HEALTHY ARIZONA WORKSITES PROGRAM (HAWP) PRESENTS:

MINDFULNESS PRACTICES FOR RESILIENT ORGANIZATIONS

Presented by:
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www.healthyazworksites.org
Mindfulness Practices for Resilient Organizations

Healthy Arizona Worksites Program
Webinar
May 14, 2019

Nancy Spangler, PhD, OTR/L
Starting with intention: A deeper dive into resilience and mindfulness

Today we will discuss...

- Resilient individuals and organizations
- Role of mindfulness for individual and collective resilience
- Effects of mindfulness on communication and collaboration
- Mindfulness practices and potential effects on workplace culture
Resilience =

• Commonly known as the ability to bounce back, to bend rather than break, to grow.

• . . .“A process linking a set of adaptive capacities to a positive trajectory of functioning and adaptation after a disturbance.” (Norris, F.H. et al., 2008)
Mindfulness = Awareness

“... that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally.”

(Jon Kabat-Zinn, 2017)

Awareness of:

- Thoughts
- EMOTIONS
- Actions
- Sensations
- Situations
- Self
- Others
- Environment
Mindfulness practices are . . .

- techniques,
- exercises,
- strategies,
- routines,
- habits

. . . that build awareness.
Organizational mindfulness = Applied collective mindfulness
Mindfulness practices for individuals:

- Mindfulness meditation – attending to your breath, while noticing and embracing the thoughts and sensations that naturally arise while.
  - Sitting
  - Walking and moving (yoga, tai chi, qigong)
  - Eating and savoring
  - Experiencing nature
  - Washing dishes (Tich Naht Hanh, 2018)
  - Being with others
We need to understand how our brain works:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System 1</th>
<th>System 2</th>
<th>[System 3]</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflexive</td>
<td>Reflective</td>
<td>Attentive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automatic</td>
<td>Conscious</td>
<td>Mindful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fast</td>
<td>Slow</td>
<td>Non-reactive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intuitive</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Observing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spontaneous</td>
<td>Intentional</td>
<td>Non-judgmental</td>
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The brain’s amygdala and limbic circuits set off the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis response to prepare the individual for:

- **Fight**
- **Flight**
- **Freeze**

The stress response involves immediate APPROACH/AVOID reactions:

Like stepping on the gas pedal!

or **SIEZE!**
STRESS = “The nonspecific response of the body to any demand made on it.” (Selye, 1956)

Distress = negative emotional state due to harmful stimuli or excessive demands
STRESS isn’t all bad!

- Eustress = euphoric effect of positive adaptation to demands or challenges
Stress can stimulate growth and resilience

Moderate, intermittent stress fuels neuroplasticity (Kirby, 2013)
However, resilience requires recovery!

• The vagus nerve helps to shut down fight, flight, freeze (the “vagal brake”)

• Connections go to and from:
  □ Heart, lungs, diaphragm, stomach, & bowels
    □ “Rest-and-digest”
  □ Face and throat
    □ “Tend-and-befriend”

• APPROACH/AVOID is automatic and immediate; RECOVERY/REPAIR takes time.

• Oxytocin = trust hormone
Extended exhale breathing for vagal nerve activation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inhale</th>
<th>Exhale</th>
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Mindfulness meditation:

- Attending to your breath, while noticing and embracing the thoughts and sensations that naturally arise while...
  - Sitting
  - Walking and moving (yoga, tai chi, qigong)
  - Eating and savoring
  - Experiencing nature
  - Washing dishes (Tich Naht Hanh, 2018)
  - Being with others
Intentional postures and facial expressions:

Help you be who you intend to be!
Positive reappraisal:

• Reflexive brain circuits
  □ Automatic thoughts and actions
  □ Distorted, self-defeating thoughts (e.g., “I really messed that up. I’m such a loser. Life sucks.”)

