



Bc Post Secondary Counsellors association

WINTER 2010 NEWSLETTER



MINDFULNESS

Produced by VIU counselling department



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BCIT

As I write this, the Olympic Torch is due to run by BCIT and there is an air of anticipation as the Institute cancels classes for the Olympic period for the next 2 weeks. The Burnaby campus will become a Park-and-Ride for the Whistler and Cypress venues and staff from the Olympics are already patrolling the student parking lots, day and night. Our Counselling office will, however, continue to provide coverage for our students each day while some of us plan to take vacation, work on projects, etc. for this time.

We have had a busy past few months, compounded by the fact that one of our colleagues, Curt Shelton, had a heart attack and was off for the month of December. We are all thankful that he is doing well, is back at work, and up to full speed.

The Counsellors are very relieved to survive this round of budget cuts at BCIT, though we will lose some of the revenue we had been saving for a rainy day.

We have also been working on a number of projects including the development of an Outcomes Survey, Satisfaction Survey, and a brief Needs Assessment. We look forward to linking with our colleagues on campus and around the province for the Eating Disorders Teleconference in March, and Heather looks forward to the PSCA Conference in May at Harrison.

As far as the newsletter mindfulness theme is concerned, several of us put a few thoughts on paper:

Judy Bushnell's Reflections on Mindfulness

What is mindfulness to you?

Mindfulness is being aware of the many blessings that surround me in the midst of the challenges and difficulties I face in daily life.

What PD opportunities have you attended/will be attending with mindfulness as a theme?

Last year, I registered for a course on "Mindfulness-based Counselling" taught by Jennifer Rodrigues at the Justice Institute of BC. When the much anticipated day arrived, I discovered that the workshop had taken place the previous week. This mistake was, in the truest sense, a wake-up call, reminding me to pay attention to the present moment, rather than focusing on the future. I learned an important lesson about mindfulness by missing the workshop!

What books have you/are you going to read on the topic?

I became interested in Japanese Psychology, Naikan, and Morita Therapy when I discovered these useful ideas and approaches as a graduate student at UBC. I currently subscribe to “Thirty Thousand Days: A Journal for Purposeful Living” which is published quarterly, arriving in my mailbox as the seasons change. I am also learning more about Acceptance & Commitment Therapy by reading several ACT books written by Steven Hayes, and by Georg Eifert and John Forsyth, including “Get Out of Your Mind & Into Your Life” and “Acceptance & Commitment Therapy for Anxiety Disorders.

How do you practice mindfulness with your students?

I remind students (and myself!) not to believe everything we think.

How do you keep “mindful”?

I actively seek ways to cultivate gratitude. Being mindful of what I have received requires me to shift my focus, be thankful, and to express appreciation for things I might have taken for granted.

**Ray deVries' Reflections on Mindfulness**

The following poem by Portia Nelson is a reminder to me of the importance of mindfulness (being mindful): the awareness of one's self that with practice supports analysis and wisdom. I share this poem regularly with my clients.



Autobiography in Five Short Chapters by Portia Nelson

Chapter 1

I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lost I am helpless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.

Chapter 2

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I am in the same place.
But it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

Chapter 3

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I still fall in ... it's a habit... but,
my eyes are open.
I know where I am.
It is my fault.
I get out immediately.

Chapter 4

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

Chapter 5

I walk down another street.



Heather Hyde's Reflections on Mindfulness:

If you are in Vancouver, in the Kitsilano area, and looking for a gentle and mindful way to wrap up some of your weeks, Heather has discovered an opportunity to do the guided Osho Active Meditation we did at the conference in White Rock (remember: shake, dance, stand/sit, lie down with accompanying music/silence) from 7:30-8:30 on selected Friday nights through the Just Dance group in Vancouver. For more information check out the schedule at: <http://www.justdance.ca/>

She also found good directions for a self- directed version of the Osho meditation at <http://www.osho.com/Main.cfm?Area=Meditation&Language=English>

Also, Heather recently signed up for Stilling the Mind: The Use of Mindfulness in Therapy workshop which is offered by the Hakomi Institute in March and promises to be interesting. Finally, Heather has found some inspiration in the following poem:

The Summer Day by Mary Oliver

*Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean-
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down-
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?*

So-for now, that's some of the latest from BCIT Counselling and Student Development. Wishing you all a great Spring (which feels like it's already here). Heather Hyde with notes from Judy Bushnell and Ray deVries on behalf of BCIT Counselling and Student Development.



CAMOSUN COLLEGE

From Linda Daley:

I like and try to apply the definition of mindfulness that Jon Kabat- Zinn shares:

***Mindfulness means paying attention in a purposeful way:
in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.***

With life being so fast and complex I find that it is so easy to be distracted and distanced from “being in the moment” throughout the day.

I use a very simple strategy that I learned while taking a Buddhist meditation course that has helped me to practice being in the present moment. It involves selecting a cue or common concrete element in the environment that can be used as the reminder/trigger to be in the moment. What I use is any threshold – doorway, gate or opening. So when I go through or look at a threshold – I am reminded to be in the “here and now” and to check in with myself and my surroundings. The threshold works for me because, as you all know, we go through many every day – e.g. Walk in and out of our offices, look out of windows, and stand at the openings of the offices’ of others’.

Recently, many members of our Student Services working group have begun participating in a walking for physical activity program. Wearing a pedometer is included to monitor the number of steps we are taking every day as well as having a buddy to walk with, be supportive to and with etc. For me – the “buddy” and the pedometer serve as wonderful reminders to be mindful.

Now – working on being non-judgmental (esp. of me) is another story and my work in progress. My walking buddy is VERY helpful with that as is my daughter’s constant support and that of my colleagues’ and their role modeling too.

