

# **Introduction to Mindfulness**

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**Duration:** 6h 0m

## **Course Description:**

This course provides the learner with an overview of mindfulness techniques, the neurobiological underpinnings of how mindfulness works in the brain, evidence of the effectiveness of mindfulness in different areas of life, and an overview of mindfulness practice. This information can be used for personal well-being and to enhance the well-being of clients and families. Upon completing this course, residential care facility administrators will be able to apply and demonstrate methods of mindfulness practice for improving well-being and stress reduction.

## **Course Objectives:**

After completing this course, the learner will be able to:

1. Discuss mindfulness practice & its components.
2. Discuss how mindfulness practice alters the brain physiology & function.
3. Discuss ways in which mindfulness is used to support health & well-being.
4. Describe how residential care facility administrators can begin a mindfulness practice for themselves and teach others to begin a practice of mindfulness.
5. Describe methods to foster mindfulness, including the use of guided sessions.

## **Teaching Methods:**

Teaching methods will include the use of a PowerPoint presentation and accompanying handouts in PDF format.

## **Course Content Outline:**

### **1. Introduction (15 minutes)**

After completing this course, the learner will be able to:

1. Discuss mindfulness practice & its components.
2. Discuss how mindfulness practice alters the brain physiology & function.
3. Discuss ways in which mindfulness is used to support health & well-being.
4. Describe how residential care facility administrators can begin a mindfulness practice for themselves and teach others to begin a practice of mindfulness.

5. Describe methods to foster mindfulness, including the use of guided sessions.

Mindfulness, the practice of cultivating moment-to-moment awareness with an open and nonjudgmental mindset, holds profound potential for enhancing our overall well-being. As Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh beautifully articulates, “Drink your tea slowly and reverently as if it is the axis on which the world earth revolves – only this moment is life” (Hanh, 2011, p. 3). This perspective encourages us to savor each moment, embracing the present with a gentle acceptance that goes beyond mere observation.

Embarking on the journey of understanding mindfulness unveils its profound impact on our holistic well-being. Beyond the apparent reduction of stress, delving into the intricacies of how mindfulness operates on both our physical and mental health is a crucial exploration. The practices associated with mindfulness act as regulators of stress hormones, particularly cortisol. By engaging in mindfulness, individuals can create a harmonious balance within their physiological responses, fostering emotional resilience in the face of life's challenges. This not only mitigates the immediate symptoms of stress but also establishes a robust foundation for improved cognitive functions. The sharpening of mental faculties, coupled with enhanced emotional regulation, becomes a testament to the transformative power of mindfulness, culminating in an elevated state of overall life satisfaction.

The journey into mindfulness is akin to unlocking a pathway that not only addresses the symptoms of stress but also leads to a comprehensive enhancement of our mental and emotional landscapes. As cortisol levels find equilibrium through mindfulness practices, the ripple effect extends to the cognitive realm. Clarity of thought, heightened focus, and improved decision-making become the hallmarks of a mind attuned to the present moment. Emotional regulation, another key facet influenced by mindfulness, becomes a skill set that individuals can cultivate. This heightened emotional intelligence, combined with the newfound cognitive prowess, contributes to an overarching sense of life satisfaction. In essence, mindfulness becomes a holistic approach to well-being, offering individuals not just relief from stress but a roadmap to thrive mentally, emotionally, and experientially in the tapestry of their lives.

In the face of our fast-paced world and information overload, mindfulness emerges as a powerful counterbalance, offering a sanctuary of tranquility within the chaos. In this modern whirlwind of constant stimuli, mindfulness becomes more than a practice; it transforms into a refuge, a tool meticulously designed to foster balance, enhance focus, and illuminate the path to mental clarity. Amid the hustle and bustle of daily life, mindfulness serves as a compass, guiding individuals towards a centered and present existence.

Concrete examples of mindfulness techniques amplify its practical applicability, making it accessible to individuals navigating the demands of contemporary living. Mindful breathing, a cornerstone of mindfulness practices, allows one to anchor themselves in the current moment, providing a momentary respite from the incessant rush. Similarly,

body scans become a methodical exploration of one's physical sensations, an exercise in self-awareness that transcends the cacophony of external stimuli. These tangible tools empower individuals to seamlessly integrate mindfulness into their daily lives, fostering a sustainable practice that can withstand the pressures of our information-saturated world.

The consequences of stress, briefly mentioned, extend beyond somatic complaints and immune system weakening. Chronic stress is intricately linked to inflammation, and understanding how mindfulness mitigates these physiological responses provides a more comprehensive view. By incorporating mindfulness into our lives, we not only address the symptoms of stress but also work towards preventing its deeper physiological impacts.

Care workers, particularly those in residential facilities, face unique stressors, including work overload and rotating shift work. To underscore the relevance of mindfulness in these contexts, presenting specific examples or case studies of successful mindfulness implementations within similar work settings is invaluable. This can help administrators envision practical applications and understand the tangible benefits for both staff and residents.

Organizations' growing interest in employee health and well-being is not merely a trend but a strategic move towards improved workplace retention and heightened productivity. Reinforcing this point with statistics or studies demonstrating the correlation between employee well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational success strengthens the argument. Mindfulness programs, when integrated into organizational culture, can serve as a proactive approach to address stress and enhance the overall work environment.

For residential care facility administrators, the course on mindfulness offers a comprehensive overview of techniques. Expanding on the specifics of these techniques, such as mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) or mindful leadership practices, enhances the practical value of the information. Additionally, illustrating real-world scenarios where administrators have successfully applied these techniques in care facility settings creates a bridge between theory and application.

In conclusion, mindfulness transcends a mere awareness practice; it becomes a transformative tool for navigating the complexities of modern life. By deepening our understanding of its physiological and practical dimensions, we unlock its full potential to enhance well-being, both personally and within professional caregiving settings. Thich Nhat Hanh's wisdom becomes a guiding light, urging us to savor the present moment, for within it lies the essence of life.

## **2.1. Mindfulness (30 minutes)**

Stress is an integral part of life, but increased levels of stress can be detrimental and can pose physical and psychological problems. How each of us chooses to deal with

stress and stressful situations influences individual health and well-being. Mindfulness is one way to create a healthier relationship with the stress that may present itself in many areas of life, including in connection with addiction, depression, anxiety, sleep, anger, and pain. This course provides an overview of the basics of mindfulness as a practice and the popularization of secular mindfulness in the United States, and it discusses the attributes that contribute to and are cultivated as part of a successful practice.

Stress has been defined as a demand placed on the body and mind to adapt to new and unfamiliar situations (Lupien, Juster, Raymond, & Marin, 2018). During times of stress, the body releases stress hormones, such as epinephrine, that cause the body to speed up blood pressure and heart rate and increase blood sugar to escape a perceived threat. Stress is necessary, because without a positive level of stress (eustress), we would not have the drive to function in our everyday lives, but high levels of chronic stress have become a normal part in today's world for many people.

This high level of chronic stress comes from living in a world filled with a constant bombardment of ideas and information overload, with quickly changing norms (Lupien et al., 2018). Unrelieved chronic stress over time causes a "rough or stuff" reaction, whereby stress can only be relieved by irritability or by pushing the emotions engendered by stress into the subconscious (Greenberg, 2017). When stress continues to be stuffed into the subconscious, it can cause somatic complaints, such as headaches, upset stomach, back pain, or trouble sleeping. It can also weaken the immune system and cause psychosocial problems, such as feelings of isolation, anxiety, and depression (Dimsdale, 2018). The mental and emotional impact of stress on the body cannot be overstated, and psycho-neuro-immunologists have found that chronic stress is responsible for conditions such as cancer, obesity, chronic inflammation, and autoimmune diseases (American Psychological Association, 2013).

Knowing that stressful events occur daily and that high levels of stress over time can cause health problems, residential care facility administrators are challenged to assist clients and families to overcome unrelenting stress and "rough or stuff" syndrome. It is important to educate and present information to improve health and to reduce psychological stress for self, clients, families, the wider community, and the world (Hauffman et al., 2017). Mindfulness is a method by which administrators can increase their compassion for clients and reduce feelings of professional burnout, and it is a way for providers, clients and families to work together to reduce stress and improve health and well-being (Fernando, Skinner, & Consedine, 2017).

Mindfulness means a state of being in the moment with intention, in which distracting thoughts and feelings are acknowledged, observed, and nonjudgmentally allowed to dissipate to create a detachment from them to gain insight and awareness. There is a difference between being mindful and practicing mindfulness. Being mindful is like

paying attention; it keeps us from falling down a flight of stairs or from walking into a wall. It is the awake and alert part of our brain. Practicing mindfulness is an intentional exercise that cultivates mindful awareness to allow one to be fully present in the moment, not thinking about what happened in the past nor what we think might happen in the future. It allows for awareness and creates a greater possibility of not overreacting or becoming overwhelmed.

The ego is focused not on the present but on the past and future. Ego can be considered a false self that is constantly active in the mind. Ego creates dysfunction and ultimately leads us toward the “story of me,” rather than seeing the reality in a situation. It is only concerned with keeping the past alive and fantasizing about the future rather than focusing on the present. The ego tells us that one day we will be happy or that after this happens, we will be happy or at peace without acknowledging that we can be at peace in the present moment. The ego looks at the present through the eyes of the past, filled with judgment and regret. The ego can initiate the fight-or-flight response because it sees danger to the story of me. Being in the present and practicing mindfulness is the key to liberation from the ego and achieving a peaceful existence.

Self-Assessment: True or False. Stress has been defined as a demand placed on the body and mind to adapt to new and unfamiliar situations.

Answer: a. True

Practicing mindfulness is a moment-to-moment practice that enables the mind to attend to what is happening in the now without reactivity or attachment. Rooted in Buddhism, mindfulness meditation is a type of meditation that brings one’s complete attention to the present moment. Mindfulness allows us to interrupt the fight-or-flight response that can lead to longer term fear and anxiety. Employing mindfulness does not change who we are but allows us to view our surroundings and happenings with a clearer vision, creating a sense of distance through observation. Mindfulness is a form of meditation that regulates our attention to influence our experience and helps to appreciate our humanity and our relationship with others and our world (Kabat-Zinn, 2016).

Jon Kabat-Zinn, founder and creator of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, was a student of Buddhism and yoga. He has studied with teachers such as the Buddhist philosopher Thich Nhat Hanh. As a medical practitioner, Kabat-Zinn began to remove the Buddhist framework from his development of mindfulness and now is considered a founding scholar on secular mindfulness practice as it has been developed apart from Buddhist tradition. He is the author of several books and a curriculum guide for teaching mindfulness (Santorelli, Meleo-Meyer, Kabat-Zinn, & Koerbel, 2017). Within his books, Kabat-Zinn provides an operational definition of mindfulness: “Mindfulness is the gentle effort to be continuously present with experience. It means paying attention in a particular way; on

purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally in the service of self-understanding and wisdom” (Kabat-Zinn, 2016, p. 3).

Using this definition as a basis for mindfulness practice, Kabat-Zinn peers through the frequent internal worries toward being present and regulating our attention and energy to influence and transform our thoughts to see a more positive relationship between others and ourselves. Noted humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers found that when we are in a conversation with others, we often do not focus on what the other person is really saying but begin to formulate a reply that makes our point without truly listening to the others’ ideas (Rogers, 1961).

To begin to teach mindfulness, Kabat-Zinn labels what most people use to make judgments and ideas about the world as “the story of me.” The story of me is the focus of our thinking, attitudes, and decision making on an everyday basis. When we focus on the story of me, it becomes a conditioned state of mind that is interpreted by the brain and changes reality in our thinking. Practicing mindfulness breaks through the story of me to allow for nonjudgmental presence in the moment, which provides a clearer picture of reality unfiltered by the ego.

Mindfulness began as part of the meditative practice in religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism; meditative practices have also existed in Christianity and Judaism. More recently, however, people in the Western world have begun to embrace mindfulness as a practice not tied to religion and intended to foster health and wellbeing (Selva, 2017). Mindfulness is now taught and practiced in many venues, such as care institutions, spas, schools, colleges, and community centers. Mindfulness has become a popular way to reduce stress and to improve health and well-being. Mindfulness has been paired with other complementary therapies, such as yoga practice, meditation, and stress reduction.

