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Stress Reduction for Medical Students: A Research Elective Spring 2019

<u>Course Dates:</u>	January 9, 30, February 6, 13, 20, 27 Wednesdays, 6:00-7:30 PM
<u>Maximum Students:</u>	24
<u>Class Year:</u>	MS1 and MS2
<u>Course Directors:</u>	Robert B. Noll, PhD, Megan Voll, LPC (Bright IDEAS) Lee K. Wolfson, M.Ed. (Mindfulness)

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.

Robert B. Noll, PhD. is a licensed psychologist who has been involved with family centered care in pediatrics for 35 years. He is one of the developers of Bright IDEAS.

Megan Voll, LPC is a licensed professional counselor who has been providing Bright IDEAS for 10 years. Both Voll and Noll have been funded by the NIH to train professionals on how to use Bright IDEAS.

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Description:
This mini-elective will teach evidence-based skills for stress reduction and overall well-being improvement in the form of a **randomized clinical trial**. Students will be randomly assigned to receive training in either Bright IDEAS or Mindfulness, two behavioral approaches to manage stress. Each approach is supported by evidence showing improved mood and fewer symptoms of depression, and no evidence of harm.

Students will be randomly assigned to Bright IDEAS or Mindfulness after registering for the elective. This mini-elective consists of six 90 minute sessions. If assigned to Bright IDEAS, each session will focus on identifying problems/stressors and employing Bright IDEAS to create solutions to those problems. If assigned to Mindfulness, each 90 minute session will include a formal 30-45 minute meditation practice, mindfulness exercises, and group discussion.

Participants in both groups will be required to complete a set of 3 questionnaires at the start of, end of, and 3 months after the mini-elective. All participants will be taught skills that can be used throughout one's medical training and career to reduce stress and improve overall mood and well-being.

Objectives:

1. Decrease stress by teaching coping skills.

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Objectives continued:

2. 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 or Bright IDEAS.
3. Expose students to clinical research through hands-on learning.

Requirements:

Students must accept the randomization of this mini-elective and will not have the option of switching groups after assignment. Note that Mindfulness and Bright IDEAS are evidence-based approaches for managing stress.

1. Consent to participate in the clinical research
2. Attend and participate in all sessions (Bright IDEAS and Mindfulness)
3. Complete formal daily practice (5-30 minutes) in addition to the weekly class session (Mindfulness)
4. Complete short informal at-home exercises or online activities. Students will be asked to jot down a few observations each day or simply take a different approach to an everyday task. (Bright IDEAS and Mindfulness)
5. Complete a set of 3 questionnaires at the start of, end of, and 3 months after the mini-elective. Areas of questionnaires will include: mood, depression, problem-solving, and mindfulness.

Pre-Requisites:

An open mind and willingness to participate in the research.

Please read the following two pages for individual course outlines of Bright IDEAS and Mindfulness.

COURSE OUTLINE for Bright IDEAS

LOCATION: Scaife Hall, Rooms 512 & 513

Course Directors: Robert B. Noll and Megan Voll

Participating Faculty: Robert B. Noll and Megan Voll; others TBA

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

Session One – January 9, 2019

Introduction to Bright IDEAS: what is Bright IDEAS, and what evidence supports the intervention. Review worksheets and website.

Session Two – January 30, 2019

Split into two small groups and begin practicing Bright IDEAS using role plays. One or two volunteers share a problem/stressor with the rest of the group, and the group collaboratively addresses possible solutions to the problems. All participants will have the opportunity to identify their own challenges.

- Homework: Students will employ Bright IDEAS to work through their chosen problem over the week.

Session Three – February 6, 2019

First volunteers share their experiences from the past week – did the solution work? Group discussion and reflection. New volunteers share their problems/stressors with the group. Same format as the previous session.

Sessions Four and Five – February 13 and 20, 2019

Same format as Session Three. Continued practice with Bright IDEAS, identifying new stressors and developing new problem-solving plans.

Session Six – February 27, 2019

Large group conclusion: sharing thoughts on the experience with Bright IDEAS. Reflections on how Bright IDEAS worked, and how to make the class better.

Questionnaires will be sent electronically at the end of session #6.

Three months after the course ends, participants will be expected to re-take the research questionnaires. They will be sent electronically.

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COURSE OUTLINE for Mindfulness

LOCATION: Scaife Hall, 11th Floor Conference Center—Room 1102

Course Director: 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 – January 9, 2019

Introduction and body scan. This meditation practice helps bring awareness to body sensation.

Session Two – January 30, 2019

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

Session Three – February 6, 2019

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

Session Four – February 13, 2019

Qigong. This is an ancient mindfulness in motion practice for good health and healing.

Session Five – February 20, 2019

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

Session Six – February 27, 2019

The course will end with an experiential review of the mindfulness exercises introduced in the class.

All sessions – All sessions will also include group reflection of progress through the course, including discussion of formal practice and informal at-home exercises.

Questionnaires will be sent electronically at the end of session #6.

Three months after the course ends, participants will be expected to re-take the research questionnaires. They will be sent electronically.