Meditation, Mindfulness, and Prevention of Burnout

- Jay Moreland, M.D.
- AUCH Online Teaching
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Dr. Jay's Peaceful Meditation

Dr. Jay

Meditation & mindfulness from a non-religious, non-sectarian perspective. Dr. Jay has been practicing Dzogchen & Vajrayana Buddhism for over 25 years. He teaches in a secular style intended for those of all beliefs and backgrounds. His goal is to...
Objectives:
By the end of the talk you will be able to...

- Identify Burnout and its causes
- Know the benefits of meditation and mindfulness
- Know some of the science behind these topics
- Know how to do basic meditation and mindfulness practices
The Two Main Burnout Characteristics are:

1) Emotional Exhaustion
2) Depersonalization

.....translate: Decreased Compassion

- Interventions to prevent and reduce physician burnout: a systematic review and meta-analysis. Lancet. 2016 Nov 5;388(10057):2272-2281
Burnout is an epidemic

- All physicians are at significant risk
- Its prevalence now exceeds 50%
- 2016 study showed symptoms in hospice MDs=62%
- Physicians are at more risk than others
- PAs & NPs are less studied but similarly high. Other medical staff less studied

Burnout is Everywhere

- All Jobs
- All Ages
- Front desk
- MA
- Billing Office

[Image of a cartoon with a character saying, "I will be so efficient today!" and another character saying, "No you won't." The other character is labeled as "TERRIBLE EMR." ]
Provider Burnout Results In:

- Lower patient satisfaction and care quality
- Higher medical error rates and malpractice risk
- Higher provider and staff turnover
- Increased alcohol and drug abuse and addiction
- Increased risk for suicide

Preventers of Burnout

- Positive work attitudes
- Quality and safety culture
- Meditation and Mindfulness

Causes of Burnout?

- NEGATIVE work attitudes
- LACK of Quality and Safety culture
- NEGATIVE Meditation
- and LACK of Mindfulness

What is Meditation?
Simple View of Meditation

- If you think a thought more than once, you are meditating.
Two Basic Classes of Meditation...

- Negative & Harmful Thoughts Repeated
- Positive & Beneficial Thoughts Repeated
Two Basic Consequences of Meditation....

- Negative & Harmful Thoughts Repeated
- Burnout and Poor Outcomes

- Positive & Beneficial Thoughts Repeated
- Longevity and Good Outcomes
There are two wolves and they are always fighting. One is darkness and despair, the other light and hope. Which one wins?

The one you feed.

-Cherokee Legend
“Meditation” From Here On

- From now and going forward, any time I use the word “meditation” I mean the positive one!
- Because that is what we recommend you practice....
- The other one, you are too good at anyway!
Learning & The Classroom

• The least of the work of learning is done in the classroom.

• **Thomas Merton**

• With that being said…..let’s practice!
Meditation #1: Using The Breath
Begin With Proper Motivation:

- Altruistic intention: “By this practice, may I be a better human being and more able to help others...”
Traditional 7-Point Posture:

- 1-Legs crossed
- 2-Hands in the lap or on the knees
- 3-Back (spine straight)
- 4-Shoulders spread like a vulture’s wings
- 5-Head and Neck (chin slightly lowered)
- 6-Mouth (tip of tongue touches palate)
- 7-Eyes (gazing past the tip of the nose)
End With Proper Dedication:

- Altruistic Dedication: “Through this practice, may I be a better person and more able to help others…”
What Is Mindfulness?
Meta-Awareness

- The ability to observe your thoughts, feelings, sensations, and impulses as they are happening.
- Meditation teaches you how to have better meta-awareness.
What Is Mindfulness?

Your body is present.  Is your mind?

Past  Present  Future
Meditation > Meta-awareness > Mindfulness

- Meditation teaches you meta-awareness
- When you notice your thoughts and feelings in your present moment and let them go, you are now mindfully in the present
- Otherwise, thoughts can lead you around to places other than the present
If you are depressed, you are living in the past.
If you are anxious, you are living in the future.
If you are at peace, you are living in the present.

