where others see waste

we see possibility

WASTE NO MORE

eileenfisher.com/waste-no-more

EILEEN FISHER

MINDFULNESS FOR MORE SENSUAL SEX • FINDING ACCEPTANCE AFTER LOSS
WHY WE HELP OTHERS • DISCOVERING THE MINDFUL LIFE • CALM INFLAMMATION

mindful

Love Your Imperfect Self

Your Powerful Brain

How mindfulness primes your mind for focus, calm, and happiness

◂ **Neuroscientist Amishi Jha**
Director of Contemplative Neuroscience and Associate Professor of Psychology, University of Miami

10 WOMEN LEADERS Transforming Mindfulness

AUGUST 2019
mindful.org

mindful

august

FEATURES

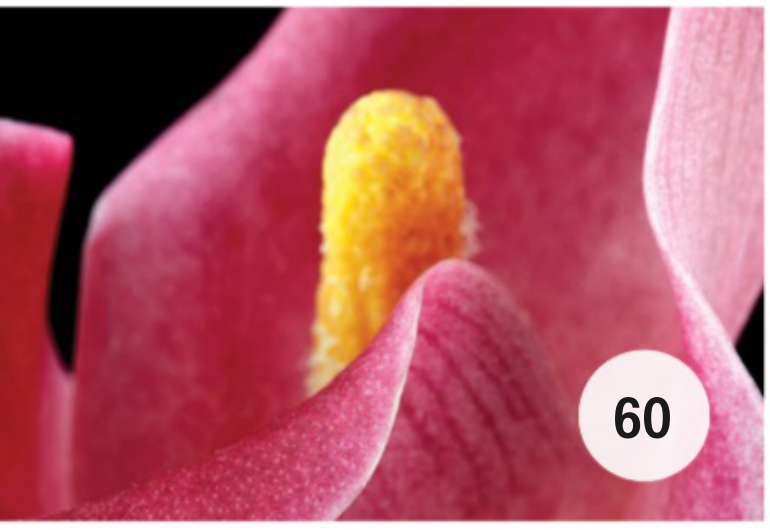
ON THE COVER

On our cover: Amishi Jha, Director of Contemplative Neuroscience and associate professor, University of Miami. Photograph by Stephanie Diani. Hair and makeup by Zianni Coats. Wardrobe by Angelina Vivace for Ennis Inc.

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEPHANIE DIANI

CONTENTS

august



DEPARTMENTS

"Positive change depends on giving voice to previously silenced narratives, so that a fuller, more accurate picture of reality, history—or meditation practice—can have an equal seat at the table."

38 WILLOUGHBY BRITTON

VOLUME SEVEN, NUMBER 3, *Mindful* (ISSN 2169-5733, USPS 010-500) is published bimonthly for $29.95 per year USA, $39.95 Canada & $49.95 (US) international, by The Foundation for a Mindful Society, 228 Park Ave S #91043, New York, NY 10003-1502 USA. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Mindful, PO Box 469018, Escondido, CA 92046. Canada Post Publication Mail Agreement #42704514. CANADIAN POSTMASTER: Send undeliverable copies to Mindful, 1660 Hollis St, Suite 205, Halifax, NS B3J 1V7 CANADA.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEPHANIE DIANI, HERA FOOD/ANNA IVANOVA/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO, JELENA MATVEJEVA/EYEEM/GETTY IMAGES, AND PLAINPICTURE/WESTEND61/MARK JOHNSON

Celebrating 5 Years

Of Mindfulness Practice and Compassionate Action.

Copper Beech Institute is a contemplative retreat center nestled in the quiet beauty of Connecticut's Central Valley. We offer silent retreats and mindfulness programs for all levels of practitioners. Located on 48 stunning acres of wooded grounds, our campus includes an outdoor labyrinth for walking meditation, sculpture and perennial gardens, and walking trails. Beyond our campus, we are also committed to sharing life-saving mindfulness skills with some of the bravest and most vulnerable members of our community including veterans, the homeless, survivors of trauma, the incarcerated, and people in recovery from addiction.

- *Generous need-based scholarships & professional fellowships available*
- *Nationally & locally renowned teachers*
- *A wide range of shared & private accommodations*
- *Continuing Education Credits for select programs*
- *Convenient driving distance from New York & Boston*
- *Transformative resilience and mindfulness programs for the workplace*

Explore all we offer at www.copperbeechinstitute.org/mindful

COPPER BEECH INSTITUTE
Mindfulness Practice. Compassionate Action.

CELEBRATING 5 YEARS

UPCOMING RETREATS

September 13-15, 2019
Healing Through Adversity: The Wild Path of Courage
Chris Grosso and Brandon Nappi

September 20-22, 2019
Polishing the Mirror of the Heart
Saki Santorelli

October 18-20, 2019
More Together Than Alone: Pathways That Bring Us Together
Mark Nepo

October 20-25, 2019
Five-Night Silent Retreat: Coming Home to our Hearts
Beth Mulligan and Brandon Nappi in Madison, CT

Free Live Stream Meditation
Every Monday, 12:30-1:00 ET

What's on your mind?

Please let us know any ideas, thoughts, comments you have. We'd love to hear from you as we work to share the best in mindfulness.

Anne Alexander
Editor, editor@mindful.org

Anne Alexander is a longtime meditator, yogi, and editor. She is the author of two *New York Times* best sellers and has had a hand in shaping magazines, books, apps, and websites for Rodale, National Geographic, and more.

You know that feeling

of electricity when someone tells you something—an amazing story or fact—that is so interesting, you can't wait to share it? It's like a bolt of energy and excitement that needs to make contact and keep spreading.

That's what I felt hearing neuroscientist Amishi Jha and Lieutenant General Walter Piatt of the US Army talk about the impact of introducing Jha's mindfulness program to his soldiers prior to their deployment to Iraq. I was riveted as General Piatt told the story of a very young soldier who was able to "zero the mind" (military parlance for being in a state of hyper-focus) using his mindfulness training and make a series of lifesaving decisions under the extreme pressure of a dangerous, high-stakes mission. He also shared how mindfulness helps his troops transition back to civilian life and has played a pivotal role in his own work trying to forge peaceful solutions.

Jha and Piatt's work—and its effectiveness—immediately sounded like a story for *Mindful*, and my mind zeroed in on finding the right editor, writer, and photographer who could bring it together and share it with you. So, on the cover this issue is neuroscientist Amishi Jha, and on page 48, journalist Barry Yeoman and photographer Stephanie Diani take us to meet General Piatt and his troops at Fort Drum, New York. Online at mindful.org/train-brain, you'll find an exceptional video in which Jha guides you through the foundational mindful brain-training exercise she uses in her lab to train warriors to sustain and strengthen their attention—and which you can use, too, no matter what kind of stress you're facing.

Another bolt of editorial lightning struck Heather Hurlock, Mindful's digital editor, for this issue's story on women in the mindfulness movement. For the past three years, Heather has been working on the Mindful30 program, our 30-day online mindfulness event featuring top mindfulness teachers and experts. "Every year, when I reach out to our network to see which teachers we should feature for Mindful30, the list of names that people rattle off first is always very male and very white," Hurlock explains, "and I wanted to claim space for a diversity of mindful women to share their power, perspective, and wisdom."

I hope you feel a similar bolt of excitement as you read these stories and that you're struck by the urge to share them with people you meet.

With love,

PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEPHANIE DIANI

Mindfulness-Based Programs and Research

The Mindfulness Center at Brown brings together top academics in mindfulness research with leading educators in the field.

We are dedicated to rigorous research, student-centered education, and a global presence to share mindfulness practices that improve individual lives and organizational effectiveness.

RIGHT: Jon Kabat-Zinn speaking at Brown on the Public Health History of Mindfulness with Eric Loucks, Director, Mindfulness Center at Brown.

- PROGRAMS FOR THE CURIOUS OR SEASONED PRACTITIONER
- MBSR TEACHER EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT
- MINDFULNESS IN THE WORKPLACE AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING
- MINDFULNESS IN HEALTHCARE
- THE BROWN GLOBAL MINDFULNESS COLLABORATIVE
- MINDFULNESS IN SCHOOLS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

BROWN
Mindfulness Center

Learn more at brown.edu/mindfulnesscenter

How We Chill Out

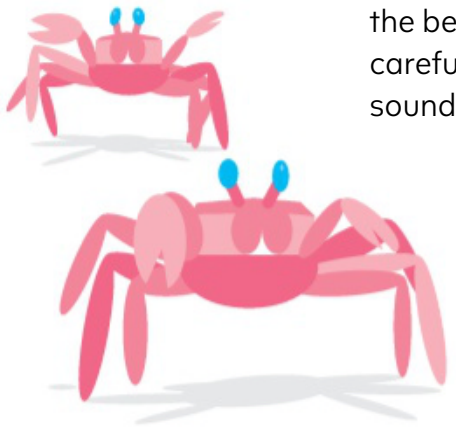
Taking some time to rest and release tension isn't lazy: It's an act of self-compassion and wisdom that makes for a well-balanced life. Here's what *Mindful* readers had to say about the role of relaxation in their days.

What unusual things do you do to relax?

ORGANIZING MY HOME and purging items I don't need helps me when things feel chaotic. Also, sometimes just getting on the floor and letting my dogs shower me with attention is amazing!

I GET UP BEFORE 6AM, light a candle, read the newspaper online, and have coffee: a peaceful hour to myself. Then I walk or work out or do yoga.

CATCHING CRABS WITH MY NEPHEW. I watch him mindfully as he explores, and his innocent curiosity brings me quiet joy.



"Single-tasking and immersing myself in my immediate experience. I've found this more calming than infrared saunas or sensory deprivation tanks."

—a *Mindful* reader

FACEBOOK HELPS ME RELAX. I've realized it's because I have few "friends" there—the ones I have are people who mean something special to me.

MY LUNCHTIME WALKS. I take the same route each day, headphones in, walking to the beat of my carefully selected soundtrack.

I SORT RANDOM THINGS into categories that have no real purpose, other than aesthetics—things like state quarters; books I haven't read yet; items picked up while traveling; pictures, downloads, and screenshots on my phone.

DANCING. It's something I wasn't allowed to do when I was growing up, and now I find that I enjoy it very much!

What does your ideal self-care practice look like?

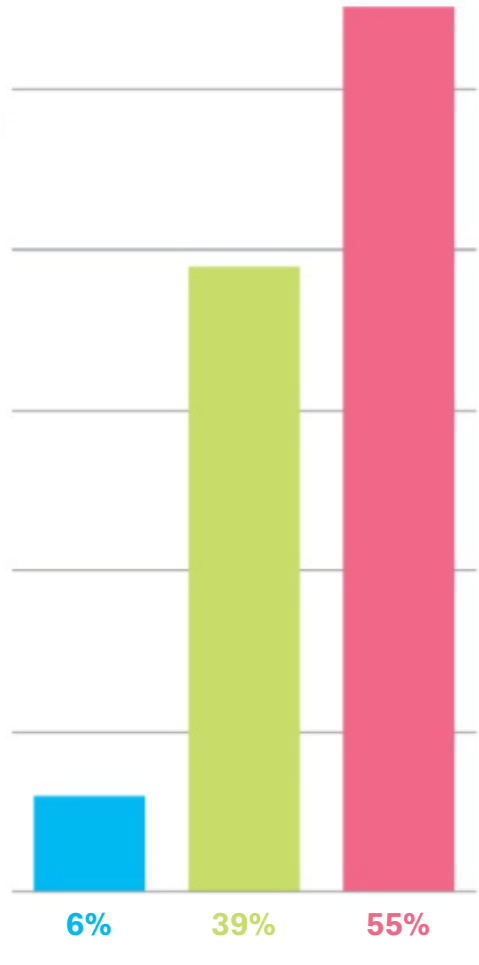
Nearly all respondents say **TAKING TIME DAILY FOR MINDFULNESS** and **EXERCISE, STRETCHING, AND BREATHING PRACTICES** would be indispensable. Other possibilities: listening to music, turning off your phone, getting a massage, loving-kindness meditation, walking on the beach, and reading a book. *Slightly* less common ideas? Horseback riding and playing backgammon.

How relaxed are you most of the time?

YOU'RE NOT ALONE if you go through most days feeling a little on edge: **58%** of respondents do, too. A mere **1%** are totally chill more often than not. **28%** say they're pretty laid-back, and the rest (**13%**) report feeling like a bundle of nerves.

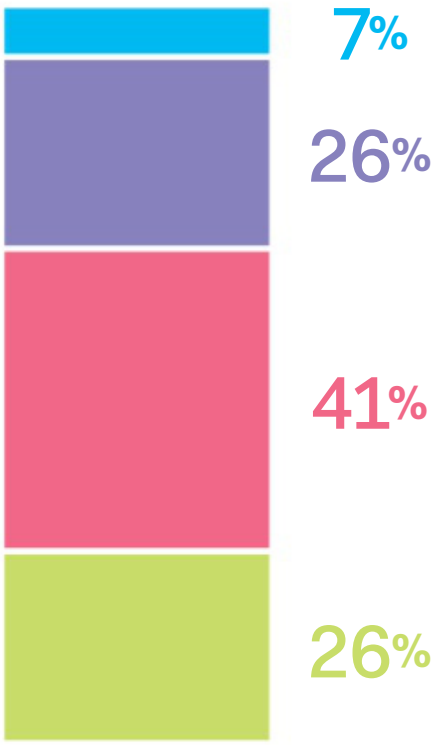
Do you feel relaxed when meditating?

GET COMFY WITH YOUR MIND. A sense of relaxation can be a nice side effect of meditating, but it's not a requirement. **55%** say they usually feel "chill" when they meditate. For **39%** meditation can be relaxing sometimes. **6%** say meditation just isn't a relaxing activity.

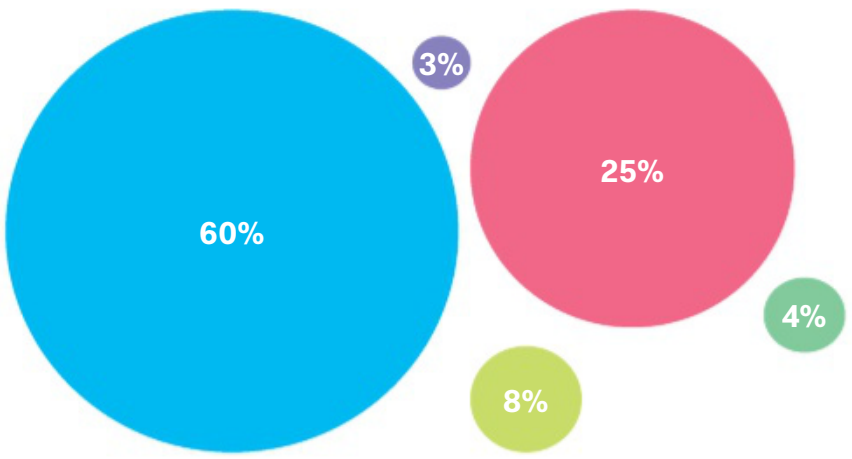


How does social media fit into your leisure time?

LET'S GET SOCIAL. MAYBE? Only **7%** say using social media helps them to relax, while **26%** say it creates an uptick in their tension. The moderate **41%** of respondents say they can chill out with social media, but only if they don't use it too much—and **26%** use it rarely or never at all.



How often do you take time to relax?



60%	A little every day	**4%**	I can't remember the last time I did
25%	Once or a few times a week	**3%**	I don't know
8%	Maybe 1-2 times per month		

Next Question...

How has mindfulness helped you develop your resilience?

Send an email to **yourwords@mindful.org** and let us know your answer to this question. Your response could appear on these pages.

Healthy Mind, Healthy Life

Welcome to mindful

Did you know Mindful is a nonprofit? We are dedicated to inspiring and guiding anyone who wants to explore mindfulness to enjoy better health, more caring relationships, and a more compassionate society.

By reading *Mindful* and sharing it with others, you're helping to bring mindfulness practices into the world where the benefits can be enjoyed by all.

Thank you!

Print magazine & special topic publications

30 Day Mindfulness Challenge

mindful30
PRACTICE WITH A PURPOSE

FREE! Guided meditations & podcasts

Mindfulness video courses

Visit online at mindful.org

Get More Mindful

mindful magazine • mindful.org

Editor-in-Chief
Barry Boyce

Chief Executive Officer
Bryan Welch

Editor
Anne Alexander

Art Director
Jessica von Handorf

Editor, Digital
Heather Hurlock

Senior Editors
Claire Ciel Zimmerman
Kelle Walsh

Production Editor
Stephanie Domet

Associate Art Director
Spencer Creelman

Editorial Assistant
Amber Tucker

Senior Editor, Digital
Nicole Bayes-Fleming

Contributing Editors
Katherine Griffin
Teo Furtado
Barbara Graham

Editors-at-Large
Kaitlin Quistgaard
Hugh Delehanty

Consumer Marketing Director
Daniel Scott

Director of Operations
Julia Sable

Circulation Planning Director
Catherine Flynn

Controller
Kenneth Swick

Audience Development Manager
Leslie Duncan-Childs

Human Resources Manager
Cindy Littlefair

Fulfillment Manager
Rebecca Pearson

Graphic Designer
Christel LeBlanc

Administrative Assistant
Sarah Creelman

ADVERTISING INQUIRIES

Kevin Gillespie
Advertising Director
kevin@mindful.org

Chelsea Arsenault
Advertising Sales Manager
Toll Free: 888-203-8076
chelsea@mindful.org

Editorial & Central Business Office
5765 May Street,
Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3K 1R6 Canada
mindful@mindful.org

Customer Service
Subscriptions:
Toll free: 1-855-492-1675
subscriptions@mindful.org
Retail inquiries: 732-946-0112

Editorial Inquiries
If you are interested in contributing to *Mindful* magazine, please go to mindful.org/submission-guidelines to learn how.

Moving? Notify us six weeks in advance. We cannot be responsible for issues the post office does not forward.

THE FOUNDATION FOR A MINDFUL SOCIETY

Mindful is published by the Foundation for a Mindful Society. The Foundation's mission is to support mindfulness champions to increase health, well-being, kindness, and compassion in society.

James Gimian
Executive Director

Chris McKenna
Mindfulness in Education Program Manager

228 Park Avenue S #91043
New York, NY
10003-1502 USA

Board members
James Gimian, Michael Chender, Susan Kaiser Greenland, Andy Karr (acting chair), Barry Boyce

MIX
Paper from responsible sources
FSC™ C132124

donate

Please make a donation to the foundation today by visiting **mindful.org/donate**

1440 MULTIVERSITY

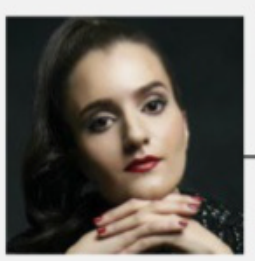
Take Time for *You*.

Named for the number of minutes in a day, 1440 Multiversity encourages you to seek your own well-being while setting traditional time aside. Register for one of our cutting-edge programs filled with conversations that matter and opportunities to recharge. Contact a program specialist at **1-833-390-7465** for more information about a stay at 1440 that is uniquely yours.

SEPTEMBER 20 – 22, 2019

Cultivating Stress Resilience 2.0

DAN SIEGEL & ELISSA EPEL



OCTOBER 11 – 13, 2019

The Art of Telling the Story of Who You Are

NAJWA ZEBIAN

OCTOBER 25 – 27, 2019

Designing Your Life Retreat

DAVE EVANS

1440.ORG/MINDFUL | SANTA CRUZ COUNTY, CA | 1-833-390-7465

Top of Mind

Keep up with the latest in the world of mindfulness.

MINDFULNESS IN TRANSIT

New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority offers programs that teach mindfulness, meditation, and yoga to its employees across the transit system, from bus drivers and train operators to office workers, ticket-takers, and mechanics. The programs, run by a corporate wellness consulting firm called the Health Enhancement Company, have been offered for several years, and HEC's president Donna DeFalco estimates they've reached 7,200 employees so far. Now, they are rolling out a large-scale daily program geared toward people working on transit vehicles every day, who face uncommon challenges and stressors in their work, such as isolation from their bosses and colleagues and a lack of flexibility while on the job.