• Reflective brain circuits
  □ Intentional re-framing
  □ Change to rational, compassionate thoughts (e.g., “That wasn’t my best, but I can work at it.”)
  □ Set different goals, develop self-mastery

“Toxic selfie”
Relationship between mindful awareness and resilience?
Individual Resiliency in Action

- **Situational Awareness**
  - Ability to notice the right data and understand the significance of that data

- **Self-Regulation**
  - Ability to keep stress reactions within a healthy range or to recover

- **Self-Leadership**
  - Ability to take bold steps in demanding situations in ways that support resiliency
Organizational Resiliency:

- **Leadership**: Leaders modeling how to perform when faced with stressful situations.
- **Awareness**: Clarity on what frontline staff and managers are dealing with.
- **Regulation**: Definitive actions to prevent or remedy cycles of distress.
Greenleaf Integrative’s assessment of a federal agency concerned about worker disengagement, extreme stress, and suicide risk:

Found that workers assumed they would face demanding situations.

What contributed to their distress were typical management issues that many organizations face . . .

• Lack of:
  – Attention to operational and organizational priorities
  – Communication, policies, operational practices
  – Leadership training and coaching
  – Recognition of when people needed rest and recovery
  – Support for self-care training
  – Managers modeling self-care practices
My experience:

- **Occupational Therapy:** Pediatrics, rehabilitation, and psychiatry (pain & stress management)
- **Workplace Health Promotion:** Health risk reduction and population health management
- **Organizational Change & Stress:** What drives resilience and adaptive capacity? Influence of leaders/managers.
- **Brain Research:** What supports individual and organizational health?
Workplace Resilience-Building Supports and Practices:

Active, outbound intervention
*(Intensive)*

- Disease management/ Case management
- Disability management (Return-to-work)

Screenings, information, resources, & benefits
*(Targeted)*

- HRAs/Screenings & coaching
- Information, webinars, education
- Medical and mental health benefits
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Organizational leadership, culture, & management practices
*(Universal)*

- Values, ethics, & mission/role alignment
- Communication (face-to-face, at multiple levels, conflict resolution, predictable structure)
- Career & life development/balance
- Training (Manager/supervisor & employee)
- Health champions
- Connectedness, meaning, belonging & trust

(Spangler et al, 2012)
Trust:

“Trust is an emotional and cerebral connection, characterized by an ability to rely on someone to act in ways that will be of benefit to one’s own health and well-being.”

Amy Lyman, co-founder, Great Place to Work Institute
The Trustworthy Leader (2012)
Connectedness: Collaborating Matters

Moving from disparate program silos. . .

. . . to integrated work performance, total health management, well-being, and thriving

(Spangler et al, 2012)
Research on compassion in organizational systems:

• High Reliability Organizations (Sutcliffe, Vogus & Dane, 2016)

• Compassionate organizations emphasize roles, routines, social networks, and values. (Worline & Dutton, 2017)

• Develop positive leadership practices (Cameron, 2013)
  □ Positive climate
  □ Positive relationships
  □ Positive meaning
  □ Positive communications

• These organizations . . .
  □ Are more adaptive to change
  □ Have better customer service
  □ Encourage innovation and creativity
  □ Outperform their peers
Research on effective teams:

• Google’s Project Aristotle
• A. Pentland, MIT
• A. Edmondson, Harvard

• Common themes:
  □ Face-to-face meetings have value
  □ Conversational turn-taking
  □ Sharing personal information
  □ Connectedness
  □ Psychological safety
Intentional practices for building collective mindfulness:

• Teach mindfulness meditation
• Provide opportunities and places for individuals to practice mindfulness
• Identify mindfulness champions
• Leaders model mindfulness and resilience practices individually and collectively (becomes cultural norm)
• Schedule predictable times for communication and connectedness
  □ Begin with intention and presence
• Teach communication skills
Collective mindfulness (cont.):

- Use Check-in Cards
  - Practice with workplace-specific case examples
- Be mindfully aware of opportunities to mitigate unnecessary stressors and adaptation challenges
- Provide trained facilitators for meetings where conflict and strong emotions are likely
- Incorporate compassion and gratitude practices
- Adopt “action learning” projects for collaboration and innovation
Check-in Cards: Recognizing the need for intervention