- Lao Tzu
Meditation #2:
Mindfulness Meditation
Begin With Proper Motivation:

- Altruistic intention: “By this practice, may I be a better human being and more able to help others…”
Traditional 7-Point Posture:

• 1-Legs crossed
• 2-Hands in the lap or on the knees
• 3-Back (spine straight)
• 4-Shoulders spread like a vulture’s wings
• 5-Head and Neck (chin slightly lowered)
• 6-Mouth (tip of tongue touches palate)
• 7-Eyes (gazing past the tip of the nose)
Mindfulness Meditation

- Paying attention to... the present moment
End With Proper Dedication:

- Altruistic Dedication: “Through this practice, may I be a better person and more able to help others…”
Science of Meditation and Mindfulness...
Increasing Literature on the Science

Why this trend?......

Scientifically Known Effects of Meditation On The Brain
Meditation and Brain Function

- Prefrontal cortex of meditators is more active on PET scan

- Meditation and Yoga can Modulate Brain Mechanisms that affect Behavior and Anxiety-A Modern Scientific Perspective
- Divya Krishnakumar, Michael R Hamblin, & Shanmugamurthy Lakshmanan
Prefrontal Cortex’s Job: “Executive function” or “The Decider”

- Differentiate among conflicting thoughts
- Good and bad, better and best, same and different,
- Future consequences of current activities
- Working toward a defined goal
- Prediction of outcomes, expectation based on actions
- Social "control"
Prefrontal Cortex Is In Charge

Prefrontal Cortex Is The Decider

- Parietal Lobe: Episodic Buffer (perceptual processing)
- Occipital Lobe: Visuo-spatial Sketch-pad
- Broca's Area
- Wernicke's Area: Phonological Loop
- ACC: Attention Controller
- Prefrontal Cortex: Central Executive
• Meditation Boosts Melatonin, Serotonin, GABA, DHEA, Endorphins, Growth Hormone, & More
• Decreases Cortisol
Evidence That Meditation and Mindfulness Helps:

- Happiness
- Less burn out
- More gray matter
- Less distraction
- Better job satisfaction

Mindfulness Practice is Effective in Health Professionals:

- Increases:
  - Mood
  - Self-efficacy
  - Empathy

- Decreases:
  - Stress,
  - Anxiety,
  - Depression

Why Does It Work?

- If you focus better on the task at hand you do a better job (less malpractice)
- If you focus on patient needs, they will be better served (decrease mistakes)
- If you focus with compassion on your patient, they will have better health
- As Lao Tzu said: you will find peace in the present moment
My Own Experiential Proof

- I have the same difficulties as you do
- “Too much work and not enough time”
- Too many patients
- Late hours, long hours, on call exhaustion
- EMR a constant drag on my mind
- Many situations that are not handled well by others or “the system.”
Result of meditation for me

- As a result of meditating for more than 25 years
- The stressors have changed,
  (But remain the same in many ways)
  My outlook HAS changed
- I feel that as the years go by, my happiness increases as a result of my practice
Other Meditations

- Counting Sheep
- Body Scan
- Mantra...repeat words or phrases
- Transcendental (Silent, secret mantra)
- Visualization
- Prayer
- Walking
- Repeating any thought more than 1x
Default Mode Network
The Brain Areas That Activate at Rest

• Neurological basis for the self
• Autobiographical information & Self-reference: Referring to traits of one's self
• Theory of Mind: Thinking about the thoughts & Emotions of others
• Moral reasoning: Good-bad judgments
• Remembering thinking about past & future:
• Story comprehension

Default mode network

fMRI scan showing regions of the default mode network
Mantra & Default Mode Network (DMN)

- Mantra can free your mind of background chatter (DMN) and calm your nervous system
- Mantra meditation seems to decrease an overactive default mode network (DMN)
- An overactive DMN means that the brain is distracted—not calmed or centered

Mantra & Default Mode Network (DMN)

• Dr. Gary Weber calls this chatter “the Blah Blah”
• It is generally unpleasant…suffering
  • UVU Undergraduates 15 minutes
  • People would rather shock themselves
• Experienced meditators can free the mind of background chatter (DMN)

What Mantra?