WELLNESS IN THE HOUSE

This spring a program with potential to ease stress in the nation's capitol launched at the US House of Representatives. The House Wellness Center brings wellness education and services—including mindfulness—to members and staff of the House. On tap: lunch-time seminars on topics including work–life balance, sleep essentials, and gratitude; assistance with life-management issues, such as childcare; a newsletter providing informational articles, a guide to resources, and wellness tips; and instruction in mindfulness-based stress management, among other skills.

READY, SET, MEDITATE!

Started with a wink and fully aware of the paradox, Competitive Meditation looks like it might actually become a thing. Since its creation in 2018 by a writer for tech news site Mashable, the 5-minute meditation showdowns—during which two competitors wear brainwave-detecting headbands that record your number of "thoughts" via weak electrical impulses—have led to matches among video game creators, residents of a meditation center, and employees of the leading mindfulness app, Calm.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RAWPIXEL.COM, MATT H. WADE

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAN IS DE MAN

CANADA'S FIRST MINDFULNESS GRAD PROGRAM TO LAUNCH

This fall, the University of the Fraser Valley, with four campuses in British Columbia, will launch a 10-month mostly online graduate program in mindfulness-based teaching and learning. It's the first Canadian university to offer a graduate degree in mindfulness; a handful of universities in the US have also added the topic to their graduate programming. The UFV program comprises four courses providing personal exploration of the topic, a deep dive into theory and research in the field, and training to facilitate mindful instruction. The for-credit classes are also designed to be transferable toward numerous professional graduate study programs, including masters and doctoral programs in education.

"Regardless of your industry, the MBTL graduate certificate prepares you to become a professional mindfulness leader while deepening your own mindfulness practice and knowledge," the UFV course description reads.

BOOKS BRING US TOGETHER

In a celebration of community and connection, Dutch street artists Jan Is de Man and Deef Feed created a striking *trompe l'oeil* mural on an apartment building in Utrecht, Netherlands. They asked residents about their favorite books and painted the suggestions on a massive, multicultural bookshelf, representing eight languages.

TAKE A MINDFUL SIP

Pour yourself a glass of water. Notice the weight of the glass in your hand, how the cool water feels against your lips. Let the moment refresh you in body and mind.

ACTS OF *kindness*

While out for dinner with friends in Oxford, Alabama, Jamario Howards noticed a woman eating alone and went over to speak with her. It turned out to be the day before her 60th anniversary with her late husband. He invited her to join him and his friends, and they've been meeting her regularly for dinner since.

When 80-year-old elementary school janitor Haze Mabry in Zebulon, Georgia, showed up for work on his birthday, instead of finding a messy school to clean, he found nearly 800 students lined up to sing him a happy birthday, hand him buckets of cards, and give him hugs.

In the German town of Bensheim, a chubby rat got stuck in a manhole cover, so a team of eight rescuers, comprised of firefighters and animal rescuers, spent about 25 minutes helping the rat escape to freedom, unharmed. "Even animals that are hated by many people deserve respect," animal rescuer Michael Sehr told German news agency DPA.

Research News

by B. GRACE BULLOCK

Research gathered from Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley, Center for Healthy Minds at University of Wisconsin–Madison, Center for Mindfulness at UMass Medical School, and American Mindfulness Research Association.

SPORT PERFORMANCE GETS A BOOST FROM MINDFULNESS

Being an elite athlete comes with its share of stress. Sixty-nine Swedish competitive athletes new to mindfulness completed either a Mindfulness-Acceptance and Commitment (MAC) intervention, or Psychological Skills Training (PST). Both were designed to increase athletic performance. Unlike PST, MAC training emphasizes present-moment awareness, attention, and acceptance. Seven weeks later MAC-trained athletes showed superior improvements in sport-related mindfulness, emotion regulation, and athletic performance compared to PST group members. The study's authors attribute these results to MAC group athletes' improved ability to focus, regulate emotion, and adapt to stress.

MBCT: A TREATMENT FOR CHRONIC PAIN?

Chronic low-back pain affects millions globally and can be debilitating and hard to treat. A study at the University of Queensland in Australia found Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) may reduce its symptoms. Researchers had three groups of 23 people either attend MBCT classes, receive mindfulness meditation training, or undergo cognitive therapy for eight weeks. Their pain, mood, physical functioning, and medication use were evaluated immediately after training, and three and six months later.

Following training, participants in all three groups reported significant decreases in pain interference (the degree to which pain interferes with functioning), pain intensity, and depression, and better physical function. Improvements in pain interference over time were better in the MBCT group than the other approaches. For physical functioning, both the MBCT and cognitive therapy groups showed more

improvement over time than adults in the mindfulness meditation group.

The findings suggest that for some, cognitive therapies may be more fitting, while others may gain more from meditation, or a combination of mindfulness principles and cognitive therapy.

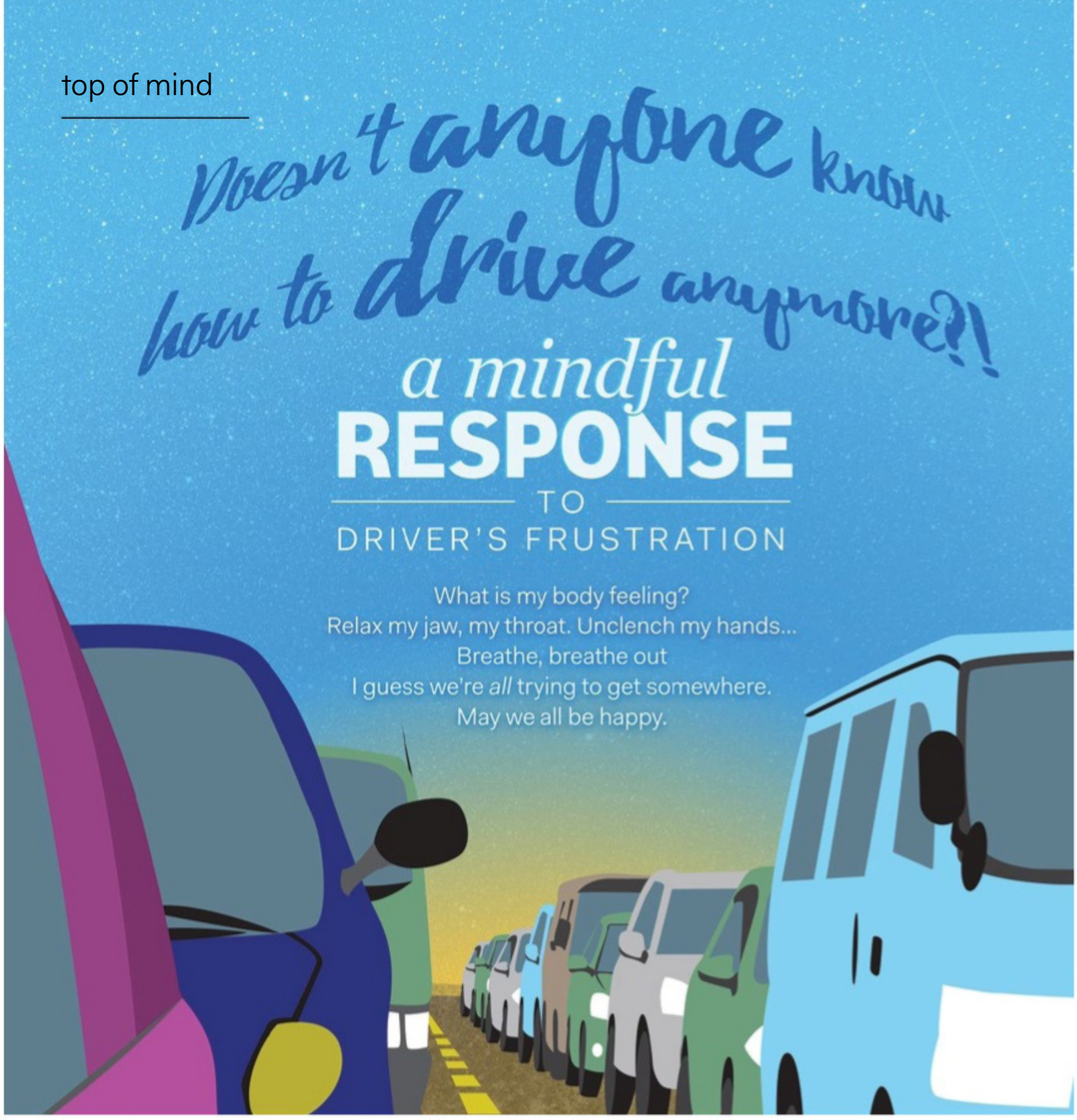
MORE MINDFULNESS, LESS LONELINESS

Half of US adults report feeling lonely and isolated. According to a new study, mindfulness could help. A study at the University of Pittsburgh asked 153 self-identified stressed people to try a 14-lesson smartphone-based training to curb loneliness and social isolation. About one-third practiced acceptance and paying attention to thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, both core aspects of mindfulness. The rest received either attention training or learned tools for coping with stress. Researchers used smartphones instead of in-person work to see if learning new skills would boost social contact and reduce loneliness. After two weeks, the acceptance and attention group participants had roughly two more social contacts per day, and were 22% less lonely. The other groups showed little change. Researchers concluded that having an attitude of acceptance and paying attention to our experience can increase social connection and reduce loneliness.

Having an attitude of acceptance and paying attention to our experience can increase social connection and reduce loneliness

BREATH AWARENESS MAY IMPROVE BRAIN EFFICIENCY

Breath awareness training may help keep us sharp into old age. In a study conducted by researchers at the University of Granada, the University of Liverpool, and Liverpool John Moores University, 21 healthy adults received four hours of mindfulness instruction and were asked to practice mindful breath awareness daily for 10 minutes per day over three weeks. Readings of brain activation during their performance on computer tests found them to be less impulsive and better able to effectively and accurately solve complex problems compared to adults with no meditation experience. The more they meditated, the better their results.



APPS FOR CRAVINGS, FERTILITY, AND MORE

HELP FOR "EVERYDAY ADDICTIONS"

Coping with cravings is one of the stickiest aspects of fighting addiction, but a new suite of apps may help. Digital therapeutics company MindSciences has launched three extensively researched and tested apps for habit change. Helping users understand and unhook from the brain's harmful habit loops, the DrJud apps offer interventions for what neuroscientist (and mindfulness expert) Judson Brewer, the eponymous DrJud and founder of MindSciences, calls "everyday addictions": anxiety, emotional eating, and smoking.

ABORIGINAL MINDFULNESS

Traditional women healers in South Australia partnered with developers from nonprofit Smiling Mind to produce an app that draws on both Aboriginal wisdom and Western psychology to bolster mental health in Indigenous communities. The app offers guided practices and songs in three local languages: Kriol, Ngaanyatjarra, and Pitjantjatjara.

MEDITATION FOR MOMS-TO-BE

For yoga teacher—and now mom—Chrissy Carter, meditating helped her move through her grief after losing her first pregnancy. With understanding and compassion around fertility struggles, Carter crafted Fertility Meditations—hosted by the Meditation Studio app—to help others find peace on their unpredictable journeys to motherhood.

CALM REACHES "UNICORN" STATUS

Earlier this year, Calm was the first mindfulness app company to skyrocket to a $1 billion value, thereby becoming, in business-speak, a "unicorn." (Hey, we're not saying mindfulness is magic, but it sure is making waves.)

CRAZE OR CRAZY

JEDI MINDFUL TRICK

If sparring like a Jedi Knight is your calling, well, there's a school for that: Sabre Masters, in Leicestershire, UK. Instructors start class with a mindfulness practice—though it's less about using the Force and more about attention to safety.

LASER FOCUS

Flag Tag AZ, a laser tag center in Flagstaff, Arizona, recently hosted a meditation-and-laser-tag workshop. The battle included "meditation micro-hits" along with teacher-led mindfulness sessions.

IN THE TETRIS ZONE

According to research, when worry creeps up on you, try playing Tetris: a study found the tile-matching game may help to ease anxiety. Participants who played Tetris at regular speed—rather than painfully slow or fast games—reached a "flow" state, which allowed them to relax while waiting for test results.

mindful FAQ

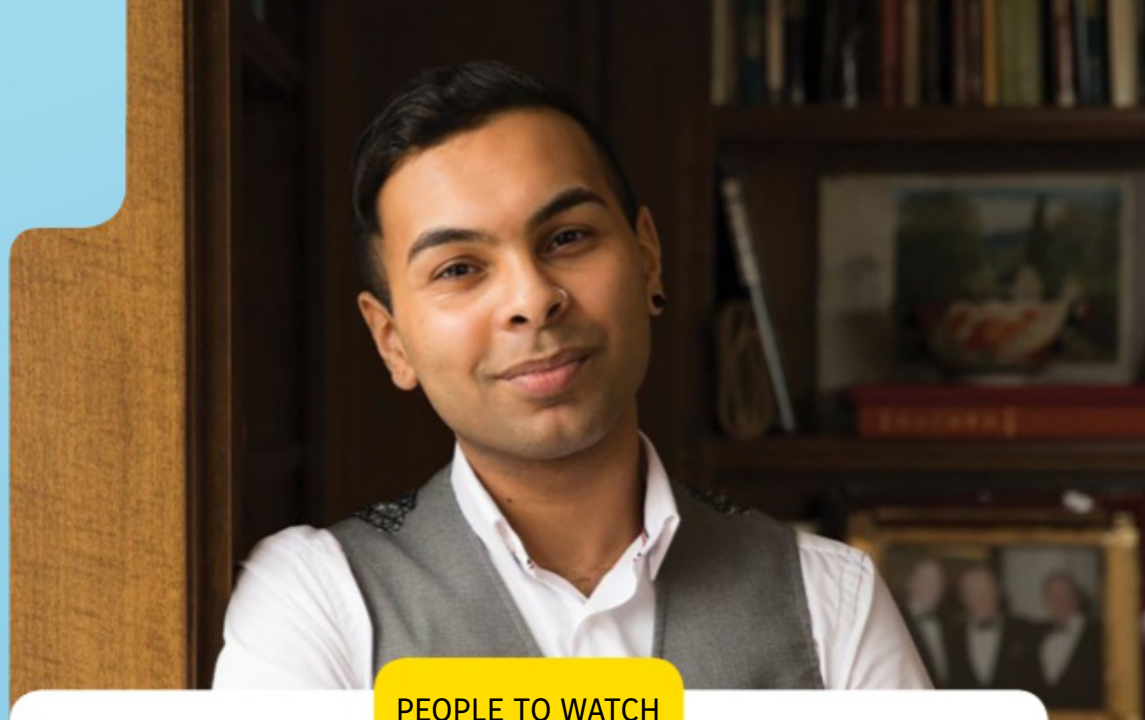
Q **What do you suggest when you feel like you've done your utmost to live by love and compassion, but then jerks out there take the wind out of your sail and just kind of crush you?**

A I think it's always helpful if we look at our motivation, and if we feel confident we're acting from a place of love and compassion, as much as we can. The intention *behind* an action is a very powerful part of the action. It behooves all of us to use mindfulness to truly pay attention to where we're coming from. And then, there's a level of skill in action if you are trying to communicate something. Beyond that is a level over which you don't have any control. You really don't. People will respond, but we don't have to define ourselves and our actions completely by their reaction, because it's hopeless. If someone is not responding in an appropriate way, or even in a kind way, usually we're heartbroken. *I'm such an idiot. Why do I always give the wrong thing?* Or: *They're hopeless. They're just jerks.* That's the place for equanimity. We do care, but how much do we care? Are we completely defined by something we actually can't even affect, which is the reaction of somebody else? Or can we have a sense of integrity about our actions based on knowing our motive and that we acted as skillfully as we could?

Sharon Salzberg is a meditation teacher, cofounder of the Insight Meditation Society, and *New York Times* best-selling author of *Real Love* and *Real Happiness*.

Practice compassion with Sharon Salzberg at **mindful.org/compassion-salzberg**

PHOTOGRAPH BY MINDFULNESS WITHOUT BORDERS, ILLUSTRATION BY DENISE NESTOR



PEOPLE TO WATCH

Charles Hargobind

MINDFULNESS WITHOUT BORDERS

Charles Hargobind leads the Mindfulness Ambassador Program, put on by Mindfulness Without Borders, in which he guides high school seniors through a 12-week mindfulness training that includes basic meditation instruction, techniques for navigating challenging emotions, and helping teens recognize and understand their internal narratives. Hargobind is a graduate of the program, and he found mindfulness at a particularly painful point in his life.

Hargobind knew he was gay but was struggling to come to terms with his identity. Finally, he came out to his best friend. "I'm gay," he told her. "She's like, 'What? NO. You can't be, Charles. Do you know how many times people have asked me and I defended you?'"

His parents also were not immediately accepting of his news. Isolated and afraid, his best friend's words rang in his ears. *No, you can't be.*

"I was in such a dark place, and I kept looking for something to liberate me in some way. When this program came into my life, it gave me the freedom to stop looking for the light at the end of the tunnel and find it within."

Hargobind sees mindfulness working for the teens he leads. "Week one they're hunched over, hoodie on, arms crossed. By week five, they're open and willing to share their vulnerabilities, willing to share what is challenging them in a moment of anger or happiness, how they're relating to that emotion, what their narrative around that emotion is."

Hargobind believes mindfulness can be a lifeline for all youth he works with, but there's a special place in his heart, and in his work, for at-risk LGBTQ teens. He says mindfulness offers something vital. "You see your mask, you see your vulnerabilities, and you get to be with them, whether that's happiness, sadness, anger, joy—you get to honor those emotions."

How Mindfulness Helps You Shed Your Masks: **mindful.org/hargobind**

MINDFUL OR MINDLESS?

Our take on who's paying attention and who's not

by **AMBER TUCKER**

In a small yet vital step toward halting climate change, the majority of Norwegian politicians withdrew support for oil drilling, worth billions, off Norway's Lofoten Islands. The country is also beginning to invest its oil wealth in renewable energy projects.

Researchers showed eighth graders an exposé on junk-food giants' manipulative marketing tactics. The hypothesis? Teens' desire to rebel against "the man" could motivate healthier snack choices. It worked: Even three months later, teen boys were still buying 31% less junk food and soft drinks at school.

A truck driver sued his employer for around a year and a half of lunch breaks ($3,500) that he said he'd worked through. He won—but he only offered one week's worth of evidence of having worked through his lunch, so he was awarded just $35.

"Syniad gwael" is Welsh for "bad idea." And this would be an apt response to a grocery store in Wales that goofed up when translating "Alcohol-free" into Welsh, causing their sign to advertise "Free Alcohol." ●

mindful
MAGAZINE | MINDFUL.ORG

Healthy Mind, Healthy Life

Discover practical ways to find calm in times of stress, let go of your inner critic, and reconnect with the best of who you are.

Subscribe Today & Save

mindful.org

Sweet, Savory Strawberries

By Claire Ciel Zimmerman

There's nothing like a perfectly ripe, luscious strawberry picked in the heart of summer. Ruby red to the core, bursting with intense sweetness and complex flavor, it's hard to believe they're related to those out-of-season berries with pale centers and one-dimensional taste. One of the key flavor compounds in strawberries, known as strawberry furanone, is also found in another red fruit: the tomato. According to food writer Niki Segnit in her 2010 book *The Flavor Thesaurus*, some chefs say the two fruits can be used interchangeably. Instead of the classic pairing of tomato and basil, try swapping in strawberries and notice how the sweet and savory play together.

STRAWBERRY BASIL SALAD

Slice a quart of **strawberries**, tear up a bunch of **basil leaves**, and toss them in a bowl with a sprinkling of **balsamic vinegar**, a smidge of **salt**, a few pinches of **sugar**, and a couple of cranks of freshly ground **black pepper**. Let marinate for 10 minutes or so, then serve.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Claire Ciel Zimmerman is a senior editor and *Mindful*'s Eater-in-Chief.

PHOTOGRAPH BY HERA FOOD, ANNA IVANOVA / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Whole Grain
Gluten Free

BALANCE & PURIFY

Whole grain is at the heart of good health - it strengthens and provides sustenance. Eden sources gluten-free whole grain and keeps the integrity of all nutritional components. Eden's gluten-free confidence is based on routine testing, superb manufacturing practices, and meticulous handling.

