Stony Brook University Employee Assistance Program is offering another 8 week, fee for service, onsite Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Program.

MBSR uses meditation, yoga and inquiry as a way of training people to relate differently to stresses in their lives and in fact, relate differently to each moment of their lives. It was originally developed for patients in chronic pain, undergoing intensive treatments for cancer, AIDS and other serious illness, but has since expanded and been incorporated into the daily lives of tens of thousands of people whether they are dealing with the serious stress of illness or simply the day to day stress which at times seems like it can be too much to handle. Research over the past 32 years indicates that a majority of the people who complete this program report a greater ability to cope more effectively with short and long term stressful situations; an increased ability to relax, lasting decreases in physical and psychological symptoms; reduction in pain levels and enhanced ability to cope with chronic pain and most importantly a greater energy and enthusiasm for life.

Some of the skills people learn in MBSR courses:
- Practical coping skills to improve your ability to handle stressful situations
- Methods for being physically and mentally relaxed and at ease
- Gentle full body conditioning exercises to strengthen your body and release muscular tension
- To become increasingly aware of the interplay of mind and body in health and illness
- To face change and difficult times in your life with greater ease.

Credit: [http://www.mindfulnessmeditationnyc.com/what-is-mbsr](http://www.mindfulnessmeditationnyc.com/what-is-mbsr)

A few of the many studies showing the benefits of mindfulness are shared below:

- **Mindfulness is good for physical health.** Practicing mindfulness improved [immune system function](http://www.mindfulnessmeditationnyc.com/what-is-mbsr), reduced [blood pressure and migraine frequency](http://www.mindfulnessmeditationnyc.com/what-is-mbsr), reduced [systemic inflammation](http://www.mindfulnessmeditationnyc.com/what-is-mbsr), and improved coping with [pain](http://www.mindfulnessmeditationnyc.com/what-is-mbsr) and [illness](http://www.mindfulnessmeditationnyc.com/what-is-mbsr).

- **Mindfulness is good for psychological health and brain function.** Practicing mindfulness decreased [anxiety](http://www.mindfulnessmeditationnyc.com/what-is-mbsr) and [depression](http://www.mindfulnessmeditationnyc.com/what-is-mbsr) while increasing a sense of balance and well-being, it was as [effective as antidepressants](http://www.mindfulnessmeditationnyc.com/what-is-mbsr) at decreasing depression and preventing relapse, and it improved [cognitive function](http://www.mindfulnessmeditationnyc.com/what-is-mbsr), communication, [relationships](http://www.mindfulnessmeditationnyc.com/what-is-mbsr) and [parenting](http://www.mindfulnessmeditationnyc.com/what-is-mbsr). Neuroscience research has found that mindfulness [improved brain function](http://www.mindfulnessmeditationnyc.com/what-is-mbsr) in areas linked to learning, memory, concentration, emotion regulation, and empathy.

- **Mindfulness is good for physicians and other health care providers.** Practicing mindfulness helped health care professionals [better cope with stress](http://www.mindfulnessmeditationnyc.com/what-is-mbsr) and [decreased](http://www.mindfulnessmeditationnyc.com/what-is-mbsr).
rates of burnout; it helped them better communicate, connect and care for their patients and improved their quality of life. Studies with mental health care providers have found that mindfulness reduced stress and increased positive emotions including self-compassion.

Watch Anderson Cooper’s interview with Dr. Kabat-Zinn on the CBS 60 Minutes program

Stony Brook University EAP again offers MBSR onsite in 2019:
Participants will self-pay the providers $450.00 to register for the 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Program. If full payment is received by 9/27, a $50 discount will be applied. Call the EAP @ 632-6085 to register.

(a) Course details. The MBSR course consists of eight weekly, 2.5 hour classes and one seven hour class held on a Saturday or Sunday (approximately 30 hours of direct instruction). Participants receive a course manual, guided meditation practices (digital or CD), and weekly handouts.

(b) Free introductory/orientation sessions. The Instructors will provide four free introductory/orientation sessions. See dates/times/locations below:
- Friday, 9/20
  - 12:30 – 2:00pm: HSC/East Campus (Room TBD)
  - 4:00 – 5:30pm: Main/West Campus (SBS N119/N121)
- Friday, 9/27
  - 12:30 – 2:00pm: HSC/East Campus (Room TBD)
  - 4:00 – 5:30pm: Main/West Campus (SBS N119/N121)

(c) Health Insurance reimbursement. Although the Instructors do not accept payment directly from Health Insurance Companies, should a participant’s Health Insurance Company cover the cost of the MBSR course, the instructors will provide an invoice and relevant documentation for the participant to submit a claim. Link to flex spending http://www.flexspend.ny.gov/2019/forms.asp
*Each participant is responsible for contacting their individual insurance company or FSA, only they can determine if MBSR would be a covered expense.