Self-Assessment: True or False. Practicing mindfulness is not a moment-to-moment practice that enables the mind to attend to what is happening in the now without reactivity or attachment.

Answer: b. False

## **2.2. Mindfulness (30 minutes)**

Many mindfulness medication programs have been developed in recent years. In addition to Kabat-Zinn’s Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy was developed by a pair of psychologists to treat depression (Kuyken & Evans, 2014). Another program using mindfulness to reduce stress is the Mindful Warrior Project, founded specifically to reduce posttraumatic stress disorder in postcombat veterans. There are also programs for young people, such as the Youthful Mindfulness program (Selva, 2017). Although

mindfulness has roots in both religious and secular traditions, the one constant in mindfulness practice is that it provides an opportunity for a person to reduce the impact of stress, improve health, and live a life of well-being.

A study supported by the National Institutes of Health (Holzel, Carmoday, & Vangel, 2011) found a link between mindfulness meditation and measurable changes in the brain regions involved in memory, learning, and emotion. These researchers found that mindfulness practices may reduce anxiety and hostility among urban youth and lead to reduced stress, fewer fights, and better relationships (Holzel et al., 2011). Using mindfulness and the nine attitudes of mindfulness can be beneficial to (and improve overall well-being in) a great number of people.

Kabat-Zinn writes about the attitudinal foundation of mindfulness practice (KabatZinn, 2016). The nine attitudes that make up this foundation are qualities that the practitioner aspires to and the beginner uses to cultivate mindfulness. They are not easy attitudes to embody and are guideposts for growing a mindfulness practice. There will be times when these attitudes seem to be mastered, and then the next minute they will disappear within the ego of the mind. There should be no judgment about your ability to achieve any of these attitudes but rather a mindfulness of their use and benefits each day.

Some of the ways to prepare for these attitudes to enter your life are simple, such as slowing down and becoming more purposeful about each task you undertake, talking less to allow your mind to be quiet, reducing multitasking and concentrating on one thing at a time, consciously relaxing and calming your spirit when you are with other people, providing time and activities throughout the day to become more centered, and simplifying your life by giving up lesser pleasures for greater ones. The following are the nine attitudes identified by Kabat-Zinn, and you are encouraged to contemplate each as you think about mindfulness. Many other scholars have studied the effects of these attitudes in specific circumstances and in daily life (Grossman, 2015; Price-Blackshear, Kamble, Mudhol, Sheldon, & Bettencourt 2017; Zivnuska, Kacmar, Ferguson, & Carlson, 2016).

At the time of beginning any new practice or endeavor, we are open to new knowledge and experience. This openness is very creative and unlocks many new possibilities. This openness of mind is the “beginner’s mind,” and using our beginner’s mind allows us to be in the present moment of wonder and fresh understanding. We need to pay attention to the beginner’s mind and continue to be present in the moment and be open to what we do not know. Once we pay attention to the beginner’s mind, we can call it forward in our consciousness whenever we require mindfulness. When we put the story of me aside, including all our expectations, and use our beginner’s mind to see the present moment from a new perspective and in a new open way, we see many possibilities of how to interpret what is happening. The beginner’s mind is creative and

brings to each person the wonder of the present moment unclouded by the judgment of the past. According to Kabat-Zinn, using the beginner's mind to open our attitude helps to create intelligence without preconceived opinions, which makes us free to engage with the moment and empower thinking in a new way (Kabat-Zinn, 2016).

For example, if an evaluator provides ways we could improve during a work performance assessment, and we are present in that moment in a nonjudgmental way, we can use the beginner's mind to see the evaluation as a positive way to become more skilled and proficient, instead of using our story of me and seeing ourselves as put down. In this way we can creatively plan to make changes in our life to become stronger and better in the future rather than feel bad about our performance. When we can focus on the present moment, it allows for all the moments that follow to be different because our awareness does not impose anything in advance of what is about to unfold. One of the ways to waken and stimulate the beginner's mind is to spend time focusing on the breath. Breathing brings in life-giving oxygen and releases unneeded carbon dioxide, which can be used by plants and trees. The exercise of focusing on the breath, as you breathe in and out, can be used to anchor attention to the present moment. When we focus on the breath, we can call up the beginner's mind to the present moment and shut out all other thoughts, judgments, and attitudes that are barriers to mindfulness.

Self-Assessment: True or False. At the time of beginning any new practice or endeavor, we are never open to new knowledge and experience.

Answer: b. False

## **Patience**

Patience is an essential aspect within the practice of mindfulness. When we are always in a hurry to get somewhere or attain something, we are not able to be where we are now and enjoy that moment. Have you ever really anticipated an event that you are planning and been so busy with the event itself you forgot to enjoy it? As author Ellen Langer notes (2014), "another key characteristic of mindfulness is focus on process before outcome, or 'doing rather than achieving,'" and that takes patience (pp. 34-35).

Patience provides the attitude that will enable you to not only anticipate and plan but also to enjoy the moment as it comes. Patience creates an attitude of fortitude that allows for a broader perspective that helps one see that anxiousness will pass. For example, our world today is extremely fast paced and does not always allow time for being reflective and mindful. When we are constantly in a hurry and need things right now, we miss the subtle meaning of occurrences, conversations, and the context of happenings for our lives. Think of how you feel at the end of a busy day when you have accomplished all your tasks but have not taken the time to evaluate the meaning of those tasks or your needs. We often hear of workers who go for hours without a



bathroom break or a meal: What does that do to your body, mind, and spirit? Is there a way we could be more mindful and less hurried and anxious, so we can get as much done without losing ourselves in the process?

## **Nonjudgment**

Another essential attitude of mindfulness is nonjudgment. Judging becomes a screen to the present moment that permeates and colors our thoughts and experiences and filters our evaluation of events and occurrences. It takes our story of me and creates a narrow reality tunnel through which we see things as we think they are but not with clarity. Using nonjudgmental mindful awareness, we can focus on the situation outside of our own conditioning and employ all viewpoints rather than be bound by our own experiences. Without nonjudgmental awareness, we often label people, experiences, and ideas prematurely as someone or something we like or dislike. This judging is our own attempt to find happiness through labels. Using mindfulness, we can move toward happiness from a clearer awareness of what is happening in the moment. This nonjudgmental awareness minimizes our obsession with the pleasant and our fear of the unpleasant.

One example of this is our ability to see people's actions without the need to change them. For example, in the medical world we often label clients as noncompliant with the medical plan. What if instead we took the client's actions as they were without trying to control them but rather to understand them? The notion of clients -centered care is just this type of mindful "nonstriving," or not trying to control the clients but working with them to make mutually acceptable decisions to improve health. It is always easy to enjoy working with clients who are kind, friendly, and grateful for the provided care; the nonjudgmental part comes when working with a client who is not pleasant but demanding and ungrateful. Nonjudgment allows you to provide them with the same level and quality of care that you provide to the pleasant client. Judging the unpleasant client as "bad" is harmful to the residential care facility administrator and the client and neglects unseen or unknown issues that may be at play.

## **Non-striving**

The next important attitude to work with in mindfulness practice is non-striving. Non-striving is allowing an experience to happen and to enter the mind without trying to control or change it. In Western culture, striving is seen as a good thing and a way to get ahead in life. However, non-striving is important to help us see that we have no place to go because we are already there. Non-striving helps us to understand the importance of being with things as they are in the present moment, of being alive now rather than always waiting for life to begin tomorrow. Instead of fleeing from an anxious or fearful situation, non-striving as an attitude in mindfulness practice lets us pause and be in the present with an experience without exerting any force on the situation. This

allows for coming to know the experience more clearly and being able to choose a response.

Non-striving can allow a person to ride the wave of anxiety until it passes like a storm runs its course. When one is not constantly striving for better or to be more successful, one is able to understand that this moment is our life, it is our time, and it is perfect. Non-striving can be one of the most difficult elements of mindfulness to master. However, when it is possible to see ourselves as already there in our lives instead of striving to get there, we will achieve greater emotional and cognitive balance and clarity of mind. Non-striving also improves relationships and provides a better and more honest communication with those around us.

Self-Assessment: True or False. Using nonjudgmental mindful awareness, we can focus on the situation outside of our own conditioning and employ all viewpoints rather than be bound by our own experiences.

Answer: a. True

### **2.3. Mindfulness Part 3 (25 minutes)**

#### **Acceptance**

Acceptance is another attitude to work with in mindfulness. Acceptance does not mean that we simply accept whatever happens. It does not mean we adapt an attitude of passive resignation but that we realize reality, attempt to find ways to be in a wise relationship with reality, and finally act on those ways from a vision of clear thinking. The awareness that things are not as they should be, from a clear and wise attitude, allows the mindfulness practitioner to act without fear and with a clear vision of what the right action may be. Acceptance, therefore, can be defined as an expression of lived wisdom. Acceptance can help us to be free of feelings that the outside world is conspiring to hurt us and clinging to the idea that we need things to be perfect for us to be happy.

Acceptance provides us with the ability to act with emotional and mental clear headedness rather than a knee-jerk reaction to whatever action comes your way. Take, for example, experiencing the breakup of a relationship. Your knee-jerk feelings and reactions are anger, fear, loneliness, and isolation. Your mind wants to act on these feelings and lash out at those involved. Awareness allows you to realize what is happening in a clear and wise way. You can attempt to save the relationship or to understand that it is beyond saving, but you know that your life will continue and there will be things you can do to help relieve the sadness of your loss. The attitude of acceptance is very difficult. Acceptance of strong emotions like grief, anger, and rage may present challenges where acceptance will take several tries. To be accepting of what is, however, allows new pathways to emerge so that you can move past what is difficult in life to a place of peace.

## **Trust**

Trust has two aspects in mindfulness practice, that of being trustworthy and of being trusting. We must trust that we cannot be in control of all aspects of our lives and we trust in our survival and accept what happens with confidence that it is what is supposed to happen. We can trust ourselves to listen to our bodily signals for food, rest, and other functions and as we trust and follow our instincts to provide what our body needs, thereby being trustworthy to ourselves.

We can trust others around us by not thinking badly about people and not judging people based on superficial outward appearances such as age, size, or ethnicity. Trust is a confidence in the world around you and in yourself without the need to control every small detail. Trust does not mean you are gullible any more than kindness means you are weak. Trust relies on your instincts to tell you who to believe and who not to believe. Using trust is a kind of ongoing nonjudgmental awareness of how to remain healthy and how to heal. Once you have developed this discerning type of trust in yourself and in your heart and head, you can handle difficult situations with grace and dignity.

## **Gratitude**

Having a spirit of thanksgiving and gratitude is a way to protect your mind from always looking at the negative. Sometimes the negative is so strong in our story-of-me minds that we cannot see past it to the wonderful things for which we have to be grateful. Gratitude helps us see the present moment as filled with humility and provides a sense of reverence for our own lives and the lives of our fellow humans. Too often, we are trapped in the rapid news cycle that covers negative happenings in our world to the point that we become overwhelmed by the bad and cannot see the good. By slowing down and taking the time to reflect on the gratitude in our lives and our world, we begin to focus on the positives in life. Even when sad or bad things happen, by using a practice of mindfulness we can focus on gratitude for surviving and learning from events. Gratitude is an option at every reflection and promotes positivity and health.

## **Generosity**

Generosity is rarely about money or things but more about your time and attention. What true friends and family often want most from us is our attention. Being fully present in the moment with them without our mind wandering to what we must do later or what happened in the past is truly a gift of gratitude to others. As we become more generous, we find that there is more happiness in giving than in clinging to things. Giving forgiveness and love bring far more happiness than holding on to hatred or grudges. Having an open and generous attitude of being present allows us to bring about joy and peace in all our interactions.

## **Letting Go**

The final foundational attitude of mindfulness practice is letting go or letting be. It is the natural consequence and follow-up to all the other attitudes of mindfulness. Letting go means that you are not thinking that things must happen in a specific way or that you can prevent things from happening. Letting go means that you are letting things be as they are. It creates within you a more spacious voice that sees greater possibility from what is in the present. It is an affirmation that you are no longer simply the product of your thoughts but that you are aware that your thoughts are not in charge and can be let go.