EDEN

edenfoods.com

Download the Eden Recipe App for delightful recipes

Download on the App Store

Android App On Google Play

no untoward chemicals or GMOs

Cooling the Flames of Inflammation

Complex and far-reaching, inflammation has been identified as the "slow burn" that fuels disease. And meditation may be one key to putting out the flame.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sara Altshul is an award-winning journalist who has covered natural and alternative healing for over 20 years. Her articles have appeared in magazines including *Prevention*, *AARP*, *Arthritis Today*, and *Health*. She is the author of *Kitchen Cabinet Cures*.

Inflammation. Since the early 1990s, when researchers began connecting the dots between a plethora of chronic illnesses and a previously unrecognized form of inflammation—properly called "metainflammation"—it's been identified as a glaring health concern, a subcategory of wellness unto itself, about which headlines are made and books are written.

Since then, doctors and healers of all stripes have advised countless (often questionable) treatments to fight inflammation, from diet changes and exercise to drugs, herbs, and supplements. Clearly inflammation is a battle we have yet to win.

Yet in this still-new terrain, researchers have also sussed out a possible common denominator in this complex condition: stress.

And meditation is showing promise as an accessible and effective way to combat it. →

ILLUSTRATION BY ANNA & ELENA BALBOSSA

By Sara Altshul

The Highest Quality Omega-3s

From Sea to Store

The Carlson Omega-3 Difference

FRIEND OF THE SEA

IQF 2015 Superior Taste AWARD

IFOS

- ✔ Professional Strength
- ✔ Superior Purity & Potency
- ✔ Wild Caught
- ✔ Sustainably Sourced

888-234-5656 | www.carlsonlabs.com

Carlson®

WHY WE GET INFLAMED

To understand why meditation may work against metainflammation, it helps to understand exactly what inflammation is, and what effects it can have on our health.

First, there's more than one kind of inflammation. Acute inflammation is triggered when you're wounded or battling an infection. One of the body's most elegantly engineered processes, your blood vessels constrict to stop bleeding. Then swarms of inflammation-promoting cells, starting with neutrophils, flood the injured area. (You may notice redness and swelling at the wound site during this process.) These trigger scab formation and skin healing, and help form new blood vessels, until it's almost like the whole thing never happened. The inflammation naturally ebbs away once healing is completed.

If acute inflammation is like a raging fire that burns in place until an infection is obliterated, metainflammation is like having embers burning deep within your body. You may never notice the smoldering until it erupts as chronic illness, notes Garry Egger, PhD, Director of the Center for Health Promotion and Research.

Instead, this low-grade, chronic, and systemic inflammation quietly spreads, affecting arteries and certain organs and causing *allostasis*, a disruption of their normal processes. Allostasis is present in many, if not most, forms of chronic disease. "We can't say it 'causes' such disease, but it is highly correlated," Dr. Egger says.

A CHRONIC CONNECTION

The triggers of metainflammation are like a huge crazy quilt that reflects the costs of living in a modern, industrialized society: processed, packaged, and fast foods; inactive lifestyle; obesity; not enough fruits and vegetables; too little sleep; pollution; chemicals that disrupt our endocrine system (and promote obesity); and social issues, including inequality and economic insecurity. These familiar life conditions all cause physical and psychological stress, which in turn can ignite the slow burn of metainflammation deep within the body.

But as with many physiological processes, how metainflammation leads to disease isn't cut-and-dried. Instead, research suggests it's a response your immune system mounts to a variety of triggers, which over time leads to the development of various chronic conditions.

In other words, how people develop chronic diseases related to inflammation is complicated, says Leonard H. Calabrese, DO, Professor of Medicine, Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine at the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio.

Metainflammation can interfere with immune system regulation, says Dr. Calabrese. People's immune systems react differently to this dysregulation—depending on myriad factors, from your genetic history to environmental or lifestyle factors—and they may respond with inflammatory diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, Crohn's disease, or psoriasis, to name just a few.

In fact, some 70% of all diseases, including diabetes, arthritis, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, heart disease, irritable bowel syndrome, depression, chronic anxiety, and even some forms of cancer may have an inflammatory trigger.

PUTTING OUT THE FIRE

Reversing widespread inflammation doesn't happen overnight, but a good start is reducing the physical and psychological stressors that can be triggering the reaction. Along with a diet rich in plant-based foods and exercise, mindfulness meditation is a noted help.

"I think the evidence is strong that mindfulness—especially the more you practice—'downregulates' inflammatory genes," says Dr. Calabrese. Simply put, that means that a consistent mindfulness practice can "turn off" the process by which genes trigger inflammation.

In a UCLA/Carnegie Mellon study conducted in 2012, a course of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) reduced C-reactive protein (a significant marker for inflammation). The researchers concluded that MBSR could be an effective treatment for blunting pro-inflammatory gene expression in older adults.

It seems to target neurogenic inflammation—which is caused by inflammatory mediators released from sensory nerve endings, and is a key factor in chronic →

ILLUSTRATION BY ANNA & ELENA BALBOSSA

ATTENTION MINDFUL LEADERS

Training & Certification

- Mindfulness@Work Facilitator Cert
- A Course in Mindful Living for Leaders

Un-Retreats

- Coaches Un-Retreat Aug 14–16
- Champions Un-Retreat Aug 16–18

6th Annual Summit

Mindful Leadership Summit
Washington, DC, November 14–17

JOIN 72,000* MINDFUL LEADERS HELPING FOSTER MINDFULNESS & COMPASSION IN THE WORKPLACE.

DOWNLOAD FREE REPORT PDF ***CREATING A CULTURE OF MINDFULNESS@WORK***

www.mindfulleader.org

*Our weekly newsletter goes out to 72,000 people. Susbcribe free online.

MINDFUL LEADER

inflammatory diseases, says Melissa Rosenkranz, PhD, associate scientist, Center for Healthy Minds, University of Wisconsin–Madison.

When you're under psychological stress, your nerve endings release substance P, a chemical "messenger" that acts on immune and other cells to create inflammation, notes Dr. Rosenkranz in her study.

Mindfulness (and potentially other meditation practices) combats this type of inflammation by helping to "train the mind to not get caught up in the story that we construct about the events of our lives," says Dr. Rosenkranz. In other words, it's reducing our reactivity to stressful events that lessens inflammation.

"THE EVIDENCE IS STRONG THAT MINDFULNESS—ESPECIALLY THE MORE YOU PRACTICE—'DOWNREGULATES' INFLAMMATORY GENES."

LEONARD H. CALABRESE, DO, PROFESSOR OF MEDICINE, CLEVELAND CLINIC LERNER COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

PREVENTIVE MEDICINE

In addition to decreasing inflammation, meditation may be a key in keeping it from developing in the first place.

Suppose you inherit a set of genes from your parents that could predispose you to developing type 2 diabetes, for example. It's not a forgone conclusion that you'll automatically become diabetic at some point in your life, because gene expression—whether those genes will activate to trigger diabetes—is affected by the food you eat, your stress levels, the amount of exercise you get, and many other environmental factors, says Parneet Pal, MBBS, MS, Chief Science Officer at Wisdom Labs in San Francisco.

Recently, Dr. Pal led a small pilot study to track the effects of a 12-week mindfulness program in the workplace.

Before and after her study, Dr. Pal's research team measured the changes in the participants' gene expression on a set of 53 genes related to inflammation and immunity. These particular genes trigger inflammation and lower immunity when the body is under stress.

After 12 weeks of a regular mindfulness practice, Dr. Pal said that among the participants, "there was a significantly lower expression of inflammatory genes and a greater expression of genes boosting immunity. Beyond that, participants also experienced improved levels of social well-being—they felt better," noted Dr. Pal.

"The practice of mindfulness," adds Dr. Rosenkranz, "is about changing your relationship to life's slings and arrows—not about keeping them at bay. A reduction in inflammation, as a consequence of mindfulness practice, is a fortunate side effect." ●

mindful30

PRACTICE WITH A PURPOSE

Join thousands in Mindful's 3rd annual online meditation challenge September 1-30

Find Calm, Feel Renewed, and Make an Impact

Experience 30 days of mindfulness and meditation with daily insight and guided instruction from some of today's leading mindfulness experts.

Amishi Jha

Frank Ostaseski

Ghylian Bell

Parneet Pal

Mark Coleman

Shelly Tygielski

Rich Fernandez

Proceeds help bring mindfulness training to teens and at-risk youth

Reserve your spot today with a special pre-registration discount!

Mindful.org/M30

Focus Your Attention

Quiet the noise inside your head with this simple naming practice.

You know when you have something you need to do but you just can't focus? Despite your earnest intention to get the job done, any (and every) distraction pulls at your attention like a dog seeing a squirrel. Instead of finishing the report, you find yourself scrolling through Instagram or researching recipes. You get everything ready to begin your project, and the next thing you know you're standing in front of the refrigerator (for the second time in an hour) wondering what to eat. You start to write the evaluation and midsentence remember the email you forgot to respond to the day before.

When your mind seems stuck in pinball-machine mode, it's nearly impossible to force yourself to focus on one task. That's when you need to gently guide it away from the romper room to a quieter, calmer den. "It's all about refocusing your attention, calming down your nervous system, and coming back to center so you can move forward in your day," says Ali Katz, author of *One Minute to Zen: Go From Hot Mess to Mindful Mom in One Minute or Less* (Skyhorse Publishing).

The Name Three Things practice can help. Katz likes to use it when in need of a quick work break or a refocusing moment to ground her when she's feeling scattered.

Before you start, let out some of that kinetic energy by standing up, moving around, perhaps swinging your arms and stretching your body, or by getting a glass of water. Then, come back and try this:

Name three objects you see in the room, one at a time. You can do this aloud or silently to yourself. Just take a natural breath, look around, and name one thing you see. Take another breath, and name another. Take a third breath, and name a third.

For example:
I see the desk chair.
I see the light.
I see the door.

Next, name three sounds that you hear. If it helps, you can close your eyes.

For example:
I hear the fan.
I hear my breath.
I hear a car on the street.

Then, name three feelings you are having right now.

For example:
I feel tired.
I feel cold.
I feel lonely.

Now you're going to do the same three steps, but this time naming just two objects that you see, two sounds you hear, and two feelings you have. When you're done, do it again, and this time, name just one thing that you see, one you hear, and one you feel.

When you finish, take a full, centering breath, inhaling through your nose and exhaling through your mouth. Notice if your mind feels a bit more settled. Go back to your day. ●

PRACTICE FOCUSED-ATTENTION MEDITATION

Explore this 3-part guided meditation series to gently work with your wandering mind.

mindful.org/focus-attention

ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHANIE DALTON COWAN

By Kelle Walsh

WHAT'S YOUR MINDSTYLE?

Join us on Facebook and Instagram and show us how you like to mind the moment.

facebook.com/mindthemoment

@mind_the_moment

Power up or power down with our guided meditation mp3s.

soundcloud.com/mindthemoment

Access our world-class mindfulness instructors in video tutorials that break down the basics.

youtube.com/mindthemoment

Enjoy single servings of mindfulness, available from your telephone 24/7.

toll free
(877) 589-6736

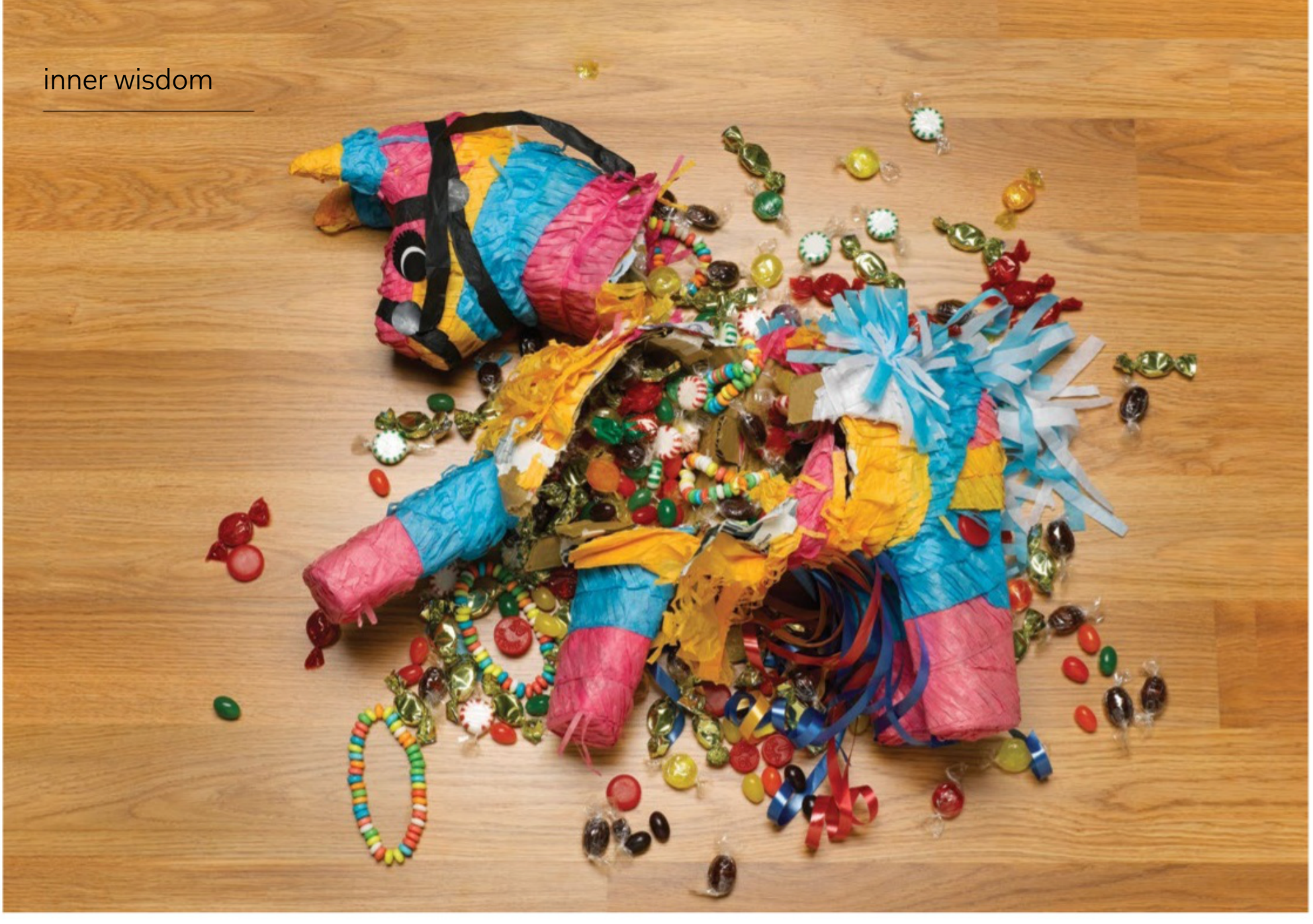
Mind the Moment has you covered with free meditation resources for every mindstyle.

mind the moment

Mind the Moment has also been offering mindfulness trainings to organizations such as non-profits, health-care systems, and everyone else, since 2005. Ask us how we can help your people **partner with the present moment.**

mindthemoment@harvardpilgrim.org • harvardpilgrim.org/mindfulness

The Mind the Moment program was developed and is offered by Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, Inc.



Why Happiness Isn't Always Comfortable

We assume being happy comes from living a stress-free life. But does it?

Thuddd. **That was the sound my** body made when it slammed against the mat.

Along with being a mindfulness teacher and psychotherapist, I am also an actor. Once upon a time, much to everyone's surprise, I was hired with no prior experience to do a stunt in a commercial. I had to launch myself off a trampoline and appear to fly across a table as I plucked a pear from someone's hand. The stunt ends with a face-plant on a thin mat. At first, I felt insecure and uneasy. But with the promise of a paycheck and a healthy dose of curiosity compelling me forward, I dove in, literally and figuratively. By the end of the rehearsal I was covered with bruises—and I felt great! I had pushed far beyond my skill set and comfort level. It took grit, determination, and surrender, and I was, for a brief moment, a stunt actor. I'd never been happier.

When I was younger and I imagined finding happiness, body slams for a TV commercial is not what came to mind. I was sure happiness would be the by-product of becoming an award-winning actor who was gorgeous, rich, and adored, living a life of luxury and ease. Sigh. It does sound pretty good. As it turns out, between working as an independent artist for decades, going through cancer, facing my credit card bills, and dealing with all the little pains and strains of being human, my life hasn't been all that comfortable. Yet, when I look back on the moments when I've been happiest, they haven't been times when life felt effortless and simple, but moments when I have met challenges and come out the other side. From moving to a new city to training as a psychotherapist, angst and difficulty have often led me to richness and fulfillment. In all my years, through all the ups and →

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elaine Smookler is a registered psychotherapist with a 20-year mindfulness practice. She is a senior faculty member at the Centre for Mindfulness Studies in Toronto.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY COOLIDGE / GETTY IMAGES

By Elaine Smookler

Essential Oil Diffuser Jewelry

Mindfully designed & crafted with love in the USA

Owner & Artist
Tari Zarka

Shop online, find a retailer

ĀĀŌTĒ
.com

Save 20%. Use discount code:
MINDFUL

CAN WE TRY TO BE HAPPY—OR AT LEAST OK—WITH WHATEVER COMES OUR WAY?

downs, I've come to one conclusion about happiness: Most of the time, a truly happy life includes a healthy amount of discomfort.

The pursuit of happiness is considered an inalienable right. The conundrum, however, is how hard it can be to recognize what will bring us lasting happiness, and what that happiness will even look like. With many of us drowning in errands, bills, work, emails, and all the other to-do-list items that seem to magically appear each day, it's easy to assume happiness springs from a life free of challenges and stress. But often what prevents us from being happy is that we would much rather not have to deal with uncomfortable experiences, which—let's face it—we can't really avoid. Life offers up ample rough patches, from broken hearts to busted knees.

Discomfort and difficulty are inevitable. Can we try to be happy—or at least OK—with whatever comes our way?

I like to think that difficulties are like fiber in our diets: They keep our systems moving and processing everything we take in. We need to take on challenges in order to feel alive, and, ultimately, to feel fulfilled and happy. And don't worry, challenges will come for us all.

In my psychotherapy practice, part of the goal of therapy, and potentially the path to happier-ness, is helping clients turn with curiosity toward people, events, or situations that they experience as difficult. For some, this might mean simply washing their dishes, walking a few feet out of their front door, or going to a family dinner. For others it might mean sitting silently for a few minutes without the TV on. Turning toward whatever we are avoiding or dreading can be game-changing. When we meet and greet our discomfort, we gradually learn that our lives are OK as they are. Over time, and with practice, this helps us build resilience, allowing us to face bigger and less predictable challenges with equanimity and curiosity.

