

UPMC Center for Integrative Medicine

Dedicated to increasing knowledge about safe and effective complementary and integrative medicine approaches.

Mindfulness Meditation: Myths, Facts, and FAQs

The word “mindfulness” pops up often in news articles and TV spots. Also, we frequently see claims that meditation can help people with pain and stress. But, what does the term mindfulness mean? What is involved in learning to meditate? Our mindfulness meditation teacher, Dr. Carol Greco, answers frequently asked questions (FAQs):

What is mindfulness? Dr. John Kabat-Zinn, who developed the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program more than 30 years ago, says, “mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.” What this means on a practical level is, being aware, in this moment, of the physical sensations of our body, and acknowledging the thoughts and emotions that come and go, without judging them or ourselves, and without trying to get rid of or hold onto them.

What is involved in learning to meditate? Most types of meditation start with focusing your attention on something that is readily available, like your breath. In Mindfulness Meditation, taught as part of the MBSR program at the UPMC Center for Integrative Medicine, we typically start with a focus on breath and on awareness of physical sensations in the body. This helps to build concentration, helps us tap into the body’s wisdom, and also lets us know how easily our attention is distracted to the future, the past, or some story. When attention wanders, we simply notice this, and without blame or judgment, refocus the attention. As meditation practice continues, there is often a growing acceptance or acknowledgment of all of experience. Not only is there less “automatic pilot” reactivity to the day-to-day stresses of life, but there is often considerably more joy.

I’ve tried to meditate but it doesn’t work. I just can’t make my mind go blank. Thinking that we must suppress or ‘blank’ all thought is a meditation myth. And, although we all are drawn to meditation for a particular reason, thinking that it is supposed to work in a certain way may not be very helpful. The paradox of mindfulness meditation is: We are not trying to get somewhere. We are not fighting to make the mind go blank. We are simply paying attention and, as best we can, letting go of judgment. We may return our focus to the breath 100 times in two minutes, and that is OK. Another paradox: Over time, cultivating an attitude of openness to experience and openness to learning in new ways tends to foster mental and physical calmness.

See page 4 for information about upcoming Mindfulness Meditation classes.

Stress, Health, and Cardiac Coherence by Deborah Grice Conway, PhD

Everyone is familiar with stress. It is a feeling of being pressured to adapt or change in a given situation. All major life events, such as having a baby, buying a house, or visiting a dying loved one come packaged with inevitable stress. The body’s fundamental physiologic response, the fight or flight response, is a built-in mechanism that prepares the body to fight or flee when we

perceive threatening things in our environment. Our blood pressure rises, heart rate intensifies, respiration rate increases, muscles tense, pupils dilate, and we clench our jaws. Stressors are damaging when they are unpredictable, repeated, intense, and out of our control. Persistent stress results in an accumulation and overabundance of stress hormones. A variety of health problems can result, including bowel problems, headaches, hypertension, a weakened immune system, and insomnia. Mental health problems like depression and anxiety also are commonly diagnosed.

So do we need to manage our body’s stress reaction? Yes. Several reliable treatments are available. At the UPMC Center for Integrative Medicine we commonly use Cardiac Coherence Training. Cardiac

Coherence Training teaches patients to regulate their heart rate variability (HRV) using deep, rhythmic breathing techniques. Patients are connected via a finger sensor or ear clip to a monitor which measures HRV. Chaotic wave patterns are seen in people experiencing stress. Relaxed people produce more coherent patterns. By focusing on your breath you can literally change your body’s physiologic response to stress. Over time, the immune system is strengthened, and the body’s production of stress hormones is balanced. Patients report feeling calmer and empowered. The treatment is short term, and effective.

If you are interested in knowing more about Cardiac Coherence, please contact the UPMC Center for Integrative Medicine at 412-623-3023 or visit: www.upmc.com/Services/integrative-medicine.

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New to the Center — Stacy Simon, PhD

My name is Stacy Simon, and I am glad to introduce myself as a new staff member at the UPMC Center for Integrative Medicine. I am a licensed clinical psychologist and I provide outpatient psychotherapy. I also serve as the program director for an inpatient treatment program that cares for individuals with a history of trauma.

My approach is based on cognitive behavior therapy (CBT). CBT is helpful for treating many psychological problems. In short, CBT looks at the connections between our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. How we interpret a situation determines how we feel, and how we feel determines how we act. CBT primarily focuses on our present experiences and our current patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting. CBT allows me to build collaborative partnerships with my clients. During sessions, both my patient and I take an active role in the treatment.

Standard CBT seeks to change our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; however, sometimes altering how we think, feel, or act in a given situation is not possible, wise, or realistic. For this reason, I incorporate "third-wave" cognitive behavioral approaches. Third-wave CBT applies elements of eastern philosophy to teach us how to accept things we cannot change, how to be aware or mindful of our internal experiences, and how to live life in the present. The goal is to fully participate in living a life consistent with one's personal values, while facing the difficulties and losses that are an unavoidable part of human experience.