We can let go of our fears and cravings and let things be as they are. Letting go can be liberating and refreshing, as we no longer must use all our energy to push things away from us. When mindfulness practice speaks of letting go, it is not withdrawal, it is embracing the whole of reality in a new way. In the same way all these attitudes are repeatedly practiced and nurtured, letting go develops through repeated practice.

Stress is an important aspect of mind and body health in all people. Although some stress is necessary to maintain daily function, most clients experience elevated levels of stress during an illness, which can be detrimental to healing and recuperation. residential care facility administrators view the person in a holistic manner and therefore must be concerned with stress as an aspect of the human condition that may be harmful.

Stress can also be felt during chronic illnesses. Reducing the impact of stress on those living with chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, heart failure, and other conditions, can assist the client in better adapting to the chronic illness and making better life choices. Stress can also be felt by caregivers and other family members and reduce their ability to care for their family member adequately. Mindfulness is a useful tool to offer to reduce the impact of increased stress and improve well-being for clients and families. residential care facility administrators can share mindfulness-based techniques and attitudes with clients and families. Using this approach to provide another avenue for clients and families to use to move toward healing allows the administrator to use his or her own caring knowledge to improve client care.

Self-Assessment: True or False. We can let go of our fears and cravings and let things be as they are.

Answer: a. True

### **3.1. The Brain (40 minutes)**

The brain stem, often called the reptilian brain, receives autonomic signals needed to regulate involuntary bodily functions such as breathing, heartbeat, pain signals, and emotional signals. The limbic system is responsible for managing emotions and memories, including those related to stress responses. Key structures of the limbic

system include the amygdala, the emotion center of the brain; the hippocampus, which helps us form new memories; and the hypothalamus and pituitary glands (collectively known as the HPA axis), which send signals to release epinephrine and cortisol, the body's primary fight-or-flight hormones. When someone perceives a threat or stressful event, their sensory organs send signals to the amygdala, which in turn sends a distress signal to the hypothalamus. Through the autonomic nervous system, the hypothalamus activates the sympathetic nervous system which responds by releasing epinephrine into the bloodstream. Epinephrine begins a series of physiologic changes, such as increased pulse rate and blood pressure, which enable a person to fight or flee the threat they are confronting. Soon after, the HPA axis releases cortisol which keeps the body on high alert if the threat does not immediately pass.

Since the beginnings of humans on Earth, the cortex of the brain, which shapes independent thought, has increased in size to become more complex and able to hold more information compared to the brains of other animals and earlier humans. The cortex is divided into two hemispheres. The left hemisphere is focused on sequential and linguistic processing, so the left side of the brain processes an understanding of science, math, and language. The right hemisphere of the brain processes emotion and visual special processing. Although the hemispheres work closely together, each person has their own unique relationship between left and right hemispheres. Often, we think of scientists, computer programmers, and other "hard fact" people as having a dominant left brain, while artists, musicians, writers, and other more creative people as having a more dominant right brain. Much of the dominance of one hemisphere of the brain over the other is through learned behavior rather than simple genetics.

The brain and its neurotransmitters shape the mind. The brain uses as much energy when we are asleep as when we are awake (Lammert & Zeeb, 2014). Creating a constant flow of energy throughout the 24-hour period of the day allows the brain to run bodily functions and supports dreaming and subconscious processes. There are more than 100 billion neurons firing each minute, and the number of possible combinations of synaptic neuron firings is enormous. The brain's neurons can form circuits that strengthen connections for mental activity. These circuits are based on repeated activity. For example, if you feel fear every time you see a snake, that fear becomes a hardwired circuit within the brain. Scientists have demonstrated that the brain has plasticity; it changes as new circuits are modified when new learning occurs (Doidge, 2016). In fact, according to "Hebb's Law" (Donald Hebb), "neurons that fire together wire together" (Neuroscience News, 2017, p. 2) – which is to say that two cells or systems of cells that are repeatedly active at the same time will tend to become associated so that the activity in one facilitates activity in the other. This is the basis of experience-dependent neuroplasticity

It is important to note the distinction between the lobes of the cortical area of the brain, as they are responsible for different functions. The cortex is divided into the occipital, parietal, temporal, and frontal lobes. The frontal lobe functions are most relevant to our study of how mindfulness practice affects the brain. The prefrontal area of the cortex is responsible for the following nine logical functions: 1. Bodily regulation 2. Attuned communication 3. Emotional balance 4. Response flexibility 5. Fear modulation 6. Empathy 7. Insight 8. Moral awareness 9. Intuition (Siegel, 2009).

Many spiritual contemplative traditions (such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism) that use meditative practices agree with the idea that contemplative practices change the structure and functionality of the brain (Elk & Aleman, 2017). In his seminal research in the area of mindfulness, Siegel (2009) found that using the mind to cultivate wholesome qualities and purity of thought through mindfulness results in changes in the brain and neural connection. Therefore, understanding how mindfulness changes the way the brain works and communicates with the mind will provide insight into the benefits of mindfulness.

One landmark research study (Lazar et al., 2005) concluded that mindfulness intervention changed the brain by strengthening the gray matter in the cortical area of the brain. Given the logical functionality in the prefrontal cortex, this was a significant finding. Another fundamental study by Holzel and colleagues stated, "Stress reduction correlates with structural changes in the amygdala" in which mindfulness intervention was implicated in decreasing the size of the amygdala (responsible for initiating the fight-or-flight response), and subjects simultaneously reported a lessening of perceived stress (Holzel et al., 2009, p. 38).

Self-Assessment: True or False. Many spiritual contemplative traditions that use meditative practices do not agree that contemplative practices change the structure and functionality of the brain.

Answer: b. False

One of the main functions of the brain is to protect the body through realizing and registering pain and emotional sensations. When pain is registered in the brain, the body can attempt to remove or repair the injury that is causing the pain. For example, if a person puts a hand too close to a hot surface, the body registers pain so that the person can remove the hand. With emotional sensations such as love, danger, fear, or sadness, the body registers these emotions both through physical and psychological means to help a person to realize the emotion is there and needs attention.

Because the mind takes into consideration what is represented in the outside world and how that is interpreted by the brain, the totality of the mind can be said to be made up of many parts, including the brain, body, the natural world, and human culture, as well as

the mind itself (Thompson & Varela, 2001). Mindfulness practice creates greater activity in the prefrontal cortex, anterior cingulate cortex, insular cortex, and the amygdala when we engage in emotional tasks (Brandmeyer & Delorme, 2018; Laneri et al., 2016; Wheeler, Arnkoff, & Glass, 2017). Stimulation of these brain centers through mindfulness practice creates increased brain focus, psychological well-being, and attention.

Problems can develop for humans when ancient protective mechanisms, such as the fight-or-flight response, are activated by the body and mind. This is because survival in the modern world is much more complex than simply avoiding immediate danger. Stability is often shaken by actions outside of our control. At times, opportunities disappoint us even when we have done our best, and threats from the outside world with its 24/7 communication and anxiety-producing noise seem always present. Although the brain and mind want to keep us separated from danger and harm, everything is connected and keeps changing and threats are inescapable.

Therefore, as the brain tries to promote the assumption that each of us is separate and independent, there is a constant conflict, because in important ways, we are connected. We are influenced and we influence others from the moment of birth. Language and culture that we learn from our family are hardwired into our brains soon after birth. The ability to love and have empathy and compassion are instilled in our brains, and if they are not can lead to mental illness. We are part of a family, a community, a country, a world, and the universe rather than being separate and independent. When we are caught up and absorbed in the day-to-day problems of the world, we lose connection with one another. When this happens, we lose connection with ourselves. Mindfulness can bring us back to the place where we see each moment for what it is and what it means rather than seeing everything as a danger or threat.

Mindfulness can be thought of to access the power of the brain and influence the mind toward peace and good feelings. When clients and clinicians have feelings of fear, helplessness, anger, or pain, over time, mindfulness practices can change the way the brain perceives these emotions and allow the individual to work around these emotions toward peace. In his book, *Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life*, Thich Nhat Hanh (1992) discusses feelings of anger, fear, and helplessness as unpleasant. He states that these feelings are “the materials from which hell is made” (p. 65). The way to use mindfulness to overcome these feelings is to call on our awareness, which can look after our anger, fear, or hopelessness, and not judge those feelings but look within ourselves, not to suppress our feelings but to put these feelings in their appropriate place in the moment. Mindfulness practice helps develop our capacity to accept and acknowledge these feelings without judgment or guilt. This can be a path to understanding, and understanding can be a path to joy.

In an early exploration of the effects of mindfulness practice on the brain, researchers studied brain electrical activity before and after a mindfulness training program and again 4 months later. Twenty-five participants were recruited to the mindfulness training group and 16 to a control group who did not get mindfulness training but whose brain electrical activity was tested (Davidson et al., 2003). These researchers found an increase in left-sided brain activity and increased antibody titers to influenza. There is a correlation between left-sided brain activation and immune function, and in this study, the magnitude of increase in left-sided activation was associated with increased antibody production and a better ability to fight off disease.

Kurth, Luders, Wu, and Black (2014) studied six older adult volunteers who experienced sleep disturbance for at least 1 year and completed a 6-week mindfulness training. The volunteers had the gray matter in their brains measured using voxel-based morphometry before and after mindfulness training. Findings demonstrated that the gray matter was significantly increased in the area of the posterior cingulate cortex in the post-mindfulness morphometry. This area of the brain plays a central role in cognition and regulates focused attention.

Basal cortisol levels are a way to determine the amount of stress produced when the brain senses a fight-or-flight situation. In a recent study, a group of 34 college students were randomly assigned to either a 4-week mindfulness training program or a relaxation control group. The mindfulness group had lower basal cortisol levels after 2 weeks and 4 weeks of training compared to the relaxation group. When the students were exposed to acute stress, the mindfulness group had significantly lower cortisol levels than did the relaxation group (Tang, 2017).

As stated earlier, based on an understanding of the pathophysiology of the nervous system, the sympathetic nervous system is the fight-or-flight system that speeds up the heart and other important organs to sustain the body while either fighting or fleeing. The parasympathetic nervous system (PNS) has the opposite effect of slowing down the body and decreasing the feelings of stress by reducing stress-producing neurotransmitters such as epinephrine and norepinephrine (also known as adrenaline).

Self-Assessment: True or False. Basal cortisol levels are a way to determine the amount of stress produced when the brain senses a fight-or-flight situation.

Answer: a. True

### **3.2. The Brain (30 minutes)**

When we cultivate mindfulness through practice, we create greater possibility of finding relaxation as we engage the PNS, because relaxed muscles let the brain know that there are no current threats. In fact, when you are relaxed, it changes the way that genes are expressed and can assist in reducing the cellular damage caused by stress.



Mindfulness allows the body to bring attention inward, which activates the PNS. Being fully aware of the present moment and being nonjudgmental allow the body to relax and increase the effects of the PNS. The first foundation of mindfulness is mindfulness of body, and the fundamental body-awareness practice is directing awareness to the breath. Slowing the breath and concentrating on the inward and outward flow of breathing can calm and center the body toward increasing relaxation and initiation of the PNS.

Activating the PNS through mindfulness of breath enables an individual to decrease attention on stressful matters and bring awareness into the body, using the body as an anchor for present moment awareness. Residential care facility administrators who work with clients experiencing stress, fear, or anxiety can use the breath as a way to enable relaxation that is not abstract but is a tool to help them move toward relaxation and improve the healing process. To share these practices with others, it is recommended that you first try them out for yourself.

Ask the client to either sit up or lie in a bed with the head of the bed elevated. Note that this practice is very simple but not easy. However, if someone is experiencing respiratory challenges, this is not recommended, as it may be found to create stress. Ask them to breathe in and out for 1 minute, saying in their minds with each intake of breath, "I am breathing in," and with each exhalation, "I am breathing out." Direct the client to notice where they most easily feel the sensation of the breath (generally abdomen, chest area, or nasal passages) and to spend the time feeling each breath in and each breath out, noticing that there is a pause between the in-breath and the out-breath. This allows the mind to focus on breathing. After 1 minute, ask the client to breathe in such a way that the inhalation and exhalation of breath are the same length; ask them to count each inhalation and exhalation.

