

INTRODUCTION TO MINDFUL MEDICINE CURRICULUM 2020-21

Slide 1: Let's start off with some definitions:

What is mindfulness? Mindfulness is often associated with and is indeed often attained through meditation. So right now you may be conjuring up a figure seated in a lotus position, trying to breathe and focus their minds. You may even be that person.

But in our usage the concept of mindfulness is much broader. Basically,

- ▶ **Complete focus on the activity or event occurring at that moment**
 - ▶ **Paying attention in the present moment without judgment(Kabat-Zinn)**
 - ▶ **With an attitude of compassion (S. Shapiro)**
- ▶ **Research indicates mindfulness reduces physical/emotional suffering**

Slide 2: So what is mindful medicine? By this we simply mean

- ▶ **Applying principles of mindfulness to clinical practice**
- ▶ **Goal is not to make you meditators, but to encourage attitudes of groundedness, presence, centeredness, compassion**
- ▶ **You may not have figured it out yet, but there's a lot in being a medical student – and a physician – that is stressful, overwhelming – and that works against these qualities. Mindful medicine is learning how to keep your emotional balance even in unsettling and stressful circumstances.**

Slide 3: For doctors, and for medical students, learning to be mindful can help

Reduce burn-out
Better listeners
More attentive
Calmer, more centered, grounded, present
Kinder, more compassionate, more empathic
Increase coping skills and resiliency

Slide 4: For patients, having a mindful physician

More confidence and trust
Better care
Reduced pain, psychological distress

Slide 5: Basically, our model suggests that practicing mindful medicine has benefits for both physicians and their patients

Slide 6: To give you a preview of things to come, the Mindful Medicine thread looks like this – 4 sessions

- ▶ **Session 1: Introduction to Mindful Medicine** which will present you with an overview of the topic; and a perspective from a physician-patient
- ▶ **Session 2: Mindful interviewing** – often learners feel there is a contradiction between being efficient in the medical interview and being empathic and compassionate. Dr. Cindy Haq will demonstrate how a mindful focus can successfully combine these two goals.
- ▶ **Session 3: Mindfulness and meditation** – although mindful medicine does not require knowing how to meditate, we believe this can be a useful skill; and this session will expose you to several mindfulness practices. Dr. Nicole Wakim, an anesthesiologist and wellness specialist, will lead this session.
- ▶ **Session 4: Mindful theater exercises** – as I've implied, there are many ways to cultivate mindfulness, and verbal and nonverbal theater exercises have been developed to create just this state of attentiveness and focus. Dr. Eli Simon, a professor of drama, will help us explore how to use our bodies and words with more intention and care.

Slide 7: In Year 2, the Mindful Medicine thread will tackle specific challenging clinical issues from a mindful perspective to help you see how you can respond in these situations with competence, grace, and compassion

- ▶ **Session 1: Difficult clinical encounters, such as angry, skeptical patients, or patients with mental health issues**
- ▶ **Session 2: Breaking bad news** – as experienced physicians will tell you, this should never become easy, but there are ways of approaching bad news that are both clear and kind.
- ▶ **Session 3: Pediatric death and dying** – the death of a child is something almost too painful to even contemplate, but our own emotional distress can often complicate these already heartbreaking situations

I'd like to conclude with a brief poem by Donna Faulds that enjoins us to Walk Slowly. I hope you can carry its spirit with you as you proceed through the demands and challenges of first year.

**It only takes a reminder to breathe,
a moment to be still, and just like that,
something in me settles, softens, makes
space for imperfection. The harsh voice
of judgment drops to a whisper and I
remember again that life isn't a relay
race; that we will all cross the finish
line; that waking up to life is what we
were born for. As many times as I
forget, catch myself charging forward
without even knowing where I'm going,
that many times I can make the choice
to stop, to breathe, and be, and walk
slowly into the mystery.**