(d) Healthier U, EAP, and the facilitators will be offering two half scholarships (valued at $225 each) so that individuals who cannot afford the program may be able to take advantage of its benefits. Interested parties should email Colleen Stanley, Lead EAP Coordinator, detailing how they may benefit from the program, why they deserve a scholarship, and any other information that may help make their case. Deadline is Sunday, 9/15 with the awards being announced on Friday, 9/20.

(e) Employees may be illegible for tuition reimbursement from participating unions. http://www.stonybrook.edu/hr/benefits/state/tuition-assistance.shtml
2019 fall schedule of classes. Friday afternoons, 3:30 – 6:00pm, from 10/4 – 11/22 (8 weeks). The date of the 7-hour weekend retreat is Sunday November 10, from 9:30am – 4:30pm (subject to change).

**MBSR Instructor Qualifications:**

**Gabrielle R. Chiaramonte, Ph.D.**, will be one of the instructors for the upcoming MBSR courses. Dr. Chiaramonte is a licensed clinical psychologist with offices in Manhattan and Long Island (Islandia). Dr. Chiaramonte received her Doctorate from Stony Brook University and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Weill Cornell Medical College where she specialized in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and where she currently serves on the clinical faculty. She is certified by the World Trade Center Health Program (WTCHP) and has worked with many 9/11 first responders and civilians as well as members of the US military, victims of accidents and crimes, and burn victims. She has expertise in health psychology and works with patients who have chronic pain as well as chronic illnesses such as heart disease, cancer, and auto-immune disorders; her research has examined factors that contribute to the misdiagnosis of heart disease in women.

Dr. Chiaramonte's interest in positive psychology, the scientific study of factors that enable individuals and communities to thrive, courses through her clinical work and educational offerings. She trained to teach MBSR as a way to foster resilience and increase well-being in her patients and clients; she completed professional training at the Center for Mindfulness (CFM) at the University of Massachusetts’ Medical School and completed professional training under the direction of Drs. Jon Kabat-Zinn and Saki Santorelli. She is also certified to teach the Mindfulness in Schools Projects’ (.b) Curriculum to young people aged 11-18.

In 2014 she founded The Stress Reduction Center (SRC) at Long Island Behavioral Medicine, PC. The SRC offers mindfulness-based interventions including the 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) to individuals and groups.

**Cheryl Kurash, Ph.D.,** will be one of the instructors for the upcoming MBSR sessions. Dr. Kurash is a licensed clinical psychologist and certified MBSR teacher, maintains a private practice of psychotherapy and mindfulness training in Stony Brook. She completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Yale University School of Medicine and has served as Coordinator of Mindfulness Programs at the Counseling and Psychological Services, Stony Brook University; Assistant Director of Counseling for Training at SBU; and Associate Professor of Psychology at SUNY/Empire State College.

For over 30 years, Cheryl’s commitment to bringing mindfulness training to the university community led her to develop a wide range of educational and clinical programs for students, staff and faculty at SBU. Her interest in the integration of psychotherapy, mindfulness and yoga guides her own clinical work as well as her educational offerings for health care professionals and teachers.

Cheryl completed MBSR Teaching Trainings and received certification with the Center for Mindfulness, Health Care and Society with UMass Medical School, under the auspices of Jon Kabat-Zinn. Her study of contemplative practices includes Yoga, Tibetan Buddhist
(Shambhala) meditation, Vipassana meditation, and East/West psychology. For the past ten years, Cheryl has been offering mindfulness programs at Avalon Park and Preserve in Stony Brook.

In 2013 Cheryl deepened her study of Buddhism and completed a year-long course in the Integrated Study and Practice Program at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies and more recently certified as a Kripalu Yoga Teacher. A highlight of her training has been a journey to Gangotri and Gomuk, India, the source of the Ganges River, under the guidance of Swami Rama of the Himalayan Institute for Yoga Science and Philosophy.

In the warmer months, Cheryl is an avid practitioner of open water mindful swimming.

For more information about MBSR:

[Image 1] Mindfulness Meditation New York Collaborative

[Image 2] Mindfulness

[Image 3] The Center for Mindful Living

Click here to register for one of the free orientation workshops.

For more information and to register for the MBSR series, call Colleen Stanley, Lead EAP Coordinator, at 631-632-6085.