example of cross-cultural transmission or borrowing, which illustrates the issues of translation and hybridization characteristics of the contemporary world (Batchelor, 1994; Wilson, 2014). In this diffusion, there usually has been an explicit assumption that mindfulness practice will be effective across contexts because they are based on universal aspects of human functioning. Kabat-Zinn (2011) maintains:

> Since Buddhist meditative practices are concerned with embodied awareness and the cultivation of clarity, emotional balance (equanimity) and compassion, and since all of these capacities can be refined and developed via the honing and intentional deployment of attention, the roots of Buddhist meditation practices are de facto universal (p. 3).

This universalism is consistent with Buddhist teachings and supports the conviction that the practice of mindfulness meditation – while it may need to be adapted to meet the needs of specific kinds of personalities or cultures – can lead to the same insights into the nature of mind for practitioners in any context (Wilson, 2014).

MBSR has emerged as a valuable clinical tool that complements and builds on social and emotional therapeutic approaches. Mindfulness-based interventions with adolescents, in particular, appear to target some of the emotional and attentional processes that can support and bolster self-regulation (Perry-Parrish, Copeland, Webb, Shields & Sibinga, 2017) and mindfulness has been widely theorized to improve self-regulation relative to emotions, behaviour and cognitive processes (Jimenez, Niles & Park, 2010). Adolescents can benefit from mindfulness and other contemplative techniques in an effort to become more responsive and

less reactive, more focused and less distracted, more calm and less stressed (Garrison Institute, 2005).

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for Teens

Mindfulness-based stress-reduction for teens (Biegel, 2005, 2009a, 2009b; Biegel, Brown, Shapiro & Schubert, 2009) is an adaptation of the mindfulness-based stress reduction program for adults (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). Like MBSR, MBSR-T is based on secular adaptations of mindfulness practices with roots in eastern traditions. MBSR-T is also strongly influenced by mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT; Segal, Williams & Teasdale, 2002, 2012) and overlaps with MBCT for children (Semple & Lee, 2011) which was developed independently. MBSR-T has strong foundations in developmental theory and considers the cognitive and attentional abilities of adolescents aged 13-18 years, as well as the cultural life of today's adolescents, for whom changes occur rapidly in how they form relationships and allocate their attention (Madden et al., 2013).

MBSR-T began as a bridge between the educational and psychiatric communities (Meiklejohn et al., 2012) and has been utilized and researched in a number of settings: in-school, after school, inpatient therapeutic settings and pediatric hospitals (Jones et al., 2013). In a comprehensive meta-analysis, John Meiklejohn et al. (2012) reviewed 14 mindfulness-based studies conducted in educational settings since 2005 and found that these curricular interventions yielded multiple benefits for Grade 8 to Grade 12 students such as improvements in working memory, attention, academic skills, social skills, emotional regulation and self-esteem, as well as self-reported improvements in mood and decreases in stress, anxiety and fatigue. It is appropriate for individual, family and group settings and dispersal of the curriculum continues to broaden (Edwards, Adams, Waldo, Hadfield & Biegel, 2014). MBSR-T can be used as a stand-alone program or as an adjunct to other forms of treatment.

In its most commonly used form, the MBSR-T program lasts 8 weeks and includes a pretreatment orientation followed by weekly 90-minute sessions. The length and number of sessions is guided by the setting in which it is being taught. Many variations can be used, ranging from single-session offerings to expanded versions lasting as long as 12 weeks. Even brief exposure to the skills is potentially beneficial (Edwards et al., 2014). Both formal and informal mindfulness practices are taught. The formal practices are similar to those in adult MBSR, but their duration is shortened to 10-20 minutes to accommodate the attention span of adolescents, for whom the traditional 40-minute practices might not be developmentally appropriate (Madden et al., 20103).

Two examples of formal mindfulness practice are *(a)* the body scan relaxation technique for managing stress and *(b)* breath awareness practices. For the body scan, participants chose to either lie down on a mat or sit in a chair while the instructor directs them to focus on relaxing individual body parts sequentially from head to toe (or vice versa) over a period of 10 to 15 minutes. Breath awareness (or the "mindful moment") typically occurs at the start of a session when the practitioner invites participants to anchor their attention on some part of the

body while breathing (e.g. the feeling of air coming in and out of their nostrils or the expansion and contraction of their chest or belly). The goal of breath awareness is less about the concentration of attention on breathing sensations and more about the way the experience helps to control thinking; having "a blank mind" and "kind of forgetting about everything that is happening" (Beigel, Brown, Shapiro & Schubert, 2009).

Although a continuing evolving area of study, emerging research suggests that mindfulness-based interventions such as MBSR-T may hold promise for traumatized adolescents (Dutton, Bermudez, Matas, Majid, & Myers, 2013; Gallegos, Cross, & Pigeon, 2015). Going beyond the rationalist philosophy of cognitive-behavioural traditions (Perry-Parrish et al., 2016), MBSR-T teaches participants to change their relationship to their thoughts, rather than changing the thought content itself. In other words, MBSR-T aims to enhance capacity for metacognitive awareness, leading to the recognition that negative thoughts, emotions and sensations linked with past traumas are inherently ephemeral and not necessarily veridical reflections of present reality (Kelly & Garland, 2016).

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for Teens with Trauma

MBSR-T may hold several potential advantages for trauma-affected adolescents. According to research by Horesh and Gordon (2018) following exposure to trauma:

> MBSR-T teaches adolescents to (a) be less fearful and reactive toward intrusive traumatic memories, instead attempting to observe them in a nonjudgmental manner, (b) more importantly, emphasize one's own ability to separate between symptom and self, a process known as "decentering" (Feldman, Greeson & Senville, 2010), (c) reduce posttraumatic cognitive and behavioural avoidance and (d) become more familiar with one's patterns of autonomic arousal, a process which eventually may result in decreased hyper-alertness and startle responses. (p. 630)

Considering studies of other psychiatric disorders (Hofmann et al., 2010), and studies addressing MBRS-T among traumatized adolescents (Swart & Asche, 2014), mindfulness practice seems to be especially suitable for younger patients, for several reasons. First, MBSR-T focus on the body and its connection to mental states, as well as on specific physical exercises (e.g. yoga stretches, walking meditation) has potential advantages. Physical activity, at various levels, was found to improve mental health among adolescents on multiple measures (Biddle & Asare, 2011). In addition, MBSR-T physical emphasis may enable adolescents to cope with negative emotions and cognitions in a non-verbal, indirect way (Beigel et al., 2009). The latter aspect may be of particular importance in the case of traumatized adolescents, as posttraumatic conditions are often characterized by significant avoidance and a strong reluctance to openly discuss traumatic content. In the context of trauma, Ford and Cloitre (2009) specifically point to:

> the importance of bodily self-regulation among traumatized adolescents and suggest mindfulness as the potent therapeutic tool in this regard. Second, the nonjudgmental,

> self-compassionate attitude fostered by mindfulness-based interventions was found to be particularly helpful among adolescents. Third, the group therapy setting may be a significant advantage, as adolescents are often preoccupied with social issues, including shame, social comparison, and a sense of isolation and loneliness. (p. 60)

Because adolescents typically spend a significant amount of their time attending school, interventions in a group setting, rather than individually, presents a more feasible option for generating positive outcomes for marginalized adolescents (Eva & Thayer, 2017). These issues may become even more apparent following a traumatic exposure (Stuewig & McCloskey, 2005). The group setting was found to be particularly important among adolescents who have gone through adverse life experiences, as they felt group MBSR-T enabled them to share their experiences, relate to those reported by others, and eventually develop more interpersonal trust. In addition, the group was found to have a structuring, stabilizing effect among traumatized adolescents. Structured group activities may provide a sense of support, decreased risk behaviours and provide a novel, positive social experience to at-risk adolescents who often do not have sufficient opportunities for such activities (Horesh & Gordon, 2018). Finally, and more generally, mindfulness-based interventions are often considered relatively “soft,” flexible therapies, which do not necessarily require the exposure and sharing of deeply personal issues. Such interventions, often described as “contemplative interventions” can allow patients both physical and mental freedom, as opposed to more structured, and sometimes more rigid forms of therapy, which may be more emotionally taxing for adolescents (Ford & Cloitre, 2009; Horesh & Gordon, 2018).

Hofmann et al. (2010) highlights the importance of encouraging adolescents to participate in mindfulness activities while being sensitive to and respectful of an individual’s background, exposure to trauma and general willingness to engage. For example, facilitators might allow an individual to simply observe rather than participate in a practice or to use a modified approach during a body scan such as sitting up with eyes open. Mindfulness allows for the individual to modify exercises according to their level of physical and emotional comfort while considering a hybrid approach to using mindfulness-based interventions with individuals who experience maladaptive reactions to trauma (Eva & Thayer, 2017).

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for Teens and Home Practice

As the amount of research evidence investigating the efficacy of MBSR-T increases, interest in identifying the mechanisms by which they lead to symptom improvement has also grown (Del Re, Flückiger, Goldberg & Hoyt, 2013; Hawley et al., 2014). One aspect of MBSR-T hypothesized to be important for positive outcomes is home practice. Home practice in this context is a set of mindfulness practices that are assigned to participants by MBSR-T facilitators to be completed between sessions and continued after the intervention has ended. MBSR-T emphasizes the importance of daily mindfulness practice throughout the programme that is either formally or informally structured. Formal practices involve providing participants with guidance on the nature and content of a meditation practice for a specific length of time. These practices include exercises such as body scans, sitting meditation and mindful movement.

Throughout the intervention, participants are also encouraged to generalize through informal practice by bringing mindful awareness to routine everyday experiences; these practices are less structured and therefore sometimes not given a set length of time (Hawley et al., 2014). Published MBSR-T curriculum guides suggest engaging in a home-practice regiment of 45 minutes of formal mindfulness practice and 5-15 minutes of informal mindfulness practice, 6 days a week during and after the intervention.

MBSR-T considers the combination of between-session and post-programme practice as one of the most essential components to increasing the therapeutic effects of treatment (Lloyd, White, Eames & Crane, 2018). Regular home-practice of taught strategies has been posited to affect a number of purported cognitive behavioural mediators of psychopathology, including rumination, stress reactivity, self-criticism and experiential avoidance – factors identified as underlying a number of disorders such as depression, anxiety and addiction (Hawley et al., 2014).

Cultural Considerations in Implementing Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for Teens

Culturally Appropriate Engagement

Child and Youth Care Workers are committed to approaching every client they work with as individually valued and important and to respecting and valuing their clients' cultures and diversity. These approaches take place within the family, the community and other socio-cultural institutions and center on engaging in culturally appropriate emotional, social and behavioural change and wellbeing within the context of daily living (The International Child and Youth Care Network, 2017; Child and Youth Care Association of British Columbia, 2018; Kostouros & Thompson, 2018). Clients experience positive outcomes in group therapy when the facilitator is culturally competent and the core of counsellor training includes the development of multicultural competence (Perera-Diltz & Greenidge, 2018). The integration of mindfulness techniques designed for improvement of cultural knowledge and awareness into group settings may promote ongoing personal reflection that could translate into culturally appropriate services to clients. According to Relational Cultural Theory, clients operate within both the intra-psychic and interpersonal realms which are deeply embedded in culture. A second premise in Relational Cultural Theory is that clarification of incongruities in intra-psychic and interpersonal realms will be clinically enriching for the client (Mitchell & Aron, 1999). However, this relational approach has inconsistent views due to the lack of definition from a single theoretical framework. While some argue the importance of paying attention to the client's culture (Arredondo et al., 1996; Sue, Arredondo & McDavis, 1992), others (Martin & Sugarman, 2000) caution that the focus on culture alone runs the risk of losing the individuality of the person within the culture. The culture of the client must be considered along with the client's uniqueness. For such cultural consideration to occur within the therapeutic relationship, raising mindfulness in counsellors so they are aware of their own values and beliefs, as well as being

able to identify the client's cultural lens, consider the client's unique characteristics and serve each client from a culturally appropriate perspective. (Perera-Diltz & Greenidge, 2018).

The term culture is defined in different ways. While sometimes used to specifically address the historical and geographical origins only (Arredondo et al, 1996), the term culture means to be inclusive of various demographics including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation and ability level. In addition, both formal and informal cultural lessons learned through interactions and life experiences provide the nutrients to becoming a cultural being. Therefore, the definition of culture also includes socioeconomic standard, educational status, and environmental factors including the sociopolitical climate or context in which an individual resides, which contribute to the individual's uniqueness (Arredondo & McDavis, 1992). This broad definition of culture posits that each individual is a multicultural being who is unique with similarities to and differences from others (Arredondo et al., 1996).

For mental healthcare to be effective, it is critical that Child and Youth Care Workers and Counsellors demonstrate cultural competence. Cultural competence is the ability to provide counselling from the context of the personal culture of the client without allowing the counsellors personal beliefs, values and biases to override those of the client (Sue et al., 1992; Sue & Sue, 2003; Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998).

The Unique Pressures Experienced by Diverse and Marginalized Adolescents

In addition to the typical developmental stressors of adolescents, diverse and marginalized adolescents frequently confront unique pressures that have been linked to poor psychological outcomes, impaired academic performance and maladaptive behaviours such as substance use and delinquency (McKnight et al., 2012). These risk factors may include language barriers, low socio-economic status, parent's own involvement in high-risk or illegal behaviour, restrictive or neglectful parenting and home environments that expose adolescents to alcohol or substance abuse. Over time these stressors accumulate further amplifying poor psychological outcomes. For example, a 2008 study reported that urban Hispanic adolescents have a higher level of depression compared to other ethnic groups and are more likely to be held back a grade (Robles-Pina, et al., 2008). Chronic or repeated exposure to stress has enduring effects on the brain, which can negatively impair memory and increase the likelihood of generalized anxiety, panic and major depressive disorders during adulthood (Keenan et al., 2008). Therefore, adolescence is a critical period to intervene by teaching stress reduction skills, in order to prevent the onset of emotional, cognitive and social problems that can persist into adulthood (Boggess & Linnemann, 2011).

Considerations for Mindfulness with African American Adolescents

African Americans are generally underrepresented in health research, and this extends to mindfulness research. One clear shortcoming is the lack of available culturally specific

treatments for stress in African American communities (Fuchs et al., 2013) The centuries-long history of African Americans being harmed by physicians (Washington, 2006) has resulted in high levels of mistrust toward medical professionals (Corbie-Smith et al., 1999). As a result, many African Americans have been reluctant to engage with medical and psychological care, thus underscoring the importance of cultivating trust before introducing any mindfulness-based practices. One way to build trust is to express the importance of the mindfulness intervention as a means of identifying and enhancing cultural strengths.

Stressors and coping processes may differ across cultures (Adlwin, 2007). Not allowing for historical contexts of stress or experiences that may be unique to diverse adolescents may miss important perspectives from the communities of interest. However, research suggests that mindfulness practices, such as mindfulness-based stress reduction for teens and breathing awareness meditation can improve the physical and/or mental health of African American adolescents Yet, this requires openness to cultural perspectives and attentive fit for different populations (Barnes et al., 2006; Kabat-Zinn, 2009).

The historical and present contexts of oppression and discrimination that diverse adolescents face are important considerations for mindfulness interventions. Microaggressions are commonplace, and intentional and unintentional daily derogatory comments and behaviors experienced by diverse adolescents can lead to stress reactivity that may not be as apparent to other North Americans (Harrell et al, 2011; Harwood et al., 2015). Diverse adolescent's sensitivity to microaggressions in therapeutic contexts may lead to poor coping processes that exacerbate rather than reduce the impact of the stress response (Graham et al., 2013, Woods-Giscombe & Black, 2010). Prior to engaging in a mindfulness intervention, a deeper conversation with diverse adolescents is needed to explore their perspectives on stress and the development of contextually appropriate coping processes to manage stressors.

Considerations for Mindfulness with Indigenous Adolescents

Mindfulness training may deepen the process of attaining peace and ameliorating poor health and social conditions in Indigenous populations such as stress, addition and suicide. (Le & Gober, 2013; Pember, 2012). Further, collaboration with Indigenous communities to develop culturally centered approaches to mindfulness helps to infuse the intervention with meaning, purpose and identity for Indigenous participants (Swinomish Tribal Mental Health Project, 1991). Proulx (2010) noted that the more Indigenous participants can rely on traditional approaches to healing that align with Indigenous culture, the more likely they will negotiate longer-term treatment modalities and express a higher sense of self-efficacy necessary for success (Swinomish Tribal Mental Health Project, 1991; Witko, 2004). Getting participants to enter into mindfulness interventions may include the extent to which facilitators integrate traditional treatments (e.g. medicine wheel, talking circles) and involve traditional healers (e.g. medicine men and women) in the mindfulness practices.

In Le and Gobet's (2013) study on mindfulness and adolescent suicide prevention with the Salish, Kootenai, and Pend d'Oreille tribes in Montana, they specifically elicited elders'

blessings and incorporated input and stories from Indigenous story tellers, such as the careful attention of picking berries and the infusion of one's focus and spirit into making moccasin. It I important that facilitators outside the Indigenous community reach out to traditional healers to fully understand how traditional treatments are implemented. Indigenous adolescents will quicky sense a misguided attempt to use their traditional healing methods, which can lead to an unsuccessful group program and a negative legacy that could impair future engagement in that community.

Mindfulness facilitators working with Indigenous adolescent populations need to also be aware of the diversity of attitudes across Indigenous cultures and accept the fact that there is not one stereotypical Indigenous individual (Proulx, 2010). Different generations of Indigenous people will be at different stages of acculturation (e.g. assimilation, integration) to dominant North American society and may represent a spectrum of acceptance of dominant cultural perspectives (Witko, 2004). Further, developing a culturally specific mindfulness program for Indigenous adolescents living in urban settings poses a challenge because of the heterogeneity of nations represented in the metropolitan milieu. Working with different generations in urban settings may further complicate the implementation of culturally based models of mindfulness. For example, the choice of whether or not to use mindfulness-based substance abuse treatments that integrate traditional Indigenous practices was a source of tension between acculturated urban Indigenous youth and their reservation born-and-raised parents who preferred traditional care models (Croff et al., 2014).

Trust

Diverse adolescents cite trust as critical to the successful implementation of mindfulness-based stress reduction interventions (Proulx, 2010). This need for trust is due to the distrust of the healthcare system (including mental health), which can prove to be an obstacle to mindfulness implementation (Fuchs et al., 2013). This is especially true when considering that mindfulness interventions are often framed in relation to existing mental health paradigms, which makes the harmful assumption that diverse adolescents are as familiar and comfortable with these references as their White counterparts. It has been shown that researchers and health providers are most effective when they are able to shift their therapeutic focus to meet the needs of their participants, rather than neglecting to do so in the service of rigidly adhering to research and treatment based on dominant society perspectives (Sue & Sue, 2003).

Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) suggests that forms of social domination (racial, gender, class, etc.) are not isolated from one another. Rather, they are interlocked and inextricably linked (Cooper, 2016). Concerning mindfulness interventions, facilitators should consider the possibility that diverse adolescents may have different experiences with mind-body interventions depending on their gender, sexuality, class and personal histories. For example, participants in Proulx et al.'s (2017) study of mindfulness in African American communities noted that being in the center of family and social life further exacerbated the underlying stresses associated with racial history in the United States. Understanding how

these roles intersect can help in the development of and conversation about mindfulness in participant's lives.

Le and Gobert's (2013) mindfulness study in Indigenous communities addressed the aforementioned trust concerns by having the principal facilitator develop a relationship with a community champion. This community champion was an early adopter of mindfulness concepts and programs and she became a trusted advocate with elders and the tribal council. The principal facilitator was in direct communication with the champion in the day-to-day affairs of the group. In turn, the champion provided periodic updates to elders and the tribal council. Through this continuous exchange of information, trust developed and continued to throughout the group and continued with the champion's successor who replaced her at tribal social services. Further, this interaction with the tribe provided the facilitator team with a better understanding of how variables often associated with inequity map onto the concept of intersectionality where being Indigenous and a woman or being Indigenous and poor may change the mindfulness approach to be introduced. Going to these lengths showed the commitment of the facilitators team to protect and better understand the complex dynamics that are more prevalent in diverse communities than in the dominant society.

Culturally Tailoring Mindfulness-Based Interventions

Psychological stress has been shown to be related to poor health outcomes in diverse populations (McKnight et al., 2012). However, daily stress in diverse populations may interact with enduring stress stemming from historical trauma(s). Therefore, stress reduction in diverse populations should be consistent with long-standing cultural values and reflective of socialcultural historical trajectories of that population (Proulx, et al., 2018).

Research suggests that mindfulness training may be an appropriate and beneficial stress-reduction option for diverse populations through the cultivation of insight, peace and compassion. However, introduction of mindfulness-based interventions among diverse populations may be troublesome as White culture, experiences and social references are embedded in Western mindfulness programs (Proulx et al., 2018). That is not to say that the dominant culture is the backdrop against which all other communities should be viewed, or that there are significant differences in response to mindfulness program across cultural groups. Rather, Whites have been the focus of mindfulness research in the West, and mindfulness interventions that are developed for this demographic should not be applied to diverse populations without due sensitivities and cultural considerations (Woods-Giscombe & Black, 2010).

Awareness of discrimination, bias, stereotype in oneself and the effect of racism on others, are considered fundamental to psychological and health-related care. Lack of awareness of one's own biases may perpetuate oppression against racial and ethnic minorities (Sue & Sue, 2003). On the other hand, Proulx (2010) noted that the more diverse populations are presented with culturally appropriate approaches to healing, the more likely those healthy outcomes associated with the intervention will be enduring. Similarly, the extent to which mindfulness

practices can be integrated with tradition treatments will predict the extent to which communities will accept the intervention (Proulx et al., 2018). However, the successes of this approach should begin with self-reflection of the mindfulness instructor (see Sue & Sue, 2003).

