Unlocking Creativity through Mindfulness – The New Campus-wide UF Mindfulness Program to Enhance Teaching

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References:


UF Mindfulness Project

**Goal:** Create a more mindful UF campus

**Objectives:** (i) infuse mindfulness practices in existing courses and curricula, (ii) offer a new cross-disciplinary set of short courses/trainings, and (iii) serve as a catalyst sparking mindful moments to create a healthy campus culture.
Mindfulness

Seven core attitudes (Kabat-Zinn, 1990)

- Non-judging
- Patience
- Beginners Mind
- Trust
- Non-Striving
- Acceptance
- Letting go/be or non-attachment
• Mindfulness has become mainstream (e.g., Time Magazine Article, 2014)
• All human beings are born with the seed of the most beneficial universal qualities, such as compassion, creativity, integrity and wisdom
• In the modern, fast-paced world mindfulness has become a latent human quality
Mindfulness in the U.S.:
• Athletics; e.g. Phil Jackson, NBA coach who taught his winning teams mindfulness; “the Zen of basketball”
• Military; army
• Corporate industry; leadership (e.g. Bill George, former Medtronic CEO; senior fellow at the Harvard Business School)
• Fortune 500 companies (e.g. Chase)
• Politicians (e.g. Congressman Tim Ryan, D-OH)
• Health movement: 8.7 percent of U.S. adults, or 20.4 million people, practice yoga (2012).

MBSR: mindfulness based stress reduction; secular (no religious or spiritual basis); cognitive/clinical science based.

• Approximately 21 million adults (nearly double the number from 2002) and 1.7 million children practiced yoga.
• Nearly 18 million adults and 927,000 children practiced meditation.
• Children whose parents use a complementary health approach are more likely to use one as well.
• Among Americans age 18–44, yoga use nearly doubled since 2002;
• The high rates of use may be partly due to a growing body of research showing that some mind and body practices can help manage pain and reduce stress.
Our planet is in dire straits, facing multiple crises (climate, water, ecosystem diversity, pollution). Agriculture across the globe is facing huge challenges, needing to feed an ever growing population. On the other hand, more awareness around agriculture and food has arisen in our part of the world in the last five to seven years and resulted in a very dynamic and burgeoning local agriculture and food....

Almost all humans participated more or less directly in the growing of food and care of the Earth in the earlier stages of our history. We have now arrived at a point in time when only a very small and rapidly aging percentage, less than 2% in fact, of our population is directly involved in this work.

A sad reality of this imbalance between rural and urban population is the dramatic disconnect that many individuals experience—a deep separation from Nature in general and our food supply, more specifically. To rekindle and help rediscover this crucial “soil to soul” connection is one of the most important acts we need to facilitate for all people and especially children.

Agriculture 1.0 was and still is rooted in traditional ways based on peasant wisdom and the practices that have developed over thousands of years in all parts of the world. This is still the most prevalent form of agriculture practiced in the world today. Its paradigm is locally adapted, labor intensive, relatively small, diverse, and agro-ecologically sound farms that are very much at the heart of their respective communities and societies. Many family farms are part of this tradition as well. Slow food, as an example, is one organization that is trying to preserve this wisdom and the products it creates, through its Arc of Taste programs.

Agriculture 2.0 is, and hopefully soon was, the application of an industrial efficiency mindset into the living realm. This has created what we call agribusiness or industrial agriculture. One of its main paradigms is “get big or get out”. It has also pushed farming onto the economic fringe, solely there to produce lots of cheap food. While it has undoubtedly provided growing amounts of food (of sometimes questionable quality), it has done so with significant social and environmental costs.

Agriculture 3.0 then is the emergent future form. In order for us to transcend and transform 1.0 and 2.0, we must redefine what agriculture actually means and what context it really needs today and looking forward. Steiner’s assertion of agriculture being the foundation of both cultural and economic life and affecting all of social life could be seen as his way of expressing this concept. Awareness Based Collaboration (ABC) (Otto Scharmer).
Origins of mindfulness

- Ancient wisdom tells us to “stop and smell the roses” and to “live for the moment.” Given our busy lives, it’s no surprise that this advice is often easier said than done. Many of us multitask not only our physical chores, but our mental ones as well.

- Mindfulness has ancient roots with very modern applications

- Mindfulness does not belong to Buddhism, Taoism or Christianity, just as the breath we inhale and exhale does not belong to any one of us

- Wisdom traditions – non-secular (relating to or involving religious or spiritual matters)

- Vedanta, a Hindu philosophy based on the doctrine of the Upanishads

- As a term, mindfulness originally appeared in old Buddhist texts; “sati” – mindfulness – stands for awareness, attention, and remembering.