Chris Balmer finds mindfulness in a variety of ways: working with stone, concrete and wood; watching his dog do his wake up ritual and walking his dog. Chris also finds that when he is “Up in the Air” he does his most creative thinking and writing. The book that has most recently inspired his mindfulness is “The Leader’s Way” by the Dalai Lama.

Laura Paetkau feels that yoga, swimming, hiking, cooking and baking activities help her to stay in the now. In addition, her work with clients keeps her in the present moment.

Iris Thomson-Glen enjoys her daily pre- work walk with her fox terrier and uses that time to be aware of the natural environment, the changing of the seasons, and the great gift of living in this part of the world. Her weekly game of Golf, Yoga and Ballet classes remind her to be in the present mentally and physically. A newsletter that she receives on a weekly basis, “Pause –The Voice of Sanity in a Speed Crazy World” (pause@patkatz.com) is a good reminder to take a pause and reflect on what is important. Her work with students has always been a great teacher in mindfulness as well as honoring what is present for herself and her students in the counseling process.

Brian Herron works to detach from thoughts that distract him from being in the present. He tries to focus on slow breathing, from the core. Mild, moderate or challenging activities in the outdoors, preferably wilderness help him to be mindful. His own experiences in the outdoors teach him how to be mindful.

Nancy Willihnganz makes a practice of writing things down and identifying goals and priorities on a daily basis. She sets herself up with a scheduled Pilate’s class so she won’t find a way out of exercising. She appreciates the emails that come with inspirational words that remind her of what really matters in life.

The Counselling Resource Centre at Camosun College has a four CD set called “Guided Mindfulness Meditation” by Jon Kabat-Zinn and the book/CD set, “The Mindful Way through Depression-Freeing yourself from chronic unhappiness” by Mark Williams, John Teasdale, Zindel Segal and Jon Kabat-Zinn.

The Sanskrit word for mindfulness (smriti) literally means “that which is remembered.” As I will be retiring this June, I just want to say a big thank you to all my former CICA and current PSCA colleagues. I will remember you for all the fun and learning times we have shared.

Cheers and all the very best!

Iris Thomson-Glen





CAPILANO UNIVERSITY

We hope the pre-Olympic season finds you well and excited – GO CANADA GO!!! Certainly athletics does remind me of a form of dedicated mindfulness, to the degree of being present in the moment.

When we discussed this topic, the first thing we've all noted is how very busy we all are, particularly at work and for many, at home as well. We noted how difficult it is to enact this or even take the time to say "Hello!" to ourselves ie. we're mindful that our stress is getting in the way of being mindful! There's something around the old adage "physician heal thyself" in this...

One of the best workshops I have attended this year was with James Hollis, a world-renowned Jungian analyst who teaches at the Jung centre in Houston and has a private practice. The title of his workshop and book is "What Matters Most: Living a More Considered Life". Wonderful! He talks about leading a more conscious life by bringing more considered reflectivity to our daily lives. In my (albeit small) understanding of mindfulness, this sounds quite similar. He relays that "self" is a process, a metaphor, that it "is selving" and can't be seen on an MRI., rather it is a transcendent mystery that is unknowable directly and yet may be revealed in the process of dialogue between the conscious and unconscious. He also talks about what many of us may remember as "The seven year itch" of Marilyn Monroe fame, basically that we have a drive to shake things up every seven years or so and that this is healthy, although uncomfortable! A final teaser which I hope will engage your curiosity was his matter of fact statement about how humans are either psychotic or neurotic, so choose neurosis as at least it's developmental! Most profound and amusing for me, especially the reminders that life is most meaningful in the face of mortality and how genuine spirituality is a journey, not an arrival.

Two other of my classic favorites pertaining to mindfulness are "Being Peace" by Thich Nhat Hanh

And Czikszentmihaly's work on flow. It's interesting to me that this topic has been previously explored by many cultures in history; somewhat a rose is still a rose by any other name?

With students, I often ask them to note that feelings typically present themselves in the body before the mind starts to interpret them. This body awareness can give very useful signals as to how things are going in life (like my "clenchy tum" that tells me I'm stressed).

For activities to promote mindfulness, I like to remind myself of the big picture, even universe-sized! Whew! Perspective! Hiking in the forest also helps with this. I also appreciate what

abundance I have, particularly in relation to much of the world. Something I'm practicing is saying hello to my ego and laughing at it, silly woman!

Susan also noted how busy and lacking in her typical mindfulness she is. It wasn't until after a recent long hike with her son and his world-chewing puppy when she said in shock, "I'm relaxed!" which underlined her stress by contrast. She also reminded me to tell you that Capilano now has a prayer and meditation space (a booked room), which is a wonderful step that our Diversity and Equity Committee has been lobbying for some time.

May we say something potentially counter-mindful? Sue and Maggie and I recently attended Reid Wilson's "Don't Panic! Brief Strategic Treatment of Anxiety Disorders" workshop (excellent) and he noted many clients, particularly with anxiety disorders are too much in their heads already and may actually benefit from getting out of there. Sue and I also agreed that many of our clients fit this and as usual, we need to be wary of possible over-application of any particular style, or, we're mindful that mindfulness is not for everyone.

Keith wanted to share with you a wonderful website from the University of Vermont Centre for Health and Wellbeing which includes a "Mindfulness Practice Center". This offers a number of meditations, relaxations, guided imageries, and even yoga routines with audio to practice mindfulness. He has booked his Peer Support volunteer Drop-in Centre for any students to come in and utilize these tools. The link is:

<http://www.uvm.edu/~chwb/counseling/mindfulness/mindfulnessaudio.html>

Maggie regards herself as a fledgling practitioner of mindfulness, and relays:

I have become more Mindful of the need to be Mindful. The topic of mindfulness seems to be everywhere (in workshops, courses, every other self-help book and so on) I'm not sure if my motivation to embrace and become mindful is due to a genuine belief in it, or simply not wanting to miss out on what "might" be the best thing ever... Anyway, I signed up for a Yoga Nira class which uses yoga postures and guided visualization together. I have to confess the practice which was supposed to leave me "centered and in a deep almost sleeping meditation" left my mind racing full of wild visualizations to the point I never fell asleep that night! I'm going to be returning to the class in case I've simply to practice more to achieve the perfect state I was aiming for, also because I paid up front and am mindful I'm quite cheap.