Institutionalized racism is part of the larger structure of racism in which biases are formed, including possible inherent biases in mindfulness facilitators (Proulx, et al., 2018). This is not to say that the current approaches to expanding mindfulness are explicitly discriminatory, but biases often go unrecognized even as they are put into action – as in facilitating a mindfulness group. Those actions (which may include how participants are addressed, attitude, language, metaphors, stories, or other means facilitators may employ) can create an instructional style and space that does not allow diverse populations to fully enter into mindfulness class considerations (Woods-Giscombe & Black, 2010). Diverse populations have endured cultural loss and intergenerational trauma due to policies and experiences of White cultural expansion in their communities (e.g., the suppression of native languages and cultural practices). As such, the steps taken by the mindfulness community may be seen as another example of encouraging diverse populations to be more like White communities rather than exploring how spiritual and contemplative traditions in these communities resonate with mindfulness (McKnight et al., 2012).

On the micro-level, diverse populations must remain in a constant state of reinterpretation in order to fit the mindfulness instructions they are receiving into their own cultural framework. While a facilitator's actions may not be "against diverse populations" per se, they may not be explicitly supportive of their particular cultural frameworks, either (Proulx, 2010). In comparison, persons of the same cultural and historical background as their facilitators may be more likely to share common cultural sensibilities, worldview and value systems so that reinterpretation is less necessary. Any level of reinterpretation is extra work for diverse populations, and extra work on some level, is stress, even in a mindfulness group trying to develop stress-reducing strategies (Proulx et al., 2018).

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for Teens with Diverse and Marginalized Adolescents

Researchers have begun to examine mindfulness as a potential intervention for helping adolescents to maneuver the turbulence often associated with this developmental stage. Despite the large number of studies on adults, studies of mindfulness interventions in adolescent populations are more limited, especially for populations of diverse and marginalized adolescents. Existing reviews of mindfulness interventions (Burke, 2010) and sitting meditation practices (Black et al., 2009) with adolescents indicate that these programs have potential for promoting positive changes. Likewise, a metanalysis on mindfulness interventions with adolescents confirms this finding, particularly in relation to psychological outcomes such as depression and anxiety (Zoogman et al., 2014). Current studies examining the feasibility and acceptability of mindfulness-based intervention for diverse and marginalized adolescents have shown promising results. Interventions have been implemented in a range of settings, including homeless shelters (Gabbe et al., 2012), juvenile detention centers (Himelstein, 2011, Himelstein

et al, 2014; Lenord et al., 2013), outpatient clinics (Britton et al., 2010; Kerrigan et al., 2011; Sibinga et al., 2011) and schools (Sibinga et al., 2013). In particular, incarcerated adolescents who had previously shown resistance to other psychological interventions were more accepting of a mindfulness-based program and found it to be meaningful, educational and beneficial (Himelstein, 2012). Acceptance of this intervention appeared to be related to the development of trust, enhancement of positive emotions and reduction of stress within the group over the course of the mindfulness program (Himelstein, 2012). In another diverse and marginalized adolescent population, HIV-infected African American patients identified five overarching themes which defined their experiences with the program. These themes supported feasibility and included improved attitude, decreased reactivity, improved behaviour and self-care and importance of group cohesion and safety (Sibinga et al., 2008). In addition to feasibility and acceptability findings, positive psychological outcomes have also been reported in studies with marginalized adolescents. These outcomes include decreases in rumination (Sibinga, et al., 2013), depression (Grabbe et al., 2012), hostility (Sabinga et al., 2011), negative coping (Sabinga et al., 2013), intrusive thoughts, emotional arousal and stress (Himelstein, 2011; Sabinga et al., 2011). Further, improvements were reported in interpersonal relationships (Sibinga et al. 2011), mental wellness and psychological resilience (Grabble et al., 2012), self-regulation (Himelstein, 2011), functional attention (Leonard et al., 2013) and self-efficacy (Britton et al., 2010; Sabinga et al., 2008).

Limitations to Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for Teens

Home Practice

As noted above, MBSR-T is a manualized, group-based skills training program that teaches mindfulness both in and between sessions. MBSR-T's standard curriculum is conducted in a structured 8-week group format, during which participants meet weekly for 2-hour group sessions for a total of 16 contact hours. Participants are encouraged by the program facilitators to engage in regular personal practice throughout the MBSR-T course. This requires active engagement by participants in applying and practicing new skills in their lives. Between-session development of these skills through 'home practice' is an integral component of treatment. Home practice includes completing daily self-directed 45-minute practice sessions consisting of the meditations taught during the previous week of the course. Such home practice is viewed as necessary for participants to gain insights and skills for the intended treatment outcomes (Kazantzis, Whittington & Dattilio, 2010; Parsons, Crane, Parsons, Fjorback & Kuyken, 2017). Between-session practice consists of formal and informal home mindfulness practice that trains attention and develops the ability to respond to difficult mental and physical experiences. Informal practices encourage mindfulness in everyday life, for example, by deliberately focusing awareness on everyday activities and savoring pleasant experiences. In a formal practice, participants are given guidance as to the nature and content of the practice; suggestions as to the posture adopted, attitude and how attention is directed. Therefore, it is widely accepted

that the full benefit of many effective treatments can only be achieved if the prescribed regime is followed reasonably closely (Parsons, Crane, Parsons, Fjorback & Kuyken, 2017).

Unfortunately, some adolescents may struggle with the time, resources or accessibility needed to participate in extensive meditation-based programs such as MBSR-T. For adolescents, the time commitments of the standard MBSR-T program represent a significant strain in an already overcommitted schedule and the time requirements are a key reason why some do not engage with such programs (Bergen-Cico, Possemato & Cheon, 2013). Although findings have been variable, a significant relationship between time engaged in home practice and greater symptom improvement has been demonstrated in a number of studies (Parsons et al., 2017). The conditions of some clinical populations, such as those with chronic physical and/or psychological health problems, are unable to participate due to the demands of MBSR-T in its standard form (Bergen-Cico et al., 2013).

In his review of mindfulness-based interventions among adolescents, Burke (2018) argues that the process of implementing MBSR-T amongst adolescents ought to consider age-related developmental needs related to cognitive capacities, therapeutic content, attention span and physical processes. In addition, the development and subsequent assessment of mindfulness-based interventions among adolescents needs to take into account the adolescent's family, caregivers and school systems, as the environment may need to support the adolescent's mindfulness practices between sessions, and generally assist in the implementation of mindfulness in the adolescent's life. These issues may be of particular importance following trauma, as adolescent survivors may require significant support in their recovery process (Horesh & Gordon, 2018).

Measuring Impact of Home Practice

In the clinical literature, higher compliance with home practice requirements during the course is associated with better outcomes following completion of the MBSR-T program (Carmody & Baer, 2008). However, few studies have actually measured home practice compliance and only Farb et al. (2013) and Holzel et al. (2013) have correlated their results with functional neural responding. Future research ought to focus on requiring participants to log their home practice time and activities in order to see whether increased compliance and frequency of practice has any impact on the patterns of brain activity among participants. Moreover, it would also provide insight into which activities participants are focusing their practice on the changes in brain. For instance, it would be beneficial to assess whether increased frequency of home practice is associated with greater brain activity or deactivation in response to emotional processing and self-regulation. In addition, it may also be important to measure the quality of the participants home practice, though this would be difficult to measure given the subjective nature of reporting form participants (Hatchard et al., 2017).

Similarly, given the necessity of home practice compliance on achieving the benefits of MBSR-T participation, as Hatchard et al. (2017) noted, future research should aim to address how much home-practice is necessary in order to sustain the brain-based benefits of

mindfulness training post-treatment. Additionally, these researchers suggested it may also be important to consider measuring how much practice is necessary post-program completion in order to maintain the changes observed in structural and functional brain activity. This would provide insight into whether adolescents need to continue engaging in MBSR-T exercises daily or only a few times a week in order to preserve gains from the program. Similarly, this would help provide an understanding of what happens to participants who do not continue to practice consistently post-program completion. Through conducting follow-up assessments that measure both long-term impacts as well as the impact of continued practice (i.e., in terms of frequency, duration, etc.) future researchers could gauge the impact of MBSR-T on neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity refers to any form of lasting functional or anatomical changes in the brain as a result of learning new things and adjusting to new experiences (Bruel-Jungerman, Davis & Laroche, 2007), such as learning how to engage in mindfulness meditation. Conducting long-term follow-ups with MBSR-T participants within a neuroimaging context has important clinical implications, as it would provide both the scientific and clinical communities with an understanding of the longitudinal changes in brain structure and function through regular practice. Moreover, by gauging the frequency of practice, or lack thereof, researchers would be able to ascertain how much practice is necessary to sustain the program benefits and, equally as important, to see the differences in those who do not practice regularly enough (or at all in some cases) and whether they return to their baseline functioning (Hatchard et al., 2017).

Mechanisms of Change

The evidence supporting the efficacy of mindfulness interventions across a wide variety of populations might lead some to conclude that mindfulness groups are a cost-effective "general purpose therapeutic technology" (Teasdale, Segal & Williams, 2003, p. 157). Teasdale and colleagues posit that while there have been favourable findings for mindfulness interventions, often these studies have had instructors who "embodied, sometimes implicitly, quite specific views of the nature of emotional distress and ways to reduce that distress" (p. 157). They further argue that for mindfulness interventions to be successful, it is necessary for practitioners to have a clear formulation of the disorder being treated and how a mindfulness intervention may be helpful for that disorder. Understanding mechanisms of change is necessary for a problem formulation approach to the use of mindfulness interventions.

Teasdale et al. (2003) outlined five considerations related to mindfulness that required further investigation. Many of these considerations involve or would be enhanced by an understanding of the mechanisms of change of mindfulness interventions for a particular disorder. First, mindfulness training can be unhelpful. There are some conditions that may not benefit from mindfulness meditation or may worsen. For example, early research on the use of meditation in clients with psychotic disorders was not promising (e.g. Walsh & Roche, 1979); however, later research using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for psychosis found lower rehospitalization rates compared to a control group (Bach & Hayes, 2002). Other adverse effects that have been reported in the literature, such as with transcendental meditation and long-term meditation, include an increase in depressive and anxious symptoms (Didonna, 2009). Second, sharing a clear formulation with clients is important, and this involves having an

understanding of how mindfulness might lead to change for that particular client's problem. Some clients may have preconceived notions of what mindfulness entails and may judge it as an unsuitable approach. A discussion of how mindfulness may be an appropriate intervention may help to counteract these preconceived notions. The third consideration relates to the apparent simplicity of mindfulness. Mindfulness appears to be a simple procedure, but the style is as important as the technique. Understanding mechanisms of change for a particular problem can inform the specific mindfulness exercises chosen for the intervention, the style of delivery and the emphasis for the inquiry. Fourth, mindfulness was originally developed as part of a multifaceted approach, not as an end in and of itself. Often there are well researched and supported techniques for a particular disorder that can be integrated with mindfulness interventions. However, leaving out previously established techniques in favour of a pure mindfulness approach may result in a disservice to clients. Often there are traditional cognitive and behavioural therapies that are empirically supported for specific populations (Didonna, 2009). One of the challenges of integrating mindfulness with these interventions is the acceptance-based focus of traditional cognitive and behavioural interventions (see Lau & McMain, 2005). However, this challenge can and has been met (e.g. Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy), highlighting that, while it may seem difficult, it is possible to achieve theoretical integration with seemingly very different approaches. Therefore, rather than abandoning empirically supported treatments in favour of a pure mindfulness intervention, integration may be the most effective approach. Additionally, understanding the mechanisms of change will enhance the development of multifaceted approaches that include mindfulness interventions. Fifth, some components of mindfulness training may be more relevant for some conditions than for others. Understanding mechanisms of change for a particular disorder will inform which components of mindfulness are most relevant for that disorder. The sixth and final consideration outlined by Teasdale et al. (2003) is that while mindfulness training may affect processes common to many disorders, indiscriminate application of mindfulness techniques across disorders is not optimal. There is still room for specificity even if the process is similar across several disorders.

Measuring Change

Research on MBSR-T with adolescents has grown substantially over the past decade. MBSR-T appears to be helpful to adolescents, especially in clinical populations and may enhance cognitive performance and stress-resilience (Zenner et al., 2004). These findings have generated enthusiasm among researchers and clinicians and support the growing dissemination of MBSR-T across clinical, educational and community settings.

There is growing discussion, however, around methodological issues in mindfulness research, including the assessment of mindfulness and measuring changes in mindfulness (Goodman, Madni & Semple, 2017). Testing the assumption that MBSR-T has specific effects on mindfulness – or that other outcomes are mediated through improvements – depends on the reliability and validity of measures used to assess the complex and multifaceted construct of mindfulness.

A substantial portion of adolescent MBSR-T studies reply on indirect measures of mindfulness such as attention, executive functioning or emotional regulation (Zenner et al., 2004). While such constructs are close proxies for mindfulness, it is important to develop measures that sufficiently differentiate mindfulness from other related outcomes, without this, there exists a critical gap in concluding that MBSR-T effects change through the mechanisms it is hypothesized to operate through (Zoogman et al., 2014). More MBSR-T studies that directly assess mindfulness are being conducted as adolescent mindfulness measures become more available (Galante e al., 2018). Still, the direct measurement of mindfulness in adolescents is faced with a number of conceptual, methodological and developmental challenges.

The first challenge in measuring mindfulness may be defining what it is. Scholars have noted the difficulties of translating the Buddhist concept of *sati* (in the Pali language) into western psychology (Bodhi, 2011). One challenge is that western psychology attempts to operationalize a concept that derives from a phenomenological understanding of direct experience, embedded within a non-western cultural and philosophical framework (Grossman, 2011). Mindfulness is often defined as present-moment awareness – either focused attention or open monitoring – combined with an attitude of nonjudgment, curiosity and kindness. Associated characteristics include metacognitive awareness, emotional equanimity, skillful decision-making and acting with compassion (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

These aspects of mindfulness are theoretically interrelated and difficult to isolate. Measures that exclusively examine present-focused attention, for example, do not assess the entirety of this multifaceted construct (Grossman, 2011). Moreover, since different mindfulness-based practices (e.g., meditation vs yoga) may develop different components of mindfulness (e.g., concentration vs body awareness), narrowly defined measures are likely to be differentially sensitive to different mindfulness practices. Assessing mindfulness as a global construct, although easier to do, makes it difficult to ascertain the particular mechanisms of change associated with mindfulness practices (Goodman et al., 2017). Single-factor measurements of mindfulness make it difficult to understand what mindfulness practices actually do and how they do it (Holzel et al., 2011).

Unraveling the nuanced mechanisms of change is especially relevant in research with adolescents, where definitions and applications of mindfulness have largely been borrowed from the adult literature without a complete understanding of how mindfulness emerges within a developmental neurocognitive framework. For example, abstract reasoning, which may precede the ability to focus attention and “observe” thoughts and emotions with metacognitive awareness, relies on prefrontal and fronto-limbic networks that are not fully developed until early adulthood (Gogtay et al., 2004). Thus, it may be beneficial to use multifactorial assessment approaches to help clarify how different aspects of mindfulness are cultivated across different developmental stages.

The distinction between state and trait mindfulness offers another challenge to the measurement of mindfulness. Trait mindfulness refers to a stable, dispositional quality, while state mindfulness refers to the capacity to cultivate a particular state of mind during meditative practice. The operationalized definition of mindfulness and existing adolescent assessments favour the assessment of trait mindfulness. Thompson and Waltz (2007) suggest that there may

be little relationship between state and trait mindfulness. While dispositional or trait mindfulness is seemingly easier to measure (i.e., through self or observer-reported behaviours), it may be less informative about an individual's ability to cultivate a state of mindful awareness – the skill explicitly targeted in most mindfulness-based interventions. Furthermore, dispositional mindfulness is likely to be less affected by short-term mindfulness-based interventions.

Many have discussed problems associated with measuring mindfulness by self-report (Grossman, 2011, Sauer et al., 2013). Biases in self-perception limit the reliability of all self-report measures used in behavioural research. Self-report bias may be especially problematic in mindfulness research because those with less mindfulness training may have less insight into the nature of their own minds and be less likely to report accurately. Alternatively, experienced adolescents may see their thoughts and behaviours more clearly and subsequently, self-report less mindfulness (see Grossman, 2011). As an individual cultivates mindfulness, he or she will be more likely to notice that their "mind has wandered" or that they are "judging." Consequently, changes in mindfulness affect not only the reliability of self-report over time, but may actually reverse expected outcomes. This phenomenon might also be due to differential item understanding, inadequate content validity, or whether the item is worded positively or negatively. Van Dam et al. (2009) found that mediators and nonmediators with similar overall levels of "mindfulness: endorsed items differently depending on whether they were negatively or positively worded. This finding also suggests that interpretation of items is influenced by meditative experience. Self-report is also subject to the effects of social desirability and demand characteristics. By the end of a mindfulness training program, participants are well aware of how they "should" be acting and may well respond to questions so as to be a "good participant" (Nichols & Maner, 2008, p. 159). Similarly, those who have made significant efforts to "be mindful" may respond with the desired outcome, rather than the actual outcomes. Finally, the wording used in mindfulness questionnaires is consistent with that used in mindfulness programs (e.g., "nonjudgment," "paying attention"), which provides clues to the expected responses.

The assessment of mindfulness needs to take into account broader cultural and contextual factors. The meanings of mindfulness, meditative practices, reasons for practicing and expected outcomes have continuously changes across countries, cultures and time. Many current practices and assessments of mindfulness, however, are not conceptualized within a biopsychosocial model or framed within a religious, spiritual or cultural context (Goodman et al., 2017). With increasing appreciation for the complexity of what mindfulness is, even with North America, for example, mindfulness is learned and may looked markedly different in individuals of different ages, genders, ethnicities or socio-economic strata. Mindfulness may look different with microsystems (e.g. a family, school or religious community), across mesosystems (e.g., different facilitators within an agency), exosystems (e.g., educational systems) and macrosystems (e.g., broad cultural values). The assessment of mindfulness needs to progress alongside our evolving understanding of mindfulness as it fits into contemporary cultures (Lavelle, 2016).

The Stressed Teens Handbook

Given that MBSR-T outcome studies show improvements in psychological functioning for adolescents experiencing stress (Dutton, 2013) as well as decreases in anxiety and depression (Kabat-Zinn et al., 1992) and reduction in depressive relapse (Ma & Teasdale, 2004) what follows now is a workbook that adolescents can take with them after their mindfulness training in *Stressed Teens.*

The Stressed Teens Handbook is structured to match the content in the *Stressed Teens* program. *The Stressed Teens Handbook* directly follows the steps that are taken within the *Stressed Teens* program and is divided into eight units. This will help link what participants in the *Stressed Teens* group have already experienced and will allow them to continue to activate the memory of what they have learned. This layout will be entirely familiar to them and help continue to support their skills development.