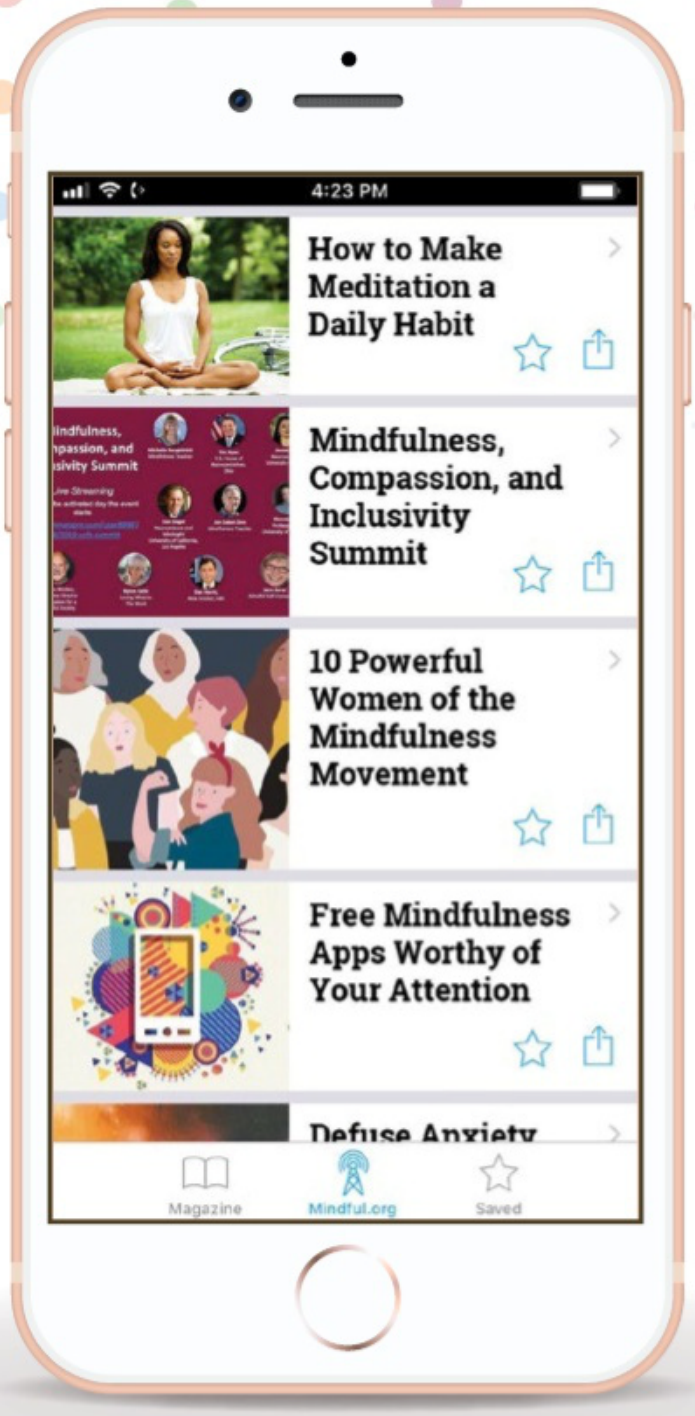
By seeing life's challenges as our daily dose of roughage, they can become part of our happiness, as opposed to being obstacles in the way. There will always be unpleasant stuff mixed in with the pleasant. Embracing that, we can find confidence, strength, and happiness born of welcoming our whole lives—bumps, bruises, and all. ●

THE TRICKINESS OF HAPPINESS

Listen to Editor-In-Chief Barry Boyce talk about how pursuing happiness too zealously can derail your mindfulness practice.

mindful.org/tricky-happy

mindful
MAGAZINE | MINDFUL.ORG



Tap into mindful anytime, anywhere

Inner wisdom for every moment from *Mindful* magazine and mindful.org

Download the FREE Mindful App

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

Read stories that matter to you.

Discover new insights and practices each week.

Save a library of your favorite articles.

*Search Mindful Magazine in your preferred app store.

WHILE EMPATHY IS NECESSARY, THE RESEARCH SHOWS IT IS FAR FROM SUFFICIENT.

The Science of Selflessness

Why do some people put their lives at risk for the sake of strangers? Research is uncovering the traits that lead to extreme altruism.

To get a sense of how the world views extraordinary altruism, consider what you go through if you want to donate a kidney to a stranger.

Naturally, transplant centers demand rigorous screening to be sure donors are healthy enough to undergo surgery, and that they're not being paid to give up their organs (which is illegal in almost every country). But as the number of unrelated would-be living kidney donors rose from 6.5% of the total in 1996 to roughly 23% today, transplant centers got worried. Why were people with neither a biologic nor emotional relationship with a recipient stepping up like this?

Surgeons argue they need psychological evaluation of prospective donors, because living kidney donation "caused concern" about "donor psychological status and motivation." Be on the lookout, they warn, for "past or ongoing psychiatric symptoms or disorders" and for "ulterior motives," such as "to atone or gain approval, to stabilize self-image, or to remedy psychological malady." Great Britain considered such altruism so pathological that living kidney donation was illegal there until 2006.

"Altruistic reasons for stranger donation are acceptable," said Harvey Mysel, president of the Living Kidney Donors Network. "But transplant centers want to be sure of the ➔

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sharon Begley is senior science writer with *STAT*, a national health and medicine publication. She is also author of *Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain* and most recently *Can't Just Stop: An Investigation of Compulsions* (2017, Simon & Schuster).

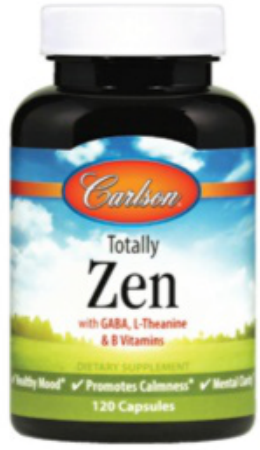
By Sharon Begley • Illustrations by Edmon de Haro

SUNRISE SPRINGS SPA RESORT

Sunrise Springs Spa Resort, the only destination spa resort in Santa Fe, NM, features 70 lush acres and spring-fed ponds. Guests may enjoy experiences including archery, animal interactions, qigong, mindfulness/meditation, gardening, cooking, hiking, yoga, fitness, and sweat lodge rituals. The spa menu includes bodywork, therapeutic massages, skin care, and energy healing services. Private outdoor Ojitos pools allow guests to relax in warm mineral-infused springs.

sunrisesprings.ojospa.com
800.704.0531

CARLSON TOTALLY ZEN



A busy lifestyle, bad night's sleep, or unfortunate event can throw off our mind-body balance. Regardless of the cause, we all have days when our bodies need some extra support. Help reset your mindset with Totally Zen, which promotes calmness, mental clarity, and a healthy mood. It's specially formulated with B-complex vitamins, L-theanine, GABA, and other nutrients that help ease occasional nervous tension, stress, moodiness, and fuzzy thinking.

www.carlsonlabs.com
888.234.5656

taking pause

A selection of products and services from Mindful's advertising community.

COPPER BEECH INSTITUTE

Mindfulness Practice. Compassionate Action.

RECHARGE WITH FREE LIVE STREAM MEDITATION

Copper Beech Institute offers a free online meditation community for all levels of practitioners. Meeting every Monday at 12:30–1:00 PM ET, each session is led by a trained instructor and includes a 10-minute meditation and wisdom talk around a monthly mindfulness theme. Live Stream Meditation creates a space to practice with others virtually and recharge from wherever you are.

www.copperbeechinstitute.org/live-stream-meditation
860.760.9750

AAOTE AROMATHERAPY DIFFUSER JEWELRY

We produce a full line of essential oil diffusers for body, home, and office. We make our own wood focals from sustainably grown, USA hardwoods. Simply apply a few drops of essential oil directly to the engraved wood focal, or the lava bead, and enjoy the aromatherapy all day. Visit aaote.com to shop online, or find a retailer near you.

aaote.com

* These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. These products are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.

reason for the altruism," meaning unselfish actions undertaken to reduce the suffering or enhance the well-being of others at some cost to the self. "There's a lot of suspicion of people who want to donate a kidney to a stranger."

Psychologists, in contrast, aren't exactly suspicious of extreme altruism, or "X-altruism," which is defined as unselfish caring for the well-being of strangers to the detriment of oneself. But they do view it the way ornithologists do a mandarin duck (home turf: East Asia) in New York's Central Park: as so outside the norm that it requires explanation.

Among the key findings from brain imaging and lab experiments are that X-altruism has two forms, one *impulsive* and one *considered*. *Impulsive X-altruism* is rescuing two girls being threatened by a knife-wielding, Muslim-insulting man on a commuter train (in Portland, Oregon; May 2017) and dying as a result. It's jumping onto subway tracks to save a woman who fell. It's pulling strangers from burning cars, as recipients of the Carnegie Medal for extraordinary civilian heroism have. *Considered X-altruism* manifests itself not in spur-of-the-moment actions but in thought-out ones such as adopting 20 orphaned or abandoned children, or founding a leper colony in a panther-filled wilderness, as Larissa MacFarquhar recounts in her 2015 book *Strangers Drowning: Impossible Idealism, Drastic Choices, and the Urge to Help*. It's repeatedly parachuting into war zones as an aid worker, as David Eubank has, dodging sniper fire to rescue a young girl who survived an ISIS massacre in Iraq. It's thinking hard, answering the questions of doctors who suspect you're crazy, and still donating a kidney to a stranger.

According to researchers, these two varieties of X-altruism are driven by different emotions and cognitive processes, and empathy—experiencing others' distress as if it were your own—plays a much larger role in one than the other.

The Roots of Altruism

Garden-variety altruism—French philosopher Auguste Comte coined the word in 1830, deriving it from *vivre pour autrui*, "to live for other people"—is driven by empathy, which children become capable of by age two, when they're able to perceive others' distress. That's a prerequisite for offering help, which most toddlers the world over do even when it brings them no tangible benefit.

The early emergence of empathy and altruism suggests that humans are genetically wired for such proto-altruism, but the wiring can last or wither depending on the culture where a child grows up. A classic examination of six cultures (Kenya, the island of Okinawa, India, the Philippines, Mexico, US), published in 1975, found that all the elementary-school-age children studied in Kenya behaved

altruistically, but only 8% of those in the US did. By one estimate, culture—what it teaches about responsibility to others, how collectivist or individualist a society is, and other influences—has 10 times more influence on altruism than genes do.

That makes sense, since genetically based altruism focuses on relatives and members of our group—that is, those most like us—rather than strangers and "others." Since extreme altruism is directed at strangers, it, too, likely has a nongenetic explanation in addition to a genetic one.

Acts of impulsive X-altruism, such as saving a stranger on a subway track, arise from extreme empathy, a brain circuit that kicks in so powerfully that seeing the suffering and distress of another overrides considerations of personal safety. These usually one-off acts sit on the same continuum as everyday altruism, with both driven by a genetically based ability to feel others' distress and a culturally nurtured belief in putting one's own needs aside, at least temporarily, to help someone else. Considered, as opposed to impulsive, X-altruism has different cognitive and emotional roots.

When Empathy Isn't Enough

It's usually not possible to scan the brains of people while they're in the middle of impulsive X-altruism, but scientists have done neuroimaging studies of the kidney donors. When it comes to considered X-altruism, while empathy is necessary, the research shows, it is far from sufficient. Rather, negative emotions such as anxiety are key: a palpable sense of itchy, jumpy, can't-sit-still angst at the mere thought of not helping compels these considered extreme altruists to act.

Amy Donohue, a stand-up comic, donated a kidney when a woman on Twitter pleaded with someone, anyone, to save her mother's life by doing so. Although friends and family describe Donahue as unusually compassionate, she said she was compelled by a different motivation: a visceral anger at the selfishness she sees throughout society. "When did we forget to help other people?" she told me when I asked her about this extreme gesture. It was an anxious anger she could calm only by acting as she did.

In a brain-imaging study of such donors, scientists found that their right amygdala, which processes the sense of fear, was about 8% larger than in nondonors. The amygdala also became significantly more active, compared to controls', when donors looked at faces with fearful expressions, Abigail Marsh of Georgetown University and her colleagues saw. That suggests greater sensitivity to others' distress—and, perhaps, a motivation for X-altruism: Seeing others' distress triggers it in themselves. That is classic empathy. Indeed, the brains of Marsh's kidney donors showed as much pain perception when seeing a stranger's thumb squashed as when feeling their own squashed.

But the amygdala is also responsible for fear and vigilance, scanning the world, and alerting the mind to the presence of danger, generating a palpable sense of fear, foreboding, and anxiety. That supports the idea that empathy alone isn't enough for considered X-altruism: Instead, compassion is the force that compels.

The Difference Compassion Makes

In her 2018 book *Standing at the Edge*, anthropologist, hospice caregiver, and Buddhist scholar Joan Halifax draws a distinction between empathy and compassion. Empathy, she writes, "is feeling *into* another, while compassion is feeling *for* another, accompanied by the aspiration to take action that benefits the other." Crucially, empathy can be crippling, as when a physician or disaster worker or psychologist identifies so strongly with others' suffering and anguish that she becomes paralyzed. "If our experience of [others'] suffering overwhelms us, empathic distress can also cause us to... abandon others in an attempt to protect ourselves from suffering too heavy to bear," Halifax writes.

SINCE EXTREME ALTRUISM IS DIRECTED AT STRANGERS, IT, TOO, LIKELY HAS A NONGENETIC EXPLANATION IN ADDITION TO A GENETIC ONE.

Compassion, in contrast, comes with less emotional attachment and more motivation. During compassion meditation, the brain's motor cortex becomes active, as the desire to end the suffering of others is accompanied by a propulsive power. In one study, Matthieu Ricard, a French-born Buddhist monk and scholar, engaged in empathy practice, consciously trying to feel the distress of others (he focused on suffering Romanian orphans) while fMRI recorded his brain activity. The more he felt their pain and suffering, the more quickly he felt overwhelmed and exhausted.

But when he switched to compassion meditation, focusing on the wish that others' pain be alleviated but without trying to feel it oneself, Ricard never flagged. Empathy practice and its quick descent into empathic distress activated neural networks associated with the distress of suffering pain oneself and seeing it in others, and can't be sustained. But compassion meditation activated brain networks associated with connecting and belonging, with positive emotions, and with maternal love.

Compassion, it seems, can make the difference between feeling the pain of others and doing something to help—a lesson worth remembering, even for those of us who are unlikely to play subway-track hero or donate a kidney to a stranger.

A Class Act in Motion

By Victoria Dawson

JG Larochette's first word—"ball"—was an early sign that he would find presence not in stillness but in motion. As he grew up, the baseball diamond and soccer field were his refuge. And after playing Division I baseball in college, Larochette joined Playworks, a California nonprofit that fosters recess play in low-income schools. A two-week assignment at an inner-city elementary school in Richmond, CA, began ominously: One afternoon, when Larochette was on the basketball court, students pelted him with rocks. He was determined to respond with love. Making spaces safe and loving became his passion, first on court, then as a classroom teacher. But as a full-time teacher, Larochette lost the habit of daily physical activity through which he had previously channeled stress. He struggled with insomnia, anxiety, and depression. Just as he began to contemplate leaving the classroom, after eight years, he found a lifeline: mindfulness. Within weeks, Larochette was sharing mindfulness practices with his students; within months, he was sharing with other schools in the community. Today, Larochette is the founder and director of the Mindful Life Project, a nonprofit that now provides intervention programs—including mindfulness—for 22 underserved Bay Area schools, and leads mindfulness trainings in schools nationwide.

Find a moment of stillness with JG Larochette.
mindful.org/larochette

Tell me about your time at Coronado Elementary School.
I fell in love with the kids and families, and I went really hard for those nine years. The kids were dealing with trauma and suffering, and I kept trying to do more—rally the community, help on the playground, collect signatures to get the resources we needed. Five years in, when I was 28, I started having bouts of anxiety and depression. I did not know what self-care was, and I kept pushing. Eventually, I was sleeping only two or three hours a night. I tried everything: therapy, medication, acupuncture, craniosacral therapy. I tried and tried, but I was sliding into an abyss.

How did you end up turning to mindfulness?
Someone suggested meditation. I'm a movement kind of person, so stillness was an interesting alternative. I tried one meditation place and left feeling even more anxious. But someone else mentioned mindfulness. After taking an introductory class through my health-care provider, I attended a Monday night talk and meditation practice at Spirit Rock, a nearby Insight meditation center. That was the moment: I felt at home in myself.

That quickly?
My brain was in such a state of haywire that even the second it started to rewire was significant. The light went on: This is what I've needed for my whole life, especially the last 10 years. Within weeks, my sleep improved.

Would you elaborate about this sense of feeling "at home"?
I'm an immigrant kid. My father is Argentinian. My mother is Jewish and Israeli. My first language was Spanish. But I wasn't really Latino. I'm a six-feet-three-inches-tall white guy. I never really felt comfortable in my own skin, never felt that I belonged to a community that I could relate to. And as a child, I was a worrier. When I look back, I realize that sports were my mindfulness practice: On the field, I was in the present moment. But I couldn't name it then—what it was that made me feel empowered, comfortable, at home.

You were quick to bring mindfulness into your third-grade classroom. Why?
Earlier that year, I had been so caught up with resolving classroom conflicts, settling kids down, redirecting their attention, assigning consequences. I had students who had lost family members, a couple of students whose fathers were incarcerated, a student whose father was on the run from immigration—it was a significant trauma group. But I realized that *my* anxiety and fear—my being disconnected from the present moment and trying to avoid my humanity—had been causing my students to feel the same way.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MCNAIR EVANS

"WITHIN 15 SECONDS, EVERY KID IN THE ROOM WAS STILL. I THOUGHT, ARE THEY MESSING WITH ME?"

How did that first session go?
I'd been practicing for two or three weeks. I had no idea how to lead meditation, but I kept it simple—two minutes. *If you don't like it,* I said, *I won't force it on you, but I've found something that's helped me, and maybe it will help you. We're going to focus on sounds and on breathing.* They looked at me: *What? We thought you were the cool teacher!*

Within 15 seconds, every kid in the room was still. Eyes closed. No fidgeting. I saw their facial muscles and their bodies dropping into relaxation. After two minutes, when I rang the bell, no one moved. Twenty-five kids! I thought, *Are they messing with me?* After a few minutes, they began to open their eyes, and then, they shared: *I felt relaxed. It was like floating in the clouds.*

And you've never wavered in your own practice?
It's funny. I'm actually more disciplined about practicing mindfulness than I am about flossing my teeth. I haven't missed one day of practicing or sitting in stillness.

ILLUSTRATION BY BY KAER STOCK / SHUTTERSTOCK

10 Women *in Mindfulness on* Finding their Power

BY STEPHANIE DOMET

Introducing the Mindful Women's Initiative

Sign up to join our emerging community of mindful women. Learn more at:

mindful.org/mindful-women

There's a balancing of gender power happening across the professional world, and the field of mindfulness is no exception. Research suggests most meditators in the US are women, yet, as mindfulness has mainstreamed, the female perspective has often taken a back seat and in some cases been ignored or overwritten. We need to hear from the female pioneers, researchers, teachers, lawyers, and activists who are shifting our understanding of what it means to be mindful. We spoke to 10 pioneering mindful women about how they bring the diversity of their experiences to bear in their work. These women were chosen based on recommendations from their peers. Many echoed similar themes: Kindness is necessary, trust yourself, find your community, meet yourself with warmth.

This is the first of a series of pieces you will see in the pages of *Mindful* highlighting women doing important work with mindfulness. For more in this issue, see our profile of neuroscientist Amishi Jha, on page 54.

"Women are not really allowed to be fierce, we're not allowed to be so active, and men are not allowed to be tender and warm with themselves."

KRISTIN NEFF

KRISTIN NEFF

Love Your Imperfect Self

Kristin Neff has been thinking a lot about traditional gender roles, and how they can block self-compassion. Neff is a professor of human development and culture at the University of Texas at Austin, and the world's foremost research expert on self-compassion.

Men think self-compassion is about being soft and nurturing, and that it's something that will "undermine your strength," says Neff. "For women, we have a little less self-compassion than men do." Women think that self-compassion is about being selfish. "Women are always supposed to focus on others, be kind to others, take care of others, and it just feels selfish to do it for ourselves."

So these days, Neff is thinking more in terms of balance. "In some ways masculine and feminine don't really mean that much, they're constructs. But there's something they point to—the nurturing, the tenderness, the openness." That's the feminine side. "The protection, mama-bear energy, fierce compassion." That's the masculine side. "Everyone needs both," says Neff.

The next phase of Neff's work is focused on helping men and women integrate these (conventionally) feminine and masculine elements of compassion. "Women are not really allowed to be fierce, we're not allowed to be so active, and men are not allowed to be tender and warm with themselves. So the next phase of my work will be about how to help people integrate."

MIRABAI BUSH

Keep Listening and Find Your Community

Mirabai Bush has watched the mindfulness world change gradually over her almost-fifty years as a leader in the field. She's a long-time activist, cofounder of the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, a key contributor to Google's Search Inside Yourself Program, author of many books, including *Compassion in Action*, *Working with Mindfulness*, and more.

"Let us just say that many of the barriers to women leading a really fulfilled life and making the best contribution they can in all areas of life, they're there for women teaching mindfulness, too. Patriarchy is really deeply embedded in our culture. Things are changing, but it sure was difficult in the beginning."

Bush thinks back to her early days as a young meditation student in India, encountering monasteries full of men, and all-male meditation teachers. "We didn't see any models of how you brought a female awareness into how you'd do these practices," she notes. Such an awareness is crucial, of course, "in order to bring these teachings into everyday life."

Bush believes we have to look for ways to be women in community. "We can't do it alone. We really need each other. Our lives are busy and full, yet we're still struggling with the individualism that's promoted through capitalism. There aren't as many structures for us to even find community." Bush adds, sometimes all it takes to make a profound change in your sense of community is one good friend "with whom you can talk about what you're learning and what you're struggling with."