For example, with intake of the breath, count to four slowly – one, two, three, four. Then as you exhale, count slowly one, two, three, four. After the count of four, begin the intake of breath again. After another minute of this kind of breathing, ask the client to continue with equal inhalations and exhalations and begin to call to mind a pleasant emotion, such as kindness, love, or something they enjoy, such as a happy vacation thought or a wonderful family memory. After a final minute of this type of breathing and recalling pleasant memories, ask the client how they feel, and see if they are more relaxed and less anxious. The administrator might even notice a change in vital signs such as blood pressure and oxygen saturation. This exercise can decrease anxiety and increase happiness and restfulness, which in turn can increase healing.

Practicing mindfulness using the breath as a tool for being present in the moment and avoiding judgmental thinking affects other parts of the brain, including the cingulate cortex, which stores working memory and monitors attention. Mindfulness can increase

an individual's ability to control their thoughts and behaviors so that they are able to strengthen positive feelings and emotions (Bremner et al., 2017). Mindfulness also affects the cingulate cortex by enabling clear thinking and calmness in the face of problems and fosters stronger emotional intelligence. The amygdala, initiator of the fight-or-flight mechanism, is another area within the brain that is significantly affected by mindfulness practice. Mindfulness can reduce the sense of fear that causes the fight-or-flight response and help us to understand happenings as just happenings and become aware of happenings in a calmer and more resilient manner (Doll et al., 2016).

The following case study sheds light on the way the brain and mind work to not only support body functions but to protect the body from outside dangers. Jeanne Anderson is the residential care facility administrator for Mrs. Peterson, a 46-year-old woman who was just given a diagnosis of lung cancer. Mrs. Peterson is understandably upset and confused. She is crying and shares that "her life is over," and she will never get to see her grandchildren or enjoy her retirement. In speaking with the doctor, the administrator learns that with proper treatment including surgery, chemotherapy, and immunotherapy, there is a good chance that Mrs. Peterson can have a better outcome and quality of life. When the administrator shares this information with Mrs. Peterson, she simply yells, "What do they know! I have cancer and cancer means death. I have had three friends who died in their 30s from breast cancer and they were younger than I am."

No matter how the administrator tries to calm Mrs. Peterson down and share with her the evidence of what can be done to help her, Mrs. Peterson is not ready or open to listen. She is focused on her fear, her anger, and her hopelessness. Her blood pressure and heart rate are elevated, and she tells the facility staff that she is having trouble breathing. She is in full fight-or-flight mode and her emotions are not under her control at this point. Jeanne Anderson decides to begin teaching some breathing and breath counting techniques. She describes pacing inhalations and exhalations as she has learned from her studies in meditation. She holds Mrs. Peterson's hand and does the breathing exercises with her. After a few minutes, Mrs. Peterson is calmer but still weepy. She stays with her for a few minutes, quietly and calmly holding her hand and asking her to create positive thoughts that will calm down her mind's emotions and get her through this day.

On the day after Mrs. Peterson's diagnosis, Jeanne speaks to Mrs. Peterson in a calm voice. Mrs. Peterson states that she has not slept and that she had visits from her family, during which they all cried and expressed anger over her diagnosis. They are a religious family and they said a prayer at the end of their visit. But after they left, Mrs. Peterson cried herself to sleep. She advises Mrs. Peterson that her body and mind need to be calm to mount the best defense over this cancer and to make good decisions regarding her treatment. She listens to Mrs. Peterson's fears and concerns

about her diagnosis and then shares with her that although she can be aware of her anger and fear, she needs to be able to work around these emotions and plant seeds of health, strength, and hope. Jeanne asks her to visualize planting seeds of healing where seeds will choke out the anger and fear and provide the strength, she will need to accept her diagnosis and prepare her body to battle the cancerous cells.

The residential care facility administrator and Mrs. Peterson begin to discuss a nonjudgmental approach to her feelings about cancer. She informs her that cancer is not an enemy or the devil, nor is it sent from God as punishment. Cancer is simply cancer and creating an awareness of the cancer and forming a plan to deal with the cancer and the treatment regimen the physicians have proposed will provide the best chance for a positive outcome both physically and emotionally. Jeanne and Mrs. Peterson again do the breathing, and Mrs. Peterson tells her that the breathing meditation helps her feel calmer. Jeanne checks on Mrs. Peterson 15 minutes later and finds that she is asleep. Over the next 3 days, while Mrs. Peterson gets prepared for surgery, several administrators can work with her on mindfulness techniques, breathing meditations, and prayer. On the fifth day, as Mrs. Peterson is going into surgery, she tells the nurse, "I am ready, and I am strong. I think I am ready for whatever comes." residential care facility administrators should think about other situations where cultivating mindful awareness and nonjudgmental thinking could be helpful to clients. Of course, not all clients will be open to this type of work, and mindfulness must be approached gradually. But an administrator's patience can go a long way in helping a clients create a mindfulness practice. More information related to mindfulness practices will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Administrators can develop methods of introducing mindfulness into their practice in a meaningful and clients-centered way.

### **Questions**

1. Why is breathwork the best way to begin Mrs. Peterson on a path to relieve her stress and anxiety? 2. The second aspect of mindfulness that the residential care facility administrators uses is to visualize planting seeds of healing which, when grown, will choke out the seeds of cancerous growth. Why is this a good example of mindfulness that could assist Mrs. Peterson in reducing her anxiety? 3. As the Jeanne uses mindfulness techniques to prepare Mrs. Peterson for her surgery and treatment, how is she increasing the client centeredness of her care?

### **Responses**

1. The breathwork exercises that Jeanne uses are the most effective way to use mindfulness to reduce stress and anxiety. 2. Using visualization is one method to change a person's mind-set and allow positive emotions to emerge. 3. She is helping Mrs. Peterson to use her own mind and mindfulness resources and therefore helping Mrs. Peterson to manage her own anxiety.

The brain and mind are separate but related entities. The signals from the body and mind are transmitted to the brain, where they are interpreted into emotions, thoughts, and actions. As the world has become more complex, the brain has evolved into a more complex organ. Mindfulness practice can change the way the brain interprets information received from the outside world. The brain can take sensory information from the body and, by using past knowledge, individual differences, and learned experiences, the brain can alter the pain experience within the body.

Mindfulness practice can alter the vicious cycle of pain or the misaligned expectation of the future because these expectations can influence perception. The use of mindfulness results in higher activation in the emotional and evaluative areas of the brain. The projective mechanisms within the brain use strong neurologic stimulation to overcome immediate threats to the body and keep the body separated from danger. However, as the world around us has become more complex, the brain and mind are unable to differentiate between all the multitudes of conflicting inputs from a steady stream of complex thoughts and emotions. Therefore, because the brain wants to separate us from danger, we lose touch with the interaction needed to function successfully in our complex world. The PNS helps the body to relax and regroup. Mindfulness meditation engages the PNS to promote relaxation. residential care facility administrators are frequently faced with a multitude of anxiety-producing occurrences in their clients. To be truly client centered, Administrators should evaluate the anxiety experienced by each client and step in to help them overcome the anxiety that the fight-or-flight brain sees as necessary and to engage the PNS to increase relaxation and health.

Self-Assessment: True or False. When we cultivate mindfulness through practice, we create greater possibility of finding relaxation as we engage the PNS, because relaxed muscles let the brain know that there are no current threats.

Answer: a. True

#### **4.1. Mindfulness Practice (35 minutes)**

In today's complex world, everyone's life is stressful. Some stress is good, because it helps us focus and concentrate on what we are doing. Stress can be a happy feeling, such as the stress associated with getting ready for a party or accepting an award for work well done. Good stress happens for a time and then dissipates. When the party is over or the award presentation ends, the good stress is gone but we have wonderful memories of the happy time. Unfortunately, the most common type of stress is not happy or anticipatory stress but accumulating stress that does not dissipate but continues to build within us until we have physical, emotional, or mental problems. One of the reasons that life stress is so common is because we are unable to control our thoughts and feelings, and therefore our ego continues to create feelings of hurt, sadness, anger, frustration, and unhappiness surrounding our daily experiences. In a

groundbreaking manuscript, Hans Selye (1946) explained general adaptation syndrome (GAS) and theorized about how stress affects the body.

He discussed three stages to his GAS of stress. The first stage is the alarm reaction, or the fight-or-flight reaction discussed in earlier chapters. In this first stage the heart rate increases, the adrenal gland releases the stress hormone cortisol, and adrenaline is released. If the energy produced by the sympathetic nervous system's alarm reaction is not used in a fight-or-flight reaction, it can harm the body by damaging blood vessels and increasing the risk of stroke, cardiovascular conditions, ulcers, and higher blood sugar levels. The second stage of the GAS is the resistance stage, in which the body begins to return to homeostasis as the stress is resolved. If the stressful condition continues and the body remains in the state of alarm reaction, then recovery does not happen or only partially happens. If this is the case, the body moves on to the exhaustion stage of GAS, in which the stress levels go up and stay high. At this point, the accumulation of chronic stress becomes hazardous to the individual's health and can damage nerve cells in tissues and organs.

The part of the brain most vulnerable to this type of stress is the hippocampus, where thinking and memory are stored. Once the hippocampus is affected, the body recognizes it is not in a homeostatic state, and there is a tendency toward anxiety and depression. Everyone encounters stress and has a choice in how they react to and cope with stress. The key is to become more aware of our tendency to follow the general alarm that comes from stress, avoid getting caught up in the alarm reaction of GAS, and change our perception of the stressful situation. The goal is not to eliminate stress, which will never happen, but to minimize its impact by creating a new relationship with stress. Viktor Frankl (Frankl & Winstlade, 2006) said "Between stimulus and response there is a space, in that space lies our power to choose our response, in our response lies our growth and our freedom" (p. 24).

Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) can break the cycle of our unhealthy perception of stress. With heightened awareness, a nonjudgmental approach to the stressful alarm feelings can be established. MBSR was developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn in the 1970s for clients facing stress-based health problems, including physical and mental illness. The program is loosely constructed to meet the needs of everyone in a group setting. Programs in MBSR are generally 8 weeks long. The goal of MBSR training is to allow everyone to evaluate personal habits and lifestyle choices, such as overbooked schedules, dysfunctional relationships, or addictions. Following this evaluation, the practice of mindful living is presented with emphasis on shifting one's perspective from narrow (urgent) to open (relaxed). Awareness of breath and of body sensations, stretching, calm relaxation meditations, and journaling are often used to reach a state where mindfulness can overcome stress. Some of the outcomes from this program are the ability to detect subtle body sensations and tensions, the ability to rest in discomfort,

the capacity to establish trusting interpersonal connections, and openness to emotional healing and personal and spiritual growth. MBSR courses, available online at no cost, include videos, readings, practice sessions, and a printable manual. (See <https://palousemindfulness.com>).

The following are principles used in MBSR:

- The most important thing is to remember to engage in some form of formal practice every day. The focus of MBSR is individual effort, motivation, and disciplined practice.
- Make the experience engaging by turning the observing of one's life mindfully into an adventure.
- Mindfulness practice causes an immediate lifestyle change, as it requires formal practice, living intentionally, and commitment.
- The importance of making each moment count is underscored by consciously bringing awareness into daily practice.
- MBSR can be used with a broad range of people with differing medical and psychological conditions. The approach to practice is to foster what people have in common and what is right rather than what is wrong.

The exercises and techniques of MBSR include mindfulness of breath practice, body scan, walking meditation, yoga, noticing underlying attitudes (pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral), and eventually graduating to an open-awareness practice, observing all activities of the mind and body sensations (University of Massachusetts Medical School, n.d.). As the student moves through the progression of mindfulness techniques to the open awareness meditation, one example of guidance provided in MBSR is to view your thoughts and feelings as surfing a wave. It asks the participant to become aware of negative feelings or positive feelings. You notice the wave of these feelings approach, crest, and fall away from you. The more you can let the wave pass and let negative emotions go with it, the more stress will be minimized. The same is true of positive feelings, as we expend energy and create stress in trying to hold on to those sensations. Through the mindfulness techniques practiced in MBSR, we learn that all things come and go, and we can reduce stress by allowing that to be so.

