

Mindful Nutrition

October 20, 2020

Nourishing our Physical, Mental, and
Emotional Well-being Through Mindfulness
Week 5

How Facing Our Fear and Insecurity Keeps
Inflammation at Bay

Definition of Mindfulness, Jon Kabat Zinn

Mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally,” says Kabat-Zinn. “And then I sometimes add, in the service of self-understanding and wisdom.”



Latest Findings for Mindfulness and Emotions

“One Week of Mindfulness Meditation May Help You Process Your Emotions”, Grace Bullock, PHd“Mindful”

In the study, researchers in China assigned 46 college student volunteers to either a brief mindfulness meditation group intervention, or an emotion regulation education group.

Where researchers did find improvement was in the meditators' emotional processing. Specifically, people in the meditation group had better emotional memory and were less likely to pay attention to negative emotion after a week of group practice. They also reported experiencing less positive and negative emotional intensity than the control group.

The silver lining is that a less time-intensive ...form of group meditation training may be enough to help people to be less impacted by their negative emotions.

Emotions: Is there a number?

...the number of emotions researchers settle on greatly depends on how specifically emotions are defined and the criteria used. For example, in a 2017 study, researchers identified 27 unique emotions.⁴

Still, when it comes to the most basic emotions, most psychologists will tell you that are far fewer than one might think and that larger accountings of emotional expression come from more nuanced variations of those basic feelings.

According to Robert Plutchick, professor emeritus at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, more than 90 different definitions of "emotion" have been put forth by psychologists with the aim of accurately describing what constitutes and differentiates human emotion.

Plutchik proposed eight basic emotions—joy, sadness, trust, disgust, fear, anger, surprise, and anticipation—

Emotions, and how we experience and express them, can be both abundantly apparent or remarkably subtle. The general consensus among scientists today is that the basic emotions, however many there may be, serve as the foundation for the more complex and subtle emotions that make up the human experience. –Kendra Cherry, “Very Well MInd”, May 9, 2020

<https://www.verywellmind.com/how-many-emotions-are-there-2795179>

Emotions (Continued)

Paul Ekman created what he called the facial action coding system (FACS), a classification model which measures and evaluates the movements of facial muscles as well as those of the eyes and head. Based on his theory, Ekman proposed that there are seven emotional expressions universal to people all over the world: happiness, sadness, surprise, fear, anger, disgust, and contempt. - Kendra Cherry

<https://s3-us-west-1.amazonaws.com/emogifs/map.html#>

Just possibly - if we ever feel overwhelmed or frozen by a multitude of emotions, perhaps this gives us an idea why...

Gratitude is an emotion we feel in response to receiving something good which is undeserved" (Lacewing, 2016). ... "gratitude is a positively valenced emotion that can arise when another person—a benefactor—does something kind for the self (Algoe et al., 2016).Jan 9, 2020

Introducing Lovingkindness Practice or "Meta" Practice - Meta meaning beyond- more comprehensive or transcending....

Tuning into and turning towards your emotions

The Mindful Way through Anxiety, Break Free from Chronic Worry and Reclaim your life

If we are human,
we are capable of fear
and anxiety.

Susan M. Orsillo,
Lizabeth Roemer

Practice: p.130



From *Mindful Way Through Anxiety* by Lizabeth Roemer and Susan Orsillio

Common observations while Practicing Mindfulness of Emotions

**Hard to stay Focused on the event and the emotion(s)*

**Many efforts to distract or to avoid*

**Discomfort from emotional experience (Touch and Let go)*

**New emotions emerged that weren't recognized at the time*

**Emotion became less intense and uncomfortable as practice continued*

**Noticed new things about the event*

**Intensity of emotions rose and fell*

**Many judgments came up*

Neuroscience of Fear

As neuroscientist Joseph E. LeDoux writes:

<https://www.cns.nyu.edu/ledoux/pdf/LeDoux%20Pine%20Two%20Systsem.pdf>

Fear is something ancient and ingrained. It has its helpful place as a survival mechanism in nature, triggering awareness of a threat and triggering responses such as flight, freeze, or fight. In the study of the human brain, the amygdala has often been considered the “fear center,” and it is definitely involved in our responses to fear.