I have also purchased 2 new resources: Mediation for Beginners, Techniques for Awareness, Mindfulness & Relaxation by Stephanie Clement and some CD's "Guided Mindfulness mediation" Jon Kabat-Zinn. They haven't begun to gather dust as they are very recent buys. I've set a goal at the end of March to open them...Yes, I'm mindful this is rather far off, however, part of mindfulness is being aware of how things actually are in the present moment which this term are rather hectic.

Finally, I have the wonderful fortune of heading to Bali for a vacation and have booked into some yoga/meditation classes there. You see I'm really trying! Wish me luck as I cultivate and

deepen my personal mindfulness practice and come to achieve stillness, clarity, wisdom and compassion...that was on the back of the CD case!

Thanks, Maggie, and we're all mindful of our envy of 3 weeks in Bali in February!

Best wishes to all in your life journeys. I'll sign off with more James Hollis who reminds us that experiencing different realities enlarges us: we can complain/blame etc. and stay stuck OR we can be accountable and find meaning in the face of obstacles. The central question to each of us is "Do we show up?"

Karen Peardon for CapilanoU



"The Dharmakaya is bringing morning light

Sitting still, my heart is at peace.

I smile.

This is a new day"

Thich Nhat Hanh



Douglas College

I think some of us here have been feeling a little “out of our mindfulness” lately, as work demands have been piling up and we have definitely felt short staffed at times. The good news is that there is a new full time counselor position in our next year’s budget, so that will give some welcome relief! Actually we lost a position a couple of years ago when our teaching sections were cut so much, so I guess we’re making up for that.

Susan Meshwork has been away from the college since last October and is now on extended leave and going through cancer treatment. We certainly miss her here, and are thankful that all her skills in stress management and mindfulness practices are of great benefit to her now.

In December all our department was involved in Post Secondary Violence Threat Risk Assessment Training level 1. The training involved many people in the college community including upper management as well as community police. No sooner did we get the training that we had to put it to use due to a couple of incidents on campus where counselors got involved as part of the assessment team.

We have free yoga classes offered at both campuses (twice a week at New West. and once a week at David Lam campus). These classes (along with other fitness classes) are open to students and staff/faculty and are well utilized by us. It’s a great way to bring a mindful practice into the work day.

We are hoping to have 2 or 3 of us attend the PSCA conference in Harrison and will look forward to that.

Sorry this is short and sweet but we wanted to get something in before the deadline!

Janet Norris for Douglas College Counsellors





Kwantlen Polytechnic University

General Update

Hello Friends and Colleagues!

As I sit here beginning this submission, surrounded by the hype of our upcoming Olympics and the tragedy of what is happening in other parts of the world, I am thinking that the topic of mindfulness couldn't have come at a better time, for it definitely engages the spirit in making sense of these discrepancies and eases the heart.

We would like to begin by sharing what's been happening at Kwantlen because we really enjoy hearing about new initiatives and experiences of our colleagues at other institutions over the year. This is followed by some thoughts from Robyn Rushford on applying mindfulness to our current uncertain times at Kwantlen, and finally, by a column on the topic of mindfulness and social learning theory by Bruce Bailey.

At the beginning of September we adopted a new scheduling and tracking system called Titanium. This was after undergoing intense research, training and implementation process, not to mention the arduous task of asking for funding for this application several years before this. We are still in the process of working through some of the glitches, but are happy to report that we love this new system for its ease of booking appointments and the possibility of being able to generate reports for student delivery and management purposes.

This past year we also underwent what seemed at the beginning to be a daunting task of an internal service review, which ended up being a very positive process and enriching learning experience. It has given us a wonderful opportunity to gather valuable information about our services and programs to plan for future decisions, and made a noticeable dent in drawing attention to the value of what we do. Our next task is to undergo an external review in the near future which will be a first for us as well.

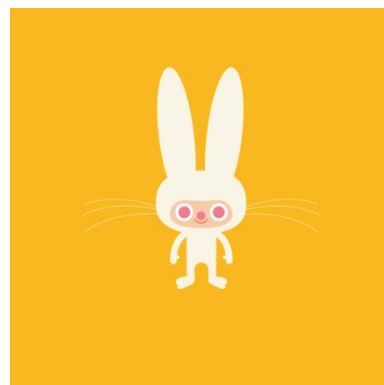
Lastly but not the least, you are all aware that we have been planning diligently for the May 3 - 5 PSCA conference at Harrison Hot Springs, for which we have lined up some very exciting topics and speakers. This is a transition year: we are having the conference in the spring rather than in the fall to hopefully tap into the "down time" after everyone's January semester has concluded. We very much look forward to seeing you all there!

The Role of Mindfulness in the Midst of Changing Times

I think many of us would agree that mindfulness is increasingly finding its way into both our personal and professional lives as we learn to accept and not fight not only those external events that we can't control but especially accepting and not fighting ourselves and our fears and anxieties (remember the good old days of snapping the rubber band around the wrist when an unwanted thought emerged?). It seems that we are in the midst of a very rich time for counselling as neuroscience has come together with mindfulness to unequivocally demonstrate how significant these ideas are to our health. And so, with this thought in mind, I shall move on to what's underfoot at Kwantlen.

As many of our colleagues at the new U's may be experiencing, Kwantlen has undergone considerable change in this past year with the creation of the new Senate. After an enormous output of time and energy by our multi-departmental Task Force (Counselling represented by Susan Morris), the proposal to create a Faculty of Library and Student Learning was rejected by Senate which leaves us currently with no voice on important matters of governance. So, back to the drawing board – perhaps after the Olympics. In the meantime, Kwantlen continues to undergo many changes in organization and direction. Our senior leadership in a year from now will look very different as many administrators are either retiring or moving on to other endeavours.

And of course, who can forget that our Collective Agreement expires this March? On this front, there is not much good news as notice has been given by Kwantlen's Board of Governors that, on any matter they choose, Senate can override the Collective Agreement. To state the obvious: the Kwantlen Faculty Association disagrees with this interpretation. Of significant interest to all of us will be the UBC Faculty Association's case at the BC Court of Appeal regarding the authority of the Senate to create policies that override the C.A. Mindfulness may come in very handy during this bargaining session.



Submitted by Robyn Rushford

Mindfulness and Social Learning Theory: How Different Are They in Practice?

Mindfulness has become a substantial theoretical practice anchored in an ever increasing research base. We in the post secondary environment are increasingly called upon to deal with students facing high levels of depression and anxiety. The need to assist students to develop positive coping strategies has fallen to the counsellor. Coupled with what seems to be decreasing community resources for students suffering depression and anxiety, our counselling centers are expected to meet the need.

How appropriate that our conference is concentrating on mindfulness in assisting our students. What is mindfulness? Simply stated it is the purposeful attempt to concentrate on each moment and to avoid the tendency to default to feelings and thoughts that are ineffective and destructive. The counsellor assists the client to concentrate and encourages the client to examine their impaired cognitions without judgment. It has been found to be effective in the treatment of depression and anxiety (Lynch, Chapman, Rosenthal, Kuo, & Linehan, 2006).

What, if anything, can we learn from Social learning Theory, (Bandura, 1977) and mindfulness?

Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) suggests that individuals learn primarily through observation, modeling and imitation. Watching others allows the individual to associate behaviors with outcomes and is the precursor to new behaviors or action. Bandura (1977) states four conditions are necessary for effective modeling.

1. Attention is increased or decreased through a variety of factors and include but are not restricted to the following; complexity, distinctiveness, arousal level and past reinforcement.
2. Retention is what you chose to pay attention to and remember and includes: mental images, symbolic coding, cognitive organization, symbolic and motor rehearsal.
3. Reproduction is creating or reproducing the image and includes: physical capabilities and self observation.
4. Motivation is why does the individual choose to imitate the behavior?

Bandura believed that these processes were reciprocal in their influence and have three components: environmental, cognitions and affect. These determine and modify behavior and action and are described as reciprocal determinism.

Bandura (1997) also contributed the construct of self-efficacy. He posits that unless individuals have both a clear behavioral target and the belief that they can achieve the target their action will fail.

Are mindfulness and Social Learning Theory mutually exclusive or can both theories support the treatment and techniques of counsellors in their practice? Both are Dialectical and their origins are from the cognitive field of psychological theory and seem to share some common ground. I hope our conference will move us all a little closer to the solution of this question.

Submitted by Bruce Bailey Ph.D.

References

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. New York: General Learning Press.

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Lynch, T., Chapman, A., Rosenthal, M., Kuo, J., & Linden, M. (2006). Mechanisms of change in Dialectical behavior therapy: Theoretical and empirical observations. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 62, 459-480.

Submitted by Jennie Campbell on behalf of all of us at KPU Counselling: Bruce Bailey, Wendy Belter, Laurie Detwiler, Izgy Gocer, Rick Hives, Susan Morris, Robyn Rushford, and Renu Seru.





SELKIRK COLLEGE

Mindfulness in the Kootenays

Laurie Read is off being wildly mindful of hockey and curling at the Olympics and Tami O'Meara (yes, we scored the Pres for our Kootenay team!) is busy trying to finish one job and move into her counseling office in Castlegar. So, I have been nominated as the mindfulness reporter.

For me mindfulness is important because it helps me settle my wild mind so I can be grounded and present in counseling sessions. I have a fairly consistent morning meditation practice and over the years I think it has helped me to slow down and understand my own triggers and stressors more clearly. It also has meant that I don't try as hard to be a good therapist. Instead of feeling like I need to have up-to-the-minute counseling techniques, I now believe that my most important contribution is to provide a calm, kind space where people can deeply relax and access their own wisdom.

With students (individually, in groups and with full classes), I often teach a short centering technique that is helpful in coming back into their bodies and the present moment. Last fall we ran an 8 week stress management group, "Finding Balance." We always started with chocolate meditation. This involved closing our eyes and focusing our mindful attention on our taste buds as we ate a piece of amazing chocolate. I think that mindfulness meditation often has a bad rap as an austere and difficult practice, so it was fun to explore its playful, sensual and delicious dimensions. We also did walking meditation outside in the forest and used relaxation exercises, focusing and music to explore how we can notice our thoughts as thoughts, but continually come back to our direct experience.

Tami uses the following mindfulness technique to help students deal with negative or obsessive thoughts:

Cognitive Disruption - a technique to assist with relaxation and focus

After taking a few slow deep breaths, say the following out loud:

I see ...5 things that you see around you. Say "I see" before each item

I hear...5 sounds that you hear

I feel...this is a statement about touching not emotion so if the word "feel" evokes emotion,

say "I'm touching"...5 things.

Repeat each phrase another 4, 3, 2, 1 times. You may identify the same objects or different ones, which ever works best for you.

My favourite books on this topic are: Wherever You Go There You Are, Radical Acceptance and Taming your Gremlins. Two new books on my shelf that I haven't read yet but look forward to are: The Mindful Way Through Depression and The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Depression.

Warm wishes for a mindful spring to all of you out there! The Kootenayites look forward to dancing at a PSCA event soon!

Robin Higgins, Selkirk College

Truth

Light

Synthesis

Surrender

Delight

Purification

Forgiveness

Freedom

Spontaneity

Peace

Grace

Clarity

Faith

Balance



SFU

Here at SFU, many of our groups are now Mindfulness based. We have found that not only the practice of mindfulness but also the conceptualization of the mind and the observer self are very helpful to people who struggle with many different issues. I have encouraged the staff to practice Mindfulness given that without our own practice we are unable to teach it well and do it justice. We have all received training in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and in Dialectical Behaviour Therapy. We run a social anxiety group, an eating disorders group, and a skills for successful stress management group all of which are mindfulness based. I also run a drop-in Mindfulness Meditation group once a week over lunch for students, faculty and staff (the latter is our longest running, most well attended group, which speaks to the thirst for this kind of practice).

I have found Mindfulness to be invaluable in my own life. I practice daily (I have learned to not have high expectations of doing it perfect, so I may practice anywhere from 10 minutes a day to 1 hour, but I do it daily). With Mindfulness I learned to stay in the present and to find the wisdom that today brings even during the times when things are difficult in my life. I recently attended a Vipassna retreat (this is the buddhist name for Mindfulness) and I learned the difference between mantra meditations and mindfulness. Mantra meditations are about tranquility and love (very lovely) whereas mindfulness is about awareness and wisdom. I think that by teaching our clients mindfulness we are assisting them in finding their own wisdom to be able to make choices in their lives that lead them to more positive outcomes. A great balance of practice may involve both mantra meditation and mindfulness practice.

And let's not forget the Loving Kindness Meditations that also teach clients to foster love in their hearts towards themselves and others. I have used loving kindness meditations in group for students with eating disorders to help them develop a more loving relationship to their bodies.

One great little book: Meditation for Beginners by Jack Kornfield (it comes with a CD with several meditations).

I wish you all peace, love, and wisdom in your hearts.

Erika Horwitz



UFV

Hello Everyone,

It is kind of strange to be writing our Winter Newsletter submission on such a sunny spring day. My little garden has snowdrops, daffodils and brilliant crocuses.

At UFV we have been incredibly busy – short of staff, three hiring processes, long wait lists, lots of demand from admin for written submissions, preparing for contract negotiations, and still learning what this change to university status means for Counselling. And we are mindfully balancing ourselves through all this.

We even have a workshop on the topic of mindfulness. Here is how we reported it for one of our many submissions.

Wellness Workshop

Anxiety, stress and depression are some of the most common concerns students seek counselling for at UFV.

With increasing numbers of students seeking mental health support, the department offered a workshop which focused on connecting with one's natural ability to relax the mind.

This workshop was based on Dr. Kabat-Zinn's work, Professor of Medicine emeritus at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Students met for one hour each week for a total of eight weeks to increase their awareness and develop their skill in cultivating their inner resources to deal more effectively with stress, anxiety, depression physical/emotional pain and illness.

Upon completion, students reported an increased calmness and ability to address stress in effective ways so it did not increase to undesirable levels which often produce illness and poor academic performance.

People use the word mindfulness in various ways. Mostly though, mindfulness is a present focused awareness. At times it is being fully present in the moment, not ruminating on the

past or planning for the future and perhaps, however temporarily, suspending thoughts, worries or concerns.

Often it is hard to be that much “in the moment”. Some of us engage in mindfulness practices such as meditation to practice this way of being or just to de-stress and relax.

Most of us have attended various workshops with mindfulness as a theme either at PSCA conferences or where mindfulness is part of other training, such as DBT or ACT or Mindfulness and Depression. Some of us go to weekend or longer mindfulness retreats. Other things we do are practicing yoga, breathing exercises, self-grounding through touching an object, body scanning or attending to the information of the senses.

These are some of the books we have read on the topic:

- The Mindful Way through Depression: Freeing Yourself from Chronic Unhappiness
- Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Workbook: Practical DBT Exercises for Learning Mindfulness, Interpersonal Effectiveness, Emotion Regulation, & Distress Tolerance
- The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Anxiety: A Guide to Breaking Free from Anxiety, Phobias, and Worry Using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
- The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment
- Various works by Pema Chodron in books and on CD

With our students we use various ways of introducing and practicing mindfulness such as progressive muscle relaxation, breathing awareness and training, depending on what the issues are. Mindfulness exercises for anxiety as well for depression are helpful in detaching a person from mistaking thoughts for facts. Often just making a comment or asking a question brings their attention to the present.

We often pair other theoretical work with mindfulness practices such as body centered therapies, trauma therapy and Hakomi work.



And this note of caution from Carolyn:

Mindfulness is a learned skill. I always keep in mind that what feels ok for one individual may not for another. With my recent work with clients with post traumatic responses I have become aware that the process of practicing mindfulness brings them back in touch with their bodies, something many have never, or not done in some time. This can reveal and release acute anxiety symptoms in those whose coping mechanisms have included dissociation and disconnection from themselves. This is particularly common with sexual abuse survivors. I always move slowly when teaching mindfulness, body centered relaxation strategies and encourage clients to stop for a while or try a different strategy if they find themselves feeling more anxious. Sometimes the most effective mindfulness strategies in this situation include cognitive grounding strategies or grounding through their 5 senses.

That's it for us. Be well everyone and enjoy the spring.

Elli Tamarin on behalf of UFV Counselling

P.S. A little news about changes in our department: Elli has gone to ½ time and Carolyn Heppner is our new ½ time counsellor. Eileen Burkholder is soon to be department head. And Dawn Holt is soon to be a mom!





UVIC

On the mindfulness trail at UVic
Counselling Services

Dave O'Brien, University of Victoria

Hmmm . . . what is this compelling draw to mindfulness? Perhaps it's the recognition that despite all the mileage behind you there seems no end to the onrush of life projects, the swoosh of work, home and family – which apparently Kabat-Zinn was referencing in naming his original book on mindfulness, *Full Catastrophe Living*, quoting Zorba the Greek's characterization of the householder's chaotic lot. The slow realization there's no real arrival, despite the unending dedication to shaping some semblance of order out of the chaos. And this particularly seems to apply in the transiency of a post-secondary environment where everyone is a traveller, everything a "work in progress."

Making peace with this condition of life seems to invite developing a greater capacity for entertaining paradox. How to more fully inhabit the present moment, "just this much," when so much calls for our attention? I find this as compelling a question for me personally as for the students who cross my path vexed by overloaded minds and schedules.

In recent years I've found increasing opportunities for mindfulness training. "Psychotherapy from the inside out: the brain of the mindful therapist" with Daniel Siegel deepened the framework. "Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for depression" with Zindel Segal supported orientation to facilitating a group program. "Mindfulness-based stress reduction" with Janet Solentjes helped consolidate personal mindfulness practice in the context of a week-long group program. All these trainers started their practice with Jon Kabat-Zinn and presented elements of his core programming.

Those of us at UVic who have participated in these and other related trainings currently facilitate an eight week group program called the "Mindful Way Through Stress." We usually have two group offerings per term that accommodate 8-12 participants. The challenges of dealing with overactive, busy minds prone to stress/anxiety/depression are universal in this environment, so the participants are diverse in terms of age, faculty, degree programs and culture. Yet all seem to readily relate to the core focus and themes.

We bookend every meeting with experiential exercises and allow for open debriefing and peer support/sharing through the core of the session. Books by Kabat-Zinn and co-authors have also been instrumental in developing our group program, and it has been especially useful to have students obtain his *Mindfulness for Beginners* CD with guided exercises (a version of this

CD is also included in the book, *The Mindful Way Through Depression*) to support their home practice. We also offer Acceptance and Commitment Therapy groups, which provide another entryway into mindfulness skills.

As we often note in the groups, mindfulness practice can be “simple, but not easy.” It’s certainly no panacea – I suppose that’s why it’s a “practice.” Sometimes getting up early in the cold and dark of a winter morning to sit for a breath meditation seems absolutely counter-intuitive and a minor tribulation. And asking students to embrace this kind of discipline given their many life involvements at times seems crazy as well. But I find that we can often bear a lot when we have a purpose, and the exercise of cultivating self-compassion and defusing our identification with the driven mind – in effect, living more in the heart – has a lot going for it.



*You lose your grip and
then you slip, Into the
masterpiece.” ~
Leonard Cohen*



Vlu

San Miguel de Allende : Practicing Mindfulness

I was dropped off in the centre of San Miguel at midnight, in the relentless rain by a Mexican shuttle driver who was cheerful and awaked after eight hours of driving to Mexico City and back.

The narrow desolated street embroidered by cobblestones and silence was a quiet welcoming to my tired self.

The following fourteen days were the most delightful adventured I have ever had.

Public transportation was limited so I walked every day, feeling the shape and the hardness of the stones under my feet, sometimes painfully, which was an invitation to slow down, to be present in each step, to pay attention, to breathe.

The doors of San Miguel started to open up at the same time the freshness of the mountain air was blessing the bougainvilleas and behind every door was a world of beauty to be discovered. Art galleries, artisan's shops, jewelry, boutiques, bookstores, and a variety of the most exquisite coffee shops! I spent hours just being in each moment, savoring the magnificent creativity in every breath of my joyful heart, filling up in the centre of my being.

Ah! and then it was the market...I went there daily, just to hear the sound of life in the children voices: full, loud, ripped; to wrap myself in colours, textures, and pleasure. The smells of tortillas, frijoles, and spices, were an everyday feast of real food, to comfort, and sooth every lingering loneliness.

I usually had a gigantic cup of fresh fruit to quench my thirst; a layer of pineapple, another of watermelon, then cantaloupe, and finally, like a white regal crown, strips of aromatic coconut.

Frida Khalo, and the Virgen of Guadalupe are everywhere; they are a constant reminder of miracles, beauty, resiliency and love, which are the ingredients of the internal fabric of every vendor, every poet, every jasmine in San Miguel.