18+

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

the biggest Internet portal, providing you various content: brand new books, trending movies, fresh magazines, hot games, recent software, latest music releases.

Unlimited satisfaction one low price
Cheap constant access to piping hot media
Protect your downloadings from Big brother
Safer, than torrent-trackers

18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages
Brand new content
One site

AVXLIVE.ICU

AvaxHome - Your End Place

We have everything for all of your needs. Just open https://avxlive.icu

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIK JACOBS AND COURTESY OF KRISTEN NEFF

> "We can't do it alone. We really need each other. Our lives are busy and full, yet we're still struggling with the individualism that's promoted through capitalism."
>
> MIRABAI BUSH

ANGELA ROSE BLACK

#whogets2bewell

For Angela Rose Black, PhD, founder, and CEO of Mindfulness for the People, her earliest memories of bringing mindful attention to her life happened in childhood in Indianapolis. She spent time at Flanner House, a community multipurpose center that supports, advocates for, and empowers Black families in Indianapolis, where she met Frances Malone, the director of the center's child development center.

"Among many things, she prioritized reminding us to pay attention to our surroundings; to walk and sit with dignity; to savor our food as we nourished our bodies. I don't think she called it 'mindfulness' but rather emphasized 'awareness' as critical to our survival as Black children in a racist society," Black says.

As Black moved through an academic career in which she studied health disparities, with research focused on Black women's health and stress, she herself suffered from stress and sought relief in meditation and mindfulness. There too, however, she found stressors. "My very existence in a given mindfulness space is oftentimes disruptive. Opening my mouth to ask 'who gets to be well' is resonant for some and triggering for others. The very breath we are invited to focus on is valued in some bodies while not in others."

Black was compelled to work for change. "My fatigue with people of color being underconsidered and undervalued in all things mindfulness—research, teaching, and practice—despite our deep historical roots of engaging in mindful practices—propelled me to unapologetically create Mindfulness for the People."

Mindfulness for the People offers a variety of courses, including mind–body training for people of color in search of compassionate ways to address racial battle fatigue, and for white people to recognize and respond to white fragility with compassion.

While the material Mindfulness for the People teaches may be challenging to some, Black's parting words are simple. "To women of color reading this: I see you. To white women reading this: Do you see us?"

JANICE MARTURANO

Find the Win-Win-Win

Janice Marturano was a high-achieving, burned-out executive at General Mills when a friend convinced her to spend a week at a spa. Marturano had just overseen a high-stakes acquisition that was supposed to take six months to complete, and took 18 instead. During that period, both her parents died. "I did what most professionals do: We play hurt. We keep going because that's what we do. We still have children to care for, and spouses, we still have our responsibilities at work."

That spa, though. Marturano scoffed at the idea, only softening when she saw one of its offerings. "The power of mindfulness, an intensive retreat for executives and innovators. And at that moment, in my very warped brain, I said, well, maybe if it's intensive, it's OK to go to a spa."

That retreat changed her life. She went all in, looking at neuroscience research, and studying the way other cultures use mindfulness. She began to see overlaps between this new passion and a longstanding one: leadership. She worked with a friend to develop the very first mindful leadership curriculum at the University of Massachusetts.

Marturano also founded and leads the Institute for Mindful Leadership, which offers retreats and courses to leaders and employees at companies and organizations. For Marturano, key to mindful leadership is what she calls the "win-win-win," which refers to a business decision that benefits the company, the employees, and society. She believes mindful leadership is not a luxury. "It's an absolute imperative if we want professionals to do the work we need them to do—for themselves, for their organization, and for that big picture. Boy, do we need it. Government can't do it. Nonprofits don't have enough money to do it. We need these folks to have the spaciousness to find the win-win-win."

"People can recognize their nervous systems are getting overly burdened and they can dial that back."

SUSAN KAISER GREENLAND

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DUKE VIRGINIA AND COURTESY OF JANICE MARTURANO AND SUSAN KAISER GREENLAND

SUSAN KAISER GREENLAND

Un-hijack Your Nervous System

A high-powered lawyer for a national television network, cofounder of the Inner Kids Foundation, author of multiple books on mindfulness, and a mother of two, Susan Kaiser Greenland says mindfulness has been a lifeline for her. "I truly believe mindfulness-based self-regulation strategies are crucial at all ages, to give people the bandwidth to have open minds so they can learn and listen," she says. "Once people recognize their nervous systems are getting overly burdened and they can dial that back, the worldview piece comes into place."

But, she believes, there's still plenty of work to be done. "The situation we're in now keeps me up at night. No one's talking to each other, they're talking past each other, hand-wringing and finger-pointing. Everyone's nervous system is jacked up, everything they do jacks it up further."

She recognizes that in her own past. "The generation of women who were coming up through the corporate world when I was there, in order to get where we were going, you had to take on a lot of male characteristics. I used to come home like the terminator," she recalls. "I know mindfulness has helped me soften that edge and be more confident, but that was a price of trying to break through to certain jobs that just weren't open to women at the time—you had to develop a male way to navigate." Now, Kaiser Greenland knows "there's a different way to navigate, kinder, more compassionate, more effective."

"People said loving-kindness was 'just a feel-good practice.' But I'd had a very powerful transformative experience, so I just kept on teaching it."

SHARON SALZBERG

SHARON SALZBERG

Believe Yourself

For Sharon Salzberg, world-renowned meditation teacher, bestselling author of *Real Happiness* and nine other books, it all comes down to advice her teacher gave her in Calcutta, India, in 1974. "You really understand suffering, that's why you should teach," Dipa Ma told Salzberg, then a young adult with every intention of living in India forever, and remaining a lifelong student. "I had a very tumultuous, difficult childhood," Salzberg says, "and that was the first time I ever thought about it as a potential credential for anything."

Salzberg began as a reluctant teacher of meditation, and soon founded, along with Jack Kornfield and Joseph Goldstein, the Insight Meditation Society. During a sojourn to Burma (now Myanmar) in the mid-eighties she was introduced to loving-kindness practices. The practices resonated hard with Salzberg, and she brought what she had learned back to the US, eventually writing a book called *Lovingkindness*. It was not met with open arms in the meditation world.

"People said to me that loving-kindness wasn't an insight technique. They said, 'It's just a feel-good practice.' But I had had a very powerful transformative experience with loving-kindness practice, so I just kept on teaching it."

The practice that many of her peers wrote off actually resonated with others. "It's very gratifying now that the pendulum has swung the other way," she says, "that people are realizing compassion is the thing that was missing from mindfulness."

She credits the kind words of her teacher, all those years ago in India, for helping her maintain her loving-kindness practice when others viewed it as frivolous. "Dipa Ma said to me: 'You can do anything you want to do, it's just you thinking you can't do it that will stop you.'"

RHONDA MAGEE

Engage with Your Experience

For Rhonda Magee, practicing law and practicing mindfulness go hand in hand. "Lawyers have to struggle with ethical questions of right and wrong," she notes. "Lawyers are called in when there are high stakes—somebody is threatened with loss of freedom or the right to be in this country, custody over children. Lawyers are called in when those who call are suffering.

"If we can engage mindfulness, we can manage stress and support ourselves in the practical aspects of what we're trying to do while also deepening our capacity to serve in ways that minimize the harm we do along the way."

For Magee, that understanding of harm includes her own experience "as a woman of color in a society and a world that wasn't necessarily created for a person like me to thrive."

"Through my life, I've had the opportunity to become more aware of the subtle ways identity may be showing up—what is the rightful place of a woman, or a Black person in a group?—by seeing how we're all caught up in making meaning and perceiving each other through lenses shaped by a culture that has made all these identities relevant to us." Mindfulness is the balm for what Magee calls "that extra layer of suffering, wounding, and harm that we may be experiencing or causing others."

Magee speaks from the experience of a 51-year-old, cisgendered, racialized Black woman in America—and that informs what she is able to offer. "I really just believe that if we're willing to look at our own experiences carefully, we have unlimited capacity to help transform the world. So we should be encouraged to be our beautiful unique selves and know that our voices are incredibly needed in the world at this time."

"If we're willing to look at our own experiences carefully, we have unlimited capacity to help transform the world."

RHONDA MAGEE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TAWNI BANNISTER FOR DUMBO FEATHER AND BY TODD RAFALOVICH


Crimes of Kinfolk
RACE THEORY

PATRICIA ROCKMAN

Feel the Gratitude of Connection

Pat Rockman "woke up" for the first time when she was 14 years old, at a leadership conference put on by the Anglican Church.

"I was sitting in a little valley and I remember having the experience—it sounds kind of hokey—of really being one with all of the environment," she says. "And I recognized that that's not usually the way I walked around."

The experience changed her life. In the short term she broke up with her boyfriend ("Because I couldn't talk to him about this experience. I remember saying, 'you can't see the stars, I can't be with you,'" she says, rolling her eyes just a little at her younger self), and changed her circle of friends. In the long run, "it initiated a path of seeking and study and wanting to understand what it is to be a human being."

Rockman pursued that understanding from all directions, studying Sufism for a while, looking into Buddhist psychology, becoming an MD, and then a medical psychotherapist. She trained with Zindel Segel and began offering Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy to her patients. In 2011 she and Tita Angangco opened the Centre for Mindfulness Studies in Toronto, which delivers mindfulness programs to trainers working in healthcare and other fields, as well as to the general public.

These days, Rockman values the interdependence of the group of women with whom she collaborates on writing, teaching, and developing mindfulness programming, with a special focus on mental health. "I love the work. I really want to be able to bring people, and many of them are women, into this work and I love working with them. I feel really lucky to be a woman doing this. I just feel grateful. What else can you feel?"

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stephanie Domet is the author of two novels, including *Fallsy Downsies*. She was the host of "Mainstreet" on CBC Radio One, and lives in Halifax, where she destresses mindfully by puttering in the garden and sewing her own clothes.

> "Trust your body and psyche more and more, and that's how you'll gain your power. It's a process of unbrainwashing yourself."
>
> HELEN WENG

WILLOUGHBY BRITTON

Trust Your Own Experience

As a clinical psychologist and research scientist at Brown University Medical School, Willoughby Britton is one of the few researchers looking into the potential negative psychological effects of meditation.

Her first inkling that this research was important came when her own meditation efforts, and those of many she knew, "did not conform to the dominant narrative of stability, clarity, and calm," she says. "When I was working at in-patient hospital during my residency, there were two meditators who became psychotic while on a retreat. Thinking that two in one year was a lot, I asked some meditation teachers if they had ever seen such meditation-related difficulties before and most reluctantly admitted that they had."

Throughout her career, Britton has observed the power dynamics that influence systems, organizations, and society. "The mindfulness movement has a lot of parallels with the women's movement, where the dominant narrative was not only omitting but also—through repetition—actively silencing other, less desirable narratives," she says. "Positive change depends on giving voice to previously silenced narratives, so that a fuller, more accurate picture of reality, history—or meditation practice—can have an equal seat at the table." So Britton prioritizes representing and documenting marginalized voices and alternative narratives in her research.

At the same time, Britton's keenly aware of the dangers of confirmation bias. "My mindfulness practice has taught me how easy it is to deceive myself and to reinforce what I already think, so I have to keep asking: *What am I missing? What are my potential blind spots? Who could help point out what I am overlooking?*"

Still, she returns to a simple—though not necessarily easy—ethos: "Trust your own experience, speak your truth, find allies."

HELEN WENG

Unbrainwash Yourself

For Helen Weng, her work as a neuroscientist, her lived experience as the child of Taiwanese immigrants, and her mindfulness practice are inseparable. Weng has spent the last 14 years investigating the neurobiological mechanisms of mindfulness meditation. What she's observed as a racialized person in mindfulness circles has made her want to do things differently—and help to change the conversation for other minorities who meditate.

Weng's work includes bringing minority and marginalized communities into her research projects. She says not only are scientists largely homogeneously white men, so are their study participants. Weng approached the East Bay Meditation Center in Oakland, CA, which offers mindfulness practices to people of color, queer people, people with disabilities, and more. They collaborated on designing studies that are culturally sensitive to people from different groups. "Once you make procedures more sensitive for diverse people it actually makes it more sensitive for everyone," Weng says. "So I'll use these procedures as my baseline now."

For Weng, an important part of her mindfulness practice has been to make it her own. "It's trial and error to find what works for you, but listen deeply to your body to see what gives you more vitality and makes you more connected to yourself and others, and feel free to adapt or change anything. I love music, so I listen to music while I'm more present with myself. Some would tell me that's not meditation, but they're wrong. Trust your body and psyche more and more, and that's how you'll gain your power. It's a process of unbrainwashing yourself." ●

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF PATRICIA ROCKMAN, WILLOUGHBY BRITTON, AND HELEN WENG

ZERO THE MIND

The military is testing mindfulness to train the brain so warriors can “zero the mind” for increased attention, focus, and calm under extreme stress. *Mindful* journalist Barry Yeoman gets on base with General Walter Piatt and neuroscientist Amishi Jha.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEPHANIE DIANI

In early morning before his work day started, Lieutenant General Piatt took time to practice mindfulness in the Memorial Park at Fort Drum, New York. In addition to Virginia Military Institue, Fort Drum is facilitating mindfulness training for warriors—a project championed by General Piatt when he commanded the US Army's 10th Mountain Division.

The bell rings, and the 21 cadets in Major Matt Jarman's leadership class at Virginia Military Institute stand at attention as their highest-ranking classmate salutes the professor. Though the weather outside is mild, the cadets are dressed in their winter uniforms. Black neckties are tied in Windsor knots and tucked between the second and third buttons of their black long-sleeved shirts. Woolen garrison hats sit on the classroom tables next to open laptops.

"Today we're going to do a little introduction to meditation," says Jarman, an assistant professor of psychology. This is not what future military officers usually hear, so he cautiously probes their receptiveness. "When you hear mindfulness meditation, what do you think?"

The cadets call out free-association words: *purposeful, tranquility, recalibrating*. One attempts a longer definition. "It's almost like slow motion," he says. "You know the next move you've got to make. You have to do it quickly. But in your mind, you slow everything around you, so that you can make that decision as efficiently as possible."

"How often are you guys distracted or daydreaming?" Jarman asks. "How often are you stressed?" All the time, the class responds in various forms. Days are regimented at VMI, a state-supported college that feeds into all five US armed forces. Rules govern everything from how cadets arrange their toiletries to what they wear to sleep.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Barry Yeoman is an award-winning journalist who specializes in narratives about complex social issues. He has written for *The Washington Post*, *National Wildlife*, *The Nation*, and *Talking Points Memo*, among many others.

Jarman explains that an emerging body of research suggests that mindfulness practices might help troops cope with the rigors of military life, particularly as they prepare for combat. Studies with Army soldiers and Marines have found that mindfulness strengthens concentration, short-term memory, and emotional regulation—essential skills under fire.

"Pre-deployment training is intentionally stressful and demanding, right?" Jarman tells his students. "If you look at cognitive function of those service members at the end of that, it's depleted, understandably." Compromised thinking causes troubles on the battlefield. "If you're making a life-or-death decision, you want to be able to hold more things in mind—to consider more options, more avenues—before making a decision. When you're depleted, it's literally more difficult to do that."

There are practices that can help maintain mental capacity under

"IF YOU'RE MAKING A LIFE-OR-DEATH DECISION, YOU WANT TO BE ABLE TO HOLD MORE THINGS IN MIND—TO CONSIDER MORE OPTIONS, MORE AVENUES—BEFORE MAKING A DECISION."

Major Matt Jarman, assistant professor of psychology at Virginia Military Institute

stress, he says. One of them is mindfulness meditation.

When Jarman began teaching at VMI in 2015, he worried that cadets would dismiss meditation as a practice unbefitting a warrior. He needn't have worried. His students see their own role models meditating. "I heard LeBron James does it during games," one young man says of the basketball star. "It makes me think that I should probably start doing it."

Jarman explains that meditation is not meant to be fun. Focusing on one's breathing, observing when the mind wanders, and returning attention back to breath requires discipline. It's like weight-training, he says: "Every time you notice you're distracted and bring your mind back, you can think of that as a repetition at the gym."

Then it's time to practice. The cadets sit upright, tuck in their chins, and shift their gazes downward. The room falls silent for five minutes. Afterward, Jarman asks for reactions.

"My mind was really good at sneaking getting distracted," says a cadet. "Not just random thoughts, but thinking about the meditation."

"Our minds are very clever," Jarman says. As we try to quiet them, →

Lieutenant General Piatt (left) checks in with Col. Michael Englis, Cpt. Nathan Held, and 1st Lt. Austin Brown during a Summit Strike exercise involving rocket fires, ground maneuvers, and airspace management. For many service members, the stresses of active duty contribute to post-traumatic stress. By learning mindfulness techniques to "zero the mind" (focus thoughts and emotions on the present), they can make smarter decisions on the field and suffer less from trauma when they return home. Above, Spc. Charlotte Carulli (left) and Pvt. Kelvishia V. Worth take part in mindfulness training with a Resiliency Trainer in the Wellness Center at Fort Drum.

A PILOT STUDY FOUND THAT AMONG MARINES WHO PRACTICED MINDFULNESS AT LEAST TWELVE MINUTES A DAY, THEY DIDN'T JUST PRESERVE WORKING MEMORY CAPACITY. THEY ACTUALLY IMPROVED.

they manufacture what seem like critical insights. "That's the beauty of the system: You treat any thought, no matter the content, the same way. You notice it, let it pass, return to breath."

Many of these cadets will join the armed forces: VMI says 50 to 60 percent of its graduates take military commissions, and almost one-fifth make it their careers. They will enter the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard at a time when researchers are recommending that mindfulness become as integral a part of training as physical fitness. As evidence mounts that practices like meditation could cultivate a better-skilled fighting force, the military is still deciding whether to heed the advice.

The United States has been send-ing troops into conflict zones for most of the past two decades, and the stresses faced by fighting forces can be crushing. Army Lieutenant General Walt Piatt discovered in the years following the September 11 attacks how those stresses bleed over into life back home.

At the time, Piatt was a brigade commander with the 25th Infantry Division at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii. He had deployed to Iraq every other year and watched some of his soldiers melt down whenever they returned Stateside. They drank too much, beat their spouses, and drove their motorcycles dangerously fast.

"It's like getting off a freeway and getting into an elevator," he says of those homecomings. "Everything slows down, but our mind was still in that combat zone, operating at that level of alertness that was no longer required."

The Army's reintegration training, designed to ease soldiers back into family life, couldn't keep pace with that depressurization. "We were desperate," says Piatt, who now serves as director of the Army Staff. "What we had been doing had not been working."

Through a colleague, Piatt met one of the country's top scientists in the mindfulness arena: Amishi Jha, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Miami. Jha and Elizabeth Stanley, an associate professor of security studies at Georgetown University, had earlier conducted a pilot study with Marine reservists preparing to deploy to Iraq. That study, first published in 2010, tested how mindfulness training affected "working memory capacity," the ability to retain and use relevant information over short periods of time without being distracted.

"I describe working memory as the mind's whiteboard, with disappearing ink," says Jha, a cognitive neuroscientist. "What we put up there, and write over and over again, moment by moment, makes up our current conscious experience. If your whiteboard is filled with preoccupations, worries, random distracting thoughts, and whatever your technology is throwing at you, there's not going to be a lot of room left for you to have access to the information you need to make important decisions." It will also be harder, she says, to regulate your emotions.

Before shipping overseas, troops undergo training that includes "stress inoculation," designed to prepare them for the intensity of combat. High stress, however, often depletes working memory. The researchers →

General Piatt kept inspirational books, including poetry by the Sufi mystic Rumi, in his office in Fort Drum, New York, where he served before becoming Director of the Army Staff. On the wall is "Pando Commando," the unofficial insignia of several battalions, combining to form what would become the 10th Mountain Division, that defeated Nazi forces in the Alps during the Second World War.


PIATT
U.S. ARMY
MG WALTER E. PIATT

hoped that mindfulness training might help the Marines survive the pre-deployment period with their cognitive skills intact.

The results of the pilot study, Stanley says, exceeded her expectations. Among Marines who practiced mindfulness at least 12 minutes a day, "they didn't just preserve working memory capacity," she says. "They actually improved." The more they practiced, the more they benefited.

