

Mindfulness and Compassion in the Diabetes Encounter

Heather Nielsen, LPC, CHWC
March 16th, 2019
Wisconsin Diabetes Education Conference

heather@healthyconnectionshr.com

Today's Journey

- *Understand why mindfulness and compassion skills can positively affect both our personal and professional lives-and our patient outcomes.
- *Experience several types of mindfulness and compassion practices.
- *Discuss and plan how you can take these tools into your work and personal lives.
- *Gain new resources to use following the workshop.



My journey began with a mindful,
compassionate CDE





What do you love (or like...) about your work as a diabetes educator?

- Let's share this as an activity in both mindfulness and compassion!!!
- Find a partner
- Two roles – speaker and listener. You will take turns, switching roles after 2 minutes.
- Stay with the positive, if possible!

I think I know some of your challenges....



Diabetes (and the systems in which we work) can feel relentless and full of insurmountable challenges

- Anything that is chronic can lead to “burnout” and even depression.
- Caregivers of those with chronic diseases bear heavy burdens!
- Even great tools and techniques (Knowledge and expertise, MI, Stages of Change, Health Coaching, Pt Empowerment, Tool De Jour...) can feel “not enough”

Could this be how our clients feel too?



Depressive mood VERY common in people w DM

- Studies vary from 1.5-3 x higher incidence of Major Depressive Disorder in people living w DM.
- Add to this those who are burned out and those who have general emotional distress, and stats go up as high as 2/3 of our pts.
- You are trained as a health care provider – perhaps not a mental health care provider? Yet this exists in the majority of your clients!
- What can we do??



Mindfulness and Compassion – The Refuges of Presence



Photo Credit: Jason Kravitz, Aminus3

Mindfulness

- Paying attention
- On purpose
- In the present moment
- Nonjudgmentally

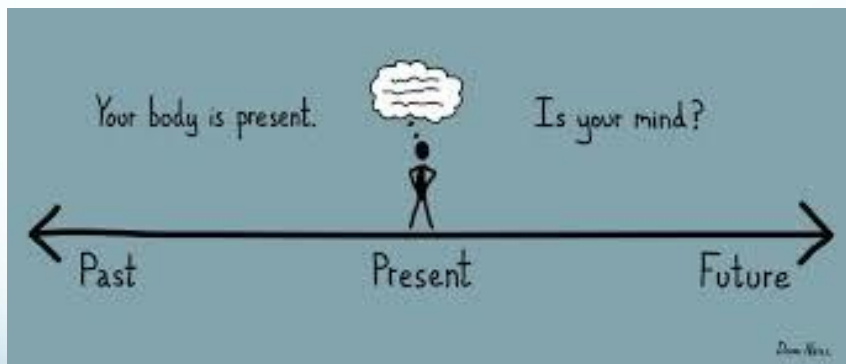


Jon Kabat-Zinn, founder of MBSR

Popular Press



Where is your mind?



Examples of Mindfulness Practices

- **Formal**
 - Sitting Meditation
 - Walking Meditation
 - Gentle Yoga
 - Body Scan
- **Informal**
 - Eating
 - Talking/listening
 - Washing dishes
 - Folding laundry
 - Opening a door
 - Chopping vegetables
 - Driving
 - Basically anything!

Mindfulness IS a practice

- Let's try it together!
- **Breathing – deeply, intentionally.**
- **One hand on heart, one hand on belly.**
- *Sends message from diaphragm to brain via vagal nerve – “I am safe!”*
- **Noticing:** Thoughts, Feelings, Sensations.
- Wandering mind = normal!!!!!!!!!!



What are some benefits?

- Increased resilience and stress-heartiness.
- Decreased reactivity (response vs reaction)=improved emotion regulation.
- Thickening of the pre-frontal cortex (responsible for complex decision making, impulse control, focusing, personality and more...)
- Psychiatrist/meditator Dan Siegel, MD from UCLA suggests mindfulness produces neural integration and coherence that leads to more adaptive functioning.



Evidence for Mindfulness Benefits

- GENERAL POPULATION: Mindful meditation practitioners vs. non meditators: significantly higher levels of mindfulness, self compassion, overall well-being; significantly lower levels of psychological symptoms, rumination, fear of emotion; