Mindfulness in Everyday Life: The Way to Happiness and Meaning

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Poll #1

Do you have any knowledge of Buddhism?

- None
- A little
- Quite a bit
- I am a practicing Buddhist
Human Suffering

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Major Life Changes
- Existential Angst

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS...
First Noble Truth

- Suffering/Stress is inherent in life

This truth is inescapable because the cycle of life for everyone is:
- Birth
- Old Age
- Sickness
- Death
Second Noble Truth

- Suffering/Stress has a cause:
  Resisting the law of impermanence through attachment

1. Desire
2. Grasping
3. Clinging
Third Noble Truth

- There is a WAY OUT of the Suffering/Stress
Fourth Noble Truth

- Reduce suffering/stress by learning to live in the here-and-now of the present moment.

- Avoiding obsessing over the PAST (ruminative thinking).

- Avoid projecting fear into the FUTURE (ruminative thinking).
Lived Experience

Phenomena and reception + response = lived experience

(Wallis, Winter 2008, p. 79)
Poll #2

What is your experience with mindfulness meditation?

- No exposure
- I’ve heard of it but don’t know much about it
- I meditate once in a while
- I meditate most days
- I’ve had a practice for years
What is Mindfulness?

- Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. Kabat-Zinn, 1994

- (1) Awareness, (2) of present experience, (3) with acceptance. Germer et al., 2005
Mindfulness Meditation:

- is a technique or intervention that helps alleviate stress
- is a way to change our conditioned response patterns
- provides the opportunity to see clearly how the mind actually works (desire, grasping, clinging; dwelling in past and future)
- trains the mind to observe phenomena without being swept away by thought or emotion
- affects our lived experience by heightening mental control and emotional regulation
- leads to greater happiness
“Monkey Mind”

RELATIONSHIP TO THOUGHTS

THOUGHT

ATTRACTION (Passion)
Snake
"I want more."

NEUTRAL (Ignorance)
Pig
"Whatever!"

AVERSION (Aggression)
Rooster
"I want less."
Mind/Body
Implications of
Mindfulness Meditation

DECREASE in:

- Cortisol (stress hormone)
  - Fight or flight response

- Anxiety, Depression, Chronic Pain, Mood Imbalance, PTSD, Attention Problems, Substance Abuse

- Heart disease, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, chronic pain, and some cancers

Research and clinical studies show that a regular mindfulness meditation practice can decrease such health concerns

National Institutes of Health, Office of Alternative Medicine, 1994 Omnibus 25-Year Report on Meditation
Mind/Body Implications of Mindfulness Meditation

INCREASE in:

- immune response

- the body’s ability to produce hormones like endorphins, melatonin, and DHEA, associated with improved immune response and feelings of pleasure

- pre-frontal cortex activation (cognitive skills, higher level reasoning and integration, emotional intelligence)

- here-and-now awareness, appreciation, gratitude, meaning, relationship satisfaction, heightened sensory experience, contentment, happiness, and a greater sense of peace and joy
ALAN WATTS (1996):

Meditation is...the art of suspending verbal and symbolic thinking for a time, somewhat as a courteous audience will stop talking when a concert is about to begin.

Simply sit down close your eyes, and listen to all sounds that may be going on--without trying to name or identify them. Listen as you would listen to music. (p. 92)
Enlightenment
OPTIMAL STRESS REDUCTION

- PRACTICE mindfulness meditation by focusing on the natural flow of the breath, returning awareness from thought back to out-breath, over and over again. This practice quiets the busyness of mind, which contributes to clarity and wisdom.

- MINDFULNESS of the here-and-now, rather than being preoccupied or obsessed by past or future thinking.

- NONJUDMENTAL attention to unfolding moment.

- ACCEPTANCE rather than rejection of present experience.

- GRATITUDE and APPRECIATION lead to greater happiness.
“The mind is man’s connection system.”

(E.L. Thorndike in Fitzpatrick, 1953, p. 452)
Meditation Exercise

Watch on YouTube:
How to Meditate: Dr. Donna Rockwell on Mindfulness Meditation

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=igpaPVWmCXk
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- Watch and read interviews with Donna Rockwell at PsychAlive.org
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