


**Stress Management
101**

Susie Hopkins


1



- The stress response
- Managing stress - the evidence
- The science of mindfulness
- A brief mindfulness practice on the breath
- Reflection

2


The Stress Response



- Physiological process
- Primes us to fight or flee
- Cortisol is a “stress hormone” that is released that causes wear and tear on the body if there’s too much in our system over long periods
- Breathing is quicker and more shallow
- Blood vessels constrict


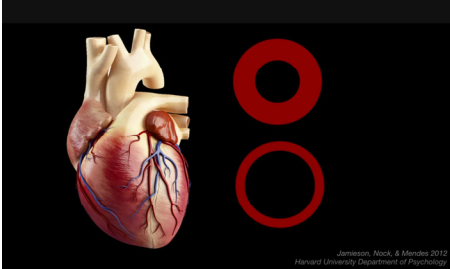
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Stress cont.



- Too much stress too much of the time can cause serious health problems - if left unchecked
- Also leads to poor mental functioning and it can lead to depression


4



Jameson, Nock, & Mendler 2012
Harvard University Department of Psychology


5

What works?



- Exercise
- Sleep. Prioritise 7 – 9 hours a night
- Breathing exercises, and other relaxation techniques
- Mindfulness, yoga, Tai Chi
- Nature
- Human connection
- Hobbies
- Mindfully use technology

6

What is mindfulness? 

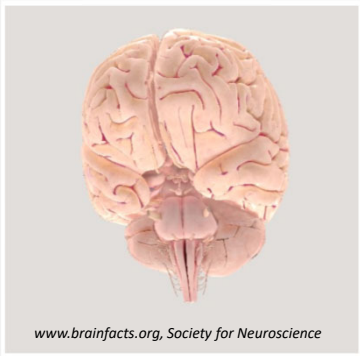
Definition:


Mindfulness is the awareness that arises by paying attention on purpose in the present moment and non-judgmentally.

Jon Kabat-Zinn

Practice: Counting your breaths

7






www.brainfacts.org, Society for Neuroscience

8





Amygdala


The amygdala is a small, almond-shaped part of the brain that works with your hippocampus to create long-term memories of specific, and often emotional, events (this is called episodic memory). It is particularly known for linking fear, aggression, and anxiety to knowledge of people or places. Damage to the amygdala reduces aggression, but also makes it difficult for people to avoid painful or threatening situations. The amygdala creates these associations by changing the strength of connections between neurons, a process known as long-term potentiation. By hardwiring memories of emotional events, the amygdala ensures threats can be recognized and avoided in the future.

[Learn more about the amygdala.](#)

9

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Prefrontal Cortex

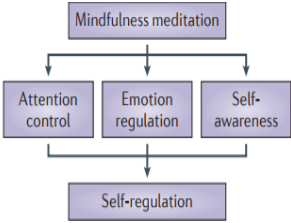


The prefrontal cortex grants us executive function, or the ability to make complex and socially mindful decisions. The prefrontal cortex must filter out unimportant sensations, focus our attention on the task at hand, and contextualize our decisions with memories of the past and predictions about how our behavior will influence the future. Behaviors and personality traits unique to humans often depend on the prefrontal cortex.

10

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The neuroscience



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graph TD; A[Mindfulness meditation] --> B[Attention control]; A --> C[Emotion regulation]; A --> D[Self-awareness]; B --> E[Self-regulation]; C --> E; D --> E;
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The Neuroscience of Mindfulness, Nature Reviews Neuroscience, 2015

11

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At the practice level

- Architects Mental Wellbeing Toolkit
- EAP
- Stress management, mindfulness, yoga
- Mental Health First Aid
- A healthy workplace culture where wellbeing (not workaholism) is promoted
- Training to reduce stigma and discussing mental wellbeing openly

12



Thank you!

For more info go to
www.lilowellness.com.au