A well-known "third-wave" approach that I practice is Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). DBT was developed by a clinical psychologist, Marsha M. Linehan, who is both a behavior therapist and a student of Zen Buddhism. DBT incorporates elements of both Buddhism and behaviorism. DBT also focuses on dialectics, or the worldview that two seemingly opposite things can be equally valid and true. For example, we need to both accept things as they are in the moment, as well as endeavor to change them. At its heart, DBT is a treatment for the emotional people of the world, and it teaches a set of skills for managing intense emotions and responding more effectively to stressful situations.

To schedule an appointment with Dr. Simon, call 412-623-3023.



Taming Chronic Anger by James Donnelly, MA

Anger has many uses, but when the way we express our anger becomes a problem, it is time to make a change. **Here are some tips:**

Develop a motivation for control

We can begin with a pro and con list of the things we like and dislike about our anger. Be honest about the pros! We would not express anger unless it works for us on some level. Once we complete the pro list we begin to look at the price we pay for our anger in terms of our health, our families, our careers, and our intimate relations.

Stop feeding the anger

We feed our anger with our thoughts. We remind ourselves of how unfairly we have been treated and, thereby, justify our anger. To manage anger we have to interrupt this process. We begin by noticing how often our thoughts feed our anger. We then deliberately change our channel of thought by thinking of something positive.

Address your primary emotions

Anger is often a secondary emotion. We may feel fearful or hurt by the actions of others. Rather than staying fearful or hurt we become angry. In order to better manage our anger we need to address these underlying emotions. Talk Therapy, EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) and self-help support groups can all help us do this.

Manage your physical reactions

We can minimize our reaction to anger by exercising regularly, using proper nutrition, avoiding alcohol and drugs, and holding regular sleep patterns. These practices carry no guarantee, however. We may still find our bodies reacting with anger before we even know what we are reacting to. In this instance, finding ways to calm our bodies is critical. Mindfulness Meditation, Cardiac Coherence Training, Gestalt therapy, and similar body-focused therapies are helpful for this.

Develop a habit incompatible with anger

The best way to curtail an undesired habit is to strengthen an incompatible one. In the case of anger we may develop feelings of gratitude and compassion. We can do this with Cardiac Coherence, Meditation, or following the AA recommendations to pray for the welfare of those we hold resentments towards. Needless to say, taking the step towards a life unhindered by anger will be impossible unless we first strengthen our desire to let go of our anger. Once we have the desire then we can practice these steps and learn to control our anger.

Staff News

Congratulations to **Chelsea Diebold** and husband Casey on the birth of **Nola Evelyn** on May 26, 2011.

Special thanks to Center for Integrative Medicine summer work-study students **Diana Pak** and **John Hahalyak** — your help is greatly appreciated!

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Research Opportunities

The UPMC Center for Integrative Medicine is dedicated to increasing knowledge about the effectiveness and safety of complementary and integrative medicine approaches. Other integrative medicine modalities may not have been subjected to the same level of scientific inquiry as western medicine treatments. The Center for Integrative Medicine, in concert with the University of Pittsburgh, is actively pursuing research to support the benefits of these therapies.

CURRENTLY RECRUITING:

- UPMC Center for Integrative Medicine Research Registry
- Low back pain research
- Heart Rate Variability for Clinic Patients
- The “Feel My Best” study for individuals with lupus
- Acupuncture for insomnia

COMING SOON:

- Healing Context Study – Help us design questionnaires to measure patients’ experiences with traditional and integrative medicine.

The “Feel My Best” study tests two forms of counseling for reducing depressive symptoms in Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE).

Do you know someone who has lupus?

If so, then you are probably aware that lupus is an unpredictable autoimmune disease that can be quite painful and energy draining.

But, did you know that people with lupus may also suffer from depression? Symptoms of depression, such as persistent sadness, reduced enjoyment of activities, and problems with sleep and appetite are more common in people with lupus than in people with similar diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis. (Sundquist et al., Arch Int Med. 2008;65(5):501-7.)

Although mind-body skills such as relaxation training and mindfulness meditation may be effective for reducing depressive symptoms and pain in people who don’t have chronic illnesses, it is not clear whether people with lupus could benefit from such skills.

Researchers at the UPMC Center for Integrative Medicine have received a grant from the National Institutes of Health to determine whether mind-body skills training and supportive counseling can reduce depressive symptoms and improve quality of life in people who have lupus and have depressive symptoms.

Who can participate in this study?

People who have a diagnosis of systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) may be able to participate in the **Feel My Best** study if they:

- have symptoms of depression.
- are 18 years old or older.
- have not had changes to their medications for at least one month.
- are able to attend eight counseling sessions and four evaluations.

