Mindfulness, Meditation and Momentum: Maintaining Balance & Ease

Presentation to the Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) 4th Annual Women’s Conference
"(Re) Defining the UC San Diego Woman: Keeping the Momentum"
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Steven D. Hickman, Psy.D.
Associate Clinical Professor
UCSD Departments of Psychiatry and Family & Preventive Medicine
Director, UCSD Center for Mindfulness
The Summer Day
What is Mindfulness?

Moment-to-moment . . .
  . . . non-judgmental . . .
  . . . awareness.

“...paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.”

-- Jon Kabat-Zinn
The “Active” Ingredient

- “Non-doing”
- Aware but “riding the wave”
- Recognizing emotional or cognitive reactions as simply that
- Fundamentally changing one’s relationship with pain, anxiety, depression, thoughts or feelings
- Not “YOUR pain” or “THE pain”
The First Meditation
Coping With Stress

Responding vs. Reacting

Internal Stress Events

- Stress Reaction
- Internalization
- Maladaptive Coping

Breakdown

Onset or Exacerbation of Pain

- Fight or Flight
- Alarm Reactivity
- Mindfulness

Stress Response
Mindfulness in Relation to Physical Pain as an Example

- MBSR developed initially in response to the needs of patients with chronic pain
- A Hospital as a “Suffering Magnet”
- The Three Sources of Suffering or “The Struggle with What Is”
Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

- Developed and implemented at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center over the past 20 years by Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn
- Rooted in 2000-year-old Eastern traditions
- Outlined in *Full Catastrophe Living* by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D.
- Thousands of patients have completed MBSR programs across the country
The Practice of MBSR

An Eight-Week Program of . . .

- Meditation
- Guided Relaxation
- Gentle Yoga/Stretching
- Group support/discussion
- Weekly classes for 2.5 hours
- Daily practice of 45-60 minutes
The “Landscape” of Pain

Will this pain affect my marriage?

I can’t take this pain!

How can I stop this pain?

What did I do to cause this pain?

What if the pain never leaves?

What if...?
Thoughts Turn to Feelings
(Thoughts Treated Like Facts)

PAIN

- ANXIETY
- GUILT
- HELPLESS
- FEAR
- GRIEF
- DEPRESSED
The Thoughts are Still There!

**The Thoughts are Still There!**

- Will this pain affect my marriage?
- I can't take this pain!
- What did I do to cause this pain?
- What if...
- How can I stop this pain?
- What if the pain never leaves?

ANXIETY

GRIEF

FEAR

DEPRESSED

GUILT

HELPLESS
Coping Using Distraction (Guided Imagery)

“Picture yourself on a beach somewhere. Imagine the sound of the waves and the image of your pain floating away on a cloud.”

Will this pain affect my marriage?

How can I stop this pain?

What if...?
What Happens When You Stop Guided Imagery?

“What if…? How can I stop this pain? What did I do to cause this pain? Will this pain affect my marriage? What if the pain never leaves?"

“Picture yourself on a beach somewhere. Imagine the sound of the waves and the image of your pain floating away on a cloud.”

GUILT
HELPLESS
GRIEF
DEPRESSION
ANXIETY
PAIN
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GRIEF
DEPRESSION
ANXIETY
PAIN
GUILT
HELPLESS
GRIEF
DEPRESSION
ANXIETY
PAIN
Holding Pain in Awareness

Meditation

- How can I stop this pain?
- What did I do to cause this pain?
- What if...?
- What if the pain never leaves?
- I can’t take this pain!
- Will this pain affect my marriage?
Holding Pain in Awareness

Meditation

- ANXIOUS
- GRIEF
- GUILT
- FEAR
- HELPLESS
- DEPRESSED

Will this pain affect my marriage?

I can't take this pain!

I don't know what to do to cause this pain?

What if…?

What if the pain never leaves?

How can I stop this pain?
What Awareness/Mindfulness Brings . . .

An awareness of what is ACTUALLY present:
- Sensation, as it is in this moment
- Thoughts (about the cause, the course, the implications, other non-pain related thoughts)
- Emotions

As well as awareness of what is NOT present:
- Other moments (past or future)
- Feared or anticipated events
Research Findings to Date . . .

- Improved quality of life among diverse samples of patients
- Reduced physical symptoms
- Decreased psychological distress

For More Information . . .

Steven D. Hickman, Psy.D.
University of California at San Diego
Department of Psychiatry
UCSD Center for Mindfulness
200 West Arbor Drive, MC 8218
San Diego, CA 92103-8218
(858) 822-6868
shickman@ucsd.edu