Mindfulness: The Link Between Wellness and Mental Health

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Mindful Benefits
Scottsdale, Arizona
Mindfulness and Mental Health

1. Drivers of health outcomes and benefit costs.
2. Mindfulness and employee benefit plan design.
3. Evidence base for mindfulness interventions.
What is Mindfulness?
Experiential learning
“THE PRACTICE OF PAYING ATTENTION TO THE PRESENT MOMENT ON PURPOSE WITHOUT JUDGMENT.”

LISA SCHMIDT
CEBS, MS, CN, CYT, E-RYT
MINDFULNESS AND MENTAL HEALTH

- STRESS: the driver of health outcomes.
- STRESS: the number 1 problem.
- The relationship between STRESS and Wellness.
- Employer’s responsibility for wellness outcomes.
“Stress is the single, non-specific reaction of the body to a demand made on it.”

Dr. Hans Selye
(1974)
STRESS IN AMERICA

• APA ANNUAL SURVEY
• Money
• Parents, millennials, lower income
• Consequences: Health care on hold, relationship problems
• Solution: Emotional support, connection to others
• Tools to manage stress: MINDFULNESS
STRESS IN CANADA

- Mental Health Commission of Canada
- 1 in 5 people in Canada experience a mental health problem
- More than 1 in 4 workers report “highly stressful” lives (General Social Survey, Statistics Canada)
  - Half a million Canadians miss work weekly
- Tools to manage stress: MINDFULNESS
THE COSTS: US and CANADA

- Serious mental illness
- Direct and indirect costs exceed $317 billion (US)
- Direct and indirect costs exceed $20 billion (Canada)
- SMI ↓ life expectancy up to 32 years
- Depression: #1 cause of disability
- Negative affect
  - Anger, fear, guilt, nervousness
60-90% of health care spending is for stress related conditions.

Source: Benson Henry Institute.
US Employers spend $600 per employee annually on wellness. Employee engagement is at an all time low. Do we offer what matters?

Source: Rand Corporation & Gallup
Fewer than 1% of Canadian Employers evaluate ROI on wellness efforts, focusing instead on participation rates, employee satisfaction and engagement.

Do we measure (or offer) what matters?

Source: The Conference Board, Canada
STRESS, WELLNESS, EE BENEFITS

- Do you measure what matters?
- Wellness plans and incentives; “one-offs”
- Gadgets, trackers, tools
- Consequences: Behavior focuses on earning $$
- Solution: Increase employee Quality of Life (QoL)
- Measure * Monitor * Assess and Report Results
Mindful Breath

Sit back and relax! A guided version is available for you.

http://bit.ly/1HU96aa
MINDFULNESS AND MENTAL HEALTH

- ✔ STRESS: The driver of health outcomes.
- ✔ STRESS: The number 1 problem.
- ☐ The relationship between STRESS and Wellness.
- ☐ Employer’s responsibility for wellness outcomes.
Next Generation Employee Benefit Programs Address the #1 Cost Driver—stress—through mindfulness interventions.
Nervous System

Central Nervous System (CNS)
- Brain: Receives and processes sensory information, initiates responses, stores, memories, generates thoughts and emotions
- Spinal cord: Conducts signals to and from the brain, controls reflex activities

Peripheral Nervous System (PNS)
- Motor Neurons: CNS to muscles and glands
- Sensory Neurons: Sensory organs to CNS

Somatic Nervous System
- Controls voluntary movements

Autonomic Nervous System
- Controls involuntary responses
  - Sympathetic Division: “Fight or Flight”
  - Parasympathetic Division: “Rest or Digest”
The Stress Response

What happens when the body moves into flight, flight, or freeze mode?

**Fight-or-flight Response**

- hypothalamus
  - activates sympathetic nervous system
    - impulses activate glands and smooth muscles
- activates adrenal medulla
  - releases norepinephrine
- activates adrenal-cortical system by releasing CRF
  - pituitary gland secretes hormone ACTH
    - ACTH arrives at adrenal cortex and releases approximately 30 hormones

Neural activity combines with hormones in the bloodstream to constitute fight-or-flight response

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Cortisol and Stress Hormones

Adrenal Glands and Their Essential Bodily Functions

- **Inflammation Modulation**
  - immune regulations
  - pro-inflammatory & anti-inflammatory
- **Carbohydrate Metabolism**
  - cell energetics
  - glucose homeostasis
- **Detoxification Capacity**
  - heavy metal, toxins, hormone detox
- **Neural Tissue Health**
  - memory, learning, sleep & mood
- **MuscloSkeletal**
  - bone turnover, muscle integrity, connective tissue
- **Metabolism**
  - weight/fat distribution
  - body composition
  - protein turnover
  - mucosal integrity
- **CORTISOL**
- **DHEA**
- **Endocrine Function**
  - thyroid, pancreas, insulin, ovarian function
Stress can affect various health conditions:

- Colds and flu
- Cancer
- Depression
- Eczema and other skin disorders
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Stomach ulcers
- Heart disease
- Asthma
Mindfulness and Mental Health

1. Drivers of health outcomes and benefit costs.
2. Mindfulness and employee benefit plan design.
3. Evidence base for mindfulness interventions.
Can we be “well” if we are stressed?
Academic researchers have analyzed the positive impact which mindfulness based interventions have had on students’ academic success and performance, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.
The Evidence

Medical Intervention Research Base

NEUROPLASTICITY
The Evidence

Medical Intervention Research Base

INTEROCEPTION

Body Awareness

Interception

Exteroception
The Evidence

Successful Worksite Interventions

Forward thinking organizations have recognized that mindfulness based interventions address STRESS in a rigorous, evidence-based, widely accepted way. With a body-mind-spirit focus combined with employee benefits precision, Mindfulness interventions are smart, scalable, and affordable. THEY WORK!!
Employer Case Study
Pre and Post Survey

• 32 evidence based questions
• Measures across domains, QoL
• Goal: Moving along a continuum of mindful awareness
  – Equates to stress reduction
  – Distress tolerance
  – Skill building
1. At work, it is easy for me to concentrate on what I am doing.

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2. In my work environment, I can accept things I cannot change.

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3. At work, I often find myself thinking about things at home.

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4. I am able to accept the thoughts and feelings that I have.

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5. At work, I am able to pay close attention to one thing for a long time.

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6. At work, I am easily distracted.

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11. When I notice that I'm not paying attention, I can redirect my attention to the conversation or task at hand.

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12. I appreciate myself at work and honor my contributions as part of the team.

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13. I pay attention to what is behind my actions at work.

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14. I feel connected to my team members, my manager, and my customers.

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15. When confronted with difficulties at work, I can pause without immediately reacting.

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16. I am friendly to myself when things go wrong at work.

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What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a mental practice used to focus attention on the present moment, rather than on the usual “chatter” that’s going on in our heads.

Practicing Mindfulness

Notice the senses in your morning routine. Savor the taste, feel, + texture of your food. Notice how your body feels when walking. Periodically drive w/o listening to the radio.
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<th>WEEK</th>
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<tr>
<td>ONE</td>
<td>HOW TO STRESS LESS: THE SCIENCE OF MINDFULNESS</td>
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<td>TWO</td>
<td>INCREASING AWARENESS TO PROMOTE RELAXATION</td>
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<td>THREE</td>
<td>THE ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE</td>
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<td>FOUR</td>
<td>STEPS TO MINDFULNESS</td>
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<td>FIVE</td>
<td>MINDING YOUR EMOTIONS</td>
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<td>SIX</td>
<td>POSITIVE = POSITIVE</td>
<td>71</td>
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<td>SEVEN</td>
<td>MINDFUL EATING</td>
<td>85</td>
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<td>EIGHT</td>
<td>EMOTIONAL EATING</td>
<td>101</td>
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<tr>
<td>NINE</td>
<td>HOW TO MAKE = AND SUSTAIN = STRESS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND BEHAVIOR CHANGES</td>
<td>119</td>
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<td>TEN</td>
<td>ARE YOU TENSE? YOUR BODY IS CALLING</td>
<td>133</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELEVEN</td>
<td>STOP COUNTING SHEEP ... (INSOMNIA BE GONE)</td>
<td>147</td>
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<tr>
<td>TWELVE</td>
<td>CONGRATULATIONS!</td>
<td>159</td>
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Employee Education

- Train the trainer
- Involves work team thought leaders
  - “Mindful mentors”
- Scalable
- Affordable
- Sustainable

The SNS slows down when it is interrupted by the PNS. Through the PNS, we can intentionally develop the ability to shift our body from the “fight or flight” response into the “rest and digest” response, releasing us from a habitual pattern of stress response. The ability to intentionally create a more relaxed state comes from practicing mindfulness. As we learn more about our own bodies, their responses to stress, and the triggers that move us into the fight-or-flight mode, we can begin to practice skillful responses that promote relaxation instead of stress.
Results from the Intervention
Mindfulness and Mental Health

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Thank you!!!

Time for Questions