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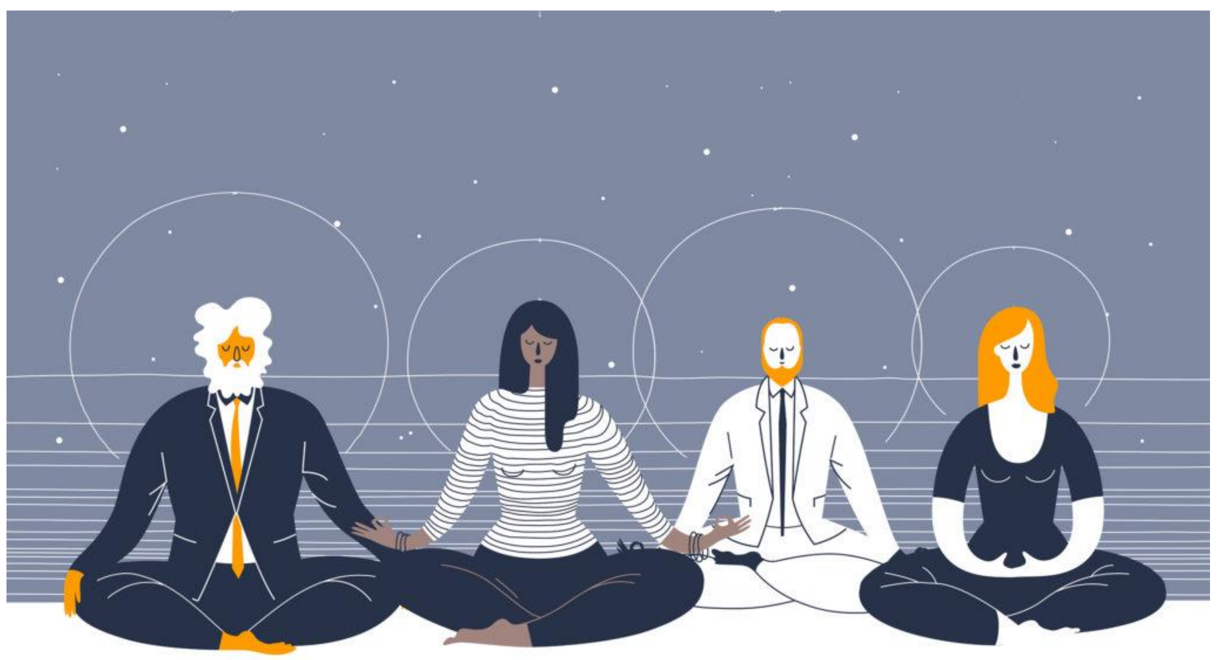
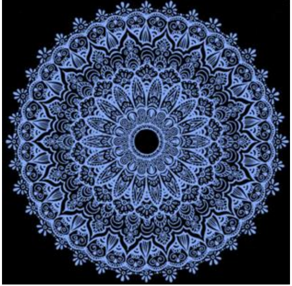
The Stressed Teens Handbook



Unit 1: Introduction

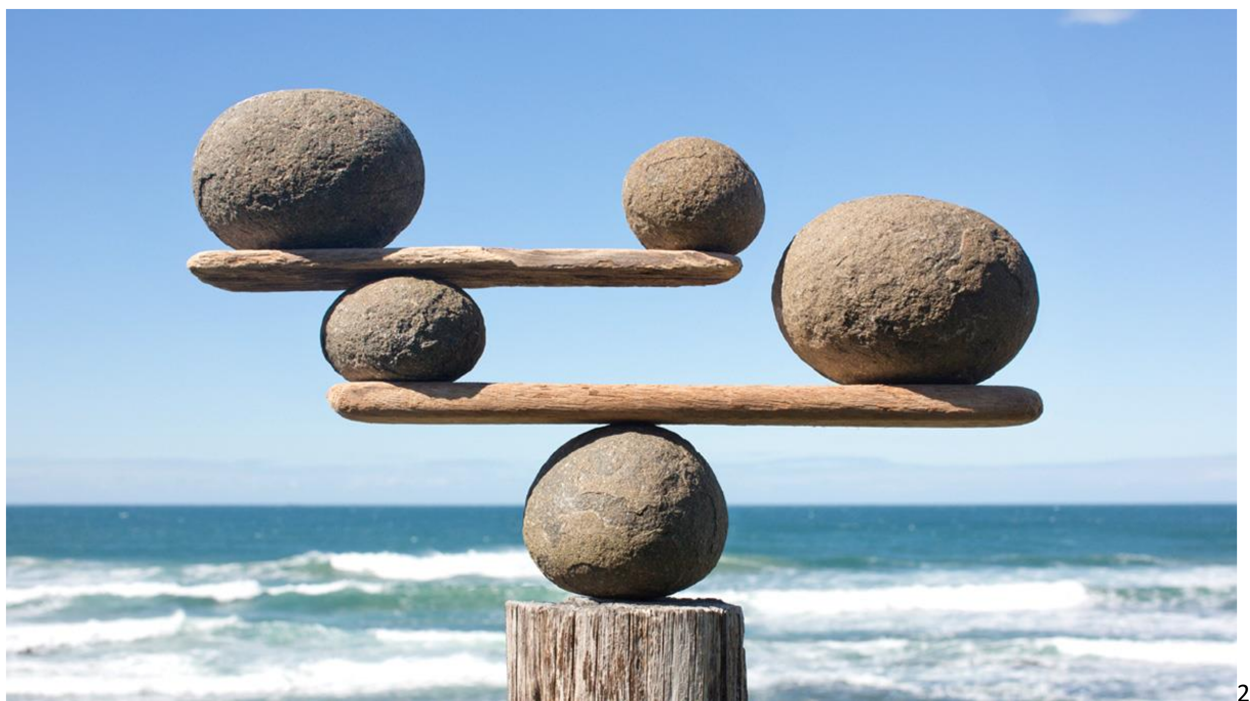


When it comes right down to it, wherever you go, there you are.

Whatever you wind up doing, that's what you've wound up doing.

Whatever you are thinking about right now, *that's* what's on your mind.

- John Kabat-Zinn [1]

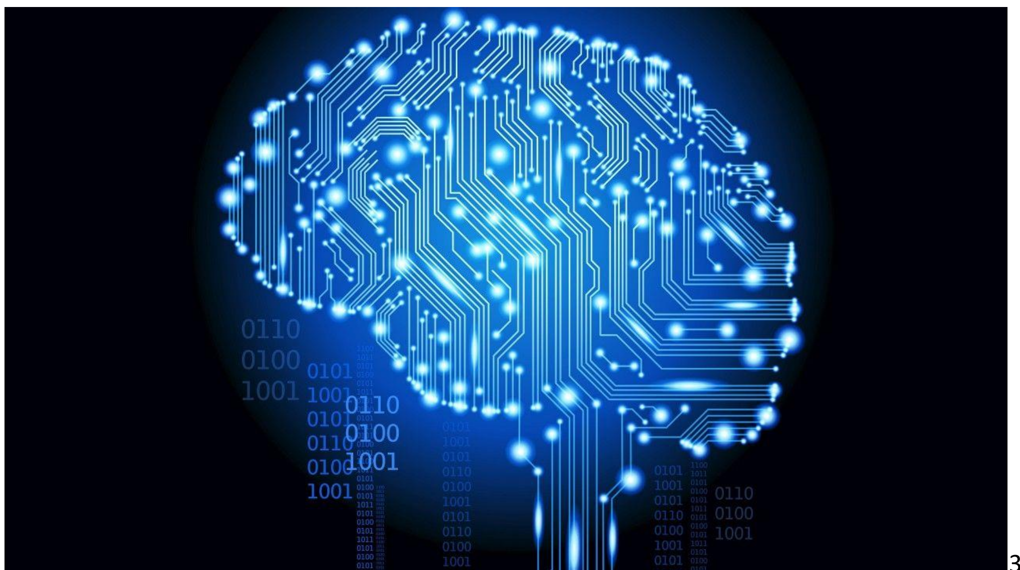

[2]

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us.

While mindfulness is something we all naturally possess, it's more readily available to us when we practice on a daily basis.

Whenever you bring awareness to what you're directly experiencing via your senses, or to your state of mind via your thought and emotions, you're being mindful. And there's growing research showing that when you train your brain to be mindful, you're actually remodeling the physical structure of your brain. [2]


[3]

The Many Definitions of Mindfulness

Asking someone to define mindfulness is kind of like asking, “What does chocolate taste like?” or “What does your favourite song sounds like?” Definitions can only give a small idea of the real experience. Just reading about mindfulness without experiencing it yourself is like going to a restaurant to read the menu, without tasting any food. Just as the point of going to the restaurant is to taste the food, the point of mindfulness is to actually experience it.

That said, there are some descriptions of mindfulness that might be a good place to start. Jon Kabat-Zinn’s (the founder of Mindfulness) defines mindfulness as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and nonjudgmentally” [3] is simple and to the point. Mindfulness is all about paying attention in the present moment. Mindfulness is about shifting out of autopilot and awakening to the here and now. Mindfulness is about freeing yourself from regrets about the past and worries about the future.

Here are a few other ways of describing mindfulness:

- ◊ “Being present”
- ◊ “Awareness”
- ◊ “Awakening”
- ◊ “Seeing clearly”
- ◊ “Concentration plus attention”
- ◊ “Compassionate awareness”
- ◊ “Openheartedness”
- ◊ “Loving presence”

People in every culture around the world have recognized the wisdom of openhearted, present-moment awareness, whether or not they call it “mindfulness” for thousands of years. Everyone can be mindful. You have probably already experienced moments of natural mindfulness. Perhaps you’ve had times, without even trying to, when you were deeply aware of what you were doing; the only thing that mattered was the present moment – the past and the future seemed to disappear – and you were filled with gratitude for being alive. Maybe this happens foy you when you play sports. Or maybe you’ve experienced this kind of awareness when you play a musical instrument, when you pet your dog or cat gently, or when you listen to your favourite song. Whether you realize it or not in those moments, you already know how to be mindful. [4]

The Basics of Mindfulness Practice

Mindfulness helps us put some space between ourselves and our reactions, breaking down our conditioned responses. Here's how to tune into mindfulness throughout the day:

1. **Set aside some time.** You don't need any sort of special equipment to access mindfulness skills – but you do need to set aside some time and space.

2. **Observe the present moment as it is.** The aim of mindfulness is not quieting the mind, or attempting to achieve a state of eternal calm. The goal is simple: we're aiming to pay attention to the present moment, without judgement.

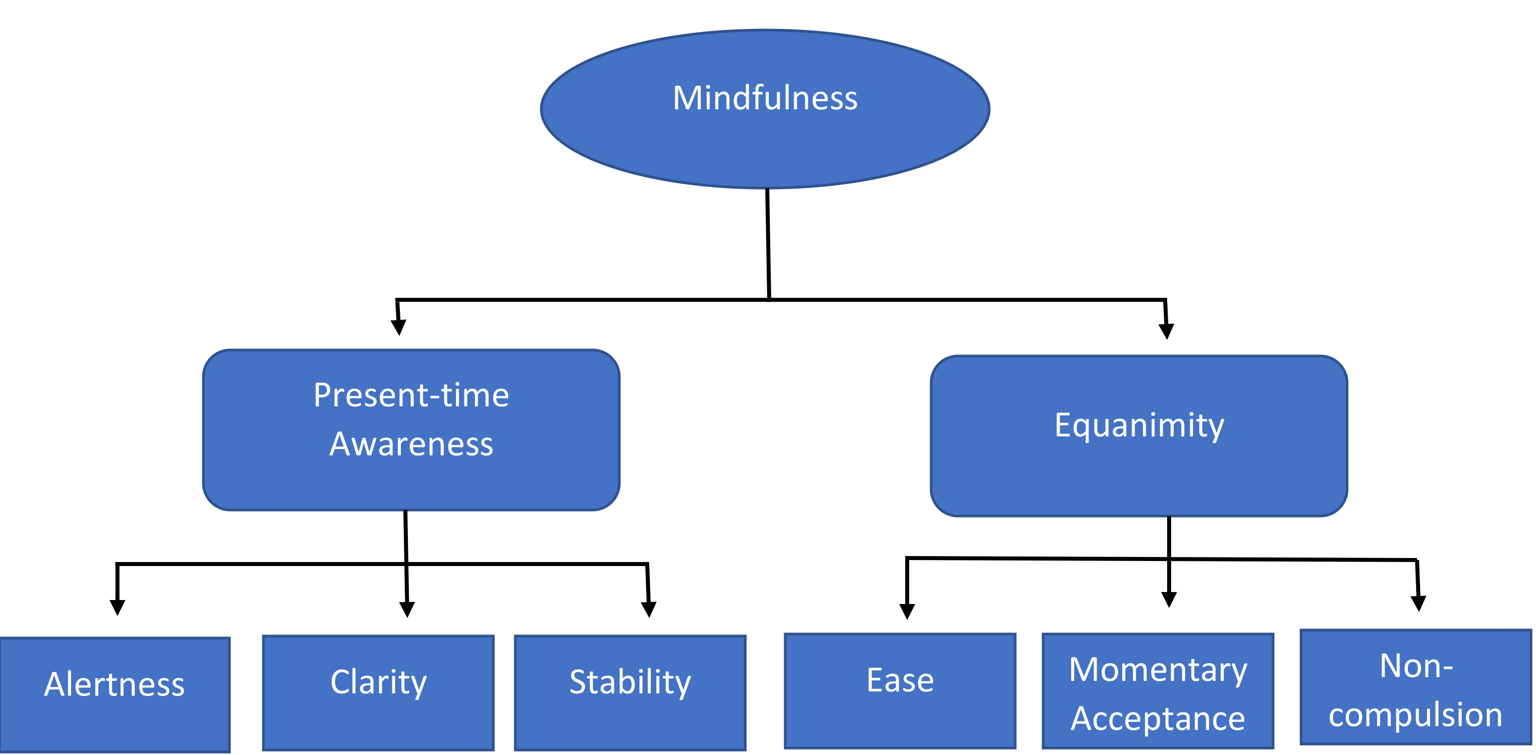
3. **Let your judgments roll by.** When we notice judgments arise during our practice, we can make a mental note of them and let them pass.

4. **Return to observing the present moment as it is.** Our minds often get carried away in thought. That's why mindfulness is the practice of returning, again and again, to the present moment.

5. **Be kind to your wandering mind.** Don't judge yourself for whatever thoughts crop up, just practice recognizing when your mind has wandered off, and gently bring it back. [5]

Mindfulness can be considered a *state*, a *trait,* or a *practice.* We can have a moment of mindfulness (*state*) and also have a habitual tendency of mindfulness (*trait*). We can do the intentional formal *practice* of mindfulness using different postures and activities: seated mindfulness, mindful walking, or mindful eating, for example. The formal practice of mindfulness leads to more moments of mindfulness and ultimately improved trait-level mindfulness. Higher trait-level mindfulness means that we're more mindful even when we're not consciously *trying* to be mindful. This is critically important: You are learning to create a healthy *habit* of mindfulness.

Below is a diagram that highlights two components of mindfulness" present-time awareness and equanimity. Equanimity can be defined as a sense of psychological-emotional balance where there is no compulsion to act out our preferences. [6]



The Benefits of Daily Mindfulness Practice

Daily mindfulness practice can literally change the brain, in ways that researchers can see on MRI brain scans. Daily mindfulness practice can actually “rewire” your brain, strengthening the connections between your human brain and your lizard brain and making you more resilient when faced with stress. It’s almost like doing brain surgery, but without the surgery.

You could also think of regular mindfulness practice as kind of like going to the gym and working out often. If you went to the gym and lifted weights just once, what do you think would happen? Maybe your muscles would be sore for a day or two, but you probably wouldn’t notice any increase in muscle size or strength. If you went to the gym and lifted weights every day, on the other hand, what would happen? You would find that your muscles got bigger and stronger, whether that was your intention or not.

Practicing mindfulness every day is like working out your “mindfulness muscle.” The more you practice, the stronger that “muscle” gets, whether or not you realize it right away. The more you meditate, the better your ability to handle stress and difficulty will be, and the more confidence you will have in that ability.

This does not mean you have to sit and meditate for an hour every day. In fact, mindfulness practice is probably most helpful in small, but frequent, doses. It’s like brushing your teeth at least twice a day – you spend just a few minutes every day on dental hygiene, for the sake of your dental health. Daily mindfulness practice is like “mental hygiene” for the sake of your mental health.

So, you are invited to give mindfulness practice a try for just a few minutes every day. You may have the thought that meditation is stupid or is never going to work for you – alternatively, you may think meditation is great or is going to solve all your problems. Regardless of how you feel about it now, just let go of all your expectations and treat meditation as an experiment, with an attitude of a beginner’s mind.

It’s recommended that you meditate at the same time every day. You can start with just three to five minutes of mindful and breathing, for instance. A good time for you to meditate might be in the morning, before you brush your teeth. Or, it might be at night, before you go to bed. Keep it up every day, even if it feels weird or boring, just to see what happens.

Just as you shouldn’t wait until you have a cavity to start brushing your teeth, you shouldn’t wait until you’re stressed to start meditating. With just a few minutes of daily mindfulness practice, you can help your body start to heal from stress and build resilience. Give it a try and see what happens. [7]

5

Stress, Health and Coping

If you had to, how would you define "stress"? Here are some examples:

"Feeling really worried about something"
"Being overwhelmed by stuff"
"When there's too much going on and I can't deal with it"
"Feeling so frustrated that I want to scream"

Stress arises in response to a challenging situation in your life, and it can be really difficult to handle. But knowledge is power: once you understand what stress does to your body and your mind, you will be empowered to handle more of it effectively.

6

The "Fight, Flight or Freeze" Response

Your body and your mind are amazing. Believe it or not, it's actually a good thing that you are able to experience stress. It sounds a little weird. Stress feels really uncomfortable – so how could it possibly be a good thing?

Your body's stress response is designed to help you survive danger. And it's really good at helping you survive the kinds of dangers – like being attacked by a tiger – that threatened your ancestor's survival a thousand years ago. The stress response is also called the "fight, flight, or freeze" response, which tells you a lot about how it works. If you were being attacked by a tiger, your stress response would help you fight back more strongly ("fight"), run away more quickly ("flight"), or hide more quietly or play dead more convincingly ("freeze"). [8]

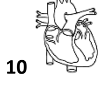
7

8

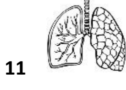
9

The Stress Response in Your Body

Let's say you're in the wilderness somewhere, when suddenly a tiger appears close by. As soon as you see the tiger, your brain sends signals to different parts of your body through adrenaline. These signals have an immediate and powerful effect throughout your entire body.



[10] **Your Heart.** Your heart starts racing – beating faster and pumping blood harder. This provides more blood to the muscles in your body, which will help you fight back with more strength or run away more quickly.



[11] **Your Lungs.** Your breath gets quicker and shallower, to supply more oxygen to your heart and the other muscles.

[12] **Your Muscles.** Your leg muscles get tense, ready to run away. Your arm muscles get tense, ready to fight. The muscles around your neck, shoulders, and face also tense up, to help you be more alert.

[13] **Your stomach and intestines.** In fight, flight or freeze mode, most of your blood is directed to your hearts, lungs, and muscles. At the same time, your intestines squeeze and empty, as blood rushes away from them. Different people experience this is different ways. Maybe you've heard of expressions like "I was so scared I pooped my pants," "That made me want to throw up" or "I got butterflies in my stomach."

Everyone experiences the fight, flight or freeze response a little differently. How about you? Have you ever noticed the stress response happening in your own body when you've been stressed, scared, or anxious? In these moments, have you felt your own heart racing, felt your breathing speed up, felt your muscles get tense, or felt a sick feeling in your stomach? [9]

"Paper Tigers"

If you were really being attacked by a tiger, your stress response would help you survive. Probably, though, most of the stress in your life come from things like school, your relationships, your parents, and conflict with other teens or adults.

The problem is sometimes your body and mind can't tell the difference between real danger – actual threats to your life, like tigers – and other types of dangers you perceive. An exam at school or an argument with your mom can active your stress response just as if you were being attacked by a tiger. In other words, whether you

are facing a real tiger or a "paper tiger" your brain and body react in almost the exact same way. Even worried and negative thinking – tigers in your mind – can trigger your fight, flight, or freeze response.

14

Acute vs. Chronic Stress

A little bit of stress can be good for you – it can help you be more alert, focus, have more energy, and perform better. The problem is when your stress level gets too high or stays high for too long. Chronic stress can lead to serious mental health problems such as depression, in which your mood and energy get so low that your life is dragging down; or it can lead to anxiety, filling your days with worries, nervousness, and panic. Because of the way the brain and body are connected, chronic stress also affects almost every organ in your body. It can lead to headaches, digestive problems, muscle pain, fatigue, difficulty sleeping, and many other health problems. So, it's crucial for your health that you learn effective ways of handling stress. [10]

Positive and Negative Coping

Stress makes you feel very uncomfortable. Whenever you are feeling stressed, you naturally want to do something to try to help yourself feel better. There are generally two different ways that you can respond to stress: positive and negative coping.

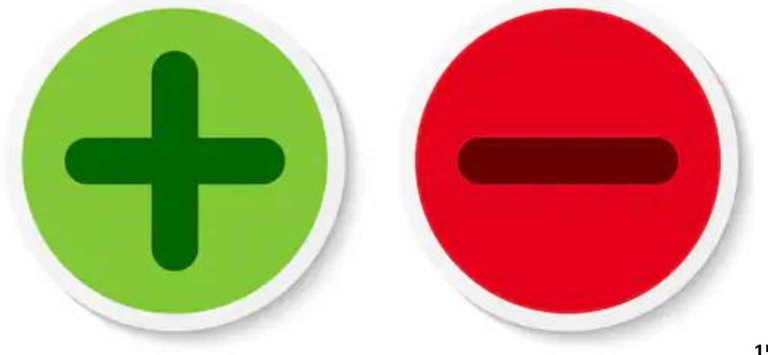
Negative coping behaviours are attempts to escape or cover up stress in ways that might be harmful to yourself or to someone else. Can you think of some examples or negative coping behaviours in teens? How about smoking, getting drunk or getting high, fighting or yelling, running away, skipping school, engaging in

self-harm (like cutting yourself), video game and Internet addiction, or starving yourself (anorexia) or making yourself throw up (bulimia)?

These behaviours are not called “negative” because they don’t work. In fact, sometimes these strategies do work. If you’re stressed out and you try one of these negative coping behaviours, you might start to feel better very quickly, at least for a moment. The problem is, in the long term, there’s a good chance that you’ll end up creating an even more stressful situation. For example, you might get into trouble, damage a friendship or relationship, get kicked out of school, or even end up in the hospital. Negative coping leads to more stress, and it harms you and the people around you.

On the other hand, positive coping also helps you handle stress, but in ways that are more healthy. Can you think of some examples of positive coping that you use or know about? How about going for a walk, talking to a trusted friend or adult, listening to relaxing music, exercising, or having a healthy snack? Practicing mindfulness is also an example of positive coping.

Usually when you choose negative coping, it is a sign that your lizard brain is activated. If you can access the clear thinking and wisdom of your human brain when you are stressed, you will be more likely to choose a positive coping strategy. Another difference between positive and negative coping is that positive coping strategies may not help you right away. They may take some time and practice. But it’s worth it. After you learn and use positive coping strategies, you’ll feel better for longer, and you won’t end up causing yourself more stress. [11]



15

Exercise: Be Mindful of Your Stress Response

Next time you are worried, stressed out, or overwhelmed, take a few minutes just to tune into your body and your mind, to see what your own stress response is like. Tune into your heartbeat. Do you feel your heartbeat getting faster, your heart pounding in your chest? Tune in to your breath: is it getting faster, shallower? Check in with the muscles in your arms, back, and neck: are they getting tight and tense? What about your stomach, is it feeling sore or sick?

At the same time, take a moment to check in with your thoughts and feelings. Are negative thoughts, worries and fear flooding your mind? Is your lizard brain activated?

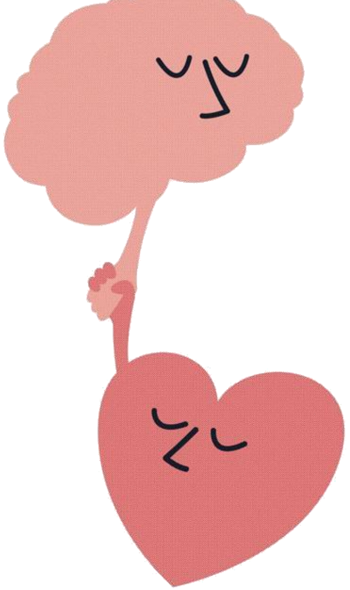
Just being aware of your stress response creates a moment of awareness and a moment of mindfulness. You can say silently to yourself, *I know that my lizard brain is activated right now; I'm going to take a break and go chill somewhere for a few minutes.* Take some long, deep breaths, and see whether this allows your human brain to come back online. [12]

Stress: Mind and Compassion

In the past, perhaps you have tried to run away from stress. Trying to deal with stress by running away from it works only up to a point and often makes things worse in the end. Yet paying attention to your stress can feel even *more* stressful, if you don't know how to handle your stress wisely. That's where "the mindful spirit" comes in. Mindfulness isn't just about paying attention – it's about paying attention *in a different way.* With the mindful spirit, mindfulness takes on the power to heal and transform stress.

By tapping into the healing powers of your heart as well as your mind, you can learn to simply breathe while being aware of your stress, instead of running away from it. Only once you can stay with your stress in this way and "hold it gently"- inviting your mindful spirit to help you stay present and take care of your stress – will you have a chance to heal it and to free yourself from it.

You don't have to let stress make you into a victim. What you do and how you think can transform the stress response in your body and mind. You have a lot of power and strength to manage your stress response in a healthy way, in a way that is better for you and for the people around you. Mindfulness practice is a powerful way of reengaging your human brain and handling stress with more wisdom. [13]



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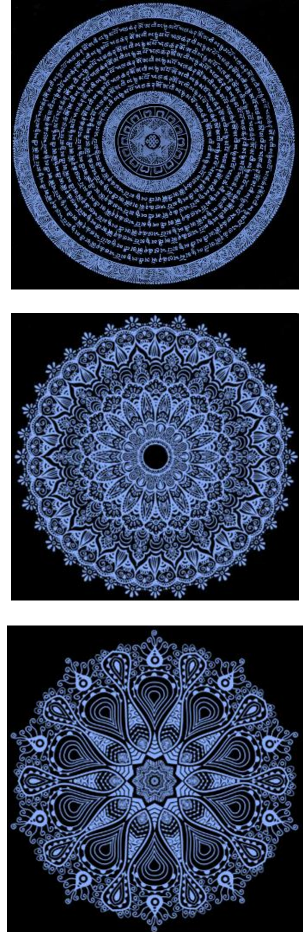
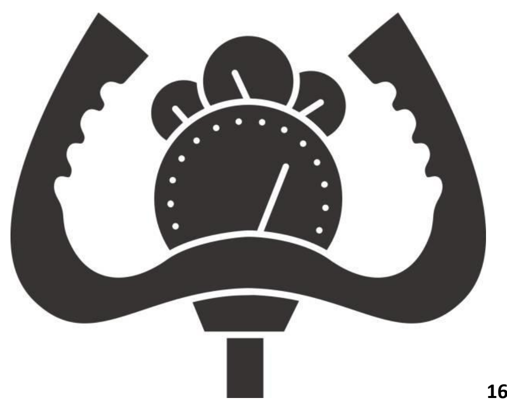
Unit 2:
Self-Awareness and Mindfulness Basics





16

Shift out of Autopilot

Have you ever been so preoccupied that you weren't consciously aware of what you were actually doing? For example, have you ever walked from one class to another, and found by that time you arrived you didn't even remember how you got there? Maybe you were busy checking your phone, or rushing just to get there on time, or thinking about what you needed to do later. And suddenly you "woke up" and realized where you were.

Perhaps you go through much of your life as if in a dream, mindlessly, without awareness. Your body may be in one place, and your mind may be somewhere else. We can call this being on "autopilot," as if you are cruising through life automatically, robotically. We all have a strong tendency to let our autopilot take over as we go through our daily lives.

Any time you are going through life on autopilot, you might take for granted all kinds of seemingly "ordinary" experiences. If you can shift out of autopilot and into a deep-present-moment awareness, you can discover how *extraordinary* every moment of life can be. If you can be fully present, you can experience the miracle of being truly alive even while doing the simplest of activities, such as eating a raisin. [14]

Exercise: Eat a Raisin Mindfully

*You can do this mindfulness practice using the instructions below or with the help of the recording (track 1) available at http://www.newharbinger.com/*30802 *(after creating a username and password).*

Start by placing a single raisin on a table or plate in front of you. (If you are allergic to raisins, or if you don't have any raisin's handy, you can substitute some other food that is easily available and that you have eaten before, like an orange slice, a peanut or piece of chocolate.)

Perhaps you have certain ideas about what a raisin is, what a raisin looks like or what a raisin tastes like. Perhaps you like raisins, or perhaps you don't. For now, put all your ideas and expectations about raisins aside. For now, simply experience and explore the raisin as if you have never encountered a raisin before. Imagine that you're an alien and you've just arrived on Earth. You are very curious to explore new things about Earth, and today is your chance to find out what a raisin is all about. You are going to explore this raisin with all your senses. You are going to be really curious about this particular, individual raisin in great detail and try to get to know it.

Before you do anything with the raisin, start by coming fully to the present moment. Tell yourself you have nothing else to do and nowhere to go right now. Take three breaths in and out. As best you can, just bring your full attention to the here and now.

Begin to inspect the raisin with your sense of sight. Hold the raisin up in your hand. Take a good, slow, long look at it. What do you notice about what this raisin looks like? What do you notice about its colour? Its texture? Does it look different depending on the angle or the light? Take your time looking at the raisin; there is no need to rush.

Now, examine the raisin with your sense of touch. Roll it between your thumb and your index finger, squeezing it gently, or rub it slowly. What do you notice? How does the raisin feel? Is it warm or cool? Firm or soft? Again, take your time examining the raisin in detail, with great curiosity.

If all this seems silly, that's okay. This is just an experiment. You can approach it with a sense of playfulness. Even though your mom and dad may have told you when you were little not to play with your food, for now it is okay.

Now, examine the raisin with your sense of smell. Hold it up to your nose, close your eyes, and gently breath in through your nostrils. What do you notice? Do you smell anything? Is it a faint smell, or a strong smell? Is it sweet, or it is bitter?

Next, examine the raisin with your sense of hearing. Hod the raisin up to one ear. Give it a gentle squeeze, or roll it between out thumb and your index finger. Do you hear anything? Remember, this is the first time you

have touched the raisin, so you don't know what to expect. Just be curious, and be open to whatever you experience, letting go of any expectations.

After listening to the raisin for a minute or two, place the raisin in your mouth., on the middle of your tongue. If you notice the urge to chew or swallow, try to just notice that urge, without acting on it right away. As the raisin sits on your tongue, roll it around your mouth, from front to back and side to side. What do you notice about the texture of the raisin as you roll it around in your mouth? Do you notice your mouth or body responding in any way to the presence of this raisin in your mouth? You can put this handbook down and close your eyes for a minute or two while you do this.

Now gently bite down on the raisin. Chew it very slowly, with purpose and care, paying close attention to every detail of taste, sensation, and texture as you chew. Take your time, slowly chewing the raisin until it dissolves. What does it taste like? What is happening to the texture, the consistency, of the raisin? You can put the handbook down for this part too and close your eyes as you chew the raisin.

If a thought like *I don't like raisins* or *This doesn't taste good* enters your mind, just notice you are having a judgement thought. Then, as best you can, bring your attention back to the pure sensory experience of the raisin in your mouth.

When the raisin is almost completely dissolved, go ahead and slowly – intentionally – swallow it. Notice what it feels like as the raisin goes down your throat, toward your stomach?

After the raisin is gone, pause and take a moment to thank yourself for eating a raisin mindfully. Thanking yourself is a way to practice self-compassion, which is an essential ingredient in mindfulness practice.

[17]

Perhaps you've eaten thousands of raisins. You might normally eat raisins on autopilot – just going through the motions, while your mind is somewhere else. When you take time to slow down and intentionally pay attention to something so simple, your experience can become richer, fuller, more alive – more flavourful.

You can shift out of autopilot and into present moment awareness while eating a raisin, while sitting quietly and focusing on your breath, or while doing almost any other activity. When you pay attention with curiosity and openhearted awareness, you will begin to free yourself from your own judgements and expectations. You will experience life just *as it is*, moment to moment. This can be profoundly liberating, helping you free yourself from stress.[15]

Breathing Mindfully

We know you know to breathe, but you probably don't know how useful this skill can be for reducing stress. In this unit, this handbook will tell you how to use your breathe in a new way; as an anchor. Think of a ship in an ocean harbor. The ocean is rough and the wind is howling. What keeps the ship from being pulled out of the harbor and lost at sea? An anchor. When a ship drops anchor, it remains in place even in powerful storms.

This handbook will teach you a way of breathing called mindful breathing. It will help you in all sorts of situations. When you notice yourself getting caught up in your thoughts or feelings, mindful breathing can help you find a solid base again. It won't make your thoughts or feelings go away, and that wouldn't be the goal anyway. You need to learn to live – and thrive – with your thoughts and feelings. Mindful breathing will help you stand firm when you feel besieged by storms, whether the storm is inside your body or out in the world. It helps you pause and respond thoughtfully, rather than reacting mindlessly. When you focus on your breath, you can center yourself and find a calm space to decide how you want to live. With practice, you'll find an inner stillness that will allow you to be more flexible in how you handle challenges.

[18]

Step 1: Notice Your Breath [19]

Start by just noticing how you're breathing right now. Place one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly. Relax your hands in these positions and observe your breath for a moment. Is the hand on your belly rising when you breath in, or is the hand on your chest rising? Or maybe it's a bit of both.

We're guessing that you'll find the hand on your chest is moving more. Most people tend to breathe into their chest. This is normal. What you're about to learn is something slightly different: breathing into your belly.

Step 2: Fill the Balloon [20]

Keep your hands in the same position and be sure that you're sitting upright. Now we're going to ask you to use your imagination to do something a bit unusual. We want you to imagine that you have a balloon in your belly. When you breath in, the balloon in your belly inflates and gets bigger and this makes your belly rise. And when you breathe out, the balloon gets smaller; it deflates, and your belly goes down.

When you breathe this way, the hand on your chest shouldn't move very much. It may take some time to get used to breathing this way. You may need to practice, since this is probably different from the way you've been breathing. Just stay with it and keep observing your breath. As you breathe in, the balloon inflates and gets bigger. As you breathe out, the balloon deflates and gets smaller.

Don't feel bad if you have trouble staying focused on your breath. That happens to everybody. Counting as you breathe may help. When you inhale, think, *In, two, three.* Then, when you exhale, think, *Out, two, three.*

Practice breathing this way for at least a minute. After a minute, you might still feel like your emotions are trying to push you around. If so, you can practice deep breathing for three minutes or even a bit longer.

Step 3: Practice [21]

Now you just need to practice. To get really good at this skill, you need to practice it at least a few times each week. We recommend that you practice for a few minutes each time and that you practice every day. If you practice when things are calm, you'll find it easier to breathe this way when times get tough.

The beauty of mindful breathing is that you can practice it anywhere, anytime. If you're waiting for the bus, think about the balloon expanding in your belly when you breath in and deflating when you breath out. Likewise, when you're sitting in class or listening to music, use it as an opportunity to take a few mindful breaths.

Plus, this kind of deep breathing is the foundation for many other exercises that will help you become more mindful, or curious and connected to the present moment.

Any time you feel angry, afraid, stressed or upset, remember to take a few mindful breaths. You'll be amazed at how effective it is at helping you calm down. It's one of the best skills you can have. [16]

Breathing: The Heart of Mindfulness

You breathe in and out about twenty thousand times a day. How many of those breaths are you consciously aware of? How many of those breaths do you really enjoy? If you are like most people, the answer is "not many." The foundation of all mindfulness practice is to bring your awareness to your breath. This is also known as "coming back to your breath." Your breath is a wonderful gift that brings your mind and body together in the here and now. You can start to bring yourself back to the present moment, and begin to free yourself from stress, with as few as three mindfulness breaths. Right here. Right now. Give it a try.

22

Exercise: Mindful Breathing

You can do this mindfulness practice using the instructions below or with the help of the recording (track 2) available at http://www.newharbinger.com/30802. (after creating a username and password). It's recommended that you start by following along with the recording a few times. Then, try guiding yourself through the practice, without the recording, just to see what that's like.

First stop. Stop whatever you are doing, or whatever it is that you were about to do, and simply allow yourself to be "here," without needing to do anything.

Next, simply bring your attention to your breath, just as it is, in the here and now. You don't need to make your breath any different than it naturally is. You don't need to make it slower or deeper. Just bring your attention to

your natural breath, with an attitude of curiosity and kindness. Notice the movement of the air as you breath in, inhaling oxygen and as you breath out, exhaling carbon dioxide.

Experiment with saying silently to yourself as you breath in and out. *Breathing in, I know that I am breathing in. Breathing out, I know I am breathing out.* [8] Or, you can shorten it to *In. Out.*

Pay careful attention to your breath, following it as you breath in and out. Notice the beginning of your in-breath. Follow your in-breath from the beginning, to the middle, all the way to the end. Then notice the pause

between your in-breath and your out-breath. Follow your out-breath from the beginning, to the middle, all the way to the end.

You might want to imagine that you are floating in the ocean and each breath is a wave passing beneath you. Each in-breath lifts you up, and each out-breath sets you back down. Just float gently on the waves of your breath. It might also help to focus on the part of your body where you notice your breath most easily, like your nose – where you can feel the air going in and out – or your belly, which expands and contracts with each breath.

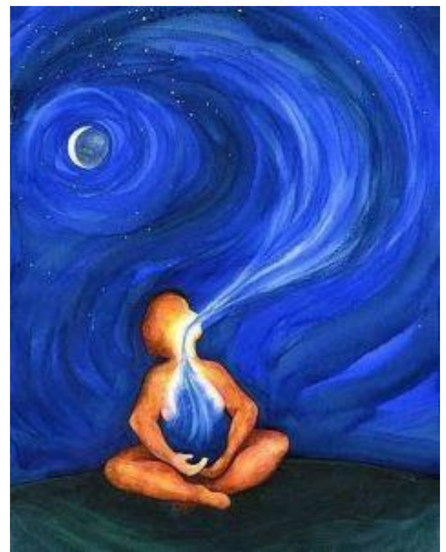
Following your breath doesn’t have to feel like work. Breathing mindfully can be relaxing and enjoyable. If your breath feels good, simply enjoy the sensation and smile.

If your mind wanders or if you get distracted, that’s okay. That’s what minds do. Don’t judge yourself as having done something “wrong.” You can just notice and gently say to yourself, *Oh, my mind has wandered off,* and perhaps be curious about where your mind wandered off to. Then gently bring your attention back to the next breath.

You can breathe mindfully like this for three breaths, nine breaths or, if you have time, two or three minutes.

What was it like to pay attention to your breath? What was it like to come back to the present moment? Did you notice anything interesting or surprising?

You can take some time to do mindful breathing any time of day, anywhere. After breathing mindfully for a few breaths or a few minutes, continue to go about your day, more connected to the present moment. See whether coming back to your breath changes your day in any way. Your breath is always there for you, to keep you alive and nourish your body and your mind. [17]



23

Everyday Mindfulness: Freedom Wherever You Are

You might be thinking, *I'm too busy – when am I supposed to find time for that?* The good news is even if you can't set aside any time specifically for mindfulness, the joy of mindfulness is available to you in every moment of every day, in any activity that you are doing.

Informal Mindfulness: Don't Wait – Meditate

Informal mindfulness involves bringing mindful awareness into everyday, routine activities that you already do. Being mindful as you simply go about your day can be a source of joy as well as stress relief. Any time you are sitting, you can follow your breath, smile and come home to the present moment. You can practice doing this while sitting in the classroom. You can also bring this same mindful awareness to any other kind of activity of daily life. You can touch the present moment deeply as you brush your teeth in the morning. You can let go of stress by being mindful as you put on your clothes, tie your shoes, or walk to class.

Perhaps you have a tendency to try to do two, three, or even four things at the same time. For example, you might be used to checking your cell phone while eating, or you might have a habit of texting while walking. Although it may seem very efficient to do multiple things at once, in reality, such multitasking usually doesn't help people be more productive. Instead, it mostly just adds to their stress. Informal mindfulness is all about doing just one thing at a time, with full awareness. [18]

Exercise: Mindfully STOPping and Informal Mindfulness

Here are some examples of daily activities that can become mindfulness practices:

◊ Brushing your teeth

◊ Walking to class

◊ Getting dressed in the morning

◊ Walking your dog or petting your cat

◊ Cleaning your room

◊ Exercising or playing sports

◊ Playing a musical instrument

◊ Drawing or painting

Can you think of some more?

The first step, before doing this activity, is the mindful STOP practice.

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S: Stop whatever you are doing. If you were about to start a new activity, just pause for moment instead.

T: Take three mindful breaths.

O: Observe what is happening around you in the present moment. Check in with yourself as well: What is happening inside of you right now?

P: Proceed mindfully with whatever it was you were doing or were about to do.

After mindfully STOPping, proceed with the activity as if it is the most important thing in the world, with great curiosity and care. As you do the activity, tune in to your senses. What does this thing that you are doing look like? What does it smell like? What does it sound like? What does it feel like?

You don't need to rush to get whatever it is you're doing done. You don't need to do three things at once. Let go of all that extra stress. Doing just this one thing, with mindfulness, is enough. If you are walking, just walk. If you are eating, just eat. If you are brushing your teeth, just brush – instead of trying to get it done quickly so that you can move on to something else, invest 100 percent of your efforts in brushing your teeth.

As best you can, keep your full attention on what you are doing. Continue to breath mindfully. Every time your mind wanders, simply notice: *Where did my mind just go?* Whenever stress arises – for example, when you start to think about all the things that you need to do or wish you had done – just come back to your breath. Don't judge yourself if your mind is wandering; you're not doing anything wrong. Remember, noticing that your mind wandered marks the moment of mindfulness. STOP, taking three more breaths. Return to the present moment, over and over again.

You can say a few guiding words silently to yourself to help you stay present. For example, if you are walking to class or to the bus stop, you can say to yourself, *Breathing in, I know that I am walking. Breathing out, I smile. Walking… Smiling…*

How is this experience different from your normal way of doing things? Do you notice anything interesting about this daily activity that you might not have noticed before? How might paying attention to everyday activities in this way help you be less stressed and more resilient? [19]

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Mindful Walking

You walk all the time – for example, to and from school or the bus stop and from class to class. But, how often are you truly present with each step as you walk? Perhaps most of the time you are lost in thought, thinking about where you are going instead of where you are at the moment. And by the time you get there, maybe you're already thinking about the next place you will go or the next thing you will do. You put a destination in front of you and chase after it, never truly arriving.

Walking meditation is a radically different way of walking. It involves shifting out of autopilot and walking just for the sake of walking. Rather than focusing on where you are trying to go, bring your awareness to the act of walking itself. You don't even need a destination – you can walk in circles if you want to. When you walk mindfully, you arrive in the present moment with every step, becoming deeply in touch with life in the here and now. Your path becomes a mindful journey. Your steps are in harmony with your breath, and your body begins to feel more relaxed and at ease.

Walking meditation can be a formal meditation or an informal one. In formal walking meditation, you walk slowly and with great care, not going anywhere in particular. With informal waling meditation, you practice any time you walk anywhere, such as when you walk to school, to the bus stop, or from one room of your house to another. With each step, you will strengthen your mindfulness muscle and find more mental balance, freedom and resilience. Each step will nourish your mindfulness and resilience, helping you let go of the past.[20]

Exercise: Mindful Meditation

You can do this formal walking meditation using the instructions below or with the help of the recording (track 6) available at http://www.newharbinger.com/30802 (after creating a username and password).

Formal Walking Meditation

For this practice, you can walk around in a circle in your living room or another room of your house. You can also try walking around your yard, around the block, on a nearby trail, or in the park.

Before you start walking, stand tall like a mountain. Breathe mindfully in and out three times, establishing yourself 100 percent in the present moment. Breathing in mindfully, take one step. Breathing out mindfully, take the next step. Walk slowly, continuing to synchronize your breath with your steps. Notice how your feet

feel as they touch the ground. Notice how it feels for your body to be in motion and moving through your environment. If this practice feels awkward or weird, just notice that too. Every time your mind wanders, or

every time stress arises, simply breathe and smile. Bring your complete attention back to the next step, the next breath, arriving again in the present moment.

You can silently recite a simple verse as you walk, to help yourself stay present. Say one phrase silently with each step and each breath: *I have arrived. I am home. In the here. In the now. Arrived… Home… Here… Now…*

Informal Walking Meditation

Practice walking mindfully as you go to school, whenever you go up or down a flight of stairs, as you walk to the bus stop, or as you walk around your house. You'll probably need to walk more quickly than you would during formal walking meditation, but you can still do it with the same mindful awareness. Continue to synchronize your breath with your steps, experimenting with the rhythm. You may find that your in-breath is naturally a bit shorter than your out-breath. For example, you might take two steps with each in-breath and three steps with each out-breath.

Instead of getting lost in thought as you walk, intentionally notice your surroundings. Notice the fresh air, the sunrise, the people, the plants, or the animals. Appreciate the wonders of life that you might take for granted if you were in autopilot mode.

Daily Walking Meditation

Experiment with this practice in the spirit of beginner's mind, as if you were relearning how to walk. Start with slow, formal walking meditation. Then, experiment with informal walking meditation as you go about your daily life. Go on a mindful hike on the beach or through a park. Practice walking meditation when you are feeling stressed, perhaps imagining that you are letting go of a little bit of stress every time you put your front foot down onto the ground. See what you can discover about your steps, your breath, and your inner resilience. [21]

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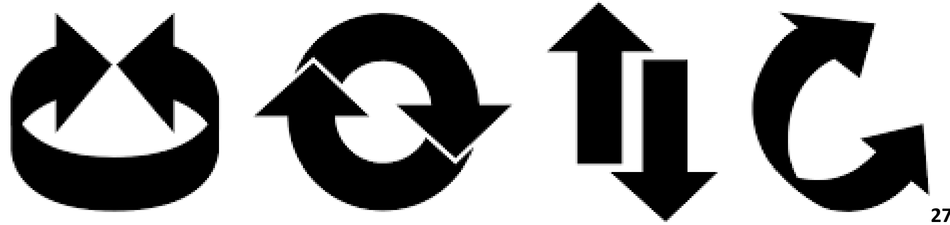
Mindful Movement

Mindful movement is a practice of moving your body slowly, intentionally, with deep care and attention to what is happening in the present moment. It is a lot like yoga or tai chi, except your specific postures or movements don't matter that much. You're not necessarily "exercising" or trying to get a stretch or a workout. You're not competing with anyone, even yourself. In this practice, exactly what you do with your body doesn't really matter. What's important is to simply be fully present with your body, with your movements, and with your breath.



[27]

Exercise: Mindful Movement

You can do this mindfulness practice using the instructions below or with the help of the recording (track 7) available at http://www.harbinger.com/30802 (after creating a username and password).

This is only an example of a sequence of movements that you can practice. If you already know a yoga or stretching routine, you can do that instead. You can even make up your own movements. What matters is that you bring mindful awareness to your body and move gently as you breathe in and out, honoring your intention to be present.

As you go through each movement, pay attention to the messages and sensations that arise in your body. Any time you notice stress or tension, bring special attention to that part of your body. Breathe deeply in and out through that part of your body, seeing whether that allows your body to release some stress or tension.

During mindful movement, it is important to listen to your body, especially if you have any health issues or injuries. If a particular movement causes you pain, do not force yourself to do it. Modify the movement so that it works for your body, or skip it entirely and just practice mindful standing or sitting instead.

1. **Standing like a mountain.** Stand with your feet about shoulder-width apart. Keep your knees slightly bent, and allow your shoulders to drop slightly. Lift the top of your head toward the sky. Notice what this feels like. Breathe mindfully three times, taking deeper breaths than you might naturally take.

2. **Roll your shoulders.** With the next breath in, in a slow, gentle motion, lift your shoulders up toward your ears. With the next breath out, slowly and gently roll your shoulders backward and down. Repeat, rolling your shoulders in sync with your breath, four times. Notice what your shoulders feel like.

3. **Roll your neck.** With the next breath out, gently bring your chin towards your chest, so that you are looking at the ground. With the next breath in, gently roll your neck to one side, bringing your ear toward your shoulder. With the next breath out, roll your neck back to the center, looking back down again. With the next breath in, roll your neck to the other side. Repeat, rolling your neck in sync with your breath, four times. Take a moment to check in – how does your neck feel right now? Are there any areas of tightness or tension, or does it feel loose and relaxed?

4. **Stretch your arms.** Breathing in, bring your arms straight out from your sides, palms up, all the way up and over your head. Breathing out, slowly lower your arms, palms facing down, in front of your chest and abdomen and then down to your sides. Repeat, making slow, gentle circles with your arms, in sync with your breath, four times. Allow the deep, cleansing breaths to wash through your body.

5. **Hang like a rag doll.** With the next breath out, bend forward. Instead of curving your back, try to allow your spine to lengthen just a tiny bit and bend at the waist. Bend your knees slightly. Allow your arms to dangle loosely. Maintaining this position, just breathe mindfully in and out five times, noticing what this position feels like for your body.

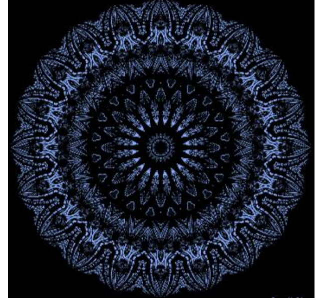
6. **Sit and bend forward.** Take a seat on the floor or on a chair, with your feet in front of you. With the next breath out, reach your hands out in front of you, toward your feet. If you are sitting on the floor, you can bend your knees slightly, if that's more comfortable. Again, allow your spine to lengthen just a tiny bit. Maintaining this gentle stretch, just breathe deeply in and out five times, noticing your breath and the sensations in your body.

7. **Twist.** Remain seated. With the next breath out, place your right hand on your left hip. Place your left hand behind your back, reaching toward your right hip. Look over your shoulder. Breath in and out. Try to lengthen your spine a little bit, twisting as you can. Continue to breathe like this, four more times. On the fifth breath out, come back to the center. Breath in deeply. Breath out, twisting to the other side, and hold for five more mindful breaths.

Experiment with practicing mindful movement just before you practice sitting meditation or the body scan. Or, practice one or two brief mindful movements any time your body feels stiff or tense – for example, after you have been sitting for a long time at your desk. Let go of any mental stresses as you come back to your body.

Practice mindful walking and mindful movement with the same care and attention that you would give to sitting meditation or the body scan. If sitting or lying still is very difficult for you, you may particularly enjoy these "moving meditations." Whether you are sitting or standing, moving or not moving, you can practice mindfulness to let go of stress any time and anywhere. [22]

Unit 3: Stress



Beginner's Mind

When you're a beginner, there's no pressure. There's no expectation of you being an "expert," to have any answers, or to know anything. For example, kindergarteners are not expected to know how to read, which allows them to explore the world of books with joy and curiosity. Being a beginner is incredibly freeing. It allows you to be curious and to know the joy of discovery.

Jason's Story

One day in class, we were about to have pizza. Before we started eating my teacher said" Let's eat this pizza with beginner's mind. Let's eat the pizza as if we've never eaten pizza before – as if it is a new experience, an opportunity to try something really different and interesting. Take your time, and see what you notice that you might not normally notice."

After we ate, my teacher asked the other students to share about the experience. Jason said, "I really love pizza. So I was tempted to just eat the pizza like I normally do, which means as fast as I can! But then I remembered what we talked about, slowing down and savoring it. So, I tried that. I was really surprised by it. I realized how many parts to the pizza there were. It wasn't just a piece of pizza. It was the crust, the cheese, the bell peppers, the mushrooms … I used to think that eating a piece of pizza was just all one thing, all lumped together. There was so much more to it than I had ever realized before. And it tastes so much better eating it this way!"

Jason learned how interesting the simple act of eating pizza can be. He had eaten pizza many times before, so he had assumed that he already knew what pizza was all about. But when he ate pizza with beginner's mind, he discovered some interesting, surprising things that he hadn't noticed before.

Perhaps you had a similar experience when you tried the "Eat a Raisin" exercise. Eating a raisin mindfully is also a practice of beginner's mind: You let go of your ideas about what a raisin is like and you simply experience eating that raisin wholeheartedly, using all your senses, with a childlike sense of wonder and curiosity. With beginner's mind, you experience each moment and each experience as if for the very first time. Whether you are doing something you do every day (like walking to the bus stop) or something special (like celebrating your best friend's birthday), that spirit of curiosity and openness can help every moment and every experience come alive. [23]

Exercise: The World Through a Child's Mind

You can learn a lot about mindfulness by closely observing young children. Take a moment to remember the last time you took a walk with a young child (for example, three or four years old). Maybe you were walking on the beach or through the forest. Or maybe you were walking down the sidewalk in your neighbourhood, to the park. Or perhaps you might remember what walking to the park or playing in a sandbox was like for you as a child.

What do you think that experience was like for that young child? What was it like for her or him just to walk and look around and explore the world? Did the child become fascinated by something as ordinary as a leaf, a tree, or a rock? Was the child delighted and entertained by the common sight of a bug on the ground or a cloud floating by?

When you were a young child, you naturally approached every experience with the same beginner's mind. That's because every experience – learning to walk, learning to talk, meeting new people – actually was new to you at that time.

I invite you to get back in touch with your own beginner's mind. Bring your beginner's mind to an activity that seems routine or boring, like eating pizza or walking to the bus stop. Reawaken your inner child and experience the joy, awe and wonder of seeing the world as though everything were new. [24]

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Self-Compassion

Some teens have a very hard time being kind towards themselves. Is that true for you? Do you sometime hear a negative and self-critical inner voice saying things like the following?

◊ "I'm not good enough"

◊ "I'm not smart enough"

◊ "Everyone's judging me"

◊ "It's all my fault"

If these kinds of self-judgmental thoughts are familiar to you, that's okay. We all have them sometimes. But believing these self-judgments as if they were true can cause an enormous amount of stress.

Self-compassion means being fully present and friendly with everything inside yourself, including all your thoughts, emotions, feelings. It means accepting yourself completely, with compassion, just as you are. Mindfulness is deeply nonviolent practice - there is no need to fight, reject or deny your own stress or difficulties. A meditation teacher once said, "We don't have to 'let go' of our suffering, our difficult thoughts, emotions or feelings. When we meet them with kindness, they let go of us." Meeting your stress with acceptance and self-compassion will allow you to soothe and calm your lizard brain, reducing your stress.

When you're feeling stressed, you may have a hard time believing that you deserve compassion. But you deserve to be loved just as much as anyone. In fact, you have to learn how to love yourself unconditionally before you can be a true friend to anyone else. A true friend knows everything about you – your strengths and your weaknesses – and sticks by you anyway, no matter what. Can you become your own best friend? [25]

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Exercise: Innate Mindfulness Qualities

In moments of stress, get in touch with your beginner's mind and self-compassion. First, simply recognize right away that stress is arising. That moment of recognition is a real awakening – a precious opportunity to stop, reengage your human brain and respond wisely.

Next, become fully present, in a mindful spirit. Once you consider a stressful situation with beginner's mind – with curiosity and openness – you might find that the situation is not exactly what you thought it was. Maybe that person didn't mean what you thought he or she meant, or maybe there is another way to look at this

conflict. Let go of your negative thoughts and judgements about how the situation “should” be and experience it just as it is. Practice smiling to the situation or to the other person. If you notice self-blame and self-judgement arising, remember to smile to yourself with self-compassion, becoming your own best friend. [26]

Just Sitting: Healing from Stress

Do you ever feel as if you’re constantly on the go, with barely any time to catch your breath, let alone relax? Do you seem to forever be rushing from school to home, from home to sports practice, from sports practice to work and from work to hanging out with friends or family? Is there always too much to do?

Being in “doing” mode all the time activates your stress response and your lizard brain. Allowing yourself some time just to “be” can be very healing. Sitting and meditating means just being yourself, in the present moment. Just sitting and “doing nothing” in this way can be a precious, wonderful gift to yourself. You can let go of your worries, all your thoughts about things that you “have” to do, and all your thoughts about the bad things that have happened to you in the past.

By just sitting, you switch from “doing” to “being.” You shift out of autopilot and give your brain and body a chance to rest. Your body is very wise – it already knows how to heal from stress.

Sitting like a Mountain

When we look at a mountain, we see how solid and stable it is, firmly rooted in the earth, as it rises toward the sky. We also notice its quiet dignity. The mountain doesn’t have to shout, “Hey, look at me!” The mountain just sits there, majestically.

You can be like that mountain. You can embody those qualities that we often see in a beautiful mountain – stability, quietude, dignity. You don’t need to do anything special. Just sit and be present with your breath and your body. [27]

[32]

Sitting and Breathing with Whatever Arises

Despite what you might have heard, meditation isn't something that requires a lot of effort. When you sit down to meditate, know that there is no problem for you to solve, nothing for you to fix. There is nothing much you need to do at all. You don't even need to try to get rid of stress or feel more relaxed. Just allow yourself to be, accepting yourself fully, just as you are, right now.

Once you sit down and start to pay attention to your own sensations, feelings and thoughts, perhaps you will find peace, relaxation and happiness. If just sitting and breathing feels good you can smile and enjoy it. If stress or pain arises, you don't have to push it away or "fix" it in any way. You can just sit with it, observing it with openness and curiosity and holding it gently for the moment. Your breath can be your "home base," your anchor. No matter how confused or lost you feel, your breath is always there for you. You can practice sitting meditation anytime, anywhere, whether you're feeling calm or stressed. Whatever storm is raging inside of you, you can breathe with it, touching some peace with each breath.

Sometimes, when difficult feelings or thoughts are present, it may seem too hard for you to sit still. That's okay. You'll learn other ways to handle difficulty – ones that don't involve sitting still – later in this handbook. That said, sitting meditation is still a great foundation for other mindfulness strategies, so please experiment with it, with a spirit of openness and curiosity. [28]

[33]

Exercise: Sitting Meditation

You can do this mindfulness practice using the instructions below or with the help of the recording (track 3) available at http://www.newharbinger.com/30802 (after creating a username and password). It's recommended that you start by following along with the recording a few times. Then, try it without the recording, guiding yourself with your own inner voice. If you will be practicing without the aid of the recording, you may wish to set a timer (perhaps on your phone) for three minutes, or five minutes, or ten minutes – however long you wish to meditate.

First, find a place to sit. A quiet room or corner should work well. If there is noise or if there are people nearby that's okay too. You might ask the people around you to not disturb you, if you can. You may also wish to turn off your phone and any other electronics.

If you are sitting on a chair, allow your sit bones to connect firmly with the chair, and your feet to rest flat on the floor. If you are sitting on the floor, use a cushion or pillow that is tall enough and firm enough to provide good support. You can kneel on the cushion, with your knees bent in front of you (with your sit bones resting on your heels). Or you can sit with your legs crossed. Find a comfortable position in which your body feels at ease.

Maintain an upright but relaxed position. Imagine yourself as a mountain, tall and dignified, in a quiet and relaxed kind of way. Your upper body should be straight, but not stiff. Experiment with leaning forward and backward a tiny bit and also side to side, until you find your body's natural upright position, in which your spine supports the weight of your body and your body holds itself up.

If you feel comfortable closing your eyes, go ahead and close your eyes. If you would rather keep your eyes open, that's okay too. Just gaze softly (without focusing on anything in particular) at the floor in front of you.

Tell yourself that for however long you have chosen to meditate, you have nowhere to go and nothing else to do. You can let go of the past; you can let go of the future. Allow yourself to just be fully present right here and now.

Become aware of your body in the sitting position. Bring your awareness to your feet touching the floor and the chair beneath you (if you are in a chair). How does your upper body feel? Are you slouching, or are you sitting upright? How do your head and neck feel? You don't need to sit perfectly still, like a statue. Simply notice what is happening with an attitude of friendliness toward your body, and make any adjustments that are appropriate for your body in this moment.

Bring your awareness to your breath going in and out of your body. Just notice your breath doing what it does naturally – don't try to change it or control it.

Breathe in. Follow your in-breath from the beginning, to the middle, to the end.

Breathe out. Follow your out-breath from the beginning, to the middle, to the end.

Hold in your awareness whatever arises. You might experience difficult thoughts, uncomfortable sensations, or negative emotions. You don't need to change anything to try and force this experience of meditation to be a certain way. Whatever it is you are experiencing, as best you can, just notice it. Allow it to be there, with an attitude of kindness and curiosity.

If you find yourself becoming distracted or overwhelmed, or lost or confused, that's okay. It isn't possible for anyone to keep his or her awareness on the breath 100 percent of the time. Noticing that your mind wandered is in fact a good thing, because it means that you are mindful of "mind-wandering." So simply notice whenever your mind has wandered and then gently bring your attention back to your breath. Any time you feel lost or confused, just bring your attention back to your breath. *Breathing in, I know that I am breathing in. Breathing out, I know that I am breathing out. In … Out…*

Notice what happens now that you are intentionally stopped, sitting still and doing nothing. If it feels pleasant, can you just appreciate and enjoy that, without clinging to that feeling? If it feels awkward or boring or weird, can you just notice that and keep doing nothing?

You don't need to try too hard with this practice. You don't need to try to have a certain experience, accomplish or achieve anything in particular, or change the way that you feel. Whatever you are experiencing – whatever this meditation is like for you – is okay.

As best you can, invite an attitude of self-compassion to your meditation practice. Sitting meditation is not a chore or punishment and it doesn't need to hurt. If you notice your feet are falling asleep, your leg is tingling or other parts of your body are beginning to hurt, try just paying attention to that sensation for three breaths,

continuing to smile. Then, if you need to move or adjust your position, do it slowly, with careful attention, continuing to follow your in-breath and your out-breath. If you need to get up, stretch, or walk around mindfully, that's okay too.

When the timer goes off or when you wish to end the meditation, open your eyes if they were closed. Take a moment to stretch, shake out your body and massage your arms or legs if they feel stiff. Thank yourself for taking the time to take good care of your body and mind with mindfulness and compassion. [29]

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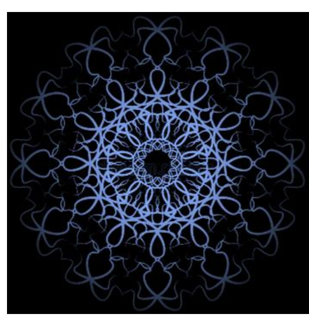
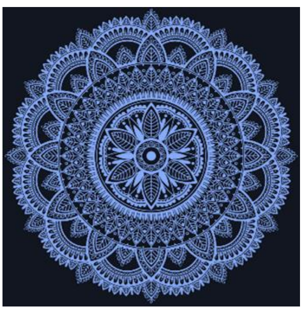
Unit 4: Physiological – How your body responds

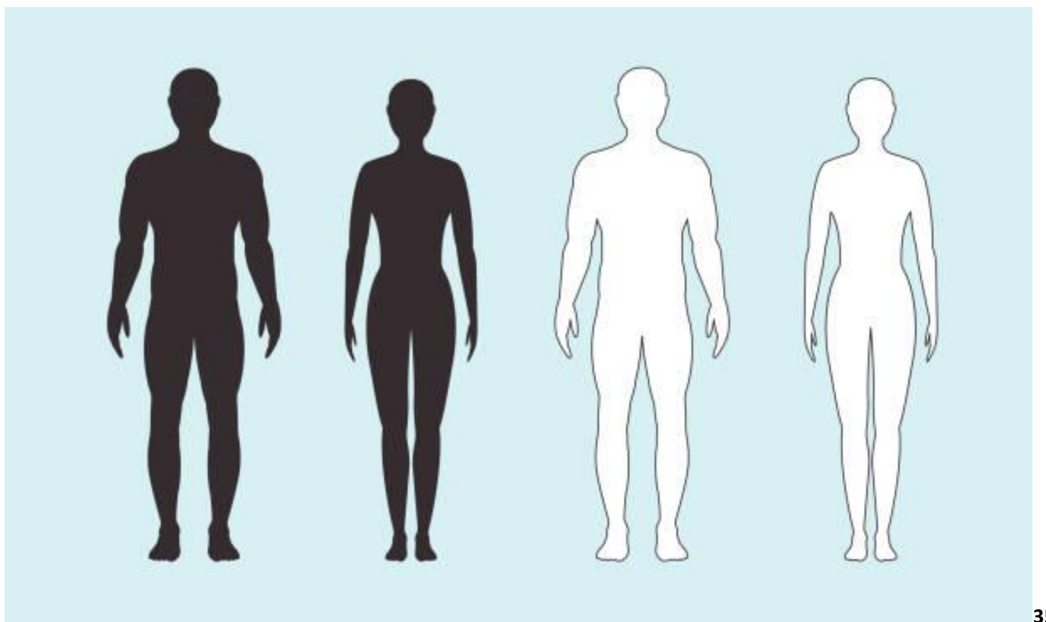




Caring for Your Body

Stress doesn't just affect your mind – it affects your body. Whenever you are stressed, your body becomes tense. You might experience that stress in the form of a "tension headache," a "gut feeling," an aching in your shoulders, a pain in your back, or problems eating or sleeping. Bringing mindfulness and self-compassion to your body can help you release and heal from the stress that lives in your body. Since your body and mind are deeply connected, releasing stress in your body will also release stress in your mind.

