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Sara Orem, PhD.

Mindful: A way of living

# Why a course on mindfulness

For many meditators, mindfulness = meditation. Although I have been a serial meditator for more than 30 years, I believe (and I think there is plenty of evidence to support this belief) that mindfulness encompasses meditation but is much more than meditation. I sustain a meditation practice for a while and then I lose it. But mindfulness as a way of living has been much more sustainable. I read Ellen Langer’s book called Mindfulness when it first came out in 1989 and, with each new year, I see a greater need for the understanding and practice of mindfulness.

## Sources for this course

### Mindfulness, by Ellen J. Langer

### Science of Happiness, online course, The Greater Good Science Center

### Mindful: Healthy Mind, Healthy Life, the bi-monthly magazine

### Mayo Clinic’s Guide to Stress-Free Living, by Amit Sood, M.D.

### How We Work, a new book by Stanford Business School faculty Leah Weiss about mindful work.

### Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness, by Bhante Henepola Gunaratana

### The Inner Dance: A Guide to Spiritual and Psychological Unfolding, by Diane Mariechild

### Calm, a publication of The School of Life, London

### Buddha’s Brain: the Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love, and Wisdom, by Rick Hanson with Richard Mendius

## Goals for the course

### To enable understanding of mindfulness as a concept

### To consider mindfulness as a significant contributor to happiness

### To connect the concept of mindfulness to its physical source (the brain)

### To introduce the practice of mindfulness

### To introduce the practice of meditation

### To connect the practice of meditation with the larger way of being of mindfulness

# Session one: The Brain, consciousness and mindfulness

How do we define brain, mind, consciousness and how does mindfulness affect any of these. Resources for this session include Buddha’s Brain, Chapter 1, and Mindful Magazine, Vol. 6, #2

## Traditional definitions of brain and brain parts name what they DO and where they are located (machine parts), implying that parts of the brain (amygdala, pre-frontal cortex) work independently.

## Brain’s wiring provides basis of consciousness

## Videos: Science of Happiness, Greater Good Science Center. Mindfulness and the Brain, Emiliana Simon-Thomas, Mindfulness changes the Brain, Shauna Shapiro (Week 6 Greeting)

## Parts of brain work interdependently as networks. Networks are relationships between an array of brain regions formed through repeated communication among the parts as we navigate through life. (Mindful, June 2018, Vol. 6, #2)

### Salience Network-filters and sorts data input like air traffic controller. Operates at two levels

#### Fast, automatic, bottom up; ice on sidewalk

#### Focus attention to achieve goal

### Central Executive Network- higher order cognition and attentional control (thinking hard about something)

### Default Mode Network- what brain defaults to when it doesn’t have task at hand. Spontaneous mind-wandering and self-talk.

#### Font of creativity

#### Locus of problematic rumination

# Session two: mindfulness and mindlessness

## Mindlessness and its pervasiveness in our culture (Langer, Chapters 3-5, 1989)

### The trap of categorization- snap judgments

### Automatic behavior

### Acting from a single perspective

### Mindlessness lives in prejudice

## Causes of mindlessness

### Repetition

### Premature cognitive commitment: Belief that something in future will be a certain way

### Belief in limited resources

### Notion of linear time

### Education for outcome (learning for the test)

### Influence of context (hospital, sports viewing)

## Effects of mindlessness

### Inhibiting self-image

### Unintended cruelty (Milgram’s famous experiment)

### Loss of control over decisions and choices

### Learned helplessness (Seligman)

### Stunted potential

## Video: Science of Happiness. Want to be Happier? Stay in the Moment, Matt Killingsworth (about mind-wandering and its effects)

## Mindfulness definition

### Video: Science of Happiness, Defining Mindfulness, Emiliana Simon-Thomas

### Article: Science of Happiness, What is Mindfulness, Barry Boyce

## Mindfulness; its qualities

### Creation of new categories

### Openness to new information

### Awareness of more than one perspective

### Control over context (Birdman of Alcatraz)

### Process before outcome

### Mindfulness East and West

### Mindfulness lives in principles

#### Gratitude

#### Compassion

#### Acceptance

#### Higher Meaning

#### Forgiveness

#### Tribe

## Mistaken Identity Exercise, Mindful, Vol. 6, #2, p. 65

## First impressions don’t lie, or do they? Snap judgments reveal a lot about biases and fears.

# Session three: cultivating Awareness

Resources: Langer, Chapters 6-10

## Attention- Focusing

### Quiets the storyteller in your head so you can be more focused, relaxed, compassionate, non-judgmental

## Interpretation

### Trades prejudice for principles-

## Mindfulness and Aging

##### Preconceived notions

##### Learned helplessness

##### Increasing decision-making and responsibility

###### Change; daily, or at least often

###### Who I am now and now and now

###### Review, Acceptance of current restrictions, what is bottom line?

###### What is NOT acceptable, might (might not) change

## Mindfulness and Work

### Paid work, passionate avocation, important volunteer experience

### Sphere in which we have both responsibility and interest

### Finding fit/balance/growth and joy

### Mindfulness at Work, Essays by Tara Healey and Maureen O’Hagan in Science of Happiness, Mindfulness module, Real world applications of Mindfulness

## Mindfulness and Creativity

### Flow (M. Csikszentmyhalyi)- where is it now?

### In what activity/process do you sense its possibility

### Mindful to blissful/heartful

## Mindfulness and Decreasing Prejudice

### Story that is automatic (mindless)

### Story you question (mindful)

### Story you create

## Mindfulness and Health

### Gratitude

### Compassion

### Acceptance

### Meaning

### Forgiveness

## Optimism Day Exercise (with colored sticky notes or index cards), Mindful, Vol. 6, #2, p. 68. Choose a day of the coming week. Periodically pause and write down anything that makes you feel good. Display these on a mirror, refrigerator, door. Decorate if you wish.

# Session four: meditation

## What is meditation and how do we practice it

## Connection to Mindfulness

## Examples of meditation

### Mindful Breathing, Science of Happiness, Mindfulness module, Happiness Practice #5

## Sources for beginners

### tarabrach.com

### [www.heromovement.net/blog/free-guided-meditation](http://www.heromovement.net/blog/free-guided-meditation)

### marc.ucla.edu/mindful-meditations

### www.ilivethelifeilove.com/10-best-guided-meditations

## Experience of Meditation

### Mindful meditation Tara Brach (tarabrach.com). Definition and Guided Meditation (**Meditation and Short Talk: Basic Elements of a Mindfulness Meditation Sitting)**

### Stages

#### Arriving; establishing attention

#### Collecting, coming back to present with chosen anchor (breathing, body scan, sky, particular facial expression), rest in awakeness

#### Being here, mindful attention to whatever arises

#### Non-doing, be awareness, love, presence.

### Body Scan Meditation, Science of Happiness, Mindfulness module, Happiness Practice #5

# Session five: mindfulness in relationships

Resources: Calm, Chapters 1 and 2

## Loving Kindness Meditation, Science of Happiness, Mindfulness module- Happiness Practice #5

## Intimacy with self and other

### Relatively easy when things are going well

### More difficult when we feel vulnerable or in conflict

### Mindful approach is unconditionally friendly toward own and other’s wounds or vulnerability

# session six: mindful project and wrap up

## Individual presentations

### Clarifications

### Appreciations

## Debriefs

## What have we learned?

## What do we take forward from this experience?