...There is no single “fear center” in the brain. Various parts of the brain contribute to a complex “threat detection system.” Perhaps our responses to fear need to be just as nuanced.

Neuroscience of Fear (Con't)

Be suspicious of any statement that says a brain area is a center responsible for some function. The notion of functions being products of brain areas or centers is leftover from the days when most evidence about brain function was based on the effects of brain lesions localized to specific areas. Today, we think of functions as *products of systems* rather than of areas. Neurons in areas contribute because they are part of a system. The amygdala, for example, contributes to threat detection because it is part of a threat detection system.

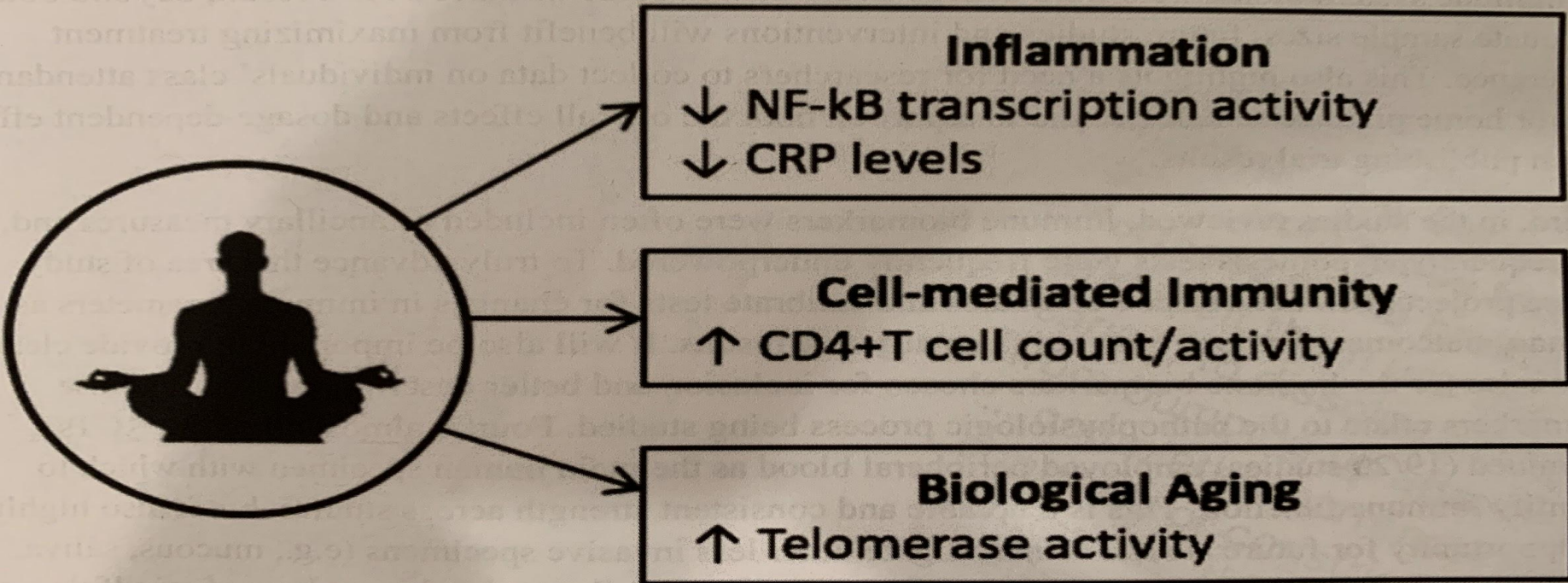


Figure 1

Mindfulness meditation and immune system biomarkers. This systematic review of 20 randomized controlled trials, comprising more than 1600 participants, revealed replicated, yet tentative, evidence that