**READY**
- Good to go
- Adapting/flexible
- Excelling at job

*I am at the top of my game and adapting well to all pressures.*

**REACTING**
- Mild distress
- Temporary symptoms
- Still getting the job done

*Stress is affecting me but I can still get the job done.*

**INJURED**
- Noticeable symptoms
- Personality change
- Erratic functioning

*I have changed to the point that I am not in total control of my behavior or reactions.*

**ILL**
- Severe impairment
- Extremely overwhelmed
- Possible danger to self/others

*This worsening condition requires full attention before getting back to work.*

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**Self Interventions**

**Social Support**

**Professional Care**

**Rest Strongly Recommended**

Adapted with permission from U.S. Navy’s COSC Doctrine
# Navigating Stressful Conversations via CATCH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C</th>
<th>Clarity</th>
<th>Be clear on your objective and the desired outcome before approaching anyone.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Approach</td>
<td>Be mindful of your approach (choose optimal time, setting, mood).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Talk</td>
<td>Talk directly to the person. Use facts, not blame. Ask questions and reflect back your understanding of their response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Consider</td>
<td>Consider how the other person might be reacting to the situation. Have empathy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Handle</td>
<td>Get a handle on the situation, take deliberate follow-up steps that help get the job done without ongoing conflict.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Greenleaf Integrative, 2017)
Compassion meditation:

• Observe and sense loving kindness we feel for someone close to us
• Visualize compassion for ourselves
• Visualize compassion for a neutral person
• Visualize compassion for someone difficult

• https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/compassion_meditation
Intentional, compassionate listening exercise:

• Describe an experience when you felt true empathy and compassion for a person who was suffering.

• Stay focused on your partner’s experience; avoid sharing your own thoughts or similar experience.

• Use active listening skills
  □ Ask open-ended questions
  □ Summarize and reflect back

• Take turns as either the active listener or the person sharing.

• When the bell rings, trade roles.
Action Learning:

1. Create a team
2. Clarify the issue
3. Identify and reflect on possible directions
4. Take actions
5. Assess and reflect
6. Plan next steps
Workplace resilience requires shared responsibility for developing.

- Personal factors and skills
- Organizational benefits/policies and cultural practices
May you and your organization grow in mindfulness and resilience!
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Building healthy and high-performing individuals and organizations.
Resources:

- Greenleaf Integrative – [https://www.greenleafintegrative.com/resources/](https://www.greenleafintegrative.com/resources/)
- Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education, Stanford University -- [http://ccare.stanford.edu/](http://ccare.stanford.edu/)
- Healthy Arizona Workplace Program webinars -- [https://healthyazworksites.org/events/categories/webinar/?doing_wp_cron=1555452201.9871180057525634765625](https://healthyazworksites.org/events/categories/webinar/?doing_wp_cron=1555452201.9871180057525634765625)
- Arizona State University Center for Mindfulness, Compassion, and Resilience -- [https://mindfulnesscenter.asu.edu/](https://mindfulnesscenter.asu.edu/)
- Workplace Strategies (Canada) – [www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com](http://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com)
- Search Inside Yourself Foundation -- [https://siyli.org/resources/category/guided-meditation](https://siyli.org/resources/category/guided-meditation)
- [https://www.cranfield.ac.uk/~media/...for.../organisational-report-david-denyer.ashx](https://www.cranfield.ac.uk/~media/...for.../organisational-report-david-denyer.ashx)
- [www.stopbreathethink.org](http://www.stopbreathethink.org) – Daily brief exercises for mindfulness based on your emotions at the moment.
- [http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/) -- Science-based practices for a meaningful life – mindfulness, therapeutic writing, gratitude, forgiveness, etc. Compassion Meditation -- [https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/compassion_meditation](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/compassion_meditation)
References:

References:


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