- Research suggests that it doesn’t matter whether you recite an ancient Sanskrit mantra such as Sat nam, or the Lord’s Prayer, or any sound, word, or phrase.
- As long as you repeat something with focused attention, you’ll get results.
Dr. Jay Suggests:

- Pick a Mantra that is meaningful to you
- Your mantra can change from day to day
- Remember, meditation is repeating a thought more than once, so......
- Pick a good mantra....
  - Positive Mantras beget Positive Thoughts
Meditation #3: With Mantra
Begin With Proper Motivation:

- Altruistic intention: “By this practice, may I be a better human being and more able to help others…”
Suggested Mantra: “Love”
End With Proper Dedication:

- Altruistic Dedication: “Through this practice, may I be a better person and more able to help others…”
Compassion In Healthcare
The Problem:
(Recent study from Harvard)

• Nearly half of Americans believe that the U.S. health care system and health care providers are not compassionate

• 75% of patients and doctors in the study also said that it matters so much that it could actually make the difference between life and death.

• Lown, B.A., J. Rosen, and J. Marttila. “An Agenda for Improving Compassionate Care: A Survey Shows About Half of Patients Say Such Care is Missing.” Health Affairs 30, no. 9 (September, 2011): 1772-8
• “Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive.”
• H.H. Dalai Lama
Definition of Compassion for the book

“...defined as the emotional response to another’s pain or suffering, involving an authentic desire to help.”
Dr. Jay's Definition of Compassion
The desire to eliminate suffering
Five Areas Of Affect From Compassion

- Physiological Effects
- Psychological Effects
- Enhanced Patient Self-care
- Increased Quality of Care
- Decreased Costs of Care
Physiological Effects of Compassion And Of Meditation and Mindfulness
Sympathetic Nervous System

- Negative Emotions like Stress and Loneliness….
- Cause increase in sympathetic nervous system and adrenaline
- Increases Cortisol, the stress hormone
Parasympathetic Nervous System

- Down-regulates adrenaline
- Decreases Cortisol
- Increases Oxytocin
- Lowers Blood Pressure and Pulse
- Promotes immune responses against disease and infection
Heart Rate Variability: Sign of Parasympathetic Activity

- Compassion in the doctor visit increased evidence of Parasympathetic system activity
Compassionate Doctors, Positive Emotions and Caregivers Cause:

- Increased Parasympathetic Nervous System
- Increased Oxytocin (the hormone of trust, bonding, and love)
Examples of Compassionate Provider Benefits:

- Trauma: 4x odds ratio for better outcome
- Improves Quality of Life in Palliative Care
- Reduces Perception of Pain
- 80% higher chance of blood sugar control in diabetes
- 41% lower risk of serious diabetes complications
- Wounds heal faster
- 1 day decrease in Cold duration. 15% Decrease in Symptoms
Meditation #4: Compassion and using visualization
Begin With Proper Motivation:

- Altruistic intention: “By this practice, may I be a better human being and more able to help others...”
Meditation on Compassion for Self and All Beings
End With Proper Dedication:

• Altruistic Dedication: “Through this practice, may I be a better person and more able to help others…”
Meditation At Work
try 10 very mindful minutes

• You can invent your own meditation
• Pick a mantra...something positive
  • Example: Compassion, Kindness, Love
• Pick a concept...purification

• Pay attention to thoughts and turn the thoughts back again and again to the chosen meditation
Mindfulness at Work

• Interruptions should be managed
  • Use labs and little things to fill if you step out from a patient room.
  • Don’t go to another complex patient in the middle of a complex patient (will forget)
• “One move to the ball”
• Chart As you go and finish it now!
• Be intentional
  • Plan ahead, plan for what you can
Meditation #5: With Hand Washing: Invent your own mantra and visualization if you wish!
The Two Main Burnout Characteristics are:

1) Emotional Exhaustion
2) Depersonalization

.....translate: Decreased Compassion


Creating A Mindful And Meditative Life

• You are meditating (positive and negative) anyway
• Choose to meditate on positive things
• If you repeat, you will get better at it
• Be mindful
• Be more “enlightened”
• Be more compassionate
• Be Happy
Volunteer Medical Mission to Dzogchen Village in Kham, Tibet

https://onewithoutreach.us
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