Our bodies carry so much wisdom. The sensations you feel in your body are important messages about your health, your stress levels and your relationships. For example, you might find your heart feels lighter in the presence of someone you love. On the other hand, an ache in your stomach might be a sign of stress or anxiety about something going on in your life. Even basic signals like hunger or sleepiness tell you how you can take good care of your body and mind. [30]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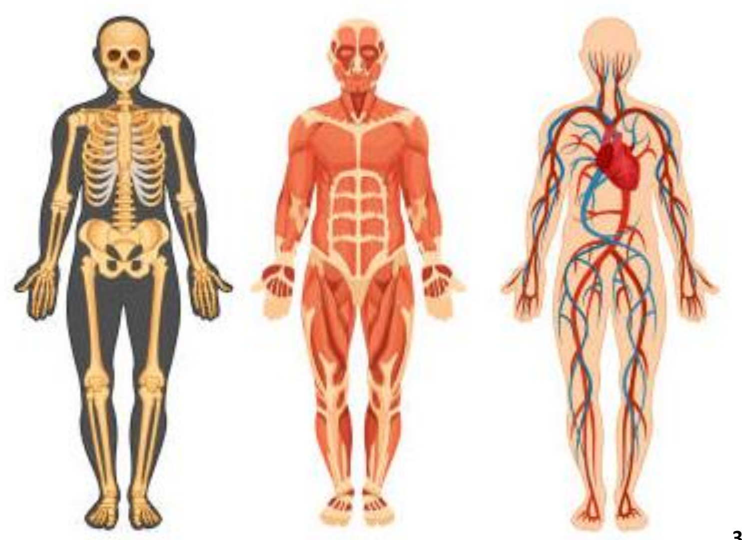
The Body Scan: Tuning-In to Your Body

One way to get back in touch with your body is a meditation called the body scan, in which you bring mindful awareness and self-compassion to your body, one body part at a time. The body scan is a true act of love for your body. It gives your body the gift of time, rest and compassionate attention. As you invite the energy of mindfulness into your body, you give your body a chance to heal from stress and pain. Because your body and your mind are deeply connected, as you heal your body, you are also healing your mind. Getting back into your body also helps you let go of stressful thoughts.

The purpose of the body scan is not necessarily to relax or go to sleep, although it can help with that sometimes. The intent of the body scan is to help you awaken to sensations in your body, in the present moment. If the body scan is relaxing for you, wonderful. If not, it is still a great mindfulness practice. If you fall asleep while practicing the body scan, that's okay. The important thing is that you stay open and curious to your body's experience. [31]



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Exercise: The Body Scan

You can do this mindfulness practice using the instructions below or with the help of the recording (track 4) available at http://www.newharbinger.com/30802 (after creating a username and password). If you will be using the recording, you can practice the body scan while lying on a mat or bed. If you don't have a place to lie down, or if you will be reading from the handbook, you can also practice the body scan while sitting on a chair or even standing.

If you will be lying down for this practice, lie flat on your back. Place your feet slightly apart, letting your toes fall to the sides. Place your arms by your sides, palms up. If you want to, bend your knees slightly. Close your eyes, it that feels comfortable. Bring your awareness to the sensations of lying on the mat or the bed.

Tell yourself that in this moment, you have nothing else to do and nowhere to go. You can simply allow yourself to be present, just as you are.

Connect with your breath. Your breath is the bridge that brings your body and mind together in the present moment. If it helps, say silently to yourself, *Breathing in, I know that I am breathing in. Breathing out, I know that I am breathing out. In… Out…*

Bring your awareness to your body, starting with your left foot. As you breathe in, imagine that you are breathing in through your left foot, all the way up your body, to your lungs. As you breathe out, imagine that you are breathing out all the way through your body, through your left leg and out through your left foot. What

sensations are you noticing in your left foot right now? Can you feel your toes? Can you feel the bottom of your foot? Can you feel the sock around your foot, if there is one? Do you feel warmth, or do you feel coolness? Do you feel any tiredness, tension, or pain? Is there any tingling or numbness? Are you getting a sense of strength, comfort, and health? If you are experiencing no sensation, just notice that.

Breath and smile to your left foot. Say to yourself silently, *Breathing in, I am aware of my left foot. Breathing out, I smile to my left foot. Aware of left foot… Smile to left foot…* Breathing brings awareness to your foot. Smiling is an act of kindness and compassion for your foot.

With the next breath in, gather your awareness. With the next breath out, shift your awareness slowly to your left ankle, noticing any sensations there. As you continue to breath mindfully, bring your awareness up your leg to your calf, your shin, and your knee. Notice sensations in your left upper leg and left hip. In the same way that you breathed and smiled to your left foot, bring awareness, care, and curiosity to your left leg. *Breathing in, I am aware of my left leg. Breathing out, I smile to my left leg. Aware of left leg … Smiling …* [32]

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Bring the same awareness, care, and curiosity to your entire body, one part at a time. Anchor yourself in your breath, and bring that mindful and cleansing breath through each part of your body. By being curious and gentle with the moment-to-moment sensations in each part of your body, you are allowing your body to reset and to release any stress that is present there. Focus for at least three breaths on each body part. If you have more time, you can give yourself two or three minutes on each body part. There is no “right” or “wrong” way to do this practice, but here is the order in which parts of the body are typically worked through:

1. Left foot
2. Left leg
3. Right foot
4. Right leg
5. Abdomen and belly
6. Upper body, chest, and shoulders

7. Back
8. Hands and arms
9. Head and face

After scanning the last part of the body, gather your awareness one last time as you breath in, and bring your awareness to your body as a whole. As you breathe out, allow your whole body to breathe.

Then, check in with your body: What is the state of your body now? Is it the same as, or different than, when you started the body scan? Are there any parts of the body that still feel stressed or tense or that need extra care? What about your emotions and your stress level? Are they the same as when you started, or are they different in any way? Take a few seconds to notice what is arising, what is changing from moment to moment.

Wake up your body. Feel free to wiggle your toes and your fingers. Open your eyes, if they were closed. Slowly – there is no need to rush- sit up, and return attention to your surroundings.

Thank yourself for taking the time to take care of your body, aware that you just practiced an act of self-compassion. Then, carry on with your day, mindfully. [33]

The Body Scan: Tuning-up Your Sleep

Maybe you're having difficulty falling asleep. If you lie awake in bed at night, what is it that keeps you up? Is it your own mind – stressful thinking about the past, worrying about the future? Are you simply too stressed out to sleep sometimes?

If so, practicing the body scan at bedtime can help. Although the purpose of the body scan is to help you tune in to your body just the way it is, often times a good sleep is a nice "side effect." Practicing the body scan can help you let go of rumination, as well as let go of stress and tension in your body. This then will allow your body to fall asleep by itself, naturally. [34]

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Exercise: The Body Scan at Bedtime

Do this mindfulness practice with the help of the recording (track 4 or 11) available at http://www.harbinger.com/30802 (after creating a username and password).

Whenever you have difficulty sleeping, practice a guided body scan at bedtime, as you lie down to sleep. Try a short body scan (track 4), or a longer body scan (track 11) if you have time, like on the weekends. Get comfortable in bed, with your head on your pillow, under the covers if you like. Close your eyes and play the track. Allow your attention to rest on your breath, on your body, and on the words of the guided meditation.

You may notice feelings, thoughts, and stress arising in your body and mind as you do the guided meditation. That's okay. Simply allow them to come and go, as if they were clouds in the sky, and then gently bring your attention back to your breath and to your body. This will allow your body to release some of the stress that it has long been holding.

If you fall asleep during the meditation, great. If not, that okay too – after the track ends, check in with your body and your breath. Has anything changed? If you're feeling more relaxed, just enjoy that. If you're still feeling tense and stressed, just notice that without judgment. You don't need to "force" yourself to sleep. Remember that the purpose of doing the body scan isn't necessarily to relax or fall asleep – simply being present with yourself, just as you are, can be healing. It may make a difference for your sleep that night and for your mood and energy the next day. [35]

[39]

Continuing Your Daily Practice: Mindfulness of Your Body

Try practicing the body scan for five to ten minutes every day. Find a time and place that works for you – maybe before you go to bed or when you get home from school – and stick to this routine. You can practice for longer – say, twenty or thirty minutes – on the weekend if you have time. Or try alternating the formal practices you have learned so far: do the body scan one day and the sitting meditation the next. After you've practiced the body scan a few times using a recording, experiment with guiding yourself through the body scan silently, without the recording.

Mindfulness of your body will help you tune in to your body's important messages. It can also help you handle physical pain and discomfort. Instead of being ruled by the sensations, you can learn to take care of them with compassion. Handling pain with awareness is true liberation and true healing. It takes time and practice but you can succeed. [36]

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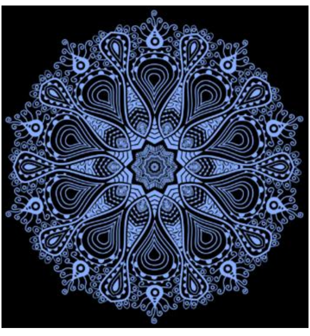
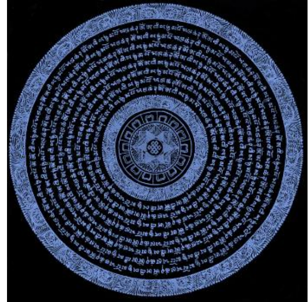
Unit 5:
Thinking Patterns



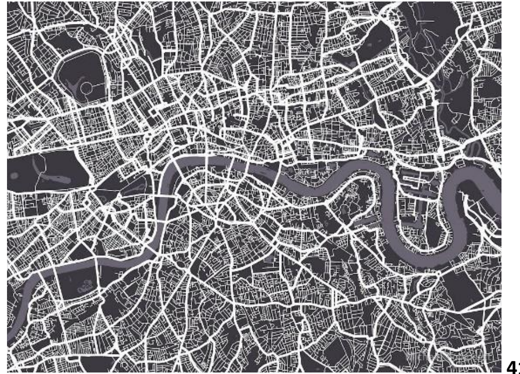


Our Bendable Brains

It's totally normal for our mind to wander. Remember, that's kind of what we do all day long, jumping from one thing to the next. The exercise for the mind is *noticing* that it's gone off into random thoughts and bringing it back. That process of noticing and returning is how we train our minds to pay attention and begin to strengthen our brains.

Mindfulness works to make our brains stronger – through techniques that settle your body and sharpens your mind. Check this out: There was a study where people were training to be taxicab drivers in London, England, who had to memorize the maze of London city maps with more than 25,000 streets. And you know what they found? The *volume* of a certain part of their brains actually got larger. Studies with adults show that mindfulness practice thickens parts of the brain associated with awareness, reflection, and feeling things.

So, our brains can get stronger and grow, kind of like muscles. Their shape or structure changes, *and the way they function can change.* In other words, our brains are malleable. Malleable means you can bend or shape something, kind of like clay or soft plastic. The word for this property is called "neuroplasticity." One of the ways our brain works is by sending signals down pathways called neural networks. When you do something a lot, the brain remembers it. It's kind of like walking through a grassy field over and over again; soon, a trail develops. Or, you can think about it like taking a new route to school: once you've done it a few times you remember how to go that way. In our brain, if we do something a lot, it gets etched in. In neuroscience they say "Neurons that fire together, wire together." [37]


[41]

Exercise: Mindfulness of Body and Sound

Let your body sit in a comfortable and relatively upright position in your chair. Remember, you don't have to be uptight, but just have a sense that the spine is extended upward. Feet are on the ground, hands in your lap.

If it feels all right to you, gently close your eyes, or else gaze down softly at the ground.

When you hear the sound of the bell, listen completely. Put all of your attention into hearing the sound from the beginning, through the middle, and all the way to the end. Notice how you feel after the sound has disappeared.

Try to notice the relaxing effects of gravity. Bring awareness to that downward force that's always here in the body. Let your body feel heavy; feel the points that are touching the ground, and let them take the weight of your body.

If you like, you can say "relax, relax" a few times silently to yourself. Let any tension in your body drain down and out.

Take a few deep breaths, and when you exhale, see if you can feel any relaxation or ease. As your body settles, become aware of the whole body sitting.

In a moment, the bell will ring again. Keeping your eyes closed, give all your attention to the sound, listening from the first moment as closely as you can until the moment it ends. See if your mind wanders or any thoughts come while you are listening.

Notice how you feel. Keeping your eyes closed, see if you can notice any other sounds. Just let your attention be wide open, listening to the sounds around you.

(*Wait about 30 to 60 seconds*)

When you are ready, you can let your eyes open slowly. Notice how you feel. Notice how it feels in the room you are in. [38]

[42]

Seeing Your Thoughts as Only Thoughts

We are but a product of our thoughts.
What we think, we become.
– Mahatma Gandhi

In the quote above, Gandhi observed how powerful thoughts can be – how your thoughts can become your reality. If you constantly have stressful, depressing, or anxiety-producing thoughts, then your mood and your entire reality will become stressed, depressed, or anxious. The good news is you are more than your thoughts. Thoughts are like clouds or weather in the sky. Even as the storm clouds come through and the rain pours down, the great clear blue sky is still there overhead. It hasn't gone anywhere, even though it may not be easy to see in that moment, hidden behind the clouds.

Your own mind is like that, too. Even when negative thoughts are storming in your mind, you still have your mindfulness and your conscious breathing that you can get back in touch with. There are still positive elements in your life (like your pet cat cuddling with you, or the beautiful flowers that are growing outside your window) that you can be grateful for, if you can remember to see them with awareness. Breathing mindfully through the storms of negative thinking allows your clear and spacious mind to reemerge from behind the clouds. In other words, even though you may have negative thoughts, you don't have to be trapped in them. You can tap into the wisdom and resilience that lives in your breath and in your body, anytime and anywhere. With mindfulness, you have the power to free yourself from upsetting thoughts by coming back to the present moment. [39]

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Jaclyn's Story

"I was getting bad anxiety about English class. I was hyperventilating before class. I was overthinking. So I tried meditating every day before class. Over a few days, my anxiety got better. I wasn't thinking so much about why I didn't want to be there.

I feel like my anxiety is unrealistic. I think about things that are unrealistic. Mindfulness helps me get back to the real world."

44

In the following exercise [55] you'll witness the powerful influence that your mood has on your thoughts.

Exercise: In the School Cafeteria

Imagine the following scenario. As you do, observe what thoughts and images arise in your mind.

Scenario 1: It's lunch time, and you're on your way to the school cafeteria. You're in a bad mood, because your teacher just criticized you in front of the class for a project that you had done. You're feeling stressed. (Take a moment to imagine how that stress would feel for you, emotionally and in your body). In the cafeteria, you notice one of your friends among the crowd. You wave to her, but she doesn't wave back.

What would you think? What kinds of thoughts and explanations are coming up for you about why your friend didn't wave back?

Now image the following slightly different scenario. As you do, observe what thoughts and images arise in your mind.

Scenario 2: It's lunchtime, and you're on your way to the school cafeteria. You're in a good mood, because your teacher just praised you for a project you had done. You're feeling really happy. (Take a moment to imagine how that happiness would feel for you, emotionally and in your body). In the cafeteria, you notice one of your friends among the crowd. You wave to her, but she doesn't wave back.

What would you think? Are your thoughts about what might be going on in this scenario any different from the first scenario? [40]

Thoughts Are Just Thoughts

When teens imagine the first scenario on the "In The School Cafeteria" exercise, they often notice thoughts like *She must have been mad at me* or *Maybe he was talking about me behind my back.* Their thoughts about this scenario are often negative and self-critical. When imagining the second scenario, they usually report thinking something like *She must have been too busy, Maybe she's just having a bad day,* or *I wouldn't take it personally*. Often, their thoughts about this scenario are much less negative and more empathetic and understanding. Was this true for you?

The only real difference between the two scenarios is your mood. In both scenarios, you have very limited information about why your friend didn't wave back to you. Yet, you make some important assumptions. Any time you are in a bad mood, you are more likely to make negative assumptions. The lesson is that the thoughts you have about any given situation are not necessarily facts, if thoughts were always true, your mood could not possibly have any bearing on your interpretation of a situation. [41]

45

Exercise: Common Automatic Thoughts

Some people report that they frequently experience certain negative thoughts. For them, these negative thoughts come up automatically in many different situations. On a separate piece of paper (or just in your head) rate each of the following such thoughts [42] on a scale of 1 to 5 according to how much you believe that thought yourself, where 1 is "not at all" and 5 is "completely." (If you're feeling really stressed out, depressed, or anxious right now, skip this exercise for the time being and come back to it later.)

1. *I am useless*
2. *Nothing ever works out for me*
3. *I fail at everything*
4. *I just shouldn't exist*
5. *No one likes me*
6. *I'm a loser*
7. *People don't understand me*
8. *There is nothing to look forward to*
9. *I wish I could change my life*
10. *I'm a really bad person*
11. *I will always feel miserable*
12. *I disappoint everyone*
13. *My life is a disaster*
14. *Everyone hates me*

15. *What's the point?*
16. *I'm stupid*
17. *I will never be good enough*
18. *I can't stand myself*
19. *I'm a burden on all those around me*
20. *No one will ever want to know the real me*

Now imagine that you're feeling really stressed out, depressed, or anxious. Take another look at the list. Can you see how your ratings might change as a result of feeling this way?

At times when you are feeling good, you are not as likely to believe the type of thoughts listed in the preceding exercise, so they may not come up. However, at times when you are feeling stressed or depressed, these thoughts may pop up in your mind more frequently, and you may be more likely to believe them. Not only does your mood affect your way of thinking, but your way of thinking affects your mood. For example, just reading a list of negative thoughts – as in the preceding exercise – can make some people feel a little sad.

Here's the bottom line: thoughts are just thoughts – thoughts are not facts. Don't believe everything you think! [43]

46

Rumination and Stress

Cows, sheep, deer, and camels all belong to a group of mammals called *ruminants*. Have you ever watched a cow chewing grass? The cow chews the same mouthful over and over and over again. That's what "rumination" means: to chew repeatedly, for an extended time. Just like a cow chewing on its cud, you may sometimes ruminate on your own negative thoughts. Whenever you get stressed out, you may end up thinking over and over about your problem. For example, if you're having a hard time while taking a test, you might keep thinking, *I should have studied more; I'm going to fail;* and *What's wrong with me?* Rumination can be like watching the same scene from a movie over and over again in your mind.

Sometimes, a negative thought can quickly lead to another negative thought, and then to a whole train of negative thoughts. For example, *I'm going to fail this exam* leads to *I'm going to fail this class* leads to *I'm never going to get accepted into college* – and it doesn't stop there. Before you know it, your mind had created a story and taken you on a "runaway train," leading to doubts and worries about your entire life.

Rumination also activates your lizard brain, distorting your way of thinking and your perception even further. You have the same fight, flight or freeze reaction whether you are facing a real tiger or a paper tiger of your mind's creation. Your own distorted thoughts activate your body's stress response and your lizard brain, and your lizard brain distorts your thoughts even further. You can end up in a downward spiral of stress and rumination.

Trying to "think your way out of a problem" is a type of rumination that is sometimes oddly irresistible. You might feel as though if you just keep thinking and thinking and thinking about the problem, you'll eventually find a solution. Unfortunately, that rarely works, and usually just makes you more stressed. People who often ruminate also tend to develop unhealthy coping behaviours – like getting drunk or getting high, or Internet or video game addictions – in an attempt to quiet their minds and escape from difficult thoughts. The problem is that you can never truly escape from your own mind, and attempts to do so usually cause more stress. So what is the healthy alternative? [44]

47

Not Getting on the Train

Whenever you are stressed out, it's easy for you to get stuck "in your head." Any time you can "get out of your head" by bringing your full awareness to your breath or to your body, you can temporarily free yourself from rumination or other repetitive thoughts. Sometimes, even just a short break from ruination can be enough for you to regain your mental balance and respond more skillfully to a difficult situation.

Meditation can also help. *How can I possibly meditate when my mind is going round and round?* you may be wondering. If so, let me assure you that meditating doesn't mean "getting rid of thinking" or having an "empty mind." It does, however, involve mindfulness thoughts – paying attention to your thoughts as they arise, moment to moment. When you meditate, you observe your thoughts with kindness and curiosity, neither holding on to nor pushing away any particular thoughts. This gives you an opportunity to learn about the nature of your own thinking and observe how thinking and stress are related. Freeing yourself from unnecessary stress doesn't in the least involve changing or controlling your thoughts. Instead, it involves changing the nature of your relationship with them.

One way to understand this is: if ruminating is like getting carried away by a stressful train of thought, mindfulness of thoughts can help you keep your feet on the ground and free you from those stressful thoughts. [44] Imagine that you are standing on a hill above the tracks, watching your train of thought go by.

Each thought is a train car. The next car (the next thought) might be the same as the one before it, or it might be different. Instead of jumping on any particular thought and riding the train, you can remain firmly planted, just observing, until all the cars pass out of view. By not getting on that train, you let go of unnecessary stress caused by rumination.

Another way to approach mindfulness of thoughts is to imagine that you are watching your thoughts pass by like clouds. In this scenario, the sky represents your mind. Sometimes there are no clouds, and your mind is clear and spacious. Other times, there are lots of clouds, floating past very quickly. Just as in life, you can't keep clouds from coming, nor can you make them stay. You can only watch as they come and go. By just watching your thoughts instead of trying to control them, you will become more at peace with your own mind.

Or you can imagine that you are sitting at the edge of a stream, and each thought that arises is a leaf being carried along with the current. [45] You are watching the leaves float by. Whenever you find yourself walking downstream because you are being "pulled" by a particular leaf, you can make a mindful choice to let it go, sit back down, and continue watching the leaves floating past. Again, the purpose of the practice is to help you avoid getting carried away by stressful thoughts, by coming back to the present-moment awareness. [45]

[48]

Exercise: Mindfulness of Thinking

You can do this mindfulness practice using the instructions below or with the help of the recording (track 8) available at http://www.newharbinger.com/30802 (after creating a username and password).

Try this meditation for three to five minutes. You can do it while sitting or lying down.

First, practice mindfully STOPping. Stop whatever it is you are doing. Breathe mindfully three times, coming back to the present moment.

Next, observe your thoughts using one of the modes of imagery discussed – imagine your thoughts as train cars, clouds in the sky, or leaves on a stream. Whichever mode you choose, simply observe your thoughts as they come into view and for however long they stay in the picture. Notice whether you're having lots of thoughts, fast thoughts, or slow thoughts. Observe your thoughts with kindness and curiosity, without getting caught up in them. If no thoughts are arising in your mind, simply notice that.