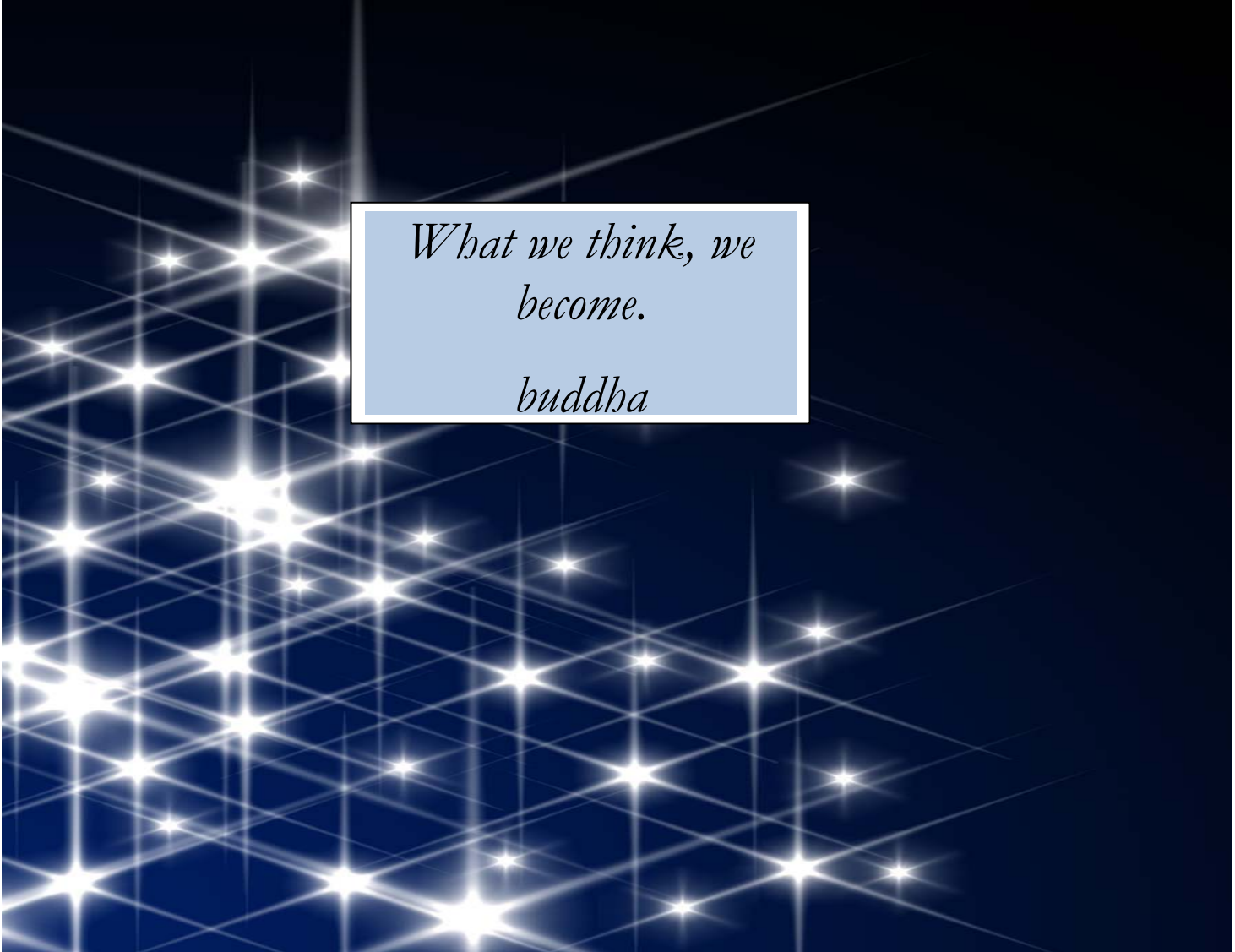
I borrowed a camera from my friend and I started to take pictures; looking careful at every detail in the ruby petal of the hibiscus being bathed by the sun; the delicate brown feet

of children; the pink, and purple, and turquoise houses balconies guarded by gargoyles and angels made of clay. My lens wandering through doors, alleys, and flock of pigeons gathering in The Jardin with the monumental Parroquia at one side of the plaza, the colonial City Hall at the other, and the communal exuberant life of the city right in the centre.

In San Miguel, I breathed in fifteen full days, one breath at the time. A forgotten window in my heart opened up and through it I reclaimed an ancient voice I remembered as the sound of my soul. I was embraced in warmth and beauty; I moved at my own rhythm, and I dreamt enormous dreams. I danced tribal songs barefoot in the moonlight of my mind. I was awakened.

I didn't plan to practice mindfulness in San Miguel...

Ycha Gil



*What we think, we
become.
buddha*

About fifteen years ago I read an article that described a “third wave” in counselling psychology. It made reference to the constructivist theories, Brief, Solution Focused and Narrative therapies that were gaining greater and greater currency in the profession. As someone who had become a student of Narrative Therapy, it was affirming to know that I was surfing a theoretical wave. The theory aligned well with what I understood about human development and it offered a means by which a counsellor could assist clients to escape the stories they were living, to re-author their experiences and potentially, to move toward a self authoring stage of consciousness.

It also rang true that counselling theory seems to come in waves. It seems to me that innovation does come in surges of theory. About five years ago I became interested in Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and attended a seven day training for MBSR certification with Jon Kabat Zinn. The previous year there had been cover stories in both Newsweek and Time Magazine on meditation and mental health in which he figured prominently. Kabat Zinn was rising to the crest of what I now see as the fourth wave, mindfulness based approaches.

A more informed practitioner would probably be able to put together a detailed family tree of mindfulness based theory. I can speculate that at the roots there would be Hakomi, and probably Morita Therapy - an approach that I became aware of when I bought Reynolds book on Constructive Living, misinterpreting it as related to constructivist theory. I have been told that somatic approaches owe a debt to Hakomi. Now there are Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and probably a raft of others that have declared foundations in the Buddhist insights - insights that serve as the philosophical underpinning of mindfulness therapies.

At the training that I attended, Kabat Zinn took great pains to emphasize that no one can employ a mindfulness based approaches with clients without a well grounded mindfulness practice of his or her own. He spoke openly about his distress that some of the new theories were being advanced by individuals who themselves did not seem to have an authentic meditation practice.

I had seen meditation, yoga and the like as means by which I might be able to better cope with the challenges I face in my life, personally and professionally. I had been attracted to meditation because I needed it. You can ask anyone, I needed it. It did not come as a revelation to me that in order to employ the mindfulness based approaches with clients, a mindfulness practice was a requirement. Indeed, one cannot be trained in MBSR without having practiced meditation for some time prior to undertaking the training.

S.N. Goenka, the leading teacher of Vipassana meditation tells the story of a young academic on a sea cruise. He establishes a rapport with an old sailor on the boat. They took to talking together each evening. The first night the young professor asks whether the old sailor had studied meteorology. Each subsequent evening he asks the old man whether he has learned anything of the sciences that govern his life on the sea. Of course the old sailor was illiterate and replied with growing discouragement that he had never studied any of the topics. Each night, he left the young academics cabin more and more convinced that he had wasted his life. Finally on a stormy night, the old sailor rushed to young man's cabin and breathlessly asked, "Sir, have you ever studied swimology?" After establishing that the intelligent young gentleman could not swim, the sailor informed him that the boat had struck a rock and was sinking quickly - those that could swim might be able to make it to the beach.

