MINDFULNESS AND GRATITUDE
AS SKILLS FOR PROMOTING
CONTENTMENT AND BALANCE

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THE WISDOM OF AN ELDERLY MAN

“You think that today is just another day in your life,
But it is the only day you have.
If you respond as though it is the first day, and the last day,
You will have lived this day well.”

-Author Unknown
Thank you for attending this presentation
We are grateful to have the opportunity to share this with you
Who we are and what we do
How these skills have impacted our lives
A brief history of Gratitude and Mindfulness
Benefits of regular practice: What the research shows
Tips for cultivating practice of Gratitude and Mindfulness
Mindfulness Meditation
ACTIVITY: PERSONAL GRATITUDE EXPERIENCE

- Think about something or someone you are grateful for at this moment.

- Write down that thought on the card in front of you.

- Self address the envelope and we will mail these to you at a random time (which will probably turn out to be when you need it most).
WHAT IS GRATITUDE

- Google defines it as “the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness.

- Researcher Nathan DeWall states “Gratitude is more than just feeling good, it helps people become less aggressive by enhancing their empathy. It’s an equal opportunity emotion.”

- Dr. Robert Emmons describes it in two parts.
  - The first is “it’s an affirmation of goodness. We affirm that there are good things in the world, gifts and benefits we’ve received.”
  - The second part is “we recognize that the sources of this goodness are outside of ourselves. … We acknowledge that other people—or even higher powers, if you’re of a spiritual mindset—gave us many gifts, big and small, to help us achieve the goodness in our lives.

Source: http://greatergood.berkeley.edu
WHY GRATITUDE IS GREAT TO PRACTICE

- Personal approach to how you choose to live your life.

- Healthy habit to form

- It’s free!

- Results are quick and can be lasting with enough practice.

- It’s transformational!
GRATITUDE AND SCIENCE

- Dr. Emmons
  - Author of “thanks!”
  - Scientist and researcher at UC-Davis

- Conducted a study that had 3 groups that were required to keep a journal for 2-3 weeks or 10 weeks.
  - Group 1: Things they are grateful for
  - Group 2: Things that irritated/annoyed them
  - Group 3: Things that happened that had major impact

FINDINGS

- Participants were given questionnaires before and after their recordings and the studies show three things:

  1. These folks were up to 25% happier!
  2. The results are not hard to achieve
  3. Cultivating gratitude brings better overall health

BENEFITS OF GRATITUDE

- Psychological
  - Energetic
  - Alert
  - Enthused
  - Reduces anxiety and depression
  - More resilient

- Physical
  - Improved sleep
  - More likely to exercise
  - Fewer symptoms of ailments

- Interpersonal
  - Less isolation
  - More connections
  - More forgiving
  - More partnership

- Spiritual
  - Improved relationship with higher power/creator
  - Increases grateful behavior

Source: http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/expandinggratitude
A HISTORY OF MINDFULNESS

- Hinduism – 1500 BCE
  - Is the forerunner of most Asian contemplative traditions.

- Daoist Mindfulness - 6th century BCE
  - Used to create a harmonious relationship between humans and the world.

- Buddhism - founded in c. 520 BCE
  - “Right Mindfulness” is part of the “Eightfold Path” to enlightenment.

Sources: http://learnmindfulness.co.uk/history-of-mindfulness/ and http://www.buddhanet.net/cmdsg/bt-9.htm
WHAT IS MINDFULNESS AND WHY IT’S GREAT TO PRACTICE

- Jon Kabat-Zinn defines mindfulness as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgementally”.

- Shamash Alidina adds to the definition of mindfulness that certain qualities including “compassion, curiosity, and acceptance” are used when being mindful.

- Mindfulness teaches us the difference between living versus existing.

- Like with gratitude, mindfulness is a personal approach to how you choose to think and live your life.

MINDFULNESS AND SCIENCE

- 8 week study at University of Massachusetts Medical School’s Center for Mindfulness
- 16 participants were in the treatment group; 17 participants were in the control group
- The treatment consisted of weekly 2.5 hour mindfulness meditation group meetings plus daily audio recordings of guided meditation to listen to at home.

FINDINGS

MRI images of the brains of both groups were taken before and after the study.

Results:

1. Participants in the treatment group experienced improvements in their ability to focus and concentrate, improved their skill of observing, and were more capable at remaining nonjudgmental.
2. The meditators (but not the control group) had increased concentrations of gray matter in several areas of the brain.
3. The treatment group also experienced the added benefits of reduced stress levels.

Source:
WHAT AN MRI LOOKS LIKE

BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

- **Psychological**
  - Reduced rumination
  - Improves working memory
  - Improves focus
  - Less emotional reactivity
  - More cognitive flexibility

- **Physical**
  - Stress reduction
  - Increased immune functioning
  - Reduces chronic pain
  - Deeply relaxes the body

- **Interpersonal**
  - Improves our ability to handle stress caused by relationships
  - Improves self-expression
  - Improves communication skills
  - Predicts relationship satisfaction

- **Spiritual**
  - Aids in self-reflection
  - Increases internal peace

Sources: [http://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/07-08/ce-corner.aspx](http://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/07-08/ce-corner.aspx)
[http://www.anandapaloalto.org/joy/BenefitsOfMeditation.html](http://www.anandapaloalto.org/joy/BenefitsOfMeditation.html)
## CREATIVE WAYS TO PRACTICE GRATITUDE AND MINDFULNESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gratitude</th>
<th>Mindfulness</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gratitude sharing at meals</td>
<td>Give yourself quiet time each and every day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gratitude calendar</td>
<td>Connect with people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gratitude journal</td>
<td>Enjoy the beauty of nature</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gratitude letters</td>
<td>See the wonder of the present moment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gratitude time with friends (not gossip/complaining)</td>
<td>Listen to unpleasant emotions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make art and post it around your home/office</td>
<td>Remember that thoughts aren’t facts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gratitude routine</td>
<td>Be grateful every day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Text messages/videos</td>
<td>Let go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Breathe and smile</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Sources:
ACTIVITY: MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

- Please prepare your body and mind to relax
  - Put down all of your materials (pens, handouts, etc)
  - Make note of your posture. Good posture is very important to the breath.
  - Close your eyes, if you are comfortable.
  - Listen with an open heart and mind.
QUESTIONS AND FEEDBACK

- We encourage questions and discussions.
- Please provide any feedback you may have regarding this presentation on the yellow half page survey.
- This should only take a few minutes to complete, and we are grateful for any feedback that you would be willing to provide.

Thank you for coming today!!!