



## How Mindfulness Can Help Relieve Stress

Celebrating a Second Chance at Life Survivorship Symposium

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## Mindfulness and Meditation


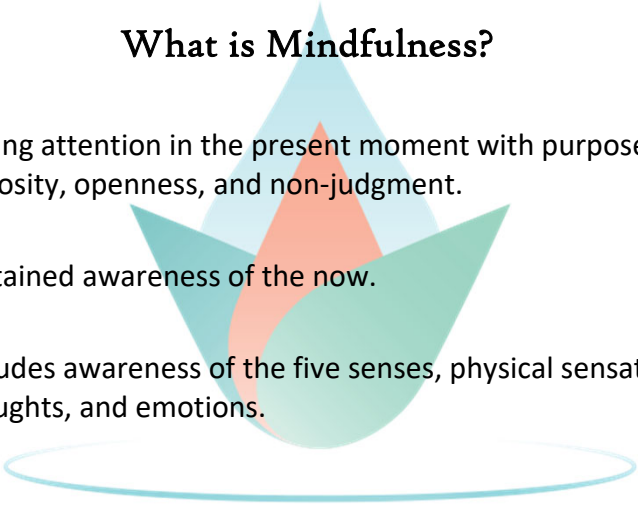
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### What is Mindfulness?

- Paying attention in the present moment with purpose, curiosity, openness, and non-judgment.
- Sustained awareness of the now.
- Includes awareness of the five senses, physical sensations, thoughts, and emotions.


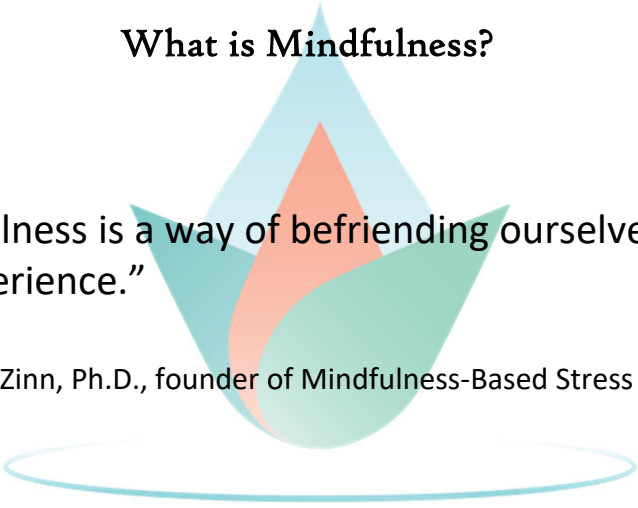


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### What is Mindfulness?

“Mindfulness is a way of befriending ourselves and our experience.”

Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D., founder of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction



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## Mindfulness Exercise



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## Fight, Flight, or Freeze


- Responses to perceived threats.
- Useful for real imminent danger.
- Heightened stress response leading to elevated cortisol and adrenaline release, and increased pulse rate due to activation of the sympathetic nervous system.
- Can be triggered through experiences associated with diagnosis, treatment (incl. transplant), and survivorship.



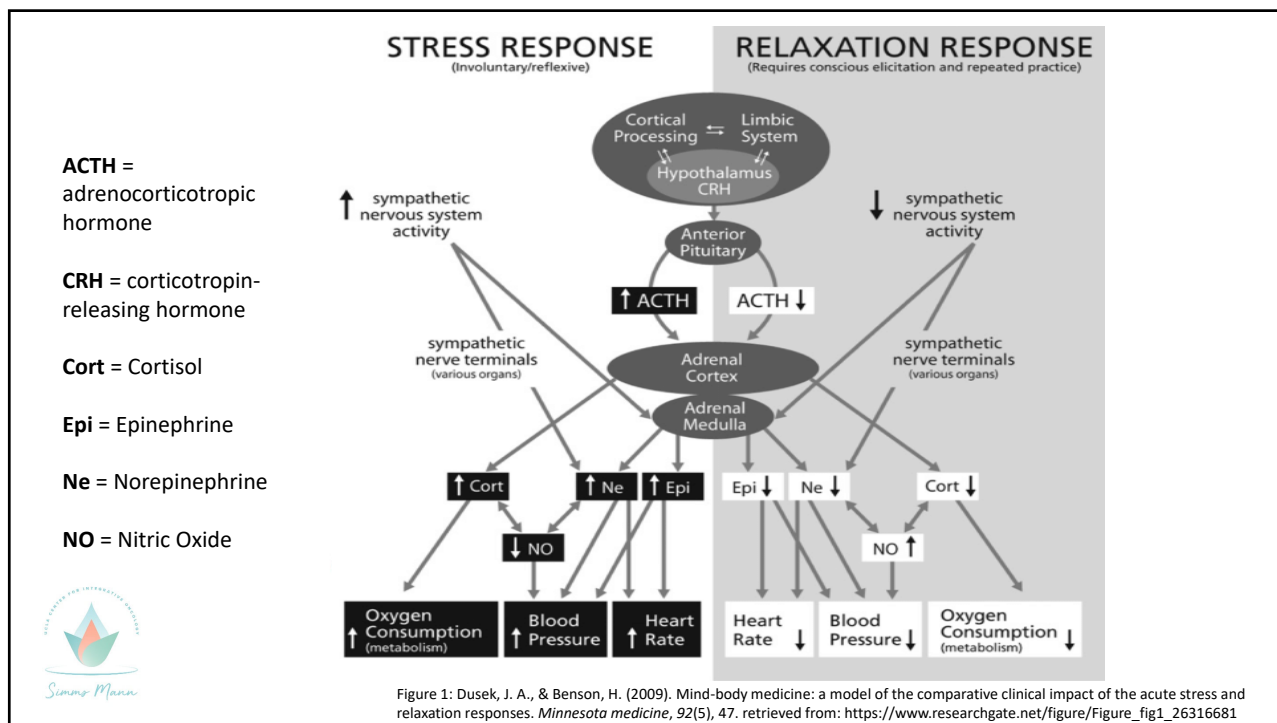
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## Chronic Stress

