

Final Reflection on MBSR

Mindfulness to me means becoming aware of what my mind thinks from moment to moment, and how that can change my experience of life. Being present and observing and feeling what is going on inside me and around me in the moment. Trying not to worry about the future or lament on the past. Mindfulness is a beautiful way to live your life and I can see how it has helped many people overcome anxiety, pain, and the stress of life. Mindfulness is an awakening, an awareness of our bodies and minds, a wisdom of our minds and body, and a way of life. Through meditation and mindful movement, I have started to transform my life, or better yet reclaim my life. Instead of opening my laptop or iPhone before I go to sleep, I have been meditating in quietness. This transformation has allowed me to sleep better and also longer. I used to get on average about six hours a sleep a night. I now get seven hours and I know that if I continue my meditation, I can achieve eight hours a sleep a night. This is because when I open the laptop, I tend to stay on it when I should be sleeping. Meditation has replaced that and allows me to get in the mood for sleep. I find myself meditating not only before I sleep, but in the morning before I go to work. This has helped to cut down on my anxiety as I start another workday in the step-down unit of the hospital. Meditation is also keeping me focused on my diet and weight. I recently put on weight as most of my exercise time has been replaced with study time for school. It doesn't help that when I study, I eat junk food or overdo it on the coffee. Through meditation, I have been able to control my cravings and replace the junk food with fruits and vegetables. I've also limited my coffee intake to one cup a day.

Through mindful movement I have been able to increase my flexibility. Work on the areas of my body where I experience pain, usually my shoulders and neck from pulling and turning patients at work. I find myself stretching and doing actual yoga poses I learned in the class before, during, and after work. Away from work, I love to go for long walks often with my wife. I have taken that opportunity to share mindfulness with her. We now practice mindful walking, trying to see how each muscle, joint, bone feels as we walk. After that we feel ourselves breathing, we swing our arms and try to engage as many muscles as we can. We then truly try to become aware of our surroundings and how our minds interpret everything around us. From the birds to the insects flying by, saluting the other walkers as they pass us, looking up at the clouds, overall our entire surroundings. This is quite a drastic change as before we would start our walk out by taking out our cell phones and distracting ourselves with music, social media, text messages, stock market updates, etc. Through mindful movement and meditation, we now see things on the same path we've walked for years that we never saw before. We also stop during the walk to practice some yoga poses. This serves to give us a rest and also stretch and feel our body and note what feels good and what part of our bodies is experiencing pain. While it's fun to observe nature, we realize also that we are there to walk, exercise, and bring awareness to our walking. I now do this when I go to the store or run errands. Instead of rushing out of the car, being on my cell phone, I do the opposite. I put my phone away, I walk a little slower, I try to observe something different, new, even though it's the same store I always go to. Before I would always walk the same way into and around the store. Now I take different entrances, walk down aisles I avoided before, walk slower, and find that it's a more vivid and interesting experience.

By being more mindful of my own thoughts and feelings my communication has improved both at work and with friends and family. Being aware of my posture, my facial expressions and my manner of speech has helped me to communicate more effectively. Being present and mindful in my dealings with patients and families, medical staff, and co-workers. At home being mindful of the stress my wife has at work and being patient with her when she tells me about how bad her day was. With my children being mindful of how difficult it is to be a teenager. Being patient with them when I help them with their homework or clean their room. Overall, I find myself more open to the challenge of communication by being mindful and present in their lives. I believe we can heal the relationships that need healing. "To develop the effective communication such healing depends on, you will have to cultivate an awareness of the energy of relationships, including the domains of minds and bodies, thoughts, feelings, speech, likes and dislikes, motives, and goals." (Kabat-Zinn ,2013, p.489). I've already shared some of the yoga poses we learned in class. I found that a good time to do them is during the morning huddle. It's a good time to listen to the updates and at the same time stretch and get ready for the day ahead. I know it's hard to be mindful and concentrate on our body as we listen to our manager, but some of my co-workers like it and told me how it helps them feel ready for the daily grind. Another thing is just to be present while dealing with everyone at work both patients and coworkers. To me that means not thinking about what I'm going to do on my day off or worry about some event coming up. Being present and mindful in my practice will make a big difference in how I deal with my patients. I want to be as authentic as possible because people can feel when you're not. Being mindful is the way to achieve this, it will improve my relationship with everyone at work and in my personal life as well.

Another thing I've learned that I will incorporate at work is meditation. I have already started to meditate in my car prior to entering work. Now I have the challenge to find the time and place to meditate during work. I'm thinking I can dedicate 5-10 minutes of meditation during my half hour lunch break. The meditation will help ground me during the day and bring a peacefulness and calm to me during my work. It's important to know that, "even if you have a job with a lot of autonomy and a good salary and you are doing things that you care about, even love to do, work always presents its unique challenges and lets you know that you are never completely in control." (Kabat-Zinn ,2013, p.303). I'm so glad I was able to take the mindfulness class. In order to continue to receive all these benefits I've gotten from the class, I'm determined to continue my practice of mindfulness, meditation, and yoga.

References

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2013). Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness. New York: Bantam Books.