There is evidence that supports the ability of MBSR to reduce stress and improve health and well-being. In a systematic review of 101 randomized control trials enrolling 8,135 participants, MBSR program outcomes were compared to control group stress-reduction interventions (DeVibe et al., 2017). MBSR demonstrated a moderately larger effect on mental health, somatic health, and quality of life, including social function, compared to the control group stress-reduction interventions. The improvements in mental and somatic health and quality of life were sustained for as long as 34 months in participants in the MBSR intervention. In a second systematic review of the literature on MBSR (Alsubaie et al., 2017), 28 randomized clinical trials were reviewed, and both self-report measures of stress and physiologic measures such as heart rate and cortisol levels were measured. The most consistent finding from the systematic review was that

self-reported change in stress levels was found at higher levels than changes in physiologic outcomes. These authors found that there was evidence that mindfulness stress reduction improved stress-linked outcomes (namely, heart rate and cortisol levels) and improved individual well-being among those participants of MBSR programs compared to those who did not participate.

In a study of 116 veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), participants were randomly assigned either to receive 9 weeks of MBSR therapy (n = 58) focusing on attending to the present moment, acceptance, and nonjudgmental thinking or to a 9-week control group that focused on each veterans' self-described current and life problems (Polusny, Erbes, & Thuras, 2015). Outcomes were measured using the PTSD checklist at baseline, 3, 6, 9, and 17 weeks, and the clinician-administered PTSD scale of improvement in depressive symptoms, quality of life, and mindfulness. The participants in the mindfulness stress-reduction program had a statistically significant greater improvement in the PTSD symptom severity ( $p = .002$ ) during treatment, and at 17 weeks they maintained a significantly better level of improvement ( $p = .01$ ). The MBSR group had mean PTSD checklist scores of 64 at baseline and 55 after the ninth week and mean scores of 55 at 17 weeks. This demonstrates that not only did the MBSR program reduce PTSD symptoms but that the effect was sustained after the program when participants practiced mindfulness on their own. While MBSR is the best-known mindfulness intervention program, there are many other ways to use mindfulness to reduce psychological and physical issues; many of them are structured in similar ways to MBSR.

Self-Assessment: True or False. Some stress is good, because it helps us focus and concentrate on what we are doing.

Answer: a. True

Mindfulness programs have been specifically designed to help lessen depression and anxiety. Depression and anxiety are diagnosable mental problems that can be caused by increased life stress. Depression often interrupts a person's ability to function. Symptoms of depression include anger, sadness, frustration, and feelings of loss. Some people have decreased appetite and insomnia, and others have increased appetite and hypersomnia. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), suicide rates increased significantly in nearly every state from 1999 through 2016 (Stone et al., 2018). The incidence and prevalence of suicide from depression in the United States in 2015 was 45,000, or 14 deaths per 100,000 citizens (National Center for Health Statistics [NCHS], CDC, 2015). Eight percent of Americans suffer from depression, and 11% of all medical office visits are for the treatment and management of depression (NCHS, CDC, 2015). The incidence of depression is higher in older adults

and considered to be a key indicator of well-being (Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics, 2016).

Those who experience depression and anxiety often have higher rates of physical illness, greater functional disability, higher care resources utilization, and if not treated properly, higher rates of dementia (Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics, 2016). Overall, those aged 50 and over (1 in 5 Americans) experience depression either as a single event or recurrently. There are several ways that mindfulness can address depression and anxiety. The ability to create the space between stimulus and response allows us to pause and step back, recognize symptoms, and be more aware of our reactions to emotions and life occurrences. It allows us to choose how to respond instead of being swept away by negative emotions. Second, facing fears through the nonjudgmental awareness of mindfulness allows us to approach situations with more neutrality, creating self-confidence. This is especially important with older adults who may face fears of health issues, loss, and loneliness, which if seen through the lens of mindfulness, could be less anxiety producing and allow each person to be more in control of emotional reactions. Finally, being fully present with others helps our understanding and resolution of relationship problems by building healthier and more supportive relationships that can alleviate loneliness, anxiety, and depression.

There is a Buddhist story that is told of two monks who were released from prison after being tortured. After several years they meet and one says to the other, "Have you forgiven your captors?" The other monk says, "I will NEVER forgive them. Never!" The first monk then says, "Well, I guess they still have you in prison, don't they?" Anger can be disguised as depression, fear, and helplessness. It is important to remember, however, that holding anger inside and not releasing it with compassion and loving kindness creates a prison for the person holding on to the anger. Using mindfulness, you can say, "I am not anger; I am experiencing the human emotion of anger," and release the anger into the universe so that you are free of anger and resentment. If a person feels anger, they can either do something about it or let it go. If there is an option to right the wrong that provoked anger, then do it; if not, the only option is to let it go. Anger is simply energy, and if we bring mindful awareness and nonjudgment into that energy, we can deal with the anger in a positive manner.

When you feel anger or when you are working with a client who is angry, here is a useful reflection. First, suggest that the client spend 1 to 3 minutes practicing awareness of breath. Next, ask the client to take time to explore their relationship with anger: From where did this anger come? What are their reactions to anger? Do they notice the anger in any body sensations? How do they feel when they are angry? Finally, ask them to consider if they can change what happened to cause their anger. If so, how can they do that with compassion? If not, how can they learn to accept and



move forward with compassion? Bringing mindful awareness to anger allows one to be open to experience without being overcome by it – even such emotions as anger, fear, and anxiety.

For many people who suffer from addiction, coming to know themselves and lovingly accept who they are is the first step to recovery (Webb & Toussaint, 2018). Allowing the mind to attend to the present in a nonjudgmental fashion creates a way to see the self in a loving way without recriminations. Paying attention to cravings and the detrimental effects of those cravings helps the person see what the addiction is really made of – thoughts and sensations, rather than real needs. As the person who is addicted to drugs and alcohol practices mindfulness, he or she can notice cravings as they arise, see how these cravings can ebb and flow, and realize they have control over them rather than being a constant need. In this way, the person can ride out the craving without giving into it.

For example, if a person in an alcohol or substance abuse program mindfully reflects on the consequences of their drinking or drug use – such as impaired health, legal issues, destroyed family connections, financial instability, job loss, and social problems – then the negative consequences outweigh the addictive use of the substances. As these cravings arise, awareness of the need to overcome cravings and awareness of the need to focus on avoidance of negative outcomes from addiction often assist the person to resist use of addictive substances. Garland, Froeliger, and Howard (2014) theorized that mindfulness might restructure thinking patterns to change addictive behavior by shifting the focus on rewards gained from using drugs, alcohol, or nicotine to focusing on rewards gained from not using these addictive substances. Based on this theory, the Mindfulness-Oriented Recovery Enhancement (MORE) program has been used for smoking cessation and for opioid and alcohol addiction (Garland et al., 2014). This program has been shown to strengthen control of cognitive biases and create awareness of fixation on addictive cues such as stress, pain, and cravings. Mindfulness practice can shift and reorient attention via the breath to enhance self-control over behavioral habits elicited by addictive cues. The MORE programs use mindful reappraisal to foster adaptive coping measures that teach addicts to mindfully disengage from negative appraisals of stressful events and restructure them in a positive way to promote resilience and coping behaviors (Garland et al., 2014).

In one study, MORE was able to decrease opioid misuse and cravings in 29 participants who experienced chronic pain (Garland et al., 2014). In a meta-analysis of four randomized control trials, Oikonomou, Avaniotis, and Sokolove (2016) found that 25.2% of those who participated in mindfulness training were able to abstain from cigarette smoking compared to 13.6% who completed a regular smoking cessation program. One in 3 adults in America is overweight and 1 in 6 children is obese (NCHS, CDC, 2016). In all, 70% of Americans are obese and 8% are extremely obese (NCHS, CDC, 2016).

This statistic reveals that obesity is at epidemic levels in the United States, and the diseases that result from obesity, such as diabetes, hypertension, and joint pain, are on the rise as well. Causative factors include poor food choices, portion sizes, speed of eating, using eating as a social convention, and stress. Stress eating is common and can be unconscious, as eating takes the place of calming our thoughts and emotions. Mindful eating, however, is not designed specifically for weight loss but to help each person understand and experience life beyond food. Mindfulness allows each of us to pay attention to what we eat and what is unfolding moment by moment, which creates a better understanding of the meaning of food in our lives.

Self-Assessment: True or False. Those who experience depression and anxiety often have lower rates of physical illness.

Answer: b. False

#### **4.2. Mindfulness Practice (30 minutes)**

Mindful eating is a nonjudgmental awareness of physical and emotional sensations associated with eating. Mindful eating involves allowing our senses to taste flavors of food and slowing the pace of eating rather than mindlessly munching. Mindful eating requires keen observation of hunger and its causes, along with being in the moment away from distractions when eating. Enjoying a meal mindfully involves being non-judgmental yet noticing when guilt or thoughts of what we “should” do come to mind, and savoring each bite of food, being aware of its texture, aroma, and flavor. Mindful eating distinguishes the five established basic tastes: sweetness, sourness, saltiness, bitterness, and savor while listening to hunger, fullness, and taste satiety cues. Mindful eating enhances the ability to choose to eat when hungry instead of out of boredom or sadness or overeating to the point of feeling uncomfortable (Mathieu, 2014).

As an example of mindful eating, Jon KabatZinn (2016) takes a raisin as the center of the experience. To practice mindful eating, take one raisin. Let the raisin become the focus of awareness – become aware of where raisins come from what they are made up of, focus on the shape, the texture, the smell, and the anticipation of eating the raisin. In this way, the raisin becomes the meditation teacher. Once taken into the mouth and slowly chewed, taste the raisin and notice only the flavor that it provides. When swallowed, be attentive to the nourishment that the raisin is providing to the body and reflect on the entire experience of eating this raisin. By the end of the raisin-eating experience, the ability to be aware of the unfolding of eating and to rest in that awareness moment by moment will help make each eating experience more mindful and less related to negative emotions. Warren, Smith, and Ashwell (2017) reviewed literature related to the evidence of the effectiveness of mindful eating. These authors found that mindful eating is effective in addressing emotional eating and eating in response to external cues. While these authors felt that more research is needed

overall, they discovered that mindfulness eating has the potential to address problematic eating behaviors and assist in controlling food intake. They also recommend adding a mindful-eating approach as a positive message to all weight management programs.

The CDC (2018) reports that one-third of American adults do not get the recommended amount of sleep they should. Lack of sleep is linked to diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and depression. Adults need 7 or more hours of sleep per night to maintain health and well-being. The brain is actively involved in wakefulness and sleep. The wake system in the brain sends out signals to create alertness. Sleep signals help initiate sleep. Stress levels, emotional upheaval, and worry play a significant role in the ability of the sleep system within the brain to take over and allow the mind and body to fall asleep and stay asleep. Stress and worry about work, family, health, relationships, and money are common problems that keep people awake at night. Sometimes there is a vicious circle of worry that can be about something minor, but the brain uses that worry to keep the alert part of the brain in gear and not allow for relaxation to occur that could help you sleep. Mindfulness promotes the focusing of your attention on the present moment rather than letting worries spiral out of control. It is about controlling your thinking to help you sleep rather than focusing on things you cannot fix at the moment. Psychologist Ethan Green discusses the “doing” mode of the brain, which continually searches for previous experiences and knowledge. This doing part of the brain is very powerful and strong. When the doing mode of the brain is involved in emotionally difficult problems such as family, health, or money, it often causes more tension and anxiety.

The opposite of the doing mode of the brain is the “being” mode. In this way the brain can help you put worries and anxieties in perspective to relax and go to sleep. (For more information on the “doing” and “being” modes of the brain and their effect on sleep, visit <https://www.nosleeplessnights.com/mindfulness-exercises>.)

