

Can Mindfulness Help Lead to the Ideal Day in Medicine?

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Wouldn't it be nice if we arrived at work each day refreshed after a night of solid sleep and excitedly anticipating the unique opportunity we have to help people navigate through life's most challenging obstacles? Wouldn't it be nice if we truly heard and comforted our patients and then moved on refreshed for each new issue.

Of course in medicine nothing every runs according to plan, but what if we could savor the wonderful aspects of our job so intensely that they dilute the negative? What about those truly appreciative patients yesterday? The elusive diagnosis we made? Or the successful hospitalization and subsequent smooth handoff?

What if we return home to our families, undistracted by thoughts of work and present in each moment with the people and things we love?

Sounds pretty ideal, doesn't it?

That is my ideal, and it should be our reality. Health care delivery in United States has been changing for years, and will continue to do so. At UHA, we are in a unique position as a young organization full of experienced physicians to create and implement processes that not only promote excellent care but also the work-life harmony of the individuals providing the care.

While many of these changes need to happen on an organizational level, there are actions we can take as individuals to achieve a higher level of well-being. Mindfulness, eating a healthy diet, and regular exercise can improve our sleep quality, enhance our overall quality of life, and improve how we respond to challenges in our lives, among many other benefits.

Each quarter the UHA Wellness Committee will highlight a practice, explain how the habit can be beneficial, provide research supporting these claims, and suggest how you can make changes in your life. We kick off with the theme of mindfulness meditation.

Mindfulness is the act of learning how to focus on the moment and to disregard both internal and external distractors. Mindfulness meditation is an exercise to help one achieve that state in daily life.

My own journey with mindfulness meditation has been amusing in retrospect. It began with my final paper "I Failed Meditation" in my college world religions class, to the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) class I took, and now finally to my 10 minute daily meditation



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practiced over lunch. I have learned that the amount of time dedicated to meditation each day should be individualized and titrated very slowly and, indeed, *mindfully*.

I hope that you try mindfulness in the next few weeks and support each other as we all try to find great work-life harmony. I would love to hear any success stories along the way or any suggestions as to how we can improve this project

Happy 2016 Everyone!

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