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Mindfulness for Medical Students Mini-Elective Spring 2017

Course Dates: February 1, 8, 15, 22, March 1, 8
Wednesdays, 6:00-7:30 PM

Maximum Students: 15

Class Year: MS1

Course Director: Lee K. Wolfson, M.Ed.

Lee K. Wolfson, M.Ed. is a licensed psychologist who provides psychological services to the medical students at the University of Pittsburgh Medical School. Previously a clinician at Western Psychiatric Clinic and Institute, he received training in Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction from Jon Kabat-Zinn in 2005 and has taught mindfulness meditation in a variety of settings.

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Registration: Betsy Nero, Office of Medical Education
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Description:

This mini-elective, modeled after the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, will give students immediate skills for stress reduction and set the foundation for life-long mindfulness and compassion. As described by founder John Kabat-Zinn, mindfulness is "paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally." Research has shown mindfulness meditation can lead to a reduction in CAD, hypertension, chronic pain, anxiety, headaches, depression, and provide improvements in overall quality of living. Among physicians, mindfulness programs have been shown to promote physician empathy, improve job performance, and help combat burnout and job-related stress. We are offering this introduction to mindfulness at the beginning of medical training in hopes of encouraging compassion for not only patients, but also the self.

This mini-elective consists of weekly 1.5 hour sessions for six weeks. Each session will include a formal 30-45 minute meditation practice, mindfulness exercises, and group discussion. A daily practice will be encouraged. Participants will develop personal skills and a knowledge base that can be shared with colleagues and patients who might benefit from this practice.

Objectives:

1. Participants will learn different types of mindfulness practices, and ways to incorporate mindfulness into everyday living.
2. Participants will become familiar with the literature and mechanisms supporting the effects of mindfulness practice.
3. Participants may experience decreased stress, leading to better problem management and healthier lives.
4. Participants may also experience increased compassion, better listening skills, better concentration, improved sleep, better ability to cope with pain, and improved relationships, just to name a few common 'side effects' of mindfulness.

Requirements:

1. Attend and participate in all sessions.
2. Complete a formal practice (5-30 minutes) five days/week, in addition to the weekly class session.
3. Complete at-home informal exercises. These are very short. Students will be asked to jot down a few observations each day or simply take a different approach to an everyday task.

Pre-Requisites:

An open mind and willingness to fully participate in the course.

COURSE OUTLINE

Mindfulness for Medical Students

Wednesdays, Feb 1, Feb 8, Feb 15, Feb 22, Mar 1, Mar 7

6:00-7:30 PM

Class location - TBD

Course Director(s): Lee Wolfson, M.Ed.

Participating Faculty: Lee Wolfson, M.Ed., Others TBD

Texts/Required Reading: Optional reading materials (articles, research papers) will be given out in class.

Session One –

Introduction and body scan. This meditation practice helps bring awareness to body sensation. Time during this session will also be spent introducing the course.

Session Two –

Mindful yoga. This light and accessible form of exercise will introduce participants to the practice of yoga and increase body awareness.

Session Three –

Sitting meditation. This type of meditation brings awareness to breath, body sensation, sounds, and thought.

Session Four –

Walking meditation. Mindful walking is a practice of being present in everyday actions.

Session Five –

Loving-kindness (“Meta”) meditation. Loving-kindness is practiced to increase compassion and non-judgmental acceptance of all people and beings, including oneself.

Session Six –

The course will end by circling back to the body scan as the formal practice for this session.

All sessions: All sessions will include shorter exercises, such as breathing exercises, mindful eating, or listening exercises. All sessions will also include group reflection of progress through the course, including discussion of formal practice and informal at-home exercises.