After the pilot study, Jha and Stanley wanted to expand their research. "We had a series of grants in the can," Jha says, "but couldn't find anyone who would take on our project, because we were asking for quite a bit of time."

They found a champion in Piatt. The general helped them launch a study at Schofield Barracks in 2010 that demonstrated that certain types of mindfulness training helped servicemembers concentrate better and tune out distractions, even as they prepared for deployment. Piatt also advised Jha and her colleague Scott Rogers as they developed a program called Mindfulness-Based Attention Training (MBAT), crafted for military populations and designed to be taught by non-experts.

Working with Piatt, says Jha, has given her "the support of a leader who is interested in mindfulness and has actually started practicing himself." She also gained an ally who understands military culture, and how to use language to win support. Piatt talks about mindfulness as "zeroing the mind," just as a soldier zeroes a weapon by aligning the sight with the target. "The soldiers will understand it," Piatt says. "It translates better and then you reduce that wall of skepticism."

Jha continues to expand her research. She's talking with militaries in other countries. She's collaborating with VMI's Jarman on a project looking at mindfulness and leadership skills. She has worked, too, with military spouses. This year she published →

WORKING WITH STRESS WARRIORS

Neuroscientist Amishi Jha has been putting mindfulness to the test with people under extreme stress—with life-changing results.

BY STEPHANIE DOMET

Amishi Jha knew she needed help when her toddler looked up at her during story time and asked what a Womp was. Jha had read this same book to her son dozens of times, and had been truly looking forward to spending this time with him. "What is he talking about?" she remembers thinking, realizing she didn't have a clue—though she'd been reading about Womps for several pages, and had over successive nights.

She was in her second year as an assistant professor, her husband was starting grad school, and she'd lost the feeling in her teeth from grinding them so ferociously. "I was at the point of quitting. I needed to do something that felt more manageable to me."

That something turned out to be meditation, and it became more than just a personal daily practice for her. A neuroscientist, Jha began to study the effects of mindfulness on people in high-stress cohorts, like medical students and nurses.

"WE'RE HELPING REAL PEOPLE IN THEIR REAL LIVES FACE THE CHALLENGES THAT WE AS A NATION ARE ASKING THEM TO ENDURE."

Amishi Jha

A tragic story turned her attention in another direction. The perpetrator of a school shooting near Philadelphia, where she then lived, was identified in early news reports as a military veteran. And though it turned out the shooter had no connection to the military, for Jha, there was a moment of sharp recognition.

"At that point we were already eight years into this Afghanistan conflict, and I felt we were seeding our society with psychosis but there was nothing being done to protect against that. So my openness to working with military personnel came from: What can I possibly do?"

As much as Jha may have met with some resistance from soldiers, she began this work a decade

Amishi Jha, Director of Contemplative Neuroscience and associate professor at the University of Miami, has been at the forefront of studying how mindfulness can best serve military service members.

ago with resistance of her own. She didn't know anyone in the military then, and she was raised Hindu, with a strong adherence to nonviolence. "Working with warriors is a really new experience for me, but what I've come to understand about many of the people I've met is peace is more important to them, because they're the front line of having to actually play a role in achieving it."

For Jha, that makes the work she's doing all the more vital, though it brings with it challenges her peers don't necessarily face in their labs, where tightly controlled studies are carried out with the participation of volunteer subjects. "I don't have that. I have to work with the timeline military leaders offer me. I get the visits that I get. But we are helping real people in their real lives be better able to face the challenges that we as a nation are asking them to endure."

And Jha hears from those real people about the impact mindfulness has had on their lives, like the helicopter pilot who got in touch to say, "Literally, mindfulness saved my life. I heard your podcast, and I asked my brigade surgeon to teach me about mindfulness and I gained an understanding of my mind that helped me not only in my job, but in my marriage." Jha says, "Obviously that's not me, that's the practice, but it does make me feel like the effort that has gone into it—and it is a difficult journey to bring these practices into communities that don't always feel that they need them—when you hear that it gives people something of their own capacity back, that's really exciting."

That helicopter pilot isn't an outlier. Jha says she regularly hears from military personnel who have had mindfulness training that they are able to be in the joyful, human moments of their lives with attention—as well as have tools at their disposal to reach for in the life-and-death moments they may face in the field. "You want to be there for the joys in your life, but the distractibility, the demand, and the rumination can just suck you away from those moments, and you don't know how to get back, and what I feel we get the privilege to hear from people is: I am able to be attentive and present for these precious moments of my life as well. It's not just the job, it's the whole person benefiting from this."

Jha says those benefits apply equally to leaders as they do to soldiers. "It has a positive contagion for the entire organization when the leader is informed and able to practice mindfulness," she says. She was invited to give a keynote address at a symposium called Evidence-based Leader Interventions for Health and Wellness as part of a NATO conference in Berlin, Germany, in April. And some military leaders are already on board. Jha remembers a conversation she had with a former US Surgeon General. "When he left the Army, they did an exit interview with him and asked what is one thing we could have offered you that would have helped you be an even better leader, and he said, 'I wish I had learned mindfulness earlier in my career.' That meant a lot to me," Jha says. "He sees it."

A Guided Brain Training Practice

Neuroscientist Amishi Jha guides you through a mindful cognitive training exercise, helping you learn how to sustain and strengthen your attention.

mindful.org/train-brain

SHOULD MINDFULNESS BE TAUGHT TO THE MILITARY?

Mindfulness, a basic human capability that can be cultivated through meditation, has historically been associated with various forms of Buddhist practice. Some within that community have questioned whether it's appropriate to use meditation in secular institutions with different values. That's at the heart of an ongoing debate over the use of such training in the military.

To neuroscientist Amishi Jha, the answer lies in the evidence. In lab experiments measuring attention, service members trained in mindfulness make fewer testing errors. "They're less likely to press the button when they shouldn't," she says. "When people turn that task into a shoot/no-shoot version, we can hope they'll be less likely to pull the trigger when they shouldn't."

Still, some practitioners in the Buddhist tradition have challenged the premise of Jha's research. In 2014, the now-defunct journal *Inquiring Minds* published a commentary by dharma instructor Ronald Purser, who lamented the reframing of mindfulness as a "decontextualized, ethically neutral, attention-enhancement technique" rather than a spiritual practice.

Fundamental to Buddhist mindfulness, Purser wrote, is "a cardinal prohibition against intentionally killing a living being." That, argued the San Francisco State University management professor, makes it incompatible with military training. In the armed forces, "new recruits are systematically trained to kill, maim, and inflict harm when ordered through desensitization, operational conditioning, and denial defense mechanisms."

The journal also published a counterpoint by Georgetown University's Elizabeth Stanley, who has done intensive mindfulness practice in Myanmar, and whose family has served in the US Army since the Revolutionary War.

"If the nation's leaders have decided to send troops into harm's way, those troops' hearts, minds, and bodies will experience the stressors of war—whether they are mindfully paying attention or not," wrote the former Army intelligence officer. "With mindfulness, however, they are more likely to see the environment around them clearly, without being influenced by unconscious 'survival brain' filters that can exaggerate what's really there. They are more likely to regulate their hard-wired stress response and the reactive impulses this stress response can create."

As a result, Stanley wrote, "they are more likely to pull the trigger only when they really need to—when imminent harm to themselves or those they are protecting actually exists."

—Barry Yeoman

an article chronicling her work with 120 members of a US special-operations forces unit. (She can't say which branch.) That study, published in the journal *Progress in Brain Research,* showed that the elite troops gained working memory, and were better able to pay attention, when they took a month-long mindfulness class and practiced the skills daily.

Much of Jha's research today focuses not on proving the value of mindfulness training, but rather on figuring out how to best implement it in a time-constrained military. "What's a good amount of time that would allow units to take it on, and not so burdensome that they say, 'Forget it, we can't do it'?" she asks.

Jha's interaction with the special-operations forces highlights the quandary: "They said, 'Can you give them this mindfulness training in one day?' They didn't really understand: Would you ever train for a marathon in a day?"

For some of the elite forces, Jha did try to compress the eight-hour training into two weeks. She found it considerably less effective than a four-week program. (Earlier trainings were spread over eight weeks.)

This type of inquiry makes Stanley uneasy, and she has parted company with Jha over it. "Some military leaders were interested in seeing how low can you go," she says. That approach, she worries, could backfire if service members don't receive a full suite of coping tools. "Mindfulness alone, without the skills to re-regulate the mind-body system, may flood someone with heightened attention on their stress, which may amplify their stress arousal and its cognitive, emotional, and physiological effects," she says. Stanley believes the training must be gradual, taught by experienced instructors, and combined with other skills to help soldiers "rewire" how they process difficult experiences. She favors a 20-hour curriculum.

Pvt. Kelvishia V. Worth practices mindfulness in the emWave Biofeedback chair—which displays heart rate variability based on mental states—in the Fort Drum Wellness Center.

Jha says that she and other researchers are looking for solutions that are safe and effective, and also realistic within the military's culture. "We need to balance the time burden of taking minutes away from their training calendar with not going so low that it's not effective," she says. "If it's a non-starter to offer a 20-hour program, even if in the end it may have some more subtle benefits, I just can't go into that direction. I still have to meet people where they're at."

Mindfulness researchers elsewhere have had promising results working with submariners in France and soldiers in the Israel Defense Force. Last April, participants at a NATO-sponsored wellness conference in Berlin heard from Anders Meland, a Norwegian psychologist who studied a helicopter unit in his country. Meland found that mindfulness practices reduced stress by creating a "restful, alert, and flexible state of mind."

At City University of London, psychologist Jutta Tobias Mortlock has been working with the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, which she says is trying to build a culture with "less command and control." In particular, she's looking at "collective mindfulness": a team's ability to anticipate and deal with conflict by remaining engaged with one another rather than retreating into individual corners.

The US military is conducting its own studies. Thomas Nassif, a research psychologist at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, analyzed survey data from 1,100 soldiers returning from Afghanistan. "You talk about a pretty banged-up population," he says: Most had dodged small-arms fire, witnessed dead bodies, and known others who were killed or seriously injured. Nassif found that the most mindful participants—those who noticed, and then let go of, their distressing thoughts—were less likely to suffer from pain, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They also engaged in fewer risky behaviors like driving recklessly, carrying weapons needlessly, and looking for fights. →

"THE LEVEL OF SERIOUSNESS TAKEN FOR PHYSICAL TRAINING SHOWS UP IN HOW MUCH TIME IS GIVEN DAILY FOR IT. WHAT I'D LIKE TO SEE IS THAT THAT SAME LEVEL OF SERIOUSNESS IS OFFERED TO MENTAL TRAINING."

Amishi Jha, Director of Contemplative Neuroscience and associate professor, University of Miami

Nassif has just conducted a study at Hawaii's Schofield Barracks to see whether mindfulness training can improve performance in skills like marksmanship, along with health outcomes like sleep quality. He's currently analyzing the data.

More developed is the body of research that shows meditation, yoga, and related practices to be valuable for veterans with PTSD. Anthony King, an assistant professor of psychiatry at the University of Michigan, says that mindfulness-based therapies can help those who avoid situations like crowded supermarkets, which might trigger their symptoms.

Avoidance, many experts believe, helps perpetuate PTSD symptoms. "People don't get normal environmental extinction of these fear memories because they never go out, because they protect themselves from coming into contact with things that remind them of their trauma," King says. Exposure therapy, in which veterans intentionally visit safe places that trigger anxiety, is by definition unpleasant. But mindfulness, he says, can serve as a gentler form of exposure therapy.

"Rather than putting yourself in a crowded situation that might cause panic," King says, "you're actually just exposing yourself to the extemporaneous contents of your mind—what's happening that moment. And rather than reacting in horror, or trying to distract, or turn on the TV, or turn on the radio, or exercise, or whatever, in the mindfulness meditation you're invited to just sit with that: to watch that thought arise, watch it develop, watch it pass."

With mounting evidence that mindfulness practices can produce warriors who are more attentive, less distracted, and more emotionally resilient, some researchers argue that such training should become routine for all troops.

MINDS AT ATTENTION

How can mindfulness practices be adapted for military culture? The University of Miami's Amishi Jha and Scott Rogers, developers of Mindfulness-Based Attention and Training (MBAT), created this sample practice.

This 12-minute drill aims to bring the mind "At Attention" from a seated position, in the same way one can be called to the standing position of attention.

- Sit in an upright and stable position.
- Keep your head erect and facing straight to the front as you breathe.
- Keep your arms hanging straight without stiffness, allowing your hands to rest flat on top of your thighs.
- Slowly and with intention, bring your heels together, toes pointed out at a 45-degree angle.
- Relax your heels, noticing their contact with the ground.

Next, bring the mind to attention.

- Bring awareness to your posture and to the contact points your body makes with the chair and floor.
- Rest your attention on your breath, noticing the natural flow of the in-breath and the out-breath.
- Direct your attention to sensations in the abdomen, or where air enters your nose or mouth.
- When you notice that your mind has wandered, which it will, for it is in the nature of the mind to wander, redeploy your attention to the breath.
- Continue this practice of attending to the breath, deliberately escorting your attention back to the breath when you notice that your mind has wandered.
- Hold the mind At Attention in this manner for the remainder of this drill, steady, and noticing.

As we conclude this At Attention Drill, return to the At Ease position. Resume your duty day activities.

"The level of seriousness taken for physical training shows up in how much time is given daily for it," says Jha. "What I'd like to see is that that same level of seriousness is offered to mental training."

The armed forces are not quick adopters. Research by Jha and other scientists "is slowly gathering the attention of the military in very serious ways," says General Piatt. But there is currently no systemwide initiative to incorporate mindfulness into troop training. "Sadly, I haven't been as successful as I would like to have been," he says.

Some of the reason is cultural, says Valerie Rice, a mindfulness researcher at the US Army Research Laboratory at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas. "I had a commander tell me, flat out, 'I don't want my soldiers to go to a mindfulness class because after the class they'll be relaxed and lazy,'" she says. That's why studies matter, she adds: They help convince military leaders there's data to support this new type of training. "It takes time and it takes information, and it takes recognition and belief in the results," she says.

Nancy Skopp, a research psychologist at the US Department of Defense's Psychological Health Center of Excellence in Falls Church, Virginia, points to the military's research investment—its grants to Jha, for example—as evidence of its serious interest. "DoD will fund a project that looks promising, and based on those results, then that can influence policy," she says. Skopp singles out Jha's efforts to train non-experts as trainers: "If mindfulness nonclinicians can deliver this, then it can be disseminated more rapidly."

Jha isn't discouraged by the slow pace of adoption. "I am glad that they're wanting the science to be strong enough before they roll it out," she says. "Whatever they decide to roll out will be interrogated, scrutinized for evidence base. And now we've established the evidence base." ●

PHOTOGRAPH BY ILONA WELLMANN/MILLENNIUM IMAGES, UK

sexual healing

Millions of women struggle with low sexual desire. Researcher Lori Brotto believes mindfulness can help.

Focus on Pleasure

Explore this focused awareness practice to learn how to breathe into your whole body, including making a connection between your breath and your pelvic floor.

mindful.org/pleasure

Shelina was a typical 48-year-old married woman and mother of two. She had a thriving career as the lead realtor at her firm, her teenage children were well adjusted and confident, and she and her husband, Akmal, had a rich circle of friends and social activities. However, Shelina had a secret she could not share. The fire that she once felt when gazing at her partner was now a dull flicker.

During her weekly sexual encounters—planned for Friday nights between 11:00 and 11:15 pm—she deliberately avoided the foreplay she used to enjoy. No more kissing, touching, or caressing. She would zone out while Akmal touched her—thinking about plans for the next day and engaging very little with her body—prompting him to move directly to sexual intercourse, which she found unrewarding. And the less gratifying that sex had become, the more her sexual motivation had diminished.

Many women can relate to Shelina's dilemma. Despite the societal obsession with sexuality, sexual difficulties are immensely prevalent. Women around the world and across ages

Despite the societal obsession with sexuality, the motivation for sex is simply not there for countless women.

have difficulty reaching orgasm; insufficient lubrication affects not just postmenopausal or breastfeeding women but women of all ages, regardless of their hormonal status. Like Shelina, many women find that sex is often unrewarding. And the motivation for sex is drastically reduced, or simply not there, for countless women.

What We Know About Women and Sex

Sexual difficulties are common. And low sexual desire, in particular, is consistently the most common sex-related concern that women report, whether they are from North or South America, Europe, Australia, or Asia.

Women also experience a great degree of shame about their sexual concerns, believing that they "should" want sex more, they "should" enjoy sex like everyone else they know does, and they "should" know what they want sexually and how to ask for it.

Unfortunately, women are often oblivious to the fact that some of the women they believe are enjoying frequent and passionate sex are actually secretly experiencing a similar set of sexual problems.

Stress: The Libido Killer

Increasingly, we rely on technological advances to accomplish the never-ending list of tasks on our to-do list and "multitask." Being "able" to eat, respond to emails, surf the internet, check Facebook, and help a child with homework all at the same time makes many of us feel proficient, and we take pride in balancing all these different activities at the same time.

Yet research suggests that the daily grind can be extremely stressful for →

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lori A. Brotto, PhD, is a clinical psychologist, professor in the department of Obstetrics & Gynecology at the University of British Columbia (UBC), director of the UBC Sexual Health Laboratory, and the Canada Research Chair in Women's Sexual Health.

PRACTICE

Bathing Mindfully

Take a bath or a shower. As you do so, notice particular parts of your body, such as your hands, arms, breasts, stomach, legs, and feet. Focus your attention on your body and let your thoughts simply "be as they are" in the background. Use all of your senses as you do this to enhance the experience. For example, notice the texture of your skin, its color, and what sounds or smells might emerge as you bathe.

Once you have finished and have dried off, spend a few minutes noticing yourself in a mirror. What can you appreciate about your body? (Think about function—not just appearance.) Are there parts of your body that give you a sense of pleasure or pride? Are there any parts of your body that you do not appreciate? Your body is alive. What does it feel like? Are there aspects of your body that deserve more attention? As you do this, notice any emotions you may be feeling, both positive and negative. It will be important to leave this exercise with the feeling that your experience of your body is a balance of things you do like or appreciate and perhaps things you do not or wish were different.

Throughout the rest of the day, be aware of your body as you engage in your daily routine.

—Lori Brotto

many of us, and multitasking may contribute to our feeling that we cannot get our head above water. In fact, according to the Stress in America Survey, up to one-third of Americans have reported *extreme* stress in their daily lives since 2013.

Neuroscientists have shown that multitasking may not be as productive as we think it is. We shift between tasks in rapid serial progression. This rapid shifting carries a "cognitive load," or certain amount of mental effort, and each "switch" is associated with a cost in our brain's processing ability and speed.

How are we dealing with never-ending to-do lists, floundering in a sea of tasks, and feeling the burden of daily challenges relevant to sexuality? It turns out that they are implicated in the loss of desire for sex in particular.

If our brains are perpetually engaged in multitasking, as we continually attend to numerous competing demands on our attention, we actually spend very little time living in the present moment. We vacillate between thinking about the future (planning, worrying, strategizing) and living in the past (replaying scenes, ruminating over conversations, mourning missed opportunities). We spend far more time living outside of the present moment than in the present moment.

Brain-imaging studies show that distraction and inattention impair our ability to attend to and process sexual cues. Even in a highly sexually arousing situation, our brains may not be paying attention to sexual triggers that are necessary to elicit a sexual response. It is as if the body is present but the mind is elsewhere—lost in thoughts, memories, or plans.

How Mindfulness Helps

Mindfulness is about fully inhabiting the present moment, without trying to change anything. It involves a complete acceptance of who you are and what your experience is—without judgment. Whether it is for the treatment of chronic pain, stress, or arousal, it can be used to tune in instead of tuning out and to bring our full awareness to these bare sensations—moment by moment.

There is great variability in people's awareness levels of their bodies. For example, some people are aware of their heart rate and can estimate, within a few beats of accuracy, their own heartbeats per minute. Other people are aware of small changes in muscle tension and can use that awareness. There is also evidence that judgmental thoughts about being inadequate or feelings of embarrassment, guilt, or anxiety can interfere with a person's interoceptive awareness (awareness of stimuli within the body).