“Face Fear and Keep Going”, Carolyn Gimian, May 15, 2016,

“Mindful”: <https://www.mindful.org/face-fear-and-keep-going/>

Although working with fear in one’s meditation is extremely valuable, it’s equally important to develop ways of working with fear and anxiety in everyday life. Here are some suggestions:

Don’t beat yourself up. Don’t blame yourself for your fears or anxiety. They’re human responses to the human condition. Try to suspend harsh self-judgments. Don’t expect to conquer fear in one breath, one hour, or one day.

Take time for yourself. Fear thrives when we push too hard. Appreciate yourself in small moments and small acts: take a walk, smell a flower, drink a good cup of coffee, watch an absorbing movie.

Do something differently. Alter a routine. By shifting a habitual pattern, you take yourself off autopilot. It may make you a little more anxious, but it also makes you more mindful and aware.

Celebrate the victories. They may be small. You’re afraid of spiders, but you managed to trap one and put it out of the house. You’re terrified of thunder and lightning but you opened the curtains during a storm. Give yourself a mental pat on the back or a genuine piece of chocolate.

“Face Fear and Keep Going”, Carolyn Gimian, May 15, 2016,

“Mindful”: <https://www.mindful.org/face-fear-and-keep-going/>

Make a catalog of daily fears. Get to know your fears and anxieties. Set aside a few minutes, and in that time, notice all the fearful or anxious thoughts that arise, and what triggers them. If this exercise makes you more and more anxious, don't do it! But often noting fears and letting them come to the surface helps reduce some of the anxiety. It's a good beginning.

Practice touch and let go in everyday life. Let the fears arise, but also let them go. After you make the catalog, look at each fear, each anxious moment, and then let it go on its way.

Be curious about your fear. We give power to our anxieties by trying to hide from them. Ignorance is certainly not bliss. Rather, it stokes the fires of fear. So look into what frightens you. Look at the big face of fear and look into the details. You may discover that fear is like the Wizard of Oz, a showman with little substance and much bravado. Or you may find something more substantial. Then, look more deeply, but with kindness to yourself.

Never forget humor. One of the best antidotes to fear is humor, in the sense of celebrating life, not making fun of yourself or others. Daily life offers a pretty steady stream of humorous encounters. It's hard to be terrified when you have a broad grin on your face.

Accept help. Sometimes the help you need is to talk with someone about your fears. Sometimes it's sharing a good meal and a laugh with a friend. A small note of caution: Accepting help doesn't necessarily mean taking everybody's advice. Seek professional help if you need it.

Fear and Space

Open the door wide to your fear and anxiety. Touch it. Be curious about it. Then let it go. See the contrast between your anxiety and the space around it.

— Carolyn Gimian

Your brain needs a party

Excerpts from the Newsletter by Elemental, 10/20/2020

<https://elemental.medium.com/your-brain-needs-a-party-2551b1a887b6>

Looking forward to good things in the future is a key element of well-being. One study showed that the more positive events a person anticipates, the brighter their mood is. Actively planning for the future, even the logistical aspects of it, was also linked to greater optimism about the coming months and years. Notably, people who are depressed anticipate fewer positive events than non-depressed people, while people who are anxious expect more negative things will occur.

Other research has demonstrated that anticipating a reward, even a simple one like reading a funny comic, is enough to increase people's positive emotions before and after a stressful event. The scientists suggest that looking forward to and experiencing a positive event after a negative one can help people recover from their stress faster.

A paper published this summer revealed a positive anticipation circuit in the brain involving three key regions: the ventromedial prefrontal cortex, which encodes reward value; the midbrain, which is involved in feelings of motivation and is rich in the neurotransmitter dopamine; and the hippocampus, which is important for creating a memory of an event.