Participants in the study receive either mind-body skills training or supportive counseling at no charge, and also receive medical evaluations by a rheumatologist who specializes in lupus. Parking costs are covered.

For more information about the SLE “Feel My Best” study, please call 412-623-2374.

Have you tried everything for your insomnia?

Would you be willing to try acupuncture?

Who can participate?

You may be eligible to participate if you:

- are between 18 and 60.
- are currently experiencing insomnia.
- are English speaking.

What is involved?

Participants will receive:

- acupuncture.
- compensation for parking and time.

For more information, please call **412-623-2374.**

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2011 Lectures and Classes at the UPMC Center for Integrative Medicine

UPMC Employees receive 75 Take a Healthy Step points for attending. All lectures and classes at CIM.

July

Mon. 7/11 – 8/29	3:15 – 4:45 p.m.	Yoga — Level II (8 sessions)	\$100	Alicja Walczak, MS, CRS
Mon. 7/11 – 8/29	6 – 7:30 p.m.	Yoga — Level I (8 sessions)	\$100	Alicja Walczak, MS, CRS
Wed. 7/13 – 8/31	5:30 – 7 p.m.	Yoga — Level I (8 sessions)	\$100	Alicja Walczak, MS, CRS
Thurs. 7/21	5:30 – 6:30 p.m.	Massage for a Healthier You — from Immunity Boosting to Living with Cancer	FREE	Jessie Larson, NCTMB

August

Tues. 8/16	5:30 p.m.	Tai Chi and QiGong Orientation and Preregistration	FREE	Joseph Bozzelli, MMQ
Tues. 8/16 and 8/30	6 – 8 p.m.	2 Part QiGong Workshop	\$100	Joseph Bozzelli, MMQ
Thurs. 8/18	5:30 – 6:30 p.m.	Tai Chi Chuan: The Benefits of a Daily Practice	FREE	Joseph Bozzelli, MMQ
Tues. 8/23	7 – 8 p.m.	Mindfulness Meditation Class Orientation	FREE	Carol Greco, PhD
Thurs. 8/25	5:30 – 7:30 p.m.	Diet and Diabetes: Recipes for Success	\$20	Janet McKee, HHC, AADP
Tues. 8/30 – 10/18	6:30 - 8:30 p.m.	Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (8 sessions)	\$300	Carol Greco, PhD
Tues. 8/30 – 11/01	6 – 7 p.m.	Tai Chi and QiGong (10 sessions)	\$100	Joseph Bozzelli, MMQ

September

Thurs. 9/1 – 9/22	5:30 – 7:30 p.m.	Food For Life: Nutrition and Cooking (4 sessions)	\$80	Janet McKee, HHC, AADP
Thurs. 9/1 – 11/3	7 – 8 a.m.	Tai Chi and QiGong (10 sessions)	\$100	Joseph Bozzelli, MMQ
Thurs. 9/15	5:30 – 6:30 p.m.	Fascial Fitness	FREE	David Lesondak, CSI

UPMC Center for Integrative Medicine Team

Neal Ryan, MD, *Director* Ronald Glick, MD, *Medical Director*

Practitioners

Joseph Bozzelli, MMQ
Tai Chi, Qi'Gong Teacher

Sari Cohen, ND
Naturopathic Counselor

James Donnelly, MA
Psychotherapist

Carol Greco, PhD
*Assistant Professor of Psychiatry,
Meditation Instructor*

Deborah Grice Conway, PhD
Psychotherapist

John Laird, ND
Naturopath/Nutritionist

Jessie V. Larson, NCTMB
Massage Therapist

David Lesondak, BCSI
Structural Integrator

Lisa Levinson, AmSat
Alexander Technique Instructor

Dan Miller, DC
Chiropractor

Sharon Plank, MD
Integrative Medicine Physician

Michael Schneider, PhD, DC
Asst. Prof. of Health & Rehab Science

Erin Simon, CMT, LLC
Massage Therapist

Stacy L. Simon, PhD
Psychotherapist

Tricia Smith, LAc, MAC
Acupuncturist

K.K. Teh, LAc, MAC
Acupuncturist

Stephanie Ulmer
Shiatsu Therapist

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Biofeedback, Yoga Instructor

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Linda O'Toole
Office Assistant

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Christine McFarland
Research Coordinator

Chelsea Diebold
Research Associate

Adam White
Research Associate

The Center for Integrative Medicine at UPMC Shadyside is a hospital-based center in Pittsburgh that combines natural healing practices with conventional medicine. "Integrative medicine" refers to the incorporation of evidence-based complementary therapies into conventional treatments for patients. Integrative medicine is meant to work in conjunction with traditional medicine, providing a more holistic approach to healing — mind, body, and spirit.