The University Counseling Center understands the value of living and working in a caring and mindful community and is dedicated to enhancing MINDFUL AWARENESS on the SBU campus. In order to do this, we offer a number of different programs to teach and develop mindfulness in students, staff, and faculty. Our website hopes to answer initial questions about mindfulness and mindfulness meditation, highlight the various trainings available in mindfulness, and provide resources for you to further your inquiry into what mindfulness meditation has to offer.
WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

John Lennon captured the essence of non-mindful living when he said, "Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans" (Beautiful Boy). It is so easy, and so natural, to live on "autopilot", in your head, thinking about the past or planning for the future, all the while missing the aliveness of the present moment. Whole lifetimes can go by this way, and they often do. This kind of automatic living reflects a "disconnect" between mind and body and contributes to overthinking and intensified stress. Mindfulness has to do with particular dimensions of attention and attitude that facilitate conscious living. It means paying attention to the present moment in a particular way: on purpose and nonjudgmentally. This kind of attention helps us to be aware of what we are thinking, feeling and doing in the moment. It helps us to be in our life, rather than in our "head", and nurtures greater awareness, clarity, and acceptance of present-moment reality.

**DIMENSIONS OF MINDFULNESS**

**ON PURPOSE:** Mindfulness has to do with paying attention on purpose. Are you able to direct your attention with intention? Can you hold your attention on these words, or on any other chosen activity, in a conscious way?

**PRESENT time sense:** being right here, right now. As you read these lines, is your attention here, right here on this word, or are your thoughts drifting off to some other place and time? Are you awake to this moment? If your attention is right HERE, then you are demonstrating some mindfulness.

**ACCEPTANCE:** allowing an experience to be, as it is, without evaluating it as good or bad or wishing it could be different. This includes noticing a feeling and allowing it to be there, just as it is. This nonjudgmental quality proves to be difficult for most of us, as we have well-developed faculties for analysis, criticism and judgment. What would it be like to let go of judgment for a while and simply observe?

Mindfulness helps us develop conscious awareness of ourselves in the present moment so that we can respond to situations with choice, rather than react automatically.

**CAN I DEVELOP MINDFULNESS?**

YES! Mindfulness is a universal quality that can be cultivated and anyone, with the intention to do so, can learn to practice and develop mindfulness. Mindfulness is not the same as intelligence, although it certainly is intelligent to be mindful! Mindfulness involves specific attentional and attitudinal skills that can be nurtured and developed, and that may, in turn, contribute to increased intelligence. The concept of mindfulness is simple, although its development requires intention and practice.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS MEDITATION?

Mindfulness Meditation is a way to practice and develop mindfulness, to stay present and mindful in all that we do. There has been an explosion of empirical research on the benefits of mindfulness/meditation, and the scientific evidence has been abundant.

**PHYSICAL BENEFITS:**
- Stress hardiness, immune system booster
- Decrease in blood pressure
- Decrease in experience of chronic pain
- Psoriasis alleviation

**PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL BENEFITS:**
- Increased ability for attention, concentration
- Decreased depression
- Decreased anxiety
- Emotional regulation

For more complete references on the benefits of mindfulness meditation, go to "Resources" and "Research".
The UCC offers several different kinds of training in Mindfulness Meditation (MM), free of charge, to undergraduate and graduate students. When possible, we may provide training for staff and faculty.

**Mindfulness Training at the UCC**

Offered at the beginning of Fall & Spring semesters, these groups provide a logical, step-by-step sequence of instruction and practice. We provide handouts & CD's to facilitate learning the skill of mindfulness & to develop a home practice. Groups are small & meet in about two weeks.

For more information about this service:
- Brochures (listing group times) & registration forms come out early each semester and can be obtained from the UCC or by calling 632-6720.
- Please be sure to register early, as groups fill quickly.

For students who have had some experience with MM, we offer 8 week ongoing groups that provide continued training in the philosophy and practice of meditation. Readings, instructions and practice are provided. Call 632-6720 for additional information about these groups.