In a study from the University of Toronto compar-

PHOTOGRAPH BY THAIS RAMOS VARELA / STOCKSY

ing novice meditators with experienced meditators, participants had areas of their brain scanned with functional magnetic resonance imaging under two different conditions. In one condition, the participants were given instructions to focus mindfully on their moment-by-moment sensations and during moments of distraction to gently guide their attention back to the present moment. In the other condition, the participants were presented with words and told to figure out what a presented word meant for them, to judge themselves for what they were feeling, and to allow themselves to get caught up in the contents of their thoughts. There were distinct differences in brain activation when participants engaged in mindfulness and when they allowed themselves to get caught up in their thoughts.

There were other interesting findings from this study. The group that had participated in an eight-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program showed reduced activity in areas of the brain associated with emotions, suggesting that one of the ways mindfulness is effective is through reducing emotional activation associated with body sensations. Thus, when one experiences the sensations of pain, for example, mindfulness reduces the tendency to feel emotions such as sadness, anger, and despair in response to that pain.

Furthermore, when the meditators were distracted, they maintained awareness of their body, whereas those untrained in mindfulness did not. The researchers postulated that even in stressful conditions, experienced meditators maintain an awareness of what is happening in their body at all times. And the more daily mindfulness that participants practiced, the more they could maintain this state of body awareness.

How might this be relevant to women with low sexual desire?

The research shows that women low in interoceptive awareness are more likely to have clinical symptoms such as depression, poor self-image, and symptoms of an eating disorder, and training in mindfulness improves each of these conditions. They are also more likely to judge themselves negatively, which impedes sexual desire.

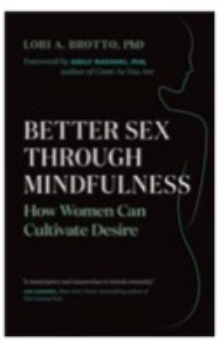
Furthermore, we have evidence that, in general, women's concordance between their self-reported and physical sexual response is low, and that training in mindfulness significantly increases the degree of mind-to-body communication and improves self-reported interoceptive awareness. In turn, improvements in women's interoceptive awareness predict improvements in their levels of sexual desire and reductions in their feelings of sex-related distress.

The take-home message is this: Mindfulness teaches women to become more aware of their internal bodily sensations, including sexual sensations, and this may improve their motivations for sex and increase their tendency to notice sexual arousal and have that arousal trigger sexual desire.

Mindfulness teaches women to become more aware of their internal bodily sensations, including sexual sensations.

Could it really be this simple—that teaching women to tune in to their body, to the signs that their body is already producing, and making them aware of these sensations can be enough to trigger sexual desire? I offer a tentative "yes" to this question.

Why tentative? Because awareness of internal bodily sensations is only one of potentially many different ways that mindfulness exerts its beneficial effects on sexual desire. Without a doubt, when we pay attention to the body in a kind, compassionate, nonjudgmental, and present-oriented way, it offers us a new way of being in the world. And that new way of being might just be critical for the sexual satisfaction that so many women crave. ●



From the book Better Sex Through Mindfulness: How Women Can Cultivate Desire, *© 2018, by Lori A. Brotto. Published in April, 2018 by Greystone Books Ltd. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.*

Testosterone to Multitasking

Lori Brotto, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of British Columbia, illuminates why some women struggle with low sexual desire, and how mindfulness helps.

Your work has received a lot of attention. Why do you think that is?

Mindfulness has received a lot of attention. And we know that sexual-health concerns are very common among women; low desire is very common. There haven't been a lot of evidence-based treatments for women—there's a lot of interest in finding a female Viagra.

So, the idea of seeing if mindfulness can help is not really revolutionary. The reality is that people are multitasking and dealing with negative self-judgment during sex. The questions then are: Can we bring mindfulness over to sexuality? And if so, how does it work? Why does it work? How long does it last?

Is it true that men struggle less than women when it comes to sexual desire?

Do men have a biological inclination or foundation that offsets or buffers against it? The answer is yes. And the answer is testosterone. Men have 10 times the amount that women have. Women's sexual desire is much more influenced by the triggers in their environment, whereas men can rely much more on that internal drive in their body.

Women in your studies practice mindfulness daily for 20–30 minutes. Do they need to continue that frequency to maintain the benefits?

It's definitely the practice that creates the change; just learning about it from a didactic point of view is not enough. Fundamentally, it's changing the brain. I often use the analogy that it's like going to the gym and building muscle. Mindfulness affects the brain in exactly the same way.

When we follow up with the women, 6 and 12 months later, we check in with how they've continued. Yes, there's some attrition. But the majority are continuing to practice to some degree. And they do so because they've benefited and in more ways than in just their sex life—they experience changes in their mood, anxiety, managing stress, general awareness of their body and body sensations.

So, is mindfulness alone enough to increase a woman's sexual desire?

For some it is sufficient. And they're quite happy, and they notice improvement in all domains. For other women, especially when there are relationship dynamics at play, things may need to be addressed at the couple level. Some literature has suggested that mindfulness can make you aware of some of the relationship dynamics, like lack of attraction, which may be contributing to sexual difficulty.

Can you talk about self-judgment and how it relates to sexual desire, and how mindfulness may help mitigate that?

People can be very, very negative in judging themselves in the sexual encounter. There's also a lot of catastrophic thinking around, *What if I don't reach orgasm* or *What if I don't move in the right way or have the right expression on my face...* There's a laundry list of thoughts that occur and just how those negative thoughts play out in terms of attention during sex and in sexual arousal.

In our group work, we practice together how to observe thoughts, even these really catastrophic negative ones, as just passing events of the mind. Then we encourage women to practice, first while touching themselves and then with their partners. Women tell us that this specific skill, being able to observe thoughts as just passing events, is critical. It's also very difficult. But ultimately it becomes the most important skill that they learn.

What's next?

We are conducting a study with men who are survivors of prostate cancer and their partners. These are men with permanent erectile dysfunction, who really struggle with it.

We often hear the criticism, "Why just women? This could be useful for men." That's absolutely true. All of the findings on how mindfulness benefits women's sexuality likely also apply to benefiting men's sexuality. It's just that the science just hasn't been there yet. So we are really excited about this.

You've been studying this since 2002. Can you now say that mindfulness is a viable solution for improving low sexual desire?

My overarching statement that I can say, more than 15 years later, is that I have no doubt that it works. Even six years after studying it rather robustly, I couldn't confidently say it worked. But now that we've run a number of studies with different populations, I can confidently state it does.

—Kelle Walsh

PHOTOGRAPH BY PLAINPICTURE/WESTEND61/MARK JOHNSON

What My Dog Taught Me About Acceptance

Award-winning journalist and writer **Steven Petrow** reveals how Zoe, a 16-year-old Jack Russell terrier with a razor-sharp bite, showed him how to dissolve some angry differences more than yoga and meditation ever could.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JELENA MATVEJEVA / EYEEM / GETTY IMAGES

Stretched into a Downward Facing Dog pose in a yoga class, I listened as the instructor talked about the "cycle of acceptance." Modeled on Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's five stages of loss and grief, the cycle is a way of absorbing a painful blow and working your way through to, well, acceptance. When our teacher suggested that each of us identify the situation that we most needed to resolve, I knew mine immediately. It had to do with my then-husband, who had just started divorce proceedings: "Accept Jim for who he is and let go."

Since separating from my ex, I had zigzagged around feelings of denial, depression, bargaining, and anger (yes, mostly anger). But I couldn't move closer to acceptance. Guided meditations helped some, especially a few specifically on "acceptance" and "surrender," but still fell short. Looking back now, however, I've come to realize that it was my relationship with Zoe, my now-16-year-old Jack Russell terrier, that revealed critical lessons about acceptance that were strong enough to dissipate my lingering anger.

Hello Zoe, the Terrier-ist

Zoe came as a package deal with Jim 14 years ago, when she was a two-year-old "terrier-ist." We each brought a dog to our romantic partnership: My canine baggage included Max, a rescue Cocker Spaniel then pushing 10. He was sweet as honeysuckle nectar, if a bit goofy and completely clueless—and Zoe, too smart and too wound up, wanted nothing to do with him. Early on, she set the tone when she backed Max into a corner and bloodied him with her razor-like incisors. I could hardly believe that such a little dog—12 pounds—could be so aggressive. But that's the nature of both the breed and denial: a suspension of belief.

I quickly turned to bargaining (think *bribery*) to try to find a resolution, desperately attempting to win Zoe over with treats of every flavor (even wild boar). I gave her a squeaky toy squirrel—which, every single morning, she flipped high into the air before attempting to break its neck. I remained determined to woo her, since I knew this relationship needed to work in order for Jim and me to succeed. But it didn't—at least not during our marriage.

The reign of the terrier continued after we all moved in together. I did my best to soothe the relationship: dividing the house with gates, calming the dogs (and myself) with anti-anxiety medications, even arranging therapy at the North Carolina State Veterinary Canine Behavioral Service.

The problem wasn't just between the pooches. Zoe bit me on several occasions (often enough that I kept the antibacterial Phisoderm at the ready). One night, Zoe unexpectedly lunged at my face, tearing my upper lip and sending me to the ER post-haste. Forget the bargaining—I found myself squarely at anger, with a good-sized dose of depression thrown in (oh, and pain, too).

The canine conflict became a recurrent theme in our couples therapy, which also focused on mutual acceptance of each other's faults and foibles. While Zoe and Max were not invited, their ongoing battle often mirrored our sessions.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steven Petrow is an award-winning journalist and a columnist for *The Washington Post* and *USA Today* and a regular contributor to *The New York Times*. He is also the author of five books on etiquette, including his most recent, *Steven Petrow's Complete Gay & Lesbian Manners*. He and Zoe peacefully coexist in Hillsborough, NC.

Author Steven Petrow savors a peaceful moment with his 16-year-old canine, Zoe.

PHOTOGRAPH BY BETHANY CUBINO, CHASING SKIES PHOTOGRAPHY

Missing Is the Hardest Part

When my beloved Max died, Zoe did not celebrate with her prancing happy dance. In fact, she seemed bereft. With the entire house now open to her (no more gates), she hardly knew what to do with her freedom. She'd approach Max's leash, still hanging at the back door, as if it were an apparition. *It smells like Max, so why is Max not here?* I imagined her wondering. As I watched her approach, retreat, and sniff, I was certain she was processing her own loss, and I actually felt genuine sympathy for her. In the months that followed, I found my anger with her dissolving into what I imagined was our shared grief at losing Max.

Was it possible I was beginning to accept Zoe for who she was?

Yes, I'd started to realize that Zoe, like her "masters," was a product of nature and nurture, a prisoner of both her gene pool and her environment. Dog experts have consistently noted the breed's aggression, possessiveness, and jealousy, as well as its "small dog/big attitude" traits. Yes and yes. The more I understood her hard wiring, the more I was able to forgive her for behaviors she could not control. →

I'd have been blind not to see that what applies to four-legged loved ones also applies to the two-legged variety.

Age also took its toll on Zoe, with increasing frailties that included deafness and incontinence. One morning I woke to discover she had soiled her pet bed and herself. Such naked humiliation. Rather than resist—or attack—she simply went limp as I bathed her.

Coming Full Circle

After Jim left, I surprised myself (and the friends who knew our bloody backstory) by asking for joint custody. He said no.

My divorce lawyer advised me not to fight it, pointing out that legally a pet is considered just another possession (in this case, Jim's). In our separation agreement, Zoe was listed between "electric salt and pepper shaker" and "red bowl." There would be no bargaining here, only more loss and anger. I signed the agreement, which acknowledged that Zoe belonged to Jim.

A few weeks later, I was shocked to get an email from Jim telling me his new condo wasn't dog friendly. Was I interested in taking Zoe full time? In a Malcolm Gladwell "blink" moment, I said yes. That's when I knew I had come full circle, accepting her worst behaviors without trying to change them—or her.

I'd have been blind not to see that what applies to four-legged loved ones also applies to the two-legged variety. I realized that my intention at yoga class—*accept Jim for who he is and let go*—had been more than a metaphor. For me, acceptance paved the road to separation and divorce, which finally meant being able to live without rancor and regrets.

Thanks, Zoe. ●

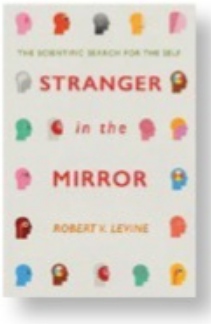
Audio Extra

Listen to award-winning journalist and writer Steven Petrow tell this story as only he can.

mindful.org/petrow

Bookmark This

read...listen...stream



STRANGER IN THE MIRROR

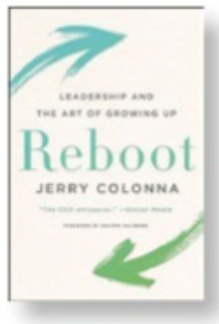
The Scientific Search For the Self

Robert V. Levine • Robinson

Dr. Robert V. Levine has taught psychology courses for over 50 years at California State University, Fresno, and has written and edited several books on social psychology. Given all of this study and experience, he seems like an apt person to put forward a scientific theory on what a "self" really consists of—an endeavor that produced this latest work. What, Levine asks, does science say about our search for the self, and how should it inform the ways we think about life purpose, self-improvement, mental health? Psychology, biology, neuroscience, and sociology are just a few of the fields Levine delves into, serving up cutting-edge research and case studies from each (such as the first near-total face transplant done in the US, or a person whose dissociative identity disorder gave them over 20 distinct "selves"—with only certain of the alter egos being aware of the other ones).

So what can we expect from Levine's fascination with this question? The self "is just a story we write—or, more precisely, are constantly rewriting," he tells us. "When the story works, it enables us to think of ourselves as one person. It creates a sense of unity and continuity. But good storytelling should not be confused with accurate reporting. The self is not a thing. We are, in fact, ultimately undescribable."

Not very satisfying, one might think. For eons already, wisdom traditions have been teaching the truth of impermanence of all things under the sun, the individual self being no exception. And any meditator will know the only constant about our sense of self is that it changes. Still, Levine manages to make the subject new, conveying the thrill of potential that exists in our own intangibility.

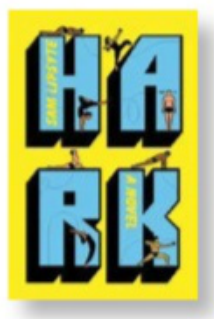


REBOOT

Leadership and the Art of Growing Up

Jerry Colonna • Harper Business

The moniker *venture capitalist* doesn't usually generate warm, fuzzy feelings. You might think "money-obsessed know-it-all." But for Jerry Colonna, money is not the big motivator. His experience tells him that anyone who aspires to great things will face challenges that test inner resolve. That's why *Reboot* focuses on "radical self-inquiry": looking in places we don't want to look, where we get stuck in a quagmire of fears, doubts, and self-criticisms. When we can look in those places—using the stability gained through contemplative practice—it can cultivate inner strength to take on the inevitable obstacles on the path to realizing our deepest aspirations.

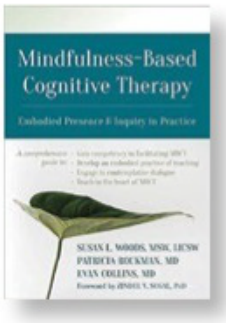


HARK

Sam Lipsyte • Simon & Schuster

In this amusing novel, Sam Lipsyte throws you into an all-too-recognizable world of desperate inequality, unceasing conflict, and unshakeable dissatisfaction, where the only hope for the future is Mental Archery: a "new" spiritual path that's part New-Age lore, part yoga postures, part fake history. Failed stand-up comic Hark Morner rises to fame and wealth as its guru, but his motley bunch of apostles have bigger plans for Mental Archery than he can possibly deliver on. Each of these would-be heroes is consumed by ideology and nihilism alike. Yet along with his acerbic humor, Lipsyte conveys a buoying belief in belief itself: the unifying potential of ideas and of hope, not just as things to be bought and sold, but as what might actually save us.

Can we gently turn toward the experience of sensations just as they are right now, without judging them?



MINDFULNESS-BASED COGNITIVE THERAPY

Embodied Presence & Inquiry in Practice

Susan Woods, Patricia Rockman, and Evan Collins • New Harbinger

When three mood-disorder researchers (John Teasdale, Zindel Segal, and Mark Williams) collaborated in the early 90s to marry Cognitive Behavioral Therapy to mindfulness practices, they created a hybrid greater than the sum of its parts. MBCT doesn't simply overlay meditation on CBT's challenging of habitual thought patterns. It emphasizes going beyond manipulating thoughts to becoming intimately aware of our automatic patterns—trusting that repeated non-judgmental appraisal of these patterns can inspire us to disrupt repetitive thinking.

In this book, three clinicians who have been teaching MBCT for nearly as long as it has existed (and who also train others to teach MBCT) lift up the hood on this relatively new and powerful vehicle. They do so in order to guide would-be practitioners—particularly those who facilitate MBCT courses—in the nuances of how MBCT works when it's done well.

Two major themes rise to the surface. The first is that to facilitate MBCT requires embodying the practice. One of MBCT's founders, Zindel Segal, who wrote the foreword to this book, has repeatedly emphasized that mindfulness is a skill. As such, it must be modeled and demonstrated for others. MBCT is not about getting high on insights; it's about learning how to ride and redirect our mind and emotions.

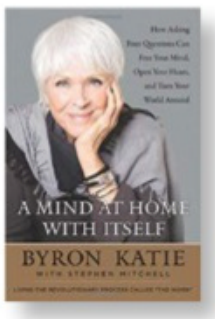
The second major theme is that inquiry practice—essentially prompting us to explore and describe experience—is the powerhouse at the heart of MBCT, and it emerges as a "contemplative dialogue." The book offers a master class in this powerful form of dialogue, which has been extremely helpful for countless people working with anxiety, depression, and other mood disorders.

PUT YOUR WORRIES HERE

A Creative Journal for Teens with Anxiety

Lisa M. Schab, LCSW • Instant Health Books

Anxiety often goes hand-in-hand with navigating the teenage years. Academic stress, home life, relationships, sexuality, emotional and physical changes—it seems like there are endless sources of worry. Based on the principles of cognitive behavioral therapy and mindfulness, *Put Your Worries Here* offers a safe and welcoming place for teens to manage these anxious thoughts and feelings. With 100 written and visual journaling prompts, it speaks directly to teens ("Create a playlist of the songs that help you de-stress. Write the best lyrics here."), and lets them discover their own best way of expressing and working with difficult emotions.



A MIND AT HOME WITH ITSELF

Byron Katie, with Stephen Mitchell • HarperOne

The popular self-help visionary Byron Katie goes by a surname that's a common first name. She is simply Katie, like Lebron is Lebron and Prince was Prince. Simple yet complicated, as is the system she teaches the world over, which is "the revolutionary process called 'the work.'"

You don't need a secret initiation to uncover what "the work" is. It's right there, in four questions: 1. Is it true?; 2. Can you absolutely know that it's true?; 3. How do you react, what happens, when you believe that thought?; 4. Who would you be without that thought?

Beneath that simplicity is a minefield of fundamental questions. In person, Katie is playful, humorous, both direct and elusive. On the page, with the aid of co-writer and husband Stephen Mitchell, she seems a little more philosophical and speculative. But the strongest sections of *A Mind at Home with Itself* are transcripts of Katie carrying on the inquiry process with a range of people going through widely varying challenges.

And herein lies the popularity of Katie's work: the enduring power of inquiry. The Socratic method of continually inquiring of a thing whether it's true and what consequences emerge from that is alive and well, and even though this book is largely dedicated to a Buddhist sutra, it's reminiscent of the mindfulness of an ancient Greek.

TUNE IN TO mindful

Visit mindful.org/tunein for featured meditations from Cara Bradley, Elaine Smookler, and Diana Winston.

A 3-PART SELF-GUIDED MINDFUL MINI-RETREAT

1 Wake Up: A Mindful Movement Practice
from Cara Bradley

Move. When you start your day on autopilot—rolling from your pillow, to your phone's notifications, to your coffee, and then to work without pause—you miss out on insights that could help shape the rest of your day. Follow this mindful movement practice to intentionally start your morning with movement, breath, and stillness so you can focus your mind, energize your body, and listen in.

2 A Beginner's Body Scan Meditation
from Elaine Smookler

Relax. Often when we're stressed or overwhelmed, we aim to calm down our breathing or our thoughts—overlooking the impact that stress also has on our whole body. By practicing a body scan, you can invite your attention to wander towards those places where you may be holding stress, and give yourself the opportunity to release tension in a clenched jaw or tight shoulders. This gentle practice is useful for beginners and experienced meditators alike.

3 A Meditation for Easing into Sleep
from Diana Winston

Sleep. This sleep meditation guides you through feeling whatever sensations are present by scanning the body for vibrations, tingling sensations, heaviness, pressure, movement, heat, coolness. When we notice these sensations without trying to change them or make them different, and simply bring mindful curiosity and openness to the present moment, we allow ourselves the freedom to drift off to dreamland.

PODCAST reviews

THE FATHERLY PODCAST
Episode: Searching for Peace and Quiet

When we find ourselves responsible for others' well-being, there's the opportunity for our mindfulness practice to be transformed. That is, if we—as parents or caregivers of any nature—can even find time to meditate. And if we can withstand the pressures of being imperfect people who are, nevertheless, relied upon to provide help and solutions. We can, in these kinds of situations, "practice not knowing right now. Learn from it, don't separate from it." Author and Buddhist teacher Joan Halifax talks with humor and wisdom about specific ways to bring a grounded awareness into all of our interactions as compassionate, ethical caregivers.

THE HIDDEN BRAIN
Episode: Why No One Feels Rich: The Psychology of Inequality

How we think about inequality matters. Psychologist Keith Payne reports that, all the way up the income ladder, even the wealthiest 1% compare themselves unfavorably to still-wealthier others. Why? It's a survival tactic, enhanced by life under capitalism. In moderation, "upward" social comparison can be adaptive, motivating us to work hard to earn more—and conversely, "downward" social comparisons can make us feel like our own rung on the ladder is A-OK after all, which may be demotivating. Our brains are never sure whether we truly have "enough." If we're aware of these mental habits, says Payne, "we can be more mindful about the kinds of comparisons we're making on a daily basis."

THE KINDNESS PODCAST
Episode: "Everyday Generosity": Drew Formsma

How many seventeen-year-olds spend their free time doing motivational speaking on the power of generosity? One, at least. That's Drew Formsma, a Californian teen with a passion for giving. Drew talks to host Nicole Philips about his book (written with his dad, Brad) *Everyday Generosity: Becoming a Generous Family in a Selfie World,* which aims to inspire all manner of giving, from a kind word to our full attention. "A lot of times, when you give, it's easy to expect something out of it," Drew says. "But it's not about us; it's about the person we're giving to." ●

mindful marketplace

Welcome to **Mindful Marketplace**, our catalog of unique products and services for people who want to live with more awareness and authenticity. Marketplace also provides an affordable and elegant way for advertisers to reach and engage our highly committed readers.

To advertise in Mindful's Marketplace, please contact us today!

Marketplace Advertising
Chelsea Arsenault
902-706-3075
chelsea@mindful.org

The Meditate Cruise A Retreat at Sea

4 days / 3 nights. November 1–4, 2019, aboard Royal Caribbean's Navigator of the Seas, leaving from Miami, Florida.

3 Relaxed & wonderful days of mindfulness & meditation, brought to you by Meditate: School of Mindfulness & Healing Arts, located in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Retreat includes: workshops, meditations, beginner classes, yoga nidra, reiki circles, sound bath, beachfront meditation.

All-Inclusive retreat packages start at $749.00. Reservations MUST be made before August 1, 2019.

Sponsorship opportunities available.

To find out more & to reserve your space, visit:

www.themeditatecruise.me
954-641-8315

Mindfulness-Based Childbirth and Parenting Professional Teacher Training & Certification

Mindfulness-Based Childbirth and Parenting (MBCP) is a childbirth education program grounded in teaching expectant parents the life-skill of mindfulness. Participants learn how to work with the stresses of pregnancy; the pain, fear, and anxiety that are normal parts of the birthing process; and how a mindfulness practice can serve them in parenting with greater awareness, kindness, connectedness, and care from the first moments of life.

Learn how to lead a 9-week MBCP class series in this internationally acclaimed, online teacher training with founder Nancy Bardacke, CNM, and the MBCP Faculty.
September 2019 – June 2020

www.mindfulbirthing.org/teach

Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness, Toronto, Canada.

Mindfulness is an incredible intervention for those with chronic pain and stress! Yet the original Mindfulness courses had elements too likely to take participants outside of their "window of tolerance", potentially quitting the practice. The MBCPMTM course incorporates trauma sensitivity, and contemplative art. Join us at our Professional Trainings in the Applied Certificate in MBCPMTM from August 10th 2019 at University of Toronto's School of Continuing Studies, Canada, or in October at a special training at beautiful Chateau Lake Louise, Alberta, preceding the Pain Society of Alberta's Conference.

https://neuronovacentre.com/mbcpm-facilitator/
team@neuronovacentre.com

Age Defying Done Right... Cruelty-Free and Natural

Theoderma Skin Care is on a mission to empower beauty shoppers in their quest for gorgeous, healthy skin.

Every product is mindfully crafted using premium botanical extracts that are ethically farmed and steam-distilled on site, eliminating contaminants and ensuring our extracts are of the highest potency.

These gentle, yet powerful antioxidant cocktails help fight free radicals, nourish the skin, and diminish the appearance of fine lines.

Need help choosing which vegan-certified product is right for you? Use our "Meet Your Match" online tool to get a personalized regimen, or email us for one-on-one expert advice.

Order online using code MINDFUL for 20% off your first order!
TheodermaskinCare.com
Info@TheodermaSkinCare.com
Leaping Bunny and Vegan Action Certified

Pause... Take a deep breath... Re-Frame your thoughts...

Your Mindfulness Solution - a simple tool to help add gratitude, awareness and meaningful moments to your busy life.

Your meaning to pause® bracelet provides a private, gentle vibration every 60 or 90 minutes, prompting you to pause from whatever you are doing and reframe your thoughts.

There are endless ways to decide how you will use your pauses throughout the day.

Available in natural stone, mala beads, sterling silver and more. PAUSE NOW to create a custom bracelet that inspires you and get 20% off your order by using code: PAUSENOW at

shop.meaningtopause.com

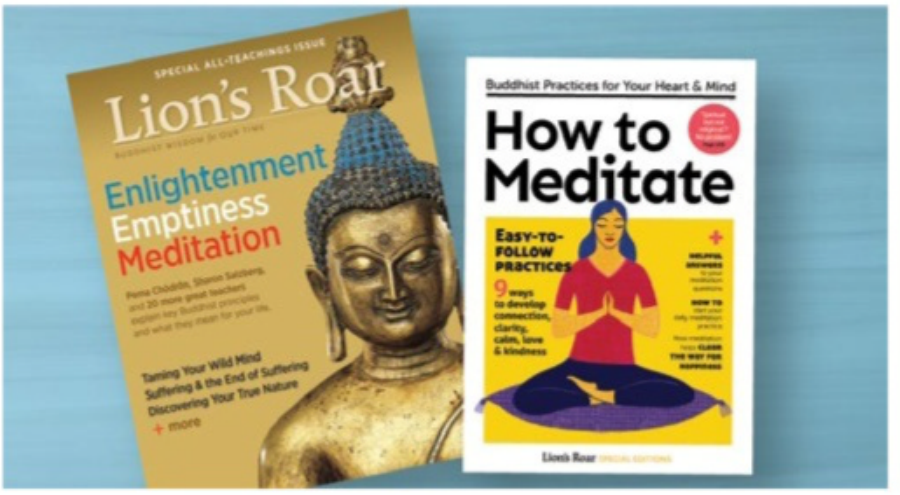
Three Award-Winning Children's Books on Mindfulness

Dr. Sileo's newest children's book *Bee Calm: The Buzz on Yoga* tells the story of Bentley Bee noticing his friends doing some funny poses in the garden. It's yoga! He learns what that is and does several poses in this kid-friendly introduction to yoga.

Bee Calm is a companion book to Dr. Sileo's award-winning *Bee Still: An Invitation to Meditation*. This book teaches children how to use meditation to focus, feel calm, and soothe difficult feelings.

His Award-Winning book, *A World of Pausabilities: An Exercise in Mindfulness,* teaches children how days are filled with endless opportunities to take a mindful pause, and ways they can apply mindfulness every day.

To order these books:
Amazon.com
drfranksileo.com



Buddhist Practices for Your Mind & Heart

Get a FREE preview of How to Meditate, a special edition from the editors of Lion's Roar. Learn the basics of mindfulness and other forms of Buddhist meditation, from trusted readers' favorites like bestselling authors Sharon Salzberg and Matthieu Ricard. Also included are inspiring stories, answers to common beginners' questions, advice and resources for sticking with meditation, and much more.

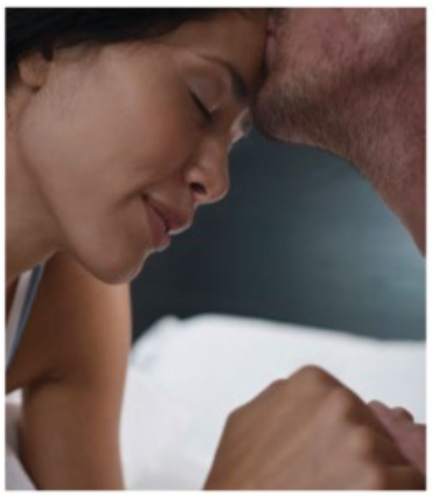
Visit the link below to receive a FREE preview of How to Meditate:
lionsroar.com/MFL

New Special Edition from Mindful

With Mindful's signature mix of deep insight and practical guidance, Your Guide to Difficult Emotions takes on the inner landscape of the emotions that challenge us every day.

Full of practical wisdom from some of today's best mindfulness teachers, you'll learn how mindfulness can provide the steadiness and curiosity to explore these difficult emotions, and help you find relief and insight in equal measure.

mindful.org/guide-emotions



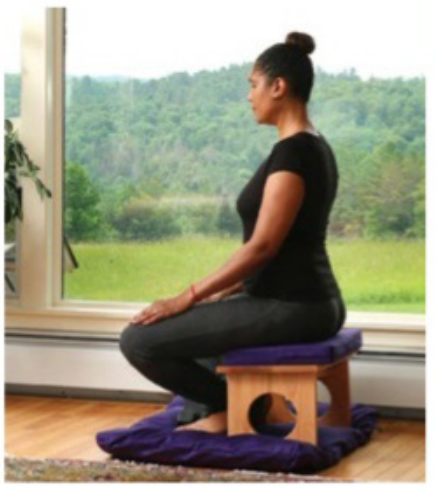
Ready to Become a Mindful Erotic Team?

Sex is complicated in long-term relationships! We'll help you get your groove back, mindfully.

Our foundation retreat offers tools to revitalize your sex life and create a loving, pleasurable, and deeply connected relationship.

August 9-11, 2019, Portland, OR.

www.passionandpresence.com



Cloud Meditation Bench Set

Meditation Bench supports a Cross-Legged Posture:

- More Grounded than Chair Meditation
- Includes 2" Cloud Bench Cushion and Zabuton Mat
- Easy Assembly, 7 lbs.

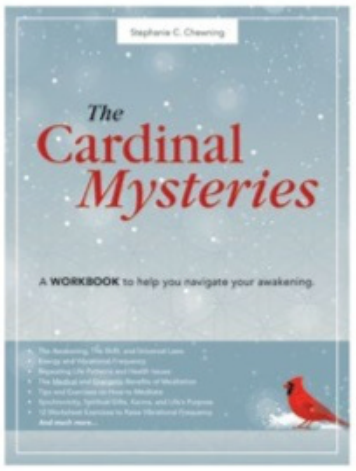
Save 5% on any Cushion, Bench or Set using the (one-time) code MINDFUL at checkout.
Samadhi Cushions
1-800-331-7751
www.SamadhiCushions.com

Call today to set up a free coaching session

Today could be the day you begin to dare greatly, remove obstacles, and discover the truest version of yourself.

Certified Life & Spiritual Coach
Certified Enneagram Practitioner in the Narrative Tradition

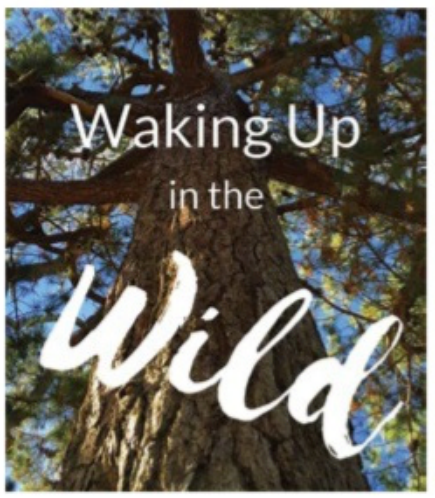
404-933-6524
gracefullivingcoach@gmail.com
gracefullivingcoach.com



The Cardinal Mysteries Workbook

Meditation and mindfulness practices often activate energy in the body, increase synchronicity, and awaken extrasensory abilities. This workbook explains the principles of energy and provides exercises to help you navigate the sometimes difficult awakening process.

To purchase: Amazon.com
To learn more about Stephanie Chewning:
www.ChewningMindBody.com/workbook



NATURE MEDITATION Retreats in California

Cultivate and deepen connection through meditation, plus relational and embodiment practices.
Half-day retreats on the Monterey Peninsula and a weekend retreat at IONS EarthRise Retreat Center in Petaluma, CA. Receive inspiration from teachings of the ocean, forest, river, sky, and mountains.
Join us in awakening awe.
Monterey Bay Meditation Studio

montereybaymeditation.com
(831) 373-1017

Mindfulness Box

A monthly subscription box

promoting mindfulness, inner peace and balance by giving you the tools to live with more intention and in the present moment. Each month you will receive 4 - 5 thoughtfully curated items. Use MINDFUL20 for 20% off your first subscription purchase!

www.mindfulnessbox.com
contact@mindfulnessbox.com

IS MINDFULNESS POLITICAL?

by BARRY BOYCE, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Like so many deep and subtle questions, "Is mindfulness political?" requires a no & yes answer.

Mindful extols the work of mindfulness teachers who teach in secular contexts. These teachers are very unlikely to raise political issues in the context of a mindfulness class, at the risk of alienating a student. The intent is to create an open, safe space welcoming to all. So, it is an article of faith with *Mindful* that we work to maintain mindfulness as an apolitical space, so to speak—in the sense that we don't take specific political positions, or directly advocate for a given policy, politician, or party.

Dive in deeper with Barry Boyce and production editor Stephanie Domet in the Point of View podcast.

mindful.org/pov

We see ourselves as existing within "the public square," where each of us is respected, acknowledged, and heard regardless of whatever religious, spiritual, political, or ideological beliefs we may have—so long as the beliefs and behaviors don't advocate hate or racial superiority. We each may be motivated by our beliefs and practices without using them to exclude others or wearing them as a badge that gives us special status.

If you are coming to meditation to know yourself better, to find relief from stress, and to gain insight, it will not be helpful if you feel excluded because you do not belong to a particular group or espouse certain views (political or otherwise). It's early days and much more needs to be accomplished, but many teachers of meditation and meditation groups *are* paying special attention to how they may have been marginalizing people who are not from the dominant culture and trying to diversify the mix of teachers (see page 38 to learn about women leaders in the mindfulness movement).

So, *no*. Mindfulness is not political. Tying mindfulness to a particular brand of politics would be exclusionary.

But here's the *yes* part. While we may be apolitical at *Mindful*, and see mindfulness itself as apolitical—in the sense I've just laid out—it's also true that there is a way in which mindfulness is unavoidably political. As Aristotle indicated, human beings are "political animals," by which he meant that each human being lives within a community (*polis*)—if not many communities—and within those communities, we seek to work together to make a good life for all concerned. We aspire to make the world a better place.

When it comes to mindfulness, then, as one practices and comes to know one's mind better, is it possible to exclude this part of your being—the part that yearns to live well within community with others? Just as we cannot exclude the full range of emotions—joy, anger, sadness, jealousy, desire, rage, and all the rest—from our meditative experience, so too we cannot exclude our aspirations for how we want ourselves, our children, our fellow people to live.

In general, mindfulness begins with close attention: one-pointed focus on where we are and what's going on inside and out. Over time, though, this will bleed into a wider awareness that sees connections and explores what drives us and what effects we're having on the world around us and the people, plants, and animals in it. It brings us into direct contact with our values, and the fundamental aspiration all of us have to make a better world, the part of us that cares.

Mindfulness brings us into direct contact with our values and our aspiration to make a better world.

To tell someone that mindfulness and awareness exclude basic parts of being human would be a lie, and may be as off-putting to someone with a strong passion to change the world as telling someone that mindfulness requires adopting a prescribed political viewpoint. Mindfulness practice may not dictate what particular course of action we take or our particular political persuasion, and in that sense it *is* apolitical. Because mindfulness and awareness leave no stone unturned, though, discovering what's happening in our minds in an intimate way will ask us to explore our deepest values, and those can't help but have a political dimension. ●

Barry Boyce is Editor-in-Chief of *Mindful* and Mindful.org and author of *The Mindfulness Revolution*. He has been an avid mindfulness practitioner for over 40 years.

ILLUSTRATION BY TOM BACHTELL

"People think online offerings diminish personal connection, but the truth is, people who join the Online Global Community invite one another into their intimate spaces. We're connected on a completely different level."

Rebecca Eldridge
Senior Certified Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Instructor
Center for Mindfulness, UMASS Medical School

Mindfulness for Everyone™

UMASS CENTER FOR MINDFULNESS
HONOR GROW THRIVE
40 years

Photo: UMASS Center for Mindfulness

TRANSFORMING MEDICINE SINCE 1979

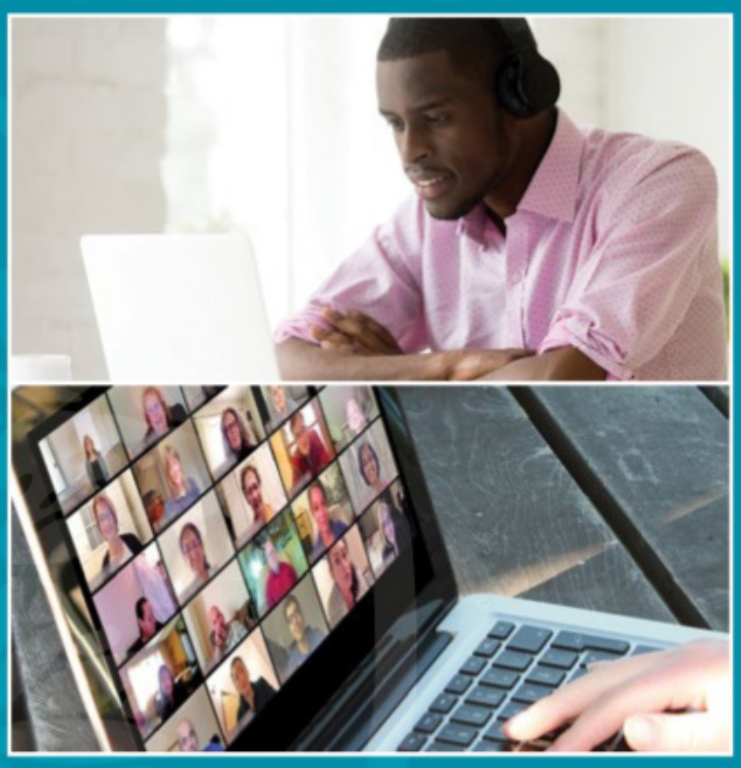
Real-world connections that span the globe

As the home of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), the UMASS Center for Mindfulness has always dreamed of making mindfulness accessible to everyone. And now we have.

The Online Global Community provides support to MBSR and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) graduates, as well as anyone interested in mindfulness—no matter where in the world they are. Participants in this community:

- Live and work in cities and countries around the world
- Come from a wide range of backgrounds and belief systems
- Want more peace and authentic connection in their lives and the world

Join our Online Global Community each week to connect, learn, and practice mindfulness together.



UMASS MEDICAL SCHOOL

Center for Mindfulness
in Medicine, Health Care, and Society
MINDFULNESS FOR EVERYONE™

Explore this and other online programs at:
umassmed.edu/cfm/online