

Mindfulness 101



Working in healthcare can be extremely rewarding, but it has the added pressure of dealing with high stress situations. Our employees have consistently indicated through the engagement surveys that they are prone to stress and burnout. In order to help address this feedback from staff Well@UHA would like to provide assistance and resources to allow us not only to withstand these work pressures, but thrive in the face of them. Cultivating mindfulness and meditation practice are proactive ways of taking control of your happiness and fulfillment at work.

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is nonjudgmental, moment to moment awareness. [Recommend a couple key examples of what that means.] A key tool of mindfulness is practicing meditation.

What is meditation?

Meditation is an exercise that involves intentional self-regulation of attention. There are many different forms, but most of the studies performed with healthcare providers involvement mindfulness meditation, especially Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), developed by John Kabat-Zinn. This meditation can be easily done sitting at your work station and takes only 10 minutes a day.

How will cultivating mindfulness benefit me?

A mindfulness practice can lead to:

- Less stress
- Greater happiness
- Less reactivity and decreased stress response
- Increased concentration
- Improves working memory
- Decreases rumination
- Increased empathy and kindness
- Improved sleep quality
- Delay in the natural decline of brain gray matter

- Increases cell life span (by increasing telomere length)
- Helps to un-train the habit of multitasking, which is linked to sadness
- Enhances the immune system
- Decrease burnout. Burnout scores in physician leaders who participated in the Mindfulness in Leadership course in 2016-2017 decreased by 50%.

What can UHA do to promote Mindfulness as a way to address stress and burnout?

Let's start by finding out how many staff are interested in training and assistance in learning mindfulness. Talk to your co-workers and see if others are interested. Please then talk to your supervisor, manager, or director letting them know your interest. Once this interest has been gauged we can take a look at various possibilities for example, rolling out programs for whole departments or just rolling out training to an interested subset of the team. Can I start mindfulness practices on my own? Absolutely. See below.

How do I start a mindfulness practice on my own?

With any new habit, it's best to start with small bites and then work your way up. Just 10 minutes of meditation per day has been shown to produce the benefits mentioned, but even just starting the habit of pausing for three deep breaths once per day can lower your stress level and push your internal "reset button."

Tips to begin a personal practice:

- Each time you open a door at work, stop and take a deep breath. Let anything going on outside that door stay outside the door, and begin anew once you step through the doorway.
- Try starting with 10 minutes (or less) of mindfulness meditation each day. Many people find it helpful to start their day with meditation, but it's best to find a consistent time where you will have the physical space to practice.
- Let a mobile app do the work for you. Popular apps include: Headspace (subscription), Calm (free), 10% Happier (subscription), Insight Timer (free), and The Potential Project (\$2, used by our leadership team at UHA)
- Want to dig deeper? Check out this document for more guidance: <http://myuha.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Adopting-Mindfulness-or-Beginning-a-Mindfulness-Meditation-Practice-2.pdf>

To foster a culture of mindfulness at work

- Start all meetings or huddles with either a deep mindful breath or three full breaths.

- Limit meetings to 50 minutes and encourage “device free” meetings to maximize efficiency and discourage multitasking.
- Prioritize breaks and focus on performance breaks, as opposed to keeping ourselves wound up with being constantly busy. We can use our 10 minutes of break time to recharge instead of depleting our energy.
- Create a physical space in each building that is reserved for quiet reflection for at least one hour per day.
- Be mindful of the attention-promoting and energy draining food we bring to work. Watch Eating for Optimal Energy & Eating for Optimal Alertness on <http://myuha.org/wellness/wellness-video-library/>
- Take a deep breath before entering the room, and set an intention of full attention for the person or people in the room.
- Lead by example. Model the behavior you’d like to see!
- Meet regularly to meditate as a group or debrief on a mindfulness curriculum. The book “One Second Ahead: Enhance Your Performance at Work with Mindfulness” used by our leadership group and “Search Inside Yourself: The Unexpected Path to Achieving Success, Happiness (and World Peace)” are both great books that can easily be read one chapter at a time with a group.
- Monitor our progress via assessments.

Please contact Well@UHA if you have questions, would like help starting a project at your site, or have feedback!