For **STUDENTS** who have some experience with Meditation:

**Continuation Meditation Groups**

For **HSC STUDENTS** as part of its commitment to developing a mindful community on campus, groups, the UCC extends its trainings to various student and faculty groups, upon request. Various types of meditative workshops are available. A sampling of past workshops include presentations to Residence Life, BSPG, EAP, Academic Departments, Habitat for Humanity, and others. Outreach workshops run from one to 2.5 hours and need to be requested and scheduled well in advance. For further information about our Outreach Programming, please contact 631-632-6720.

**For Undergraduate & Graduate STUDENTS**:

**8-Week Beginning Mindfulness Meditation Groups** for Academic Success & Well Being

A variety of different mindfulness groups are offered at the HSC's satellite counseling service. Call 444-7760 for additional information.

**RESEARCH**

The UCC is involved in a research project to investigate the clinical and academic impact of our particular 8-week model of MM. Participation in the research is voluntary and anonymous. Dimensions being measured include attention, concentration, depression, perfectionism, self-identity, and "mindfulness."
**What is Mindfulness?**

Mindfulness is a practice that involves observing your thoughts, feelings, and sensations without judgment. It is a way of being present and aware in the moment, allowing you to observe your experiences without getting caught up in them.

**Mindfulness Training at Beginning Mindfulness**

**Related Links**

**Resources**

**BEGINNING MINDFULNESS INSTRUCTIONS**

**Sitting Practice Instructions**

(10 minutes)

Sitting practice involves three components: Posture, Focus on the Breath, and Labeling Thoughts. The purpose of sitting practice is to slowly cultivate a gentle and observing mind, without judging or evaluating.

**Posture**

Sit on a cushion or chair, with your body in a relaxed and upright position. Feel “grounded” and stable as you sit.

If you are sitting on a cushion, cross your legs at the ankles. If you are sitting on a chair, sit to the front of the chair with your feet relaxed, touching the floor. Relax your arms and place them loosely on your thighs or knees.

Your back is straight yet relaxed.

Your head is resting on top of your spine.

Your chin is tilted slightly downwards.

Your eyes are open and your gaze is soft and relaxed, about 2-4 feet in front of you.

Feel relaxed and grounded as you sit in this posture. Be there. This posture invites wakefulness and a sense of dignity.

**Focus on Breath**

The breath is an object of focus and an anchor for you in meditation. Place your attention on your breath in a gentle way.

Breathe naturally, in and out.

Follow your breath naturally, bringing your awareness to your breath.

Relax with your breath and observe your breath and follow or notice your breath. Feel your body breathing.

Stay with your breath with gentle attentiveness. Notice the quality of your breath.

**Labeling Thoughts**

As you pay attention to your breath, it is natural that thoughts arise in your mind as you breathe. You will notice the tendency for thoughts to naturally arise—we always think, and think, and think. In fact, it’s the mind’s job to think.

When a thought arises in your mind, gently invite that thought in, label that thought “thinking,” let go of that thought tenderly, and return your attention to your breath.

When you notice that you have drifted off, gently label that drifting off as “thinking” and return your attention to your breath.

Each time you label thoughts “thinking” and return to the breath, you are experiencing a moment of mindfulness!

Each time you bring your attention back to the breath after you’ve wandered off, you are developing your ability to concentrate and are giving yourself a “fresh start.” This means that each moment is a brand new moment.

Don’t struggle. Be gentle and easy with yourself. Relax.

**Helpful hints**

- It is often helpful to meditate in a quiet location. Pick a specific time to meditate each day.
- Begin sitting for 10 minutes each day and gradually increase your sitting time to 20 minutes, then to 30 minutes. Each meditation sit is different—try to be accepting of your practice and not compare it to other meditation sits.
- Practice with a non-judgmental and accepting attitude towards yourself. Label any judgments as “thinking,” and let them go.
- If possible, find a teacher or Mindfulness Meditation group with which to practice mindfulness meditation. The University Counseling Center offers 8-session Introductory Mindfulness Meditation groups for students (see page 3 of website). You can inquire about them by calling 632-6720.
MINDFULNESS RESOURCES