Lovingkindness Practice “Meta” Practice “LVK”

A Guided Loving-Kindness Meditation with Sharon Salzberg

<https://www.mindful.org/a-guided-loving-kindness-meditation-with-sharon-salzberg/>

A Loving-Kindness Meditation for Connection

1. **Sit comfortably, or lie down if that’s better for you.** You can close your eyes or leave them open. Let your attention settle into your body and start by taking a few deep breaths.
 2. **Allow your breath to be natural.** We’re choosing, as an object of awareness, the silent repetition of certain phrases with ourselves as the first recipient. You can use any variation of the phrases: *may I be safe, be happy, be healthy, live with ease*.
- Repeat these phrases over and over with enough space and silence to create a rhythm that’s pleasing to you.
3. **You don’t have to force a special feeling.** Just gather all of your attention behind one phrase at a time. If you find your attention wandering, or you get lost in thought, or you fall asleep, don’t worry about it.
 4. **See if you can bring to mind someone who we will call a benefactor.** Think of someone who has helped you. Maybe they’ve helped you directly, or they’ve helped you get up when you’ve fallen, or maybe you’ve never met them. This is someone who makes you smile.

If someone comes to mind, you can bring them here. Visualize them, say their name to yourself, get a feeling for their presence and offer the phrases of loving-kindness to them. Even if the words seem imperfect, that’s fine.

LVK (Con't)

May you be safe, be happy, be healthy, live with ease.

All kinds of emotions may arise. You may feel grateful, or you may feel embarrassed. Whatever may come up, see if it can just wash through you as you steady your attention on the repetition of the phrases.

5. Now, have that benefactor figure offer loving-kindness back to you. Put yourself in the position of the recipient as your benefactor offers the phrases to you.

May you be safe, be happy, be healthy,

All kinds of emotions may arise. You may feel grateful, or you may feel embarrassed. Whatever may come up, see if it can just wash through you as you steady your attention on the repetition of the phrases.

6. Imagine a friend who's doing well right now. You can bring them here. Visualize them or say their name to yourself. Get a feeling for their presence and offer the phrases of loving-kindness to them.

LVK (Con't)

7. **Now imagine a friend who's having difficulty.** If someone comes to mind, bring them here and offer the phrases of loving-kindness to them.

8. **Let's have a party.** Imagine a gathering of friends and family—anyone that comes to mind. Offer loving-kindness to that collective.

May you be safe, be happy, be healthy, live with ease.

9. **Then, add all beings everywhere.** All people. All creatures. All those in existence. Near and far. Known and unknown.

May all beings be safe, be happy, be healthy, live with ease.

10. **When you feel ready, you can open your eyes.**

In Beauty May I walk

In beauty all day long may I walk.

Through the returning seasons, may I walk.

On the trail marked with pollen may I walk.

With dew about my feet, may I walk.

With beauty before me may I walk.

With beauty behind me may I walk.

With beauty below me may I walk.

With beauty above me may I walk. With beauty all around me may I walk. In old age wandering on a trail of beauty, lively, may I walk. In old age wandering on a trail of beauty, living again, may I walk. My words will be beautiful...

It is begun in Beauty, It is begun in Beauty.

-Excerpts from a Navajo Way Blessing Ceremony, by Robert S. Drake

Resources

The Mindful Way Through Anxiety, Lizbeth Roemer, Susan M. Orsillo

Full Catastrophe Living, Jon Kabat Zinn, Bantam 1990.

Mindfulness for Beginners, Jon Kabat Zinn. Sounds True 2002

Mindful Diet, Ruth Wolever, Beth Reardon, Scribner 2015

Eat. Right. Now, Judson Brewer, APP 2016

“A Guided Loving-Kindness Meditation with Sharon Salzberg”

<https://www.mindful.org/a-guided-loving-kindness-meditation-with-sharon-salzberg>

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