- Can result from consistent perception of threat to oneself.
- Ongoing stress-response activation from fight, flight, or freeze.
- Studies show wide-ranging physical and psychological health effects due accumulated “wear and tear” from chronic stress.
- Relaxation response as a counter to chronic stress.



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## Building a Relaxation Response

- Associating cues with a moment of mindfulness
  - Ex. Sound of the phone ringing, washing hands
- STOP
  - Stop, Take a Breath, Observe, and Proceed
- Deep Breathing
  - Belly breathing, 4-7-8 breathing
- Formal Mindfulness practices
  - Meditation, Yoga, Qi Gong/ Tai Chi



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## Benefits of Mindfulness-Based Interventions

- Fatigue
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Sleep
- Perception of Pain
- Fear of recurrence
- Anxiety related to MRI or CT scans
- Family caregiver stress



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## Mindfulness and Transplant Survivorship

- A 2019 study by Larson et al. looked at mindfulness in 111 HSCT survivors.
- Findings indicated an association between mindfulness and less depression and anxiety in coping with survivorship.
- Mindfulness correlated with psychological well-being regarding:
  - Attending to the present moment
  - Nonjudgmental attitude towards current experience
  - Allowing thoughts and sensations to come and go without reacting to them



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## Transplant Survivor Experiences: Coping through Survivorship

“Mindfulness meditation has changed my thinking. When I go for a walk, I see things I never saw before. I am open to possibilities and take my time savoring what I am doing, instead of rushing through from one task to start another.... Mindfulness meditation has helped me to live my life in Gratitude every moment of every day. Together, my practice and gratitude have enhanced my recovery and health in general.”



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## Transplant Survivor Experiences: Coping through Survivorship

- “This July will be my ninth year of “re-birth” after my ASCT, and successful treatment, following a diagnosis of Multiple Myeloma. Although I am eternally grateful for the scientific advances that have kept my disease in remission, the medical treatments have only been a part of my recovery and sustainability. I, for one, have benefitted tremendously from a wholesome strategy of diet, exercise, support groups and education, Qi Gong, acupuncture, and especially Mindful Meditation (on my own, listening to seminars, but specifically a weekly group practice).”



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## Transplant Survivor Experiences: Coping through Survivorship

- “Even if none of the elements I have mentioned can be clinically proven to be effective in altering the course of an illness, I believe **meditation** gives me a sense of **empowerment** to counteract the “victimization and powerlessness” inherent in my illness. I have found, not only during the meditation itself, but carried on throughout the day, an ability to be more conscious, aware, present and alive, with myself and in relating to others, and thus I am more calm and appreciative, compassionate, relaxed and ... well, healthier. The same way that someone goes to a gym to improve their physical condition, I believe having a meditation practice alters our mental attitude and approach not only to our cancer, but to life and relationships overall. “Life isn’t about how to survive the storm, but how to dance in the rain.”



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## Self-Compassion

"You can have compassion for yourself - which is not self-pity. You're simply recognizing that 'this is tough, this hurts,' and bringing the same warm-hearted wish for suffering to lessen or end that you would bring to any dear friend grappling with the same pain, upset, or challenges as you."

Rick Hanson, Ph.D., *Just One Thing*



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## Self-Compassion

- Self-compassion is associated with emotional resilience and is fundamental to the effectiveness of mindfulness-based practices in coping with distress.
- Self-Compassion exercises:
  - Writing a letter to your current self from your future self
  - Compassionate Body Scan
  - Caring for yourself as you care for others



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## Self-Compassion Practice



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## Resources

- Online courses
  - Offered through many local organizations, and through UCLA at [marc.ucla.edu](http://marc.ucla.edu)
  - Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction and Mindful Self Compassion
- Smartphone Apps
  - Calm, Headspace, Ten Percent Happier, Insight Timer, UCLA Mindful, CancerCare Meditation
- Books
  - *Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself* by Kristin Neff, Ph.D.
  - *The Mindful Path to Self Compassion* by Christopher Germer, Ph.D.
  - *Full Catastrophe Living: How to Cope with Stress, Pain, and Illness Using Mindfulness Meditation* by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D.
  - *The Miracle of Mindfulness* by Thich Nhat Hanh



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# Questions?



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