Mindfulness as a Student Affairs Practice

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Introduction

* Our interest in this topic
* What is Mindfulness
* The need for Mindfulness in our Personal and Professional lives
* **Experiential Mindfulness Activity**
* Research on Benefits for Higher Education
* Mindfulness as a Skill to Build Cultural Competence
* **Experiential Mindfulness Activity** (if time)
Experiencing...
What is Mindfulness

Mindfulness has roots in many faith traditions including Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, and Islam

- Paying Attention
  - listening, watching or considering what naturally exists

- On Purpose
  - intentionally increasing awareness of experience

- in the Present Moment
  - focusing on the here and now

- Non-Judgmentally
  - being curious and objective about experience

...as if your life depended on it.

Working definition from Jon Kabat-Zinn
Mindfulness is not a thing, it is a way of being.

Mindfulness is awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment. John Kabat-Zinn (2003)
What is Mindfulness

More recently been incorporated into therapy through the work of Kabat-Zinn in treatment of pain

• (Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction)

Incorporated into Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. The Third Wave of behavioral therapy

• Segal, Williams & Teasdale (2002) focusing on Depression (Mindfulness based cognitive therapy)

• Linehan (1993) focusing on Personality Disorder (Dialectical Behavior therapy)
Types of Mindfulness Practice

* Focus on an External Object – Beholding an object without judgment
* Focus on Internal Sensations - Breathing
* Observing Thoughts – noting thinking, letting go
* Thought Defusion – Recognizing thoughts as thoughts
Attitudes that Support Mindfulness

- Non-Judging
- Patience
- Beginner’s Mind
- Trust
- Non-Striving
- Acceptance
- Letting Go
Why we Need Mindfulness

* Life- and work- are stressful!
* Social trend towards multi-tasking
  * Value in doing multiple things at once, but is this actually helpful?
* The many demands on our time
* Emotional balance to handle stress
  * And interpersonal relationships!
Benefits of Mindfulness
Amanda L. Chan, Huffington Post

1. It lowers stress– literally!
2. We know ourselves more fully
3. Improves academics and concentration
4. It helps even when we aren’t actively practicing it
5. Aides in pain management
6. Improves quality of sleep
7. We process our emotions better
8. Connects us more empathically to others
Careers in Student Affairs may bring long days, late nights, stressed students, projects that require patience, leadership and a positive attitude, the need to deal with variety of people and concerns and crises. The many benefits we reviewed can allow you to feel calmer, more effective, and confident in your work!
Mindfulness Activity
Benefits of Mindfulness in Higher Education  Shapiro, Brown, Astin (2008)

* Mindfulness may improve preparedness and orient attention (Zylowska, Smalley, & Schwartz 2009)

* Mindfulness may improve ability to process information accurately (Foerde, Knowlton, & Poldrack, 2006)

* Concentration based meditation, practiced over long term, may improve academic achievement  Hall (1999)
Mindfulness may decrease stress, anxiety and depression (Hoffman, Sawyer, Witt & Oh, 2010)

Mindfulness meditation supports emotional regulation (Brown & Cordon, 2009)

Mindfulness cultivates positive emotional states---Loving Kindness guided meditation, also feelings of contentment (Brown & Cordon, 2009)
Cross Cultural Communication

- Anxiety about saying the wrong thing
- Assumptions we hold about others
- Anxiety may make it difficult to listen deeply
- Being hard on ourselves if we make a mistake
- Wishing to avoid challenging dialogues

- Being aware of what we are feeling – orienting attention
- Beginner’s Mind, letting go of assumptions, openness
- Empathy, processing information accurately
- Self Compassion and feelings of loving kindness,
- Accepting that things are as they are – emotional regulation
Bennett’s Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett 1993)

* **Stage 1**: Denial, Defense and Minimization

* **Stage 2**: Acceptance - moving from entho-centrism to ethno-relativism

* **Adaptation** - being able to change behavior, to exhibit empathy

* **Integration** - not only sensitive to others but able to evaluate from multiple perspectives, constructive marginality, standing outside all cultural frameworks
Mindfulness Activity
“Mindfulness, an open awareness needs to be taught to our young people who are the future leaders!

When individuals develop the skill of relaxed attention they gain self-mastery in listening, thoughtful speech, creativity, risking, changing and building community.

The world is rapidly changing and education is needed to include self-mastery in order to embody the responsibility required in today’s world.”

Jeffrey Walker, Manager Partner, JP Morgan Partners
Resources Handout

Guided Meditations by Tara Brach

Stop Breath Think – a smartphone app
http://stopbreathethink.org

Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts Medical School
http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/

Full Catastrophe Living, Jon Kabat-Zinn
Where Ever You Go, There You Are, Jon Kabat-Zinn

Touching Peace, Thich Naht Hahn

The Miracle of Mindfulness, Thich Naht Hahn

The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion, Christopher Germer

The Mindful Way through Depression: Mark Williams, John Teasdale, Zindel Segal, and Jon Kabat-Zinn

Mindfulness in Plain English, Henepola Gunaratana

When Things Fall Apart, Pema Chödrön
The Wisdom of No Escape, Pema Chödrön