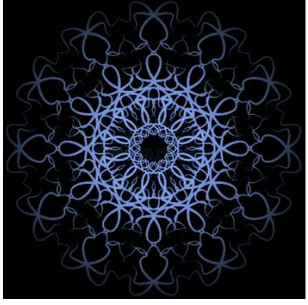
Experiment with silently labelling each thought using one word, according to category, such as "planning," "worrying", "memory," or "rumination."

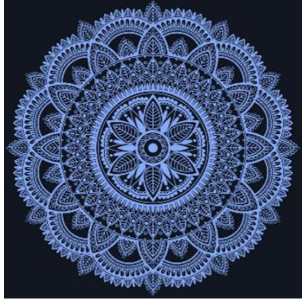
You don't need to try and figure out whether your thoughts are true or not. You don't need to suppress certain thoughts or judge yourself for having them. And you don't need to get carried away by the story your mind creates. Every time you feel lost, confused, or overwhelmed, remember that mindful breathing is always there for you. Simply come back to the next breath, and return to the present moment. When you're ready, bring your attention back to your thinking, and observe what thoughts are arising now. You can go back and forth in this way as many times as you need.

Lizard-brained thinking and rumination can add to your stress. But you are more than your thoughts. Even when your mind is filled with stressful thoughts, you can still tap into your inner clarity, strength and resilience. With mindfulness, you can recognize when your lizard brain is activated. Instead of fighting it, you can say hello (and goodbye) to rumination when it arises. *Hello lizard brain! Hello rumination! I recognize you. I know that you're just trying to keep me safe. Thanks, but I'm okay – I don't really need you right now.* Then, with a gentle smile, you can breathe mindfully and come back to reality in the present moment. [46]

[49]

Unit 6: Emotions





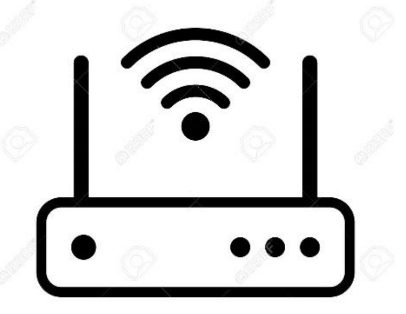
Getting Back Online

So, we've been learning more about how to train our minds, to make them stronger and clearer. Let's start with a simple question: Can we control what our mind and body think and feel? Think about your day. Do you choose each thought or emotion you have?

Sure, it's a mix. Sometimes, we can choose to think or feel something intentionally, but a lot of the time our thought and feelings aren't up to us. Sometimes that's okay, like if we're just daydreaming on the bus or something. But other times, they can get out of control. We can get hijacked by our thoughts, or feelings in ways that aren't helpful.

In these situations, we can't just will ourselves to think of feeling differently about what's happening. It's like if your internet connection goes down: you're not Googling anything until you get back online. When we're tripping up on something, we lose the ability to think clearly and make good decisions. So why is that? How do we manage to get kicked offline in our own brain?

Basically, it is a wiring issue. If you unplug your modem, the Wi-Fi goes down, right?



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Same with our thoughts and feelings. They're not just floating out there on their own. Thoughts and feelings are connected to the rest of our mind, brain and body. When we get triggered or upset, the wiring inside starts working in a different way. Our whole biology is having the reaction – not just our thoughts – and *that's* what we need to understand and work with. [47]

Wiring of the Brain

Our brain is incredibly complex; it has different parts, which evolved over time, with many different functions. Some scientists spend their entire lives studying just one part of the brain. One way of breaking it down is saying that there are older parts and newer parts.

The *older aspects of our brain* do a lot of the same things that brains of other animals do:

◊ *Basic physical desires:* Getting food and shelter.

◊ *Basic social desires:* Being close with family, figuring out where we stand socially in relation to others, mating, competing for resources.

◊ *Basic responses to the environment.* We like some things and dislike other things. We are drawn toward some things and avoid others.

What about the *newer parts of our brain?* Hundreds of thousands of years ago, what became the human brain evolved some new abilities, including:

◊ Being able to imagine the future.

◊ Being capable of complex planning and goal-directed behaviour.

◊ Becoming self-conscious in a way that more primitive animals are not.

Scientists believe that the older parts of the brain and the newer parts of the brain need to be "talking" to each other in order to regulate our emotions and behaviour. When they're not talking to each other there can be problems – we can wind up feeling out of control behaving in ways we regret. When we're freaked out, those newer capabilities of thought can ruminate on stuff that's not helpful, imagining our worst fears and getting us really down.

So, we want to train our brains so that the different parts are friends – not ignoring each other – and we want to strengthen some of the newer parts of our brain so they can really get the attention of the older parts of our brain.

Taking some mindful breaths in the heat of the moment is like resetting your Wi-Fi – it helps you get back online by activating some of the newer parts of the brain, and helping those newer parts talk to some of the older parts. [48]

Impulses and Patience

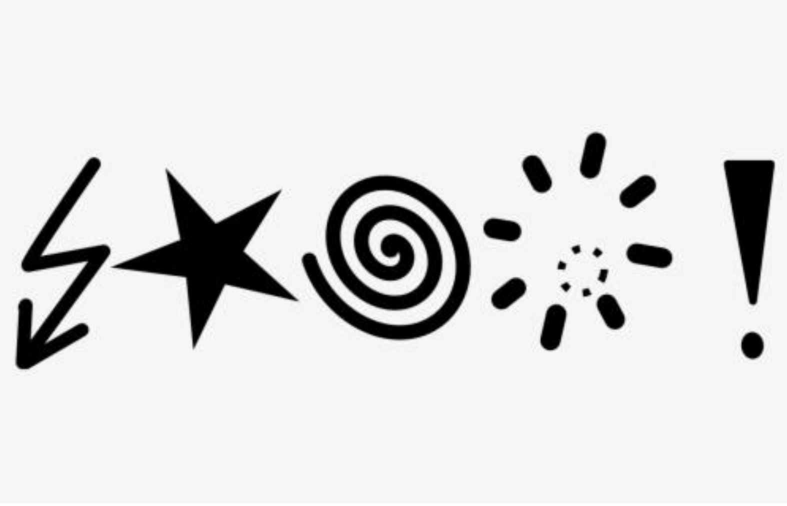
To get what we really want in life, we need to have patience and self-control. And to develop self-control, we need to learn to recognize impulses. How many times have you acted on impulse and it has gotten you in trouble? Yeah, we all do that. Part of mindfulness is about developing more choices even when we're having intense feelings. But to decide if we should act on our impulse, we have to be aware of that impulse first.

Let's look at a research study. It's been called The Marshmallow Test. The experiment was simple. A psychologist at Stanford University would take a child age 5 to 6, put her or him into an empty room with just a table and a chair in it. He asked the child to sit in the chair and placed one marshmallow on the table. Then, he told the child he was going to leave the room and come back in 15 minutes. The child could eat the marshmallow if they wanted to. But if it was still on the table when he returned, he told the child that they would get a second marshmallow.

The research at Stanford University found that 2 out of 3 five-year-old's could resist the temptation and get the second marshmallow. Years later, the researchers looked at how the kids were doing – and the ones who were able to wait were doing much better than the ones who ate the first marshmallow immediately. Bigger studies have found that those higher in self-control grow up to be healthier, have lower rates of addiction, make more money and get in less trouble with the police.

So what skills do you need to resist the marshmallow? You guessed it – mindfulness! When we notice an impulse, we can become aware of it and pause. We can practice breathing mindfully and relaxing. Some of our bad decisions come when we're rushed, stressed out and operating on automatic. Mindful breathing helps you pause, relax and make better choices.

The following is a short and simple mindfulness practice. During that time, you'll probably have some impulses. Maybe you'll want to scratch an itch, or open your eyes and look around. Or maybe you'll want the bell to ring early because you're bored. Or maybe you'll think of eating something delicious and want to go get it. When you feel these impulses, see if you can pause, breath and relax. [49]



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Exercise: Impulse Awareness

Let the body be comfortable and upright, feeling your spine. Feet on the ground, hands on your lap or any other comfortable position. If it feels all right to you, gently close your eyes.

When you hear the sound of the bell, listen with all of your attention all the way to the end.

Sense the relaxing effects of gravity. Feel that downward force in your body and let your body get heavy. Feel the points that are touching the ground, letting them take the weight off your body.

If you want, you can repeat "relax, relax" a few times silently to yourself. Let any excess tension present in your body drain down and out.

Take a few deep breaths, and when you exhale, see if you can feel a ripple of relaxation across the whole body.

As your body settles, feel the sensation of your whole body sitting.

Now, bring the awareness to the breathing specifically. Choose a place where you feel the breath most clearly – either the belly, chest or nose.

The breath is neutral. It's not a strong emotion, it's not something we hate or love. It's just there, continually, all day, every day, breathing in, breathing out. We can find it anytime we remember.

Bring your attention to the spot where you feel your breath easiest – your anchor in your belly, chest, or nose. Just like an anchor keeps a boat from drifting off, we use our breath to anchor our mind.

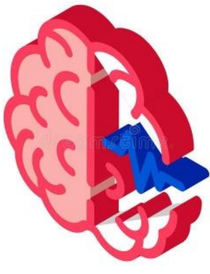
When your mind drifts away from the anchor and into planning, worrying or remembering, direct your mind back to the anchor sensation of breathing. Don't worry if you have to do that again and again, you're not doing it wrong.

When you notice a strong impulse – maybe you want to move your body – this is an opportunity to practice. First, just notice that this is an impulse. Then, silently, calmly make a note to yourself in your own mind. Silently say "pausing, pausing." Then feel your breath and silently say, "breathing" which each breath.

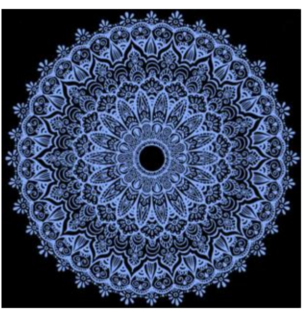
Turn to your breath to soothe your mind when you find yourself caught in an impulse. Really feel the breath. You can silently say "breathing in" as you inhale, "breathing out" as you exhale.

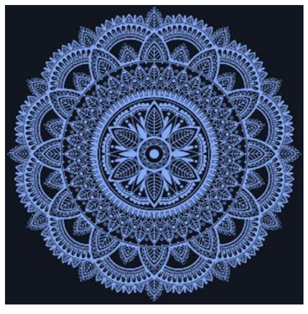
(*Repeat for about 30 seconds*)

When you are ready, you can let your eyes open slowly. Notice how you feel. [50]



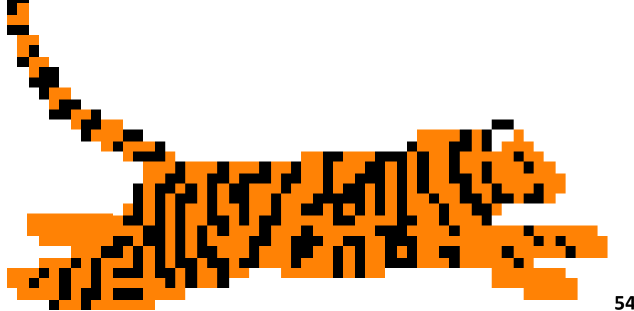
Unit 7: Media and Communication





Manage "Digital Tigers"

In addition to our physical lives (doing chores, going to school and so on), we have a whole other digital life online. We can access all the knowledge of the world immediately. We can play video games with friends who live across town and never leave our own bedrooms. We have instant (and constant) contact with friends, family and acquaintances nearly anywhere on the planet. Yet while the digital world is full of ways to create a great life, the same technology comes with real-world stress that impacts the teens (and adults) who use it. Soon, we can find ourselves surrounded by "digital tigers."


[54]

Digital tigers are very sneaky. You might think checking social media or texting with friends in a group chat helps you relax and forget the tigers you already face. But research shows that today's teens – who've never known a life without screens around them 24/7 – are experiencing higher levels of anxiety, depression and loneliness than other generations who didn't have constant access to the internet their whole lives. In other words: we created a digital world with just as many stressors as the real one.

Like anything, being online has its pluses and minuses. It's only recently that science has begun to understand some of the negatives of having a large digital component to your life. You've heard about drug addiction. This can happen when you regularly take a drug and your body starts to crave it. This often leads to other side effects that can damage the body if you continue to take the drug. The same thing can happen in the digital world.

In a 2015 survey by Common Sense Media,[51] half of the teens who responded said they feel like they're addicted to their digital devices. They felt like they *needed* to "immediately respond to texts, social media posts, and other notifications." Another study showed that people who play a lot of computer and video games – more than three hours a day – have brain scan patterns similar to those of people addicted to drugs.

While spending some time online can be helpful – you can research a paper for school, catch up with friends, or stream songs from your favourite artist – spending too much time with a screen in your face can pull you into a digital jungle where a whole new pack of tigers lie in wait. And if you're not careful, screen time can start to replace time that could be used for other important activities: being outdoors, staying physically active, and interacting in-person with family and friends. [52]

Taming Digital Tigers

If you're even a little at risk of being consumed by your screens, here are some suggestions for understanding the dangers, being intentional about how you manage them, and navigating the digital jungle.

55 **Avoid digital junk food.** If you're online life consists of general playing around, killing time, constantly checking likes, reading other people's posts, or learning about all the bad news in the world, it's exactly like eating junk food. It's okay sometimes but consuming too much digital anything is a diet that's not good for you in the long run.

You've heard the term FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). This can occur when you spend too much time following the online lives of other people (mostly strangers). You can start to feel like your life is not as wonderful as all the fun and exciting things others are posting about. This can actually decrease your sense of wellbeing. Or maybe you feel competitive and stressed about getting as many likes as the posts of others. You could also feel like you are not as popular or connected as others social media users.

Screen time can give you a temporary distraction from your real self, create the illusion that you're doing something that counts, and give you some not very nourishing connections to others. But ultimately, too much digital junk food is going to make you unhappy, lonely and hungry for something substantial. The digital world can be terrific. But just like going to a huge supermarket, you have to know what's good for you and what's not … and then make good choices.

56 **Put people before screens.** We are social creatures and while online interactions with people create the illusion of connection, it's not always a good substitute for personal interactions. You don't have to give up online relationships. But you may want to consider reducing the amount of time you spend conversing on a screen and increase face-to-face time with people. True friendships come from having extended in-person time together, talking about your life in more depth, and sharing feelings.

57 **Separate fact from fiction.** IRL (In Real Life) – it's how people talk about their day-to-day interactions in the non-digital world. The fact that we call it "real life" suggests we know there is something *not* real about the time we spend online. But it can sometimes be hard to tell the difference, especially when it comes to relationships. And remember, not everything is how it appears. You probably know by now that you can't believe everything on the internet. You've heard of fake news (alleged news sites that create false stories without evidence to back up their claims) and you know that *anyone* can edit a Wikipedia page to say anything

they know about that anything they want. The same is true for how people present themselves online. The next time you find yourself admiring people's lives based on the pictures or information they post, remember they're only showing the good stuff they want you to see. But everyone has problems. They just don't show them online. In fact, showing off online might be a way that they're trying to deal with their problems. The point is: Don't believe everything that people – especially people you've never met – tell you about themselves in the digital world. No one's life is that perfect.

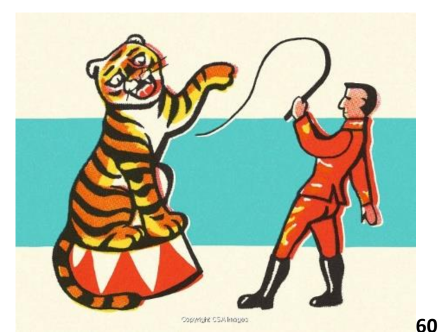
58 **Take a screen vacation**. If just the mention of not using your screens for a while makes you uncomfortable, it might mean you *really* do need some time away. Think about it: What have you stopped doing as a result of the amount of time you spend with screens? What part of your life could you pump up if you put down screens for an hour each day, or after 7pm, or for a whole day, or even for a week? Just like taking a real vacation to some far-off, exotic location, there is a good chance you'd come back rested and happy.

59 **Taking charge of your screens.** Instead of allowing screens to control your life, you can be intentional about screen time management. Here are some ways you can change your relationship to screens:

● The first step in managing your screens is to figure out how much time you spend on screens. For a whole day, pay attention to, or even keep track of, how many times you check your smartphone for texts, messages or social networking updates. Record how much time you spend watching videos or playing online games. When you get a sense of how much you're involved with screens you can then begin to make some choices to get in charge of screen time.

● Don't use your favourite digital device for a few hours. Go non-digital for a while to see how it feels. In the beginning, you might feel uncomfortable not filling the time with a screen. It might feel like withdrawal. To push past that feeling, try being creative with this time. Enjoy a book, go for a run, or practice a mindfulness activity

● Create a screen-time budget. Give yourself a limited amount of time online each day. Or set limits on when you can use screens, for example, not before school starts and not after 10 pm. Start small, see what happens, and then adjust. [53]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Watching for "Digital Tigers"

Because we tend to think of the digital world as something we can turn on and off as we choose, we often don't realize how much power and control our screens have over us. And when our defenses are down like that, the digital tigers wait for a chance to pounce.

Here are some questions to ask yourself if yourself if you're wondering if you're becoming digitally dependent:

1. Do you ever feel like you're spending too much time with screens, or do you hear that from the adults around you?
2. Do you get upset, angry or stressed if your screen time is cut off or limited?
3. Does what you are doing online add stress, anxiety, or drama to your life?
4. Do you spend time on screens when you could be having real face time with family or friends? Do you prefer connecting online instead of in person?
5. Would you feel lost without a smartphone, a tablet, or an internet connection for an hour? How about the whole day? A week?
6. Do you lose track of time online and have problems with things like not getting your homework done or ignoring your home responsibilities?
7. Is online gaming becoming a habit, or worse, a need? Do you feel like you arrange your day so you can get back to gaming as soon as possible? Is it the first thing you do after school?
8. Have you tried to spend less time online but failed and found yourself back in front of your screens? Have you ever lied to anyone about how much time you spend online?

If you said yes to more than three of these questions, you're at risk for screen-driven stress. Spending most of your time in the two-dimensional world of screens can make it more difficult to improve your life, strengthen your friendships, move toward your life's goals, or become a happier person. It might be time to rethink your relationship to screens. [54]

Exercise: Managing the Impulse

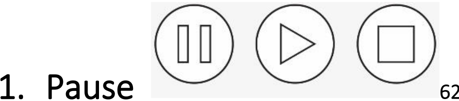
To practice managing the impulse, the trick is to follow these steps whenever you:

● Notice yourself reaching for your phone when it pings

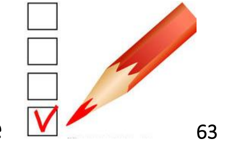
● Go to click on a notification for an app (from Facebook, etc.) when you're already in the middle of something else on your phone

● Or when a notification pings on your desktop while you're working

Follows these steps:

1. Pause  [62]

It might sound self-explanatory to pause when you notice one of these impulses arise, but it's easily the most important part of the practice and therefore needs to be emphasized. Each time you consciously pause when you notice the urge to check your phone when it pings, or a similar situation, you take a step toward reworking the unconscious habit.

2. Acknowledge  [63]

Next, once you've paused, take a moment to acknowledge the thoughts going through your mind:

"Did Jen reply to me?"

"What's everyone up to?"

"What am I missing?"

Or, it could simply be an emotion:

"Anxiety"

"Anticipation"

"Stress"

Whatever you notice, acknowledging those thoughts and feelings has a kind of power to it. It's like bringing a problem to the surface.

Admitting there's a problem is often half (or more) of the battle. Acknowledging that you feel anxious every time your phone pings immediately starts shifting the power back into your hands so you can begin to interact with your screen in a more mindful way.

3. Note Down [64]

This last step can be done by writing a note or can be done mentally, but it's important to start keeping tabs on the different feelings you're noticing.

You don't just want to notice the emotions that arise when you're interacting with these screen-related impulses, you want to identify patterns and get to the root of the problem – and you can only achieve that by seeing the big picture. [55]

Assertiveness Skills

A lot of stress we feel comes from how well we get along with others, for example, at times, you may feel disrespected by your friends or that other people – including family adults, teachers, or other adults – have too much control over your life. Maybe you sometimes feel like your needs, opinions and feelings don't count, that everything is decided for you. Or maybe you feel like your family and school responsibilities take up a lot of your free time. And when you do have time for yourself, maybe the limits are placed on what you can do or how much time you spend doing the activities you enjoy. Assertiveness skills can help you with stress caused by these kinds of situations.

Others may have a lot to say about some parts of your life, but you actually have more control than you might realize. Some rules at school or home don't seem fair, but you probably know from experience that rebelling against them doesn't usually help. Assertiveness skills can help you stand up for yourself in positive ways.

[65]

Assertiveness Quiz:

1. If teachers are unfair, do you talk to them about it?
2. If you know a friend has lied to you, do you say something?
3. If a person sends nasty text messages or posts negative things about you, do you talk with someone about it?
4. If you're waiting in line and someone cuts in front of you, do you speak up?
5. Do you confront people who try to embarrass or gossip about you in person or online?
6. If a friend wants you to do something you're not comfortable with, can you say "no"?
7. Can you discuss household rules (like curfew or chores) without arguing?