Basic Introductions: Mindfulness and Meditation

- *Out of Your Mind: Essential Listening From the Alan Watts Audio Archives.* Alan Watts (Sounds True, 2006). Audio CDs. (see also other audio selections by Alan Watts)
- *Guiding Your Body into Freedom.* Stephen1 Stepillian (Shambhala, 1994).
- *Beyond Illness, Stress, Illness and Mindfulness.* Segal, Z.V., Williams, J.M.G. & Teasdale, J.D. 2002 Guilford Press
- *Meditation for Dummies (Book and CD).* Stephan Bodian (For Dummies Publishing, 2006)
- *Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction.* Segal, Z.V., Williams, J.M.G. & Teasdale, J.D. 2002 Guilford Press
- *Seeking the Heart of Wisdom: The Path of Insight Meditation.* Joseph Goldstein. (Shambala, 1996).
- *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression.* Segal, Z.V., Williams, J.M.G. & Teasdale, J.D. 2002 Guilford Press

Resources

- *Beyond Illness, Stress, Illness and Mindfulness.* Segal, Z.V., Williams, J.M.G. & Teasdale, J.D. 2002 Guilford Press
- *Healing, Stress, Illness and Mindfulness.* Segal, Z.V., Williams, J.M.G. & Teasdale, J.D. 2002 Guilford Press
- *The Path of Insight Meditation.* Joseph Goldstein and Jack Kornfield. (Shambala.1987)
- *How to create a simpler, more peaceful life.* Richard Carlson, Joseph Bailey
- *Out of Your Mind: Essential Listening From the Alan Watts Audio Archives.* Alan Watts (Sounds True, 2006). Audio CDs. (see also other audio selections by Alan Watts)
Mindfulness is an ancient practice that can be traced back thousands of years. It involves meditative introspection and the careful, systematic observation of the natural world, as well as the inner space of the human mind. Both traditions are empirical in that they rely on direct sensory experience to gather knowledge. The combination of “objective empiricism” of modern science with the “subjective empiricism” of ancient meditation and mindfulness meditation has been a revolutionary development.

Recent scientific findings have demonstrated the benefits of mindfulness meditation for emotional flexibility and psychological well-being. For example, in a study published in the Journal of Psychosomatic Research, participants who received a 6-week mindfulness skills training showed improved pain tolerance compared to those trained in guided visual imagery techniques. Similarly, a study published in the Journal of Clinical Psychology reported encouraging evidence for mindfulness-based treatments for suicidal depression.

In the treatment group, positive strategies of coping with stress increased compared with a non-treatment group. Participants in a 6-week mindfulness training showed significant declines in stress, negative affect, rumination, state and trait anxiety, and significant increases in positive affect and self-compassion. Together, these findings suggest mindfulness meditation may be specific in its ability to reduce distractive and ruminative thoughts and behaviors associated with psychological distress.

The Mindfulness Meditation program at Stony Brook is part of an emerging fusion between modern psychology and ancient meditation traditions. While modern science has specialized in rigorous observation and analysis of the natural world (physics, astronomy, neurology, etc.), mindfulness meditation seeks to measure the effectiveness of our meditation groups and further the development of empirically supported treatment programs such as MBSR. In the field of psychology, the combination of science and wisdom has led to a new understanding of the human condition.

We encourage students to actively engage in learning about the empirical foundations of mindfulness as a scientific construct. It is an excellent place to start: http://sunysb.edu/library/index.html
What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness Training at Beginning Mindfulness

Resources

Related Links

http://www.uvm.edu/~chwb/counseling/mindfulness/aboutus.html
Mindfulness Practice Center at the University of Vermont: Website has helpful audio exercises to guide your practice.

http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/index.aspx
Website for the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society, Jon Kabat-Zinn's homebase. Helpful information on mindfulness training, conferences and research references.

http://ny.shambhala.org/
The Shambhala Center of NY has many beginning and advanced training opportunities. Check it out, it's excellent!

http://oprah.com
Click onto Oprah's "Soul Series". Every week, she interviews a renowned person in the field of meditation, spirituality, health. Her guests have included Eckert Tolle, Jon Kabat-Zinn, Elizabeth Lesser. You can download her programs to your iPod or computer, as well as related exercises her guests often provide.

http://www.meditationmovie.com/move.html
A brief movie of ocean waves to aid in your relaxation

http://www.eomega.org/
Website for the Omega Institute, a holistic health center in Rhinebeck, NY. Many wonderful weekend and weeklong programs in mindfulness, yoga, health, creativity and the arts.