Mindfulness-based sleep programs use two key elements: (1) acknowledgement of the thoughts buzzing around your brain in a compassionate or positive way, and (2) shifting into the being mode by practicing mindfulness attributes such as nonjudgment and awareness. Garland, Zhou, Gonzalez, and Rodriguez (2016) reviewed 12 studies on the impact of mindfulness practice on sleep. These researchers found a significant impact of mindfulness on insomnia and sleep disturbance. These findings were significant in trials that were aimed at improving sleep. In a randomized control trial of 54 adults with chronic insomnia, those in the mindfulness practice group had significant reduction in wake time while trying to sleep than the group who were not involved in mindfulness practice. These researchers concluded that mindfulness meditation has emerged as a viable treatment for adults with chronic insomnia and should be used in this group as part of therapy.

Mindfulness therapy to relieve chronic pain is modeled on the MBSR objectives and programs. The goal is to enable awareness of painful feelings and minimize these feelings through distraction and release of anxiety that can increase pain. The premise is much like that of childbirth relaxation; when we experience chronic pain we tense up around the area where the pain is felt, which increases the pain and further causes injury to muscles, organs, and other areas where pain is produced. In addition, being mindful of the pain in a nonjudgmental way can allow the cerebral cortex to take pain sensations from the dorsal horn of the spinal cord and interpret the pain signal as lower, based on the relaxation response and mindful awareness.

The National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine (Buczynski, 2017) has funded a study of MBSR on lower back pain. The study investigators randomly assigned 324 participants from age 20 to 70 to an MBSR group, a cognitive behavioral therapy group, or to a group receiving usual care for back pain with medication only. After 26 sessions, the mindfulness group had significantly less low back pain than the other two groups, and this improvement persisted at 52 weeks for those in the MBSR group. Mindfulness can distract the person from the pain experience by reducing daily stressors and can increase the ability of muscles and tendons to relax and exhibit less inflammation, thereby reducing painful stimuli.

In a meta-analysis of 25 randomized controlled trials to determine the effect of mindfulness on chronic pain, researchers reviewed pain intensity, depression, anxiety, pain interference, disability, and quality of life (Veehof, Trompetter, Bohlmeijer, & Schreurs, 2016). Study participants included 1,285 clients with chronic pain who were in mindfulness-based intervention, medical treatment as usual, or an education group. The mindfulness group had significantly lower depression and anxiety scores and lower levels of pain and pain interference compared to the control group and the education group.

Compassion is defined as a sympathetic consciousness of the distress of others and a desire to alleviate that stress (Compassion, 2016). In the harsh, fast-paced world of today, compassion is a tool to create peace in our lives and well-being in our souls. Mindfulness can foster feelings of compassion and open our hearts to living with compassion. Being compassionate toward others begins with being compassionate with ourselves. Spending time in nonjudgmental awareness allows one to embrace the self and others.

This course has reviewed the many ways that mindfulness can support overall health and well-being. Decreasing stress and increasing awareness seem to be the major link between all of these types of therapy. residential care facility administrators can improve their own health and well-being along with their clients by regularly practicing mindfulness techniques. Mindfulness practice increases compassion, reduces burnout,

and lessens anxiety and fatigue. Increasing awareness and compassion could energize the Residential care facility staff for the valuable work that they do each day.

Mindfulness practice is also a useful tool for clients who suffer from anxiety, depression, or anger. residential care facility administrators who cultivate a mindfulness practice can build trusting relationships with clients and tend to more readily encourage education on mindfulness. Mindfulness increases insight by helping us become more aware of feelings and thoughts that are negative and not useful. Letting go of unhealthy thought patterns may improve the health of the client and reassure the administrator to feel a sense of accomplishment in working with sometimes difficult people.

Mindful eating would be beneficial to everyone in our society. Rediscovering a healthy relationship with food renews our sense of appreciation for the pleasure of eating. When a residential care facility administrator is rushed to eat, mindful awareness of nourishment is lost, contributing to overeating and poor food habits. This can lead to fatigue, digestive issues, and lack of energy. For clients, eating can be a highlight of the day or an unpleasant experience. Using mindfulness at mealtimes helps clients focus on an awareness of nourishment as a source of healing. There are many ways to use mindfulness to increase a sense of peace and relaxation. Mindfulness could become an essential tool for administrators to use for themselves, their families, and their clients.

Self-Assessment: True or False. Compassion is a sympathetic consciousness of the distress of others and a desire to alleviate that stress.

Answer: a. True

### **5.1. Teaching Mindfulness (25 minutes)**

In 1988, Merle Mishel developed the uncertainty in illness theory, which posits that uncertainty in illness is the inability of clients and families to determine the meaning of illness-related events during the diagnostic and treatment phases of an illness. This middle-range theory contends that coping with uncertainty causes stress and disharmony in the body and mind. To overcome this disharmony, Mishel's theory proposes the aspects that are needed to assist in overcoming the uncertainty of illness, including the client's acceptance of his or her illness and a new view of life. Negative aspects that affect uncertainty include emotional distress and fear of life situations caused by anxiety. In 1990, Mishel reconceptualized the uncertainty in illness theory to address the experience of living with a chronic illness or illness with the possibility of recurrence. The two new concepts in the reconceptualized theory include self-organization and probabilistic thinking. client care that is based on Mishel's uncertainty in illness theory can benefit from the use of mindfulness practice to support adaptation in coping. Working with clients to share your mindfulness practice could be an important wellness tool in many client situations.

Practicing mindfulness can influence both good and bad life experiences and enable each of us to come to know our true humanity and our relationship to others in the world. Once you start to practice and begin to employ the concepts of mindfulness, it is easier to create habits of mindfulness and to share authentically the benefits with clients, families, and others. Kabat-Zinn (2016) has stated that practicing mindfulness enables the mind and body to become more stable and insightful. Tracing the lineage of mindfulness from early Eastern religions to its modern secular presence in Western medicine has proven that mindfulness practice can assist people with health issues and help them to manage everyday common stressors. In dialoging with a client, it is important to understand their worldview, culture, religious beliefs, and how open they are to interventions such as mindfulness. In a case where an individual views these practices as being in opposition to their own religious or spiritual beliefs, there is no need to continue the discussion of mindfulness. If someone is not ready or willing to participate in mindfulness practice, it should not be pursued, but for many clients, administrators, and others, it can be an invaluable intervention. If you plant a seed about mindfulness as an intervention to consider, you give the person permission to inquire when and if they are ready.

As you begin to explore mindfulness practice, let us review several of the important attributes of mindfulness. When you start on the path of mindfulness practice you begin right where you are. This means being gentle with yourself, especially if you feel you are not doing it right. Continue with a daily commitment to practice without judgment or expectations. As you become more proficient with regular practice over time, there is usually an experience of increased awareness of whatever is happening in your life: good, bad, or indifferent. This may create a greater sense of well-being and greater objectivity as you let go more easily of your stress, worry, and anger. You may begin to uncover your innate nature that welcomes health, peacefulness, and compassion. You may also notice negative emotions and sensations that you have been avoiding come to the surface and recognize this as part of your own resistance to change. Examining what is good and wholesome in addition to those feelings that are not wholesome is an important aspect of all psychologic and spiritual development. Mindfulness is a method that can be used to release unhealthy thoughts or beliefs to transform ourselves into who we truly are. Let us begin to practice and think about our own mindfulness so that we can work with others in our practice.

### **Opening to the Beginner's Mind**

The beginner's mind allows us to open our body and mind to the practice of mindfulness with a new and open spirit. The beginner's mind supports curiosity and wonder in the present moment. As we practice mindfulness, we take baby steps like a child beginning to walk. With an attitude of beginner's mind, we are open to new possibilities, to new information, and to creating an attitude of engaged awareness.

## Setting the Stage

To begin mindfulness practice, we need to stop all external and internal activity to open ourselves to an interior stillness. This is not an easy thing to do in today's world, when the clamor for our attention is strong. The stillness of the present moment is being totally aware of the now. Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu wrote that "The key to growth is the introduction of higher dimensions of consciousness into our awareness: As you let go of thoughts and emotions that weigh you down and rise in awareness to only the present moment you will find that you become more serene and calm" (Beaulac, 2016). The beginner's mind is open and fresh in the approach to this type of mindfulness practice. If we are clients as we explore mindfulness with our beginner's mind, we open ourselves up to new and exciting potentials. Being in the moment and paying attention to the sensations of breathing enable the mind and body to slow down and release tension and stress. As you practice awareness you will notice that each moment provides beauty, gratitude, and the sense of an abundant life. As our consciousness expands with mindfulness practice, we will begin to overcome the emotional and mental longings, hurts, and obsessions and allow our consciousness to focus on awareness that takes us back to our true nature of kindness, love, and wisdom. As an example, mindful eating focuses on the awareness of chewing and eating each piece of food in a thoughtful, sensory way, filled with awareness of the benefits that food provides to our bodies.

Self-Assessment: True or False. Practicing mindfulness can influence the good but not the bad life experiences.

Answer: b. False

Before we can be introduced to higher dimensions of consciousness, we should investigate exactly what consciousness is and what it means. Consciousness is everything you experience. It is all of the thoughts, emotions, and feelings that appear in our lives and become aspects of who we are and how we behave. Many philosophers have sought to understand how consciousness works and how it influences our lives. At the most basic level, consciousness begins in the brain and generates experiences and feelings such as pain, full bladder sensations, and smell. The cerebellum of the brain participates in consciousness as we experience motor movements, posture, and gait. More complex motor movements, such as playing the piano, typing, ice skating, or mountain climbing, also involve the consciousness that stems from the cerebellum. We know that the brain is so complex that when one part of the brain is unable to function (from stroke, head injury, or even when overwhelmed by stress) other parts of the brain are sometimes able to take over for it. This creates a form of parallel or overlapping consciousness in the brain.

In an experiment that demonstrates brain processing, two different images were presented – one to the right eye only and one to the left eye only (Koch, 2018). Over a minute or so, participants alternatively saw each of the images one at a time in what neuroscientists call binocular rivalry. This happened because the brain was able to decide which image to focus on even when they were equally represented. Processes such as language, planning, and memory are imprinted on the brain and respond with action when called to do so from external stimuli. The brain uses all aspects and stimuli of an experience to fully evaluate the experience in consciousness. For example, if you are sitting in a park on a sunny day, feeling the breeze in your hair and the warmth of the sun on your face as you watch a dog at play with its owner, these feelings and sensations cannot be separated into parts without the experience being changed in your consciousness as well. This allows us to see that consciousness encompasses how we feel, what we think, and how we can influence our view of the world around us.

Consciousness emerges over and above simple physical properties and is formed using experience, emotion, and feelings of security. Putting two people in the exact same place with the exact same experiences can cause different consciousness-inspired responses based on memory, perception, and interpretation. One person may be happy and calm while the other may be fearful. Think about a person you know who is always worrying; have you ever wondered why they always worry, even when you are able to determine why they are worried? That is the result of their consciousness stemming from memory and experiences. As we attempt to use our conscious mind to make sense of our lives, we either become the sum of our thoughts and experiences (whether real or imagined) or we modify who we are and how we react to the world by focusing on our nonjudgmental awareness of any thought or feeling.

A quote from the Buddhist Prayer Book states that We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. Speak or act with an impure mind and trouble will follow you. We are what we think. With our thoughts we make the world. Speak or act with a pure mind and happiness will follow you. In this world, hate never yet dispelled hate. Only love dispels hate. This is the Law, ancient and inexhaustible. We are what we think. (Rinpoche, 2013, p. 3).

How do we point ourselves into a pure mind filled with love and drive out the disruptive destructive thoughts that come from interacting with the world? How do we work to become happy? Another Buddhist saying is: Happiness is a choice not a result. Nothing will make you happy until you choose to be happy. No person will make you happy unless you decide to be happy. Your happiness will not come to you. It can only come from you. (Chodron, 2011, p. 2). How do we choose happiness? How do we decide to be happy? How do we frame our thoughts and experiences to be happy? One way to do this is through the transformative thinking of mindfulness and paying attention to the miracle and beauty of being.



We may have trouble when first attempting to become still and allow our brains to become quiet. The little voice in our head continues to chatter, and the more we are still the louder the chatter. Mindfulness practitioners call this the “monkey mind,” because it pesters each of us with often meaningless and unfounded problems and issues. Before beginning a mindfulness session, you should check in with your body or ask your clients to check in with their body. Body awareness involves an attentional focus on and awareness of internal body sensations. Close observation of internal experience is defined as awareness of internally generated stimuli such as sensations, cognition, and emotions. How does body awareness relate to mindfulness? Mindfulness encompasses more than awareness of inner sensations by including awareness of cognitive thoughts of any kind, which are not excluded from body awareness.