8. If someone is bullying you at school or online, are you able to tell an adult?
9. Are you able to tell your friends the truth about what you think and who you are?
10. Are you able to resolve conflicts with others without getting angry and aggressive?

If you answered no to some or most of these questions, you could benefit from a boost in assertiveness. Assertiveness skills help you honestly share your thoughts and feelings without disrespecting others. They help you set limits on what is and isn't okay with you and ask for what you want and need. When you're assertive, people know who you are and what you think and feel, and they understand your ground rules for relationships. Assertiveness can help you protect the rights you have as a person. [56]

Exercise: The ASSERT Formula [66]

You might know from experience that keeping a level head when you feel you've been wronged can be difficult. Tough situations can come up and make it hard to keep your cool. Other times you might feel afraid to speak up about something that's bothering you. Assertiveness skills come in handy in all these situations.

Attention. To work on problems you're having with others, you first have to get their **attention.** Engage the person in a respectful way and tell him or her you want to talk about something important.

Soon, Simple, Short. Respond as **soon** as possible to a situation. Letting something go unaddressed can cause you stress for a long time. If you're upset and afraid you might react in a negative or harmful way, talk to the person as soon as you've calmed down. When you are ready to discuss the issue, keep your explanation of the problem **simple** and **short.**

Specific. When you've described the situation, focus on the **specific** behaviour – what a person has said or done – that's causing you to be uncomfortable.

Effect. Help others understand the **effect** a situation is having on you. Share with the other person how the specific behaviour causes you to feel.

Response. Describe the response you would like from him or her that would help resolve the issue. Then ask the other person for feedback on your request.

Terms. Finally, after discussing the specific behavior and your request for change, briefly restate the terms of your mutual agreement to make sure everything is clear.

Here is an example of how and when to use the ASSERT formula to give you an idea of what it will sound like when you put it into action.

Situation:

Your mom yells at you to get off the phone when you're talking with friends. Your friends can hear her, and the shouting embarrasses you.

Attention. "Mom, can we take a second to talk about what just happened while I was on the phone? This is very important to me."

Soon, Simple, Short. "I'm having a problem with how you let me know when you want me to get off the phone."

Specific. "I don't like being yelled at when you feel I've been on the phone for too long."

Effect on me. "When you do that, my friends hear you and I'm embarrassed."

Response. "Would you be willing to try something different? If you held up two fingers to let me know I have two minutes to get off the phone, it would give me enough time to finish my conversation. I think it would be easier for both of us."

Terms. "Okay, so you'll hold up two fingers instead of yelling, and I'll get off the phone within two minutes. Thanks for being willing to try this idea." [57]

[67]

The ASSERT formula may feel mechanical and awkward at first, but with practice it can become more natural. Even though it's a simple formula, it can be quietly powerful. When you are assertive with others about what you want to happen, you are more likely to get your needs met as well as get more respect. While you may not always get what you want, at least you've explained how you feel and tried to make the situation better. Using this form of assertiveness is like saying, "I'm taking this risk because I care about our relationship and I want it to work for both of us" That kind of statement can go a long way toward how people see and treat you in the future.

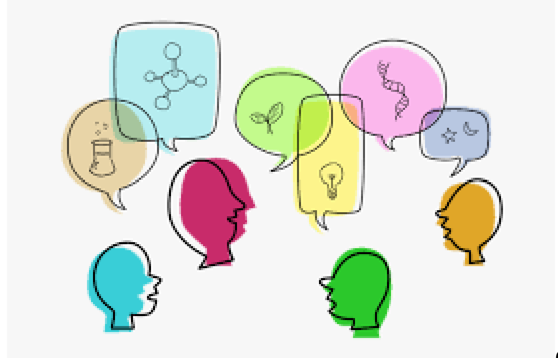
Expressing your feelings in a positive and assertive ways is like having a safety valve that allows you to release the pressure of strong negative feelings and keeps you from reaching the bursting point. It can also help you understand yourself better, feel less vulnerable, and get some more of what you want and deserve in life. That's much better than heading out into a jungle full of threatening paper tigers without any defense. [58]

Mindfulness Communication: Offering Your True Presence

Have you ever been having a conversation with your best friend or girlfriend or boyfriend and felt that he or she wasn't really listening to you? That he or she was physically with you, but mentally "checked out," thinking about something else, not really "there"? Maybe he or she was too busy texting to really pay attention to you. How did that feel?

When you truly care for someone, the most precious gift that you can offer him or her is not money, jewelry, or a fancy dinner. The most precious gift you can offer someone is not even a "thing" at all – it is just being fully there with him or her, 100 percent, in the moment. When you are present with someone with an open heart, the quality of your presence alone can be refreshing.

When you are truly there for yourself and the other person, you can practice mindful communication, which consists of *deep listening* and *compassionate speech*. *Deep listening* involves doing your best to listen with an open mind and open heart. One thing we all have in common is that we want to feel heard and understood. When you practice deep listening, you listen to really hear and understand what he or she is saying as "right" or "wrong". You try not to interrupt him or her, correct him or her, or attempt to "fix" his or her problem. You just listen. Especially when that person is stressed or upset, your compassionate presence alone can be soothing. This is an act of true friendship, of true love.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Compassionate speech involves being deeply aware of what you are saying as you say it. It also involves speaking with the primary intention of helping the other person be well, be happy, and be at peace. When you practice compassionate speech, you try to avoid saying things that might cause unnecessary stress, hurt or difficulty. In fact, mindful communication is less about knowing what to say than knowing what *not* to say.

If you are currently experiencing a lot of stress in your conversations and relationships, mindful communication can be a powerful antidote to conflict. The next time you are hanging out with your best friend or your girlfriend or boyfriend – for example, having a meal, going for a walk, or enjoying some bubble tea – why not practice the art of deep listening and compassionate speech, to get a feel for it? [59]

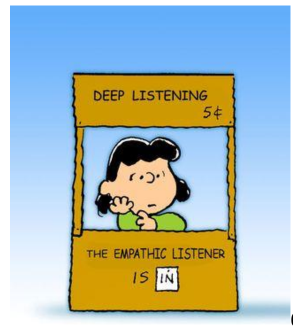
Exercise: Deep Listening and Compassionate Speech

Any time you wish to try some mindful communication, first practice mindfully STOPping: Stop whatever you are doing, and shift out of autopilot. Turn off your cell phone, your TV, and any other electronic devices, so that you can be fully present. Breath in and out mindfully three times. Recognize how precious this moment is, this chance to be with your friend or loved one. Notice what is happening within you: are you stressed, angry, anxious, depressed, or happy? Notice, too, what seems to be happening within the other person. You don't need to tell the other person that you are about to start practicing mindfulness. Simply embody as best you can the mindful spirit of beginner's mind and self-compassion as you enter into deep listening.

Allow the person to share with you whatever is on his or her mind. You may wish to ask a few simple questions, like "What's going on?" or "How was your day today?" But your primary intention is just to listen. With beginner's mind listen as if you've never met this person before. Can you learn something new about this person or understand him or her in a new way? Can you listen without interrupting, without judging, and without planning what you're going to say next?

Notice what is happening inside you as you listen. If stress arises as you listen, just notice it and breathe. If an urge to interrupt, to judge, or to give advice comes up, just notice it and breathe.

As the conversation unfolds, practice compassionate speech. Speak mindfully, aware that what you say and how you say it has the power to deeply affect the other person. Bring awareness to your own emotions as you speak. Slow down, and pay attention to what you say as you talk. As best you can, use words and language that might help the other person feel comfortable, understood, and cared for. The practice of conscious smiling and breathing can be really helpful here. If you breathe mindfully and smile gently as you speak, your words will naturally convey compassion, without you having to try too hard or do anything special. [60]



[69]

Exercise: Writing a Kind Letter to Yourself

Here's one way to practice self-compassion. It may sound a little odd, but go ahead and do it – right now. Try approaching yourself with self-compassion so you can see what it feels like.

Start by thinking about what you'd say to a close friend who was really struggling and being self-critical. How would you express kindness to your friend? Then write a letter to yourself and say those things to yourself – the same things you'd say to that friend. Be kind and gentle. Write whatever feels natural and right to you, but one thing you might consider doing is telling yourself that everybody has self-criticism and that it's normal. After all, you don't want to start criticizing yourself for being self-critical!

Dear (your name) ______________________________________ ,

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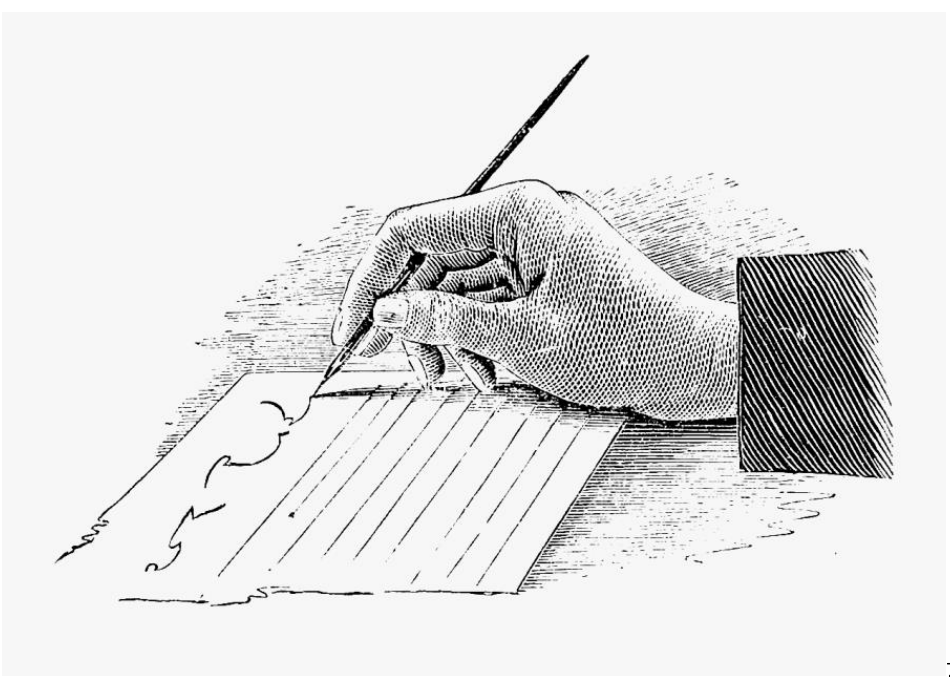

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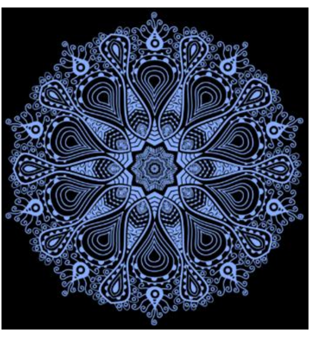
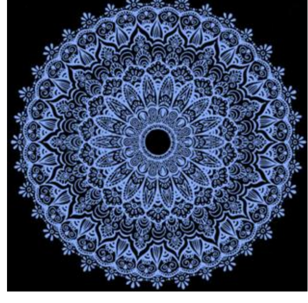
Chapter 8: Gratitude





Mindfulness and Gratitude

Mindfulness practice boils down to two things: first, the art of joyful living – learning to enjoy life more deeply, more fully – second, the art of handing stress. Just like you, everyone experiences stress. With mindfulness, you know how to handle it so that you don't get overwhelmed.

It turns out that joyful living and handling stress go hand in hand. Mindfulness helps us enjoy the "good stuff." And mindfulness help handle stress without fighting it or making it worse. Mindfulness help us be open to whatever comes our way, whether you consider it "good" or "bad."

Let's see how mindfulness practice may help you enjoy life, or notice the good stuff more. Being aware of and grateful for the positive things in your life can help you heal from the effects of stress. [62]

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Exercise: Gratitude

Take a moment to become aware of one or two things that you can be grateful for, like things that are fun or things that you have enjoyed lately. They can be big things (like winning an award) or little things (like petting your cat this morning). They can be things that you notice right now, things from earlier today, or things from earlier this week. What are a few good things, the pleasant moments, the positive events? Even if you are under a lot of stress right now, can you identify just one or two little things in your life that you are grateful for? Don't judge yourself too much if it is hard to think of anything.

What did you come up with? If you found it difficult to think of anything positive in your life, maybe you can identify with one or more of the following things that teens are sometimes grateful for.

◊ "Being on the soccer team"

◊ "Seeing my best friend"

◊ "My family"

◊ "My coach"

◊ "The sun was shining this morning"

◊ "Riding my bike"

Having read this list, can you think of any more things in your own life that you are grateful for? [63]

Enjoying the Little Things

When you pay close attention to each moment, you can start to see the small wonders of life. Maybe the sky is a fabulous shade of blue today. Maybe your best friend's smile warms your heart. There are wonders in every moment, just waiting for you to be present and recognize them. Maybe if you pay close attention, it feels good to just breathe. The cool air enters your lungs – how wonderful that can feel, like a glass of cool water on a hot day. Even when things are stressful in your life, this very breath can be a small moment of joy. Just by paying attention to your breath, you might feel grateful to be alive, grateful that your lungs are working and that you have air to breathe.

Be careful, however, not to get too attached to whatever it is you're enjoying. Perhaps you have a tendency to want to hold on to happy moments, wishing every moment could be like that. But every moment can't be happy, and, in hard times, wishing for things to be different than the way they are will only increase your suffering. With mindfulness, you can breathe in and enjoy, then breathe out and let go. You don't need to hold on to anything. Each breath heralds a new moment – and, perhaps, something new to enjoy. You can practice mindfulness in this way anytime, no matter where you are. [64]

Exercise: Mindfulness of Pleasant Events

Over the next few days, pay attention to the small, pleasant moments in your life. When you notice a pleasant moment, smile and allow a pleasant emotion like happiness or gratitude to arise.

Experiencing a pleasant emotion is like having your best friend come over for a visit. Recognize your pleasant emotion. Enjoy it while it lasts. When it starts to fade, let go. You don't need to try to hold on to happiness, just as you wouldn't force your best friend to stay any longer than he or she wanted to. Just breathe again, smile again, and open your mind and heart to the next moment, whatever arises.

Here is a short saying that you can use to help yourself practice mindfulness of pleasant events. Any time you notice a small, pleasant moment in your life, say silently to yourself: [65]

◊ *Breathing in, I know this is a pleasant moment.*

◊ *Breathing out, I smile.*

◊ *Pleasant moment.*

◊ *Smiling.* [57]

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Exercise: Keep a Gratitude and Mindfulness Journal

At the end of each day, write down something in your life that you are grateful for. It could be a person in your life. It could be something that happened during your day. It can be something big or small. As you think about what you are grateful for, breathe mindfully in and out three times, and bring your awareness to any feeling of gratitude that arises. Notice what is present in your body – for example, a warm sensation in your heart. Does the thought of what you are grateful for bring a gentle smile to your lips?

If it helps, as you notice these pleasant moments, practice saying to yourself silently, *Breathing in, I know this is a pleasant moment. Breathing out, I smile. Pleasant moment … Smiling …*[66]

[73]

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Reflections and Recommendations

Reflections

Normally, Touchstone Family Association runs the *Stressed Teens* group in-person over the course of 8 weeks, meeting once a week for 90 minutes. Because of the global pandemic, the *Stressed Teens* group that I shadowed moved to online and was condensed into 4 weeks, meeting twice a week for 120 minutes. Although there was no decline in the number of initial participants or number of dropouts compared to regular *Stressed Teens* groups, the move from in-person to online made me reflect on some research I had come across while writing my literature review. Researchers Quach, Gibler & Mano (2017) conducted a study which investigated the effects of home practice compliance on cognitive and psychological outcomes and the relationship between intervention expectations and home practice compliance among adolescents in a school-based mindfulness program. They discovered the shorter duration of their study (twice weekly sessions for 4 weeks) may have contributed to poorer home practice compliance, and consequently a smaller impact of home practice on the outcomes investigated in their study. They recognized that home-based practice occurring over longer periods of time may allow adolescents to gradually cultivate stronger mindfulness skills and to reap the associated psychological benefits. However, because full length MBSR-T interventions tended to be time-intensive and associated with a high degree of attrition (Jastrowski-Mano et al., 2013) and home practice noncompliance, incentivizing home practice adherence in some way throughout the duration of future school-based intervention may be beneficial for examining the direct effects of home practice adherence on improving mindfulness skills, and reducing stress and anxiety in adolescents.

Recommendations

Referring to the previous study by Quach, Gibler and Mano (2017) the researchers concluded that the adolescents in their study volunteered to participate – as an alternative to their traditional gym class – which may account for the generally high acceptance of and positive expectations for mindfulness meditation interventions. Participation in the *Stressed Teens* group is also voluntary, and clients may even refer themselves. Clients are told during intake that if they do not like the *Stressed Teens* group for any reason that they can drop out with no repercussions. Considering the similarities between Quach, Gibler and Mano's (2017) study and *Stressed Teens*, it may be beneficial for future studies to examine whether volunteering versus being mandated (e.g. as part of a requirement for a class) to participate in school-based mindfulness interventions results in differential expectations of benefit, home practice compliance and/or intervention outcomes.

Parsons et al. (2017) conducted a recent review of studies which investigated the relationship between home-practice in MBSR and its relationship to clinical outcome and found that across 43 MBI studies, participants completed about 60% of assigned formal mindfulness home-practice during the intervention period. There are however some important issues that

these existing reviews did not address. Parsons et al. (2017) opted to have a broad focus on evaluating studies that used a range of designs with varying degrees of methodological rigour. They investigated whether participants completed their assigned formal practice and the association between formal practice and treatment outcomes. Across 28 studies, they reported a small but significant association between participants' self-reported formal home-practice and intervention outcomes across clinical and nonclinical populations. Parsons et al. (2017) did not explore in detail the formal and informal home-practice guidance that was provided to participants, specifically in controlled research trials.

The findings in these reviews go some way to addressing the uncertainty regarding whether home-practice influences outcome measures used to evaluate mindfulness interventions (Hawley et al., 2014). There continues to be a disparity between what is recommended clinically and what is known empirically regarding the effects of home-practice. Given the emphasis placed on home-practice and the considerable time commitment required of participants to complete practice exercises, it is imperative that understanding is improved about the potential associations between home-practice and clinical benefits. It also raises key questions regarding: the way in which mindfulness home-practice is measured across studies; what guidance is given to participants regarding the completion of home-practice; and whether the reported home-practice in studies meet the recommendations set out by MBSR protocols. Answering these questions will be important for developing our understanding of the role of home practice in MBIs.

There is much potential for improved methodology in studying home practice and outcomes in MBSR. Current estimates of mindfulness practice reply on participants' retrospective self-reports, but it is unclear how this relates to their actual practice behaviour. Related to this, studies typically reported asking participants to complete daily diaries or weekly forms. Parsons et al. (2017) found no difference between mindfulness practice recorded using either form type. They reported that, however, it was difficult to ascertain that actual frequency with which participants completed the forms.

Additionally, few studies provide details on the specific forms filled in by participants (e.g. form by Crane et al., 2014). Development and widespread use of standard home practice reporting forms would be helpful in ensuring consistency in participant experience and in reporting across studies. Future use of smartphone apps, text message reminders to fill in participants diaries, or online portals, may support participants in recoding home practice. In addition, this would provide researchers with a means to assess the frequency and timing of practice recording. Smartphone apps may be particularly valuable as a method of recoding informal practices in real-time. (e.g. when participants undertake unscheduled 'additional breathing spaces' in response to stressful events, and 'noticings' – bringing mindfulness awareness moments in daily life). Future studies may also examine whether specific practices (e.g. body scan, yoga) are more robustly correlated with treatment outcomes than others.

Furthermore, participants' practice 'quality' may be crucial (Del Re et al., 2013), but this presents an inherent measurement challenge. Parsons et al. (2017) did not examine informal practice, which has been investigated in two recent studies but was not found to affect intervention outcomes (Crane et al., 2014; Hawley et al., 2014). However, as has been widely

discussed, informal practice is more challenging to quantify when compared with formal practice, which has a more standard duration with audio guidance. Instructor competence in reviewing home-practice, and providing formative feedback, may be particularly important in obtaining insights into practice behaviour, in increasing engagement with practice, and in increasing the beneficial effects of practice on outcome.

Concluding Remarks

Mindfulness-based stress reduction research suggests that interventions such as MBSR-T may be particularly helpful among younger individuals, such as adolescents, who may be able to acquire mindfulness skills more easily due to a natural openness for new ideas (Goodman, 2005). MBSR-T encourages home-practice to cultivate the development and enhancement of skills (Beigel, Brown, Shapiro & Schubert, 2009) and it is assumed that mindfulness practice outside of group sessions is directly related to changes in cognitive and psychological outcomes (Crane, et al., 2014; Del Re et al., 2013; Quach et al., 2017). However, there is a lack of empirical evidence that home-practice is related to measurable clinical change in mindfulness-based interventions, as few studies have documented the *degree* to which participants practice mindfulness skills at home, and even fewer have analyzed the relationship between home practice and outcomes (see Vettese, Toneatto, Stea, Nguyen & Wang, 2009). Additionally, even fewer studies have examined the effects of home practice in youth samples, making mindfulness-based interventions for adolescents a critical avenue through which the direct influence of home practice on cognitive and psychological outcomes should be investigated (Quach et al., 2017). Finally, informal practice may also play a role in the beneficial effects of mindfulness-based interventions among adolescents (see Kerrigan, 2011; Sibinga et al., 2011). Therefore, consideration should also be given to the role of informal home practice, its relevance to program effects, and the possibility that informal practice has a differential importance in mindfulness-based stress reduction programming (Quach et al., 2017).

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