- Buddhist teachings (dharma)
  - Shamatha (mindfulness practice) – to become more stable, to develop tranquility and peace
  - Vipashyana (awareness, clarity, insight, prajna = wisdom)
  - Out of shamatha-vipashyana arise naturally qualities of compassion, kindness, gentleness, generosity and expanded consciousness

- Formal practice – meditation e.g. bodyscan, mindful movement, sitting practice, breathing space

- Informal Practice – awareness of body sensations, thoughts, emotions and sensory input during daily life. Practiced in ordinary activities like eating, washing brushing teeth
The four noble truths

1. Suffering happens all the time because people always want more or something better than what we have.
2. Because we don't have what we want we suffer and feel upset.
3. If we accept what we have and stop wanting more we will become happy.
4. Following the Noble Eightfold Path will help achieve this.
Teaching Mindfulness

- Mindful teacher
- Mindful students
- Assignments that require mindful attention and reflection
Mindful Learning & Education

Mindfulness
FOR LIFE
Directing attention to what is rather than what isn't

Find learning as interesting as it should be

Mindful learning

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Mindfulness can take many forms in education, e.g.
• Meditation on a cushion (--- > new meditation room in the new wing of the Reitz Union)
• Contemplation, reflection – e.g. self-reflective exercise given by a teacher
• Group discussion – mindful listening; mindful communication
• Playful learning; being present in the moment of studying (when learning is perceived as joyful)

Reference:
To teach mindfulness, we need to be mindful
Nourish the inner lives of our students and teachers
Emotional and social competencies are lacking behind the technical and scientific ones
Social competencies, such as self-management, self-awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making
Emotional intelligence
The cultivation of mindfulness in the teachers (self-care) creates well-being and will naturally translate into an environment of wellness for the students
Mindfulness is only taught through the transmission of an experienced practitioner
Examples: The Lineage Project, Mind Body Awareness Project, Holistic Life Foundation

Reference:
References:


Schoeberlein David, D. Mindful teaching and teaching mindfulness. Wisdom Publ., Boston, MA.
Ramsburg and Youmans (2014) found that meditation in the higher-education classroom improved student knowledge retention during lectures. However, mood, relaxation, and class interest were not affected by the meditation training.

Garland et al. (2014) showed that the state of mindfulness during meditation predict enhanced cognitive reappraisal.

Other research has demonstrated that meditation (both concentration and insight-oriented meditation) significantly enhanced well-being (Hosemans, 2015). In this study, compared to non-meditators, both meditation approaches demonstrated significantly enhanced mindfulness and also indicated lower perceived stress.

Lauricella (2014) found that the practice of mindfulness meditation can help individuals to self-calm, focus on the present moment, and experience physical and mental health benefits. This skill is of particular importance to undergraduate students, who often experience stress, anxiety, or depression. She demonstrated that mindfulness meditation in a group of undergraduate students showed multiple benefits, more so in the face-to-face mindfulness training that provided the notion of a sangha or community when compared to a digital informed practice. Numerous other mindfulness studies have investigated the positive effects on body, mind, well-being and other.

References:

Abstract:
Objective: To briefly review the effects of mindfulness on the mind, the brain, the body, and behavior. Methods: Selective review of MEDLINE, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar databases (2003—2008) using the terms "mindfulness," "meditation," "mental health," "physical health," "quality of life," and "stress reduction." A total of 52 exemplars of empirical and theoretical work were selected for review. Results: Both basic and clinical research indicate that cultivating a more mindful way of being is associated with less emotional distress, more positive states of mind, and better quality of life. In addition, mindfulness practice can influence the brain, the autonomic nervous system, stress hormones, the immune system, and health behaviors, including eating, sleeping, and substance use, in salutary ways. Conclusion: The application of cutting-edge technology toward understanding mindfulness— an "inner technology" — is elucidating new ways in which attention, awareness, acceptance, and compassion may promote optimal health—in mind, body, relationships, and spirit.
Benefits of Mindfulness

Evidence-based research has shown that mindfulness

- Improves performance; learning
- Positively transforms the architecture and operation of the brain
- Enhances creativity
- Encourages personal development
- Enhances physical and emotional health
- Reduces stress (e.g., reduces high blood pressure) and burn-out; pain; suffering
- Enhances relaxation
- Enhances well-being; reduces depression
- Feel balanced in our mind, hearts and bodies (→ integration)
- Cope more confidently with exams, dissertations, theses and research projects
- Make meaningful relationships
- Helps to regulate emotions (e.g., reduces anxiety)
- Facilitates effective communication
- Enhances compassion and empathy (→ collaboration; team-work)
- Authentic presence (→ leadership)
- Find deeper meaning of life; true self, and .......

References:


UF Mindfulness Project - overview
Learning Outcomes

Mindfulness is not this separate thing - Mindfulness integration in live

Learning to be present

- Learn mindfulness experts/teachers
- Learning "to be" rather than "to do"
- Awareness building

Silence (opposite of multi-tasking, constant stream of doing)

- Mindful listening
- Mindful observation
- Reconnect with body, mind, spirit, life

Spiritual, sacred dimension; insight and wisdom

- Develop trust in mindfulness
- Social justice
- Evidence-based learning

Nonjudgemental state of being

- Ethics dimension in mindfulness

Brings forth compassion, love, fulfillment

- Self-recognition of the positive benefits of mindfulness on health and well-being

Mindfulness is "being human" and "normal"

- Common vocabulary

De-stress

- Antidote to anxiety
UF Mindfulness Project

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First ever UF Mindfulness Day: Sept. 28 2015 & MedMob