As counsellors, we are nearly continuously engaged in a practice of professional development. We read and attend training events on every kind of counselling "ology." We have an obligation to stay current. Kabat Zinn was certainly right - employing mindfulness based approaches without a mindful practice of one's own is contradictory. I find I need to keep afloat, whatever approach I use. As I look around at my colleagues, I see more and more counsellors who meditate, do yoga or some other mindful activity. They do so for their well-being and thus probably better serve their clients. We are confronted with complex issues and sometimes exposed to very traumatic and vicariously traumatizing stories. We sit with people experiencing enormous upset. Coping with what we are exposed to in our work is as important a task as any professional development. Like it or not, there seems to be an inescapable onus on counsellors to engage in practices that foster mental health. It's a notion against which part of me rebels, but clearly, if you're going to surf the waves, you've got to know how to swim.



Michelle's Reflections on Mindfulness

It is so easy to be mindful today...the sun is shining, the sky is blue – the scenery literally takes your breath away.....and then you remind yourself to breathe!

A few years ago, I thought that to be “mindful” and to practice “mindfulness” would be onerous, would require meditating for hours a day. I am delighted to see that I was wrong. Through my reading, learning, engaging in workshops over the past years, “living”, breathing, the theme of mindfulness has continually surfaced and I have learned that “mindfulness” is to participate in the present moment in a state of complete awareness of your behaviours, bodily sensations and experiences. When we can bring this knowledge to ourselves, to our students, we invite self and them to shift from “autopilot” to “living in the here-and-now”.

I start my day by choosing a card from, “Present Moment – Wonderful Moment”, a deck of 52 inspirational cards from Thich Nhat Hanh, as well as choosing one homemade “Angel” card. I often invite students to choose an angel card after their appointment (email me if you’d like a template of Angel Cards). Today’s Present Moment card was:

45. Watering the Garden

*Water and sun
green these plants.
when the rain of
compassion falls,
even a desert becomes
an immense, green ocean.*

So many activities promote mindfulness for me: Cooking, baking, working with glass (fused/stained), hiking, kayaking, the outdoors, watching a campfire, yoga – activities which invite me be in the present moment. To this list this year, I add eating! Yes, Eating, Mindfully. I have created a one hour introductory workshop, “Eat, Drink, and be Mindful”, based on the work of Susan Albers Psy. D. I hope to offer a workshop on Mindful Eating next year. The goal of the work is “how to end your struggle with mindless eating and start savoring food with intention and joy.” Our community appears to be hungry for this (pun intended!).

Wishing to increase my knowledge and understanding of mindfulness based practices around the issue of addiction’s, I spent 5 days with Gabor Mate at his workshop at Hollyhock last Fall, a profound and moving experience. We experienced “living now” through meditation; active meditation; chanting; and learning to be – in all splendor, raw emotion, in joy and in pain, in curiosity, with uncertainty.

He stated, “If there was awareness, there would be no suffering...it’s not about changing, getting rid of anything, bringing anything in – it’s about awareness. Whatever is illuminated turns to light = awareness.”

Some of the resources I have read, use, refer students to, or are on my bookshelf to read include:

- o Eating Mindfully; and Eat, Drink and be Mindful – the Workbook, Susan Albers, Psy.d.
- o Mindful Eating 101 – A Guide to Healthy Eating in College and Beyond, Susan Albers
- o Meditation for Beginners, Jack Kornfield
- o Mindfulness in Plain English, Bhante Henepola Gunaratana
- o Full Catastrophe Living, Jon Kabat-Zinn
- o Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Anxiety, John P. Forsyth, Ph. D., Goerge H Eifert, Ph. D
- o The Miracle of Mindfulness, Thich Nhat Hanh
- o The Cheri Huber Series (Excellent resource for you and your students). Check out the “Keep it Simple” series. www.livingcompassion.org . Two of my favourite books from this series are: “There is Nothing Wrong with You” (and she offers a week long workshop in California based on this book); How you Do Anything is How You Do Everything” workbook. I receive “Daily Peace Quotes” from Living Compassion website...you can too! 😊
- o Grace Unfolding, Greg Johanson and Ron Kurtz
- o Mandala work – recently ordered “Coloring Manadas” and “Creating Mandalas: For Insight, Healing and Self-Expression” by Susanne F. Fincher. What a neat group that would be...making ones’ own Mandala. Has anyone done a workshop around this theme?

I leave sharing a mindful moment....snorkeling in Akumal Bay on the Yucatan Peninsula this past January. Brilliant water, soft waves rising and falling gently above me at the reef. The fish, oh, the fish...the blues, the yellows, whites and golds, the coral bending, begging, retreating. The sand, the grasses, the rocks, filled with life, hidden and at the same time boastful. And the turtles, the gentle giants, watching me with eyes of wisdom, bodies of wisdom. The warmth and spirit of the water encompassing my thoughts, my mind, my body, my spirit, in the most joyous, peaceful, and graceful way. *That* is mindfulness for Michelle.



It had been a pleasure receiving and compiling these wonderful nuggets of mindfulness from all of you. I wish you a joy filled Spring.

A special thank you to Iris who is leaving us and to Don who has left us. (Let's hope we can to grab them for our PSCA conferences for laughter and fun!). Iris and Don, thank you for your energy, your bright light and caring souls. I'm sure I can speak for all of us in saying "we miss you". Warm hugs, best wishes.

Cheers and sunshine,

Michelle

on behalf of the VIU counselling department.

