Title: Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction

Leader: Mark Abramson

Description:

The impact of stress on health is well recognized. Now the efficacy of stress reduction as an adjunct to medical treatment is being recognized in more and more health care settings. In 1996 Dr. Mark Abramson founded a program at Stanford University Medical Center using the 2,500-year-old technique of Mindfulness Meditation to train patients as an adjunct treatment for many different medical conditions.

Mindfulness is "nonjudgmental awareness." This requires one to pay attention to direct experience in the present moment, neither clinging to what is perceived as pleasant nor reacting with aversion toward what is perceived as unpleasant. In both mental and physical stress, much of the perpetuating cycle of pain or discomfort is a result of one’s judgmental struggle to push away what is experienced as unpleasant. Yet as one becomes willing to directly meet the actual experience, it becomes finite. One begins to see that it can be workable to deal with a finite level of discomfort one moment at a time.

Approximately 3,000 people have taken this training with Dr. Abramson. Most patients report a significant increase in their ability to manage their illness and significant reductions in stress and physical complaints. Dr. Abramson adds, "What I most appreciate is participants reporting improved ability to respond to themselves with kindness and compassion."

Objectives

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the physiology of the stress response
2. Demonstrate physiologic control of autonomic nervous system stress response using diaphragmatic movement alteration to stimulate sympathetic or parasympathetic pathways
3. Gain understanding on the clinical application of techniques for medical/psychological conditions of panic and anxiety disorders, cardiovascular disease, insomnia, and adjunctive medical and psychological therapy.

4. Knowledge in clinical application of these techniques for positive psychotherapy wellness.

COURSE CITATIONS

Schwartz AR; Gerin W; Davidson KW; Pickering TG; Brosschot JF; Thayer JF; Christenfeld N; Linden W
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Neural and cardiovascular responses to emotional stress in humans. 
Am J Physiol Regul Integr Comp Physiol. 2008; 295(6):R1898-903 (ISSN: 0363-6119) 
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Trauma


Mood


Substance Use Disorders


Brain Effects


Other Physiologic Effects


QOL/Relationships


This program is designed to integrate the practice of mindful awareness with directed heartfulness to facilitate growth, healing, and change. It is based on Fred Luskin’s research at Stanford Medical School on the healing effects of forgiveness and heartfulness and Mark Abramson's work as the director of Stanford’s Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Program.

The workshop introduces the practical application of techniques of mindfulness and heartfulness to transform emotional states and unleash the great potential for deep healing of the body. The goal is to learn new ways of relating to experience that allow greater opening, understanding, and the possibility of transformation. "This work," writes the leader, "has shown that this creates an increasing experience of gentleness, kindness, and respect for oneself and others."

The program offers guided practice in mindfulness meditation, body movement, breathing practices, and heart opening, interspersed with lecture and interactive discussion. While the practices are especially helpful for people who are experiencing emotional or physical concerns, the universality of the experience makes this program valuable for all. It is especially useful for psychologists, nurses, and others in the healing professions in working with their patients and clients.
This course meets the qualifications for 10 hours of continuing education credit for: LMFTs, LCSWs, LPCCs, and/or LEPs as required by the California Board of Behavioral Sciences; RNs as required by the California BRN; Psychologists by the APA. Esalen is an approved provider of continuing education by the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, CA BRN and APA.

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