Self-Assessment: True or False. Consciousness emerges over and above simple physical properties and is formed using experience, emotion, and feelings of security.

Answer: a. True

## **5.2. Teaching Mindfulness (25 minutes)**

As we begin the practice of mindfulness and mindful meditation, we must quiet the monkey mind that babbles on and on about life, happenings, hurts, worries, and daily schedules. You cannot just quiet the monkey mind; you must try to put away that monkey mind and focus on a quieting ritual, knowing that once your meditation time is over you and your client can go back to the ordinary thinking process. Relax the muscles and release any tension that occurs. If the client is in pain, try to position them for as much comfort as possible and begin the mindfulness mediation after pain medication if possible.

### **Visualization**

One meditation leader used the example of picturing a box in your mind. Picture a beautiful ornate box with jewels and dark polished wood with a large lock on the front. Open the box and smell the sweet fragrance of the wood, gather up all of the thoughts from your monkey mind, and place them lovingly in the box, knowing that you will be able to retrieve them and that they will all be intact when you do. Lock the box and place it out of your mind’s view and then begin the quiet work of meditation.

### **Breathing**

Breathing is a natural and essential part of every living organism. Inhalation provides oxygen to the tissues of the body and breathing out allows for the exhalation of the waste products of metabolism, carbon dioxide. Although carbon dioxide is a waste product for animals, it is sustaining and required for plants to grow. So there is a beautiful and important symbiotic relationship between humans and plants just in the

breath. Breathing is a natural act regulated by the autonomic nervous system so that we are not always conscious of breathing. Once called to our attention, this natural act of breathing can enable the mind to quiet and thoughts to evaporate until we are simply focused on the breath and are present with each intake and outflow. Breathing meditations are best to help begin the process of mindfulness.

Short intervals are best as you begin to practice mindfulness. Again it is important to remember that using the beginner's mind, we are happy with what we can do rather than what we cannot do yet, knowing that as we practice, we will be able to spend more time in mindful meditation. Start with 3 to 5 minutes first and then extend the time by 1 minute every other day until you hit 10 minutes. Find a comfortable position in which to sit, relax your body and mind, and quiet that monkey mind. Then as you breathe in, say, "I am breathing in," and as you breathe out say, "I am breathing out."

Doing this pulls your mind into one thought and quiets that busy mind thinking. Every time the monkey mind thoughts start to seep into your brain while you are doing breathing meditation, refocus on the breath to bring your attention back to quiet focus. Do this again and again until your medication time ends. The point is that every time you bring your attention back to the breath, you work out your "attention muscle." As you do this over and over, your focus, concentration, and attention will improve. If you are doing this to help a client begin mindfulness practice, start by asking the person to concentrate on breathing in and out; sit with the person and practice your own meditation as you sit together. You may even need to start the first few sessions with saying aloud, "I am breathing in and I am breathing out," so that you both can focus on the breath. A client may fall asleep while you are assisting them to become centered and quiet in preparation for a mindfulness session. Sleep is one way to demonstrate relaxation and lower stress levels in the body, so if the client falls asleep while participating in this mindfulness meditation you have achieved your goal at one level. If the client is too anxious or agitated to become engaged in the mindfulness practice, it is important to be patient and work to bring them into a centering mind-set. This may take several sessions and may not be possible in the time you have with the client. Sometimes the best that we can do is to work toward relaxation for a time and then let it go and try another time. This is especially true if the client has had a trying or anxiety-filled day. Relaxation and mindfulness meditation must be entered into gradually, so do not be discouraged.

Mindfulness of the body is the first foundation of mindfulness and a wonderful place to begin to cultivate practice. It is our starting point and our anchor point to engage in present moment awareness. When we are engaged in present-moment awareness, our mind is free from ruminating over the past or worrying about the future. Traditional practices to cultivate mindfulness of body include exercises known as mindful walking meditation (see Table 4-1) and taking the body for a walk (see Table 4-2).

#### **TABLE 4-1: MINDFUL WALKING**

**MEDITATION** Choose a spot where you can walk unimpeded by furniture or crowds and where it is quiet. You do not need to have a very long space, perhaps about 20 feet in which to walk back and forth. Stand for a moment before you begin walking. Make sure your body is relaxed with your knees slightly bent. While gazing outwardly from where you are standing and paying attention to what is in front of you rather than looking down at your feet, become aware of where your feet touch the ground. Be aware of the weight of your body on your heels and feet. Before you begin your meditation, allow all your thoughts and feelings to float by as though they are on a river. As you begin to walk, become aware of each step as you raise your foot and as you bring it down again. As you come to the end of your walking path, spend a few seconds and feel your weight evenly distributed on both feet. Turn and go back to where you began. Notice the rhythm of your walk – step, place foot, step. As you become more aware of your movement you may become sleepy. If so, increase your walking speed to bring your attention back to your steps. Doing this for 10 minutes or so will calm your mind and focus your awareness on the moment so that you can become more mindful of right here, right now.

#### **TABLE 4-2: TAKING THE BODY FOR A WALK**

Relax your body and practice breathing in and out slowly. Think about releasing your “I” and notice how you feel when you release the “self.” As you breathe, focus on breathing in and out so that the breath is the focus of your thoughts. When you exhale, let go of all anxiety and all of that which is part of your “I” until you are one with the moment. As you breathe in and out, feel yourself becoming calm and being in the moment, aware of nothing other than what is happening at this moment. As you continue to breathe in and out and focus on the breath, let all the peacefulness and calmness of this moment wash over you and let your worries and concerns be put away for another time. After a few minutes, begin to move your body. Start by moving your fingers and toes gently, without any direction or any reason for the movement; simply experience the movement. Next, stand up gently and without any purpose. Just be aware of standing – how your legs and muscles move at this moment. When you are comfortable standing, start to walk with no “self” direction; simply be aware of your body in space and the movement you are making at this moment. When you can walk with awareness only and no “self” direction, sit down again in the same way; relax and breathe. As you relax, the “self” will reappear, but attempt to gently disperse the monkey brain chatter and return to an awareness of only this moment. Think about what the “self” brings and how it can be put aside to focus simply on the moment in awareness. After this walk, come back and remember the sense of awareness and the feeling of putting aside the “I” or “self.” Recognize that you can do this yourself at any time.

## **Mindful Walking Meditation**

This meditation will be appropriate for the residential care facility administrators and for clients who are ambulatory and can walk. It uses movement as a constant that allows the person to be aware of the body and physical sensations as they move while the mind is rooted in the present. It is an especially good meditation for anyone who finds it difficult to sit still and meditate. The mindful walking meditation script shown in Table 4-1 can be used for this type of meditation. The benefits of these meditations are that they can be integrated easily into schedules and they can be practiced in tandem with sitting meditation. Mindful walking meditation increases circulation and alerts us to poor posture and incorrect shallow breath as full attention is brought to the body. Walking naturally without analyzing can open the heart and help us appreciate body mechanics. Focusing the mind on the act of walking can completely silence thoughts and provide a respite for new perspectives. It is relevant to mention the secular and particular care applications and benefits of practice.

This course focuses on how to begin a practice of mindfulness. Looking at Mishel's uncertainty theory, it becomes evident why mindfulness should be considered an intervention. The use of mindfulness for selfcare to prevent the burnout from the stresses related to caring and advocating for clients makes mindfulness practice important to administrators as well. Mindfulness practice takes patience and perseverance because the monkey mind will continue to try to detract attention from awareness of the now. Nonjudgmental feelings toward life's turmoil and stresses are the benefits of mindfulness practice. As residential care facility administrators personally adopt their own mindfulness practice and begin to experience the benefits of a peaceful life, they will be able to guide clients and families toward this useful intervention to decrease stress and uncertainty, thereby improving quality of life and well-being.

Self-Assessment: True or False. Mindfulness of the body is the first foundation of mindfulness and a wonderful place to begin to cultivate practice.

Answer: a. True

### **6.1. Guided Sessions (25 minutes)**

As beginners in mindfulness practice, it is important to note that we do not suppress feelings and thoughts but bring mindful awareness to them. There is an expression related to this phenomenon: "what you meet will retreat, and what you resist will persist." By meeting our thoughts and feelings with mindful awareness, we are better able to see them for what they are: observing events of mind that come and go like waves. The mind is a deep and vast place where attention and awareness can sift through the wave motions of thought and see them in a broader context in hopes of making sense of their meaning.

Awareness is a skill that we train through mindfulness techniques. With patience and time we can learn to use our awareness to meet all our thoughts and emotions with kindness and self-compassion and look at them as they really are rather than have them fleeting through our brain, stirring up unwanted feelings. We have discussed beginning our mindfulness practice by focusing on the breath; the inhalation and exhalation is a way to center ourselves and our thoughts. Using breath as a beginning to mindfulness practice makes us aware of a simple but essential bodily function in a way that facilitates the ability to pay attention to one thing at a time – only the breath. Therefore, mindfulness practice is all about awareness. Awareness can move us away from our own feelings of self-reproach and helps us to focus on what is real and important in our lives. Through awareness we can release our misperceptions and misapprehensions of reality. Awareness frees us from detrimental beliefs, ideas, and prejudices.

With mindful awareness, we grow the capacity to step back from the situation – even if the situation happens to be our own thoughts – possibly allowing us to not engage and perhaps even detach. Detachment resulting from this fuller awareness may free the mind from racing thoughts so that awareness of the immediate and contemplation of what is important are more evident. Detachment is different from indifference, which implies that you are walking away from something rather than seeing it with new awareness.

As you begin your mindfulness practice, it is easier to put things in their proper perspective. With this broader perspective, mindful awareness skills, and support, we may now find we can look back on past events in life with greater clarity. It is interesting to look now with clarity at some of the factors that have had an impact on how our lives have unfolded. It is possible to view each achievement or failure as a learning experience and fill your mind with wonder at how the world unfolds. Detach yourself from feelings of pride and feelings of failure and keep on an even plane with feelings of trust, gratitude, and compassion toward yourself and others. As you continue to practice mindfulness, you may notice that identifying with the contents of our thoughts and emotions does not support us. Our mindful and peaceful life can begin when we examine and pay attention in a different and larger way so that we can overcome our identification with those thoughts of the “I” and emotions from the ego and focus on the actuality of life unfolding moment by moment.

Stress is inevitable; how we perceive the stress determines whether we experience a host of distressing feelings and emotions. With mindful awareness cultivated through our continued practice, we expand the ability to choose how we respond to stress and to use awareness and nonjudgmental thinking to change our response to stress. Using a mindfulness-based stress reduction practice can help individuals address problems associated with stress, such as sleep disturbance, stomach and headache problems,

fatigue, and problems with family and friends. A summary of the principles for creating your own mindfulness approach to stress can be found at <https://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/mindfulnessbased-programs>. The following list provides a foundation for mindfulness practice and will enable you to establish mindfulness as a way to improve your life.

1. Making the experience a challenge rather than a chore and thus turning the observing of one's life mindfully into an adventure in living rather than one more thing one has to do for oneself to be healthy
2. Viewing mindfulness-based stress reduction as a way to do something for your own health and well-being
3. An emphasis on the importance of individual effort and motivation and regular disciplined practice of the meditation in its various forms, regardless of whether one feels like practicing on a particular day
4. Committing to an immediate lifestyle change that is necessary to undertake formal mindfulness practice because it requires daily practice
5. The importance of making each moment count by consciously bringing it into awareness during practice, thus stepping out of clock time into the present moment
6. Keeping track of our mindfulness work so that you are able to see progress – this can be done by keeping a journal or through participating in a mindfulness group either in person or online

The following mindfulness techniques are methods that can be used in your personal mindfulness process or when you are working with clients.

Each of these techniques can be used to cultivate your personal mindfulness practice, which you may eventually wish to share with others.

- Focus attention meditation. This type of mindfulness practice has an emphasis on looking inward. Often using the breath as an anchor is a good way to begin this practice and calm the mind so you can move to inward thoughts. Other focus attention practices use the senses such as sound, touch, taste, body awareness, and movement.
- Open awareness meditation. This type of mindfulness practice emphasizes the external rather than the internal. The first step is to quiet your mind and center yourself. Picture your thoughts as they travel through your mind. View each thought from a detached perspective and observe all your thoughts without any judgment. Simply watch them float by as if they were attached to leaves falling from a tree. Notice how your thoughts become patterns and allow them to float past and vanish from sight. Watch your thoughts move down from the tree. Watch them float away and allow

yourself to observe the sensations that these thoughts can evoke from a distance. You may pick out one thought from your stream and spend a minute focusing on that thought and then allow it to drift from you. As you become aware of your thoughts you will be able to better understand what they mean and how you can react to them with calmness and confidence.

The following is a guide to a simple open awareness exercise.

- Begin this exercise by taking a breath in and allowing that breath to float outward from your mouth. As you take in the next breath, allow your body to relax. Keep breathing and relaxing your body until you are ready to move forward.
- After you are relaxed, see a tree in your mind's eye. All the leaves on that tree are your thoughts. Watch as the wind blows your thoughts to-and-fro. As each thought passes through your mind, see it as a leaf that falls from a tree.
- Once you have allowed your thoughts to be like leaves in your mind and can see them as separate from yourself, pick out one thought and focus on it. Identify any feelings or sensations that come from focusing on that thought. Take time until you are comfortable with that thought and you are able to see it for what it is – just a thought
- Once you have been able to fully see that thought as an object and not a reality, let it drift slowly downward toward the earth.

Following is a list of different mindfulness meditation practices that can be tried easily.

- Body scan – Lie flat on the floor or bed with eyes closed. Move your mind through your body, starting at your toes and moving upward through your legs, your torso, and your upper body and then your head and face. When you find an area that seems tight or sore, stop there and focus your breath on this area until you can relax it. Use visualization (like a ball of white light) to melt the soreness and pain.
- Object meditation – Hold an object that you find interesting in your mind. Focus all of your senses on it and notice the size, shape, color, texture, smell, tastes, or sound it makes. Continue focusing on that object, changing each of those sensual things as they come into your mind.
- Walking mindfulness – Take a gentle walk at a comfortable pace. Know that you are not trying to get anywhere but are participating in a mindfulness exercise – you can walk in circles or up and down a hall. You will remain detached and nonjudgmental of whatever comes to mind. Observe how you walk and pay attention to the sensations in your body as you walk. Notice any areas of your body that feel tense or loose. Notice the sensation as your foot meets the ground and the swing of your hips with each stride. Match your breathing to your gait and focus on the synchronicity of your walk. If your mind wanders from the focus, notice where it has gone, then calmly and peacefully

escort it back to the walking. People who are agitated may find walking meditation a good fit, as the physical movement helps the mind focus on the agitation in a detached way.

Self-Assessment: True or False. Awareness is a skill that we do not train through mindfulness techniques.

Answer: b. False

## **6.2. Guided Sessions (20 minutes)**

- Mindful stretching – Do any comfortable stretches that you enjoy or go online to find some simple stretching activities. As you stretch, envision your muscles and joints moving. Feel your body move, and as with the body scan, check for any tension or stiffness. While holding a stretching pose, breathe into the soreness or tension until it is gone. Then go onto another stretch as you feel empowered with the moment to be aware of your body and your mind and release all the built-up stress.
- Worry surfing – This exercise helps you to see your worries and fears as a wave. These strong feelings come at you with a force like a big ocean wave that is about to crash upon you. The way to use mindfulness to reduce the force of this big wave is first to be aware of the signs that indicate that a wave is forming for you. See the wave as it comes toward you while you are still in shallow water. Notice what is a part of the wave. What is the fear? What is the worry? What is the urge that you want to resist? Brace your mind for this wave and realize that these are only thoughts, not realities. Allow the wave to pick you up and ride the wave without allowing the fear or worry or urge to take over you. Then allow the swell of the wave to pass and leave you standing once again strong and steady. Life is an ebb and flow and emotions do not last forever. Using the image of a wave will help you to stand strong against the waves in life.

Think of a recent event when you felt nervous or worried. Remember how you felt and notice the disconcerting thoughts. Perhaps you will observe images of disaster, but as you become more mindful and aware you will note the judgments that you made about this worry made it worse. Let your anxiety rise, and perceive the sensations and how your mind evaluates them. Label these thoughts with “I am noticing.” Be aware of sensations such as tightness and warmth. As you detect the emotional wave, you may see it as tall and frightening. As the wave washes over you, you notice that the swell passes and the wave runs its course. Let this happen without controlling or blocking it. Keep feeling the emotional waves come, crest, and pass. You will soon find that you are able to go to this mindfulness place each time a nervous or worried emotion becomes evident – you will observe it approach, crest, and fall without judgment or fear.

Anger is a strong emotion that can have an adverse impact on health and well-being. Overcoming anger and angry feelings takes effort and control over emotions and strong



feelings. Sometimes anger is caused by interactions between people or by what a person has done that has affected you or someone you love negatively. These moments of anger strike everyone from time to time. How we react to feelings of anger can determine how well we move forward from anger to peace. Using nonjudgmental awareness to dissipate feelings of anger makes mindfulness a strong tool toward anger management. In one study, mindfulness-based interventions alleviated the cognitive, affective, and behavioral manifestations of anger (Wright, Day, & Howells, 2009). Among adolescents with Asperger's syndrome, mindfulness practice demonstrated the ability to control aggressive behavior (Singh et al., 2011).

The following are suggestions for a mindfulness program when you experience feelings of anger.

- It is important to remember that when you experience anger because of a person or situation, you are causing harm to your own peace of mind and are often unable to accomplish anything useful.
- As you sit quietly and use a nonjudgmental attitude to draw attention to what you are feeling, allow your heart and mind to be open to these feelings. Do not become engaged with these feelings but allow them to flow past your mind and heart in a detached way.

Allow yourself to feel patience with what you are experiencing and enter a meditation as follows:

1. Focus on loving yourself; think of yourself with kindness and compassion. Begin to concentrate on the friendship you want to have with yourself. You are good and worthy of loving kindness.
2. Now think about someone you like a lot – a friend or family member. Think of this person experiencing a problem in their lives and going through a time of trouble. Think about how you would help them cope and how you would show them love and acceptance during this time. You would truly wish them well and want them to feel better.
3. Next, think about a person who you know but have no real connection to, for example, a clerk in a store that you go to frequently or a person at work who you do not know well. Think about this person with loving kindness and compassion to wish them well in their life. Extend a hand of friendship in your meditation to this person and help them to know that you are asking the universe to watch over them in love.
4. The final and most difficult part of this meditation is to think of someone with whom you are angry or with whom you do not feel comfortable. These feelings may be related to what they have done or what feelings have come from them toward you. In your meditation, begin to be aware that you want to extend your love to them and send

compassion to them. In your mind let go of all of the issues you have with this person or situation to be free of anger and hate at this moment. Open your mind to embrace this person, and as angry thoughts float through your mind, allow them to float down the river toward the universe and away from you.

5. When you have gone through all of these steps, become aware of a circle in your mind where you embrace each of these groups: yourself, a friend, an acquaintance, and someone with whom you have had a difficult relationship. Allow the circle to embrace all of these people together with healing, love, and compassion. As you end your mindfulness practice to dissipate anger, see that all of the people in your circle are just people and that your love for all of them including yourself is good energy.

If you have heard about mindful eating but are not sure where or how to start, here are instructions for a brief mindful eating exercise. It is simple and will only take a few minutes.

- Find a small piece of food, such as one raisin or nut or a small cookie. You can use any food that you like. Eating with mindfulness is not about deprivation or rules.

- Begin by exploring this little piece of food using as many of your senses as possible. ° First, look at the food. Notice its texture. Notice its color. Now close your eyes and explore the food with your sense of touch. What does this food feel like? Is it hard or soft? Grainy or sticky? Moist or dry?

- ° Note that you are not being asked to think but just to notice different aspects of your experience using one sense at a time. This is what it means to eat mindfully.

- Before you eat, explore this food with your sense of smell. What do you notice?

- Now begin eating. No matter how small the bite of food you have, take at least two bites to finish it.

- Take your first bite. Please chew very slowly, noticing the actual sensory experience of chewing and tasting. Remember, you do not need to think about your food to experience it. You might want to close your eyes for a moment to focus on the sensations of chewing and tasting before continuing.

- Notice the texture of the food – the way it feels in your mouth.

- Notice if the intensity of its flavor changes moment to moment.

- Take about 20 more seconds to finish this first bite of food, being aware of the simple sensations of chewing and tasting very slowly. It is not always necessary to eat slowly to eat with mindfulness. But it is helpful at first to slow down to be as mindful as you can.

- Now please take your second and last bite.

° As before, chew very slowly while paying close attention to the actual sensory experience of eating – the sensations and movements of chewing, the flavor of the food as it changes, and the sensations of swallowing.

° Just pay attention, moment by moment. Mindful (awareness) eating is the foundation that many people have been missing for overcoming food cravings, addictive eating, binge eating, emotional eating, and stress eating (Collard & Stephenson, 2015).

Mindfulness practice can be beneficial to you personally and to your clients. When you as a residential care facility administrators practice mindfulness, you are calmer and more at peace. This peacefulness creates a peaceful attitude around you in your work life. Your clients and fellow workers will notice that you are less anxious and more unshakable in times of stress. When you have a lower level of stress, you can think more clearly, creatively, and critically. Noone, Bunting, and Hogan (2016) used the Halpern Critical Thinking Assessment to measure critical thinking and creativity in 178 university undergraduates. These researchers found evidence that a session on mindfulness can significantly increase creativity and critical thinking skills. Another study at an educational institution showed that offering mindfulness contemplation practices throughout the day increased students' ability to turn to well-being, creativity, and intuition as methods for problem solving (O'Donnell, 2015). These are very useful traits for administrators to possess when operating in a fast-paced, stressful environment while advocating and caring for clients. Introducing clients to mindfulness practices at whatever level they are ready to accept can help them feel calmer and more peaceful. It can guide them to accept health issues and continue to live a bountiful life. The several mindfulness exercises presented here can be used in your own practice or with a client to provide peace, calm, and a sense of well-being. In previous chapters, we discussed the evidence for the use of mindfulness for addiction, obesity, pain, and suffering. Each of the mindful exercises in this chapter can help you to lead clients to a better life.

Self-Assessment: True or False. Anger is a strong emotion that can have an adverse impact on health and well-being.

Answer: a. True

### **Post-test (25 minutes)**

See attached Introduction to Mindfulness Post-test (with answer key).

### **Survey (5 minutes)**

See attached Course and Instructor Evaluation Survey.

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6 Mindfulness Exercises You Can Try Today

<https://www.pocketmindfulness.com/6-mindfulness-exercises-you-can-try-today/>

Center for Mindful Self-Compassion <https://centerformsc.org/>

Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society

<https://umassmed.edu/cfm/>

Free Audio Resources for Mindfulness Meditation <http://www.mindful.org/audio>

The Free Mindfulness Project <http://www.freemindfulness.org/download>

Mindfulness.com <https://www.mindfulness.com/>

MBSR: 25 Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Exercises and Course

<https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/mindfulness-based-stress-reduction-mbsr/>

MBSR Website for the Mindfulness Program at University of Massachusetts

<https://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/mindfulness-based-programs/faqs-mbsr-mbct/>

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Calm – Meditation Techniques for Sleep and Stress Reduction <https://www.calm.com/>  
Headspace: Meditation and Mindfulness Made Simple <https://www.headspace.com/>  
Insight Timer <https://insighttimer.com/>

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The following records shall be maintained:

1. Course Schedules, Dates, and Descriptions
2. Course Outlines
3. Lists of Instructors and Resumes
4. Rosters of Participants
5. Course Evaluations by Participants
6. Documentation of Participant Course Completion

Location of Course:

This is an online course. All digital copies of records are maintained at the Educate Simplify Platform's server. Moreover, printed copies of records are maintained at 3580 Wilshire Blvd., 17<sup>th</sup> Floor Suite 1705 C&D, Los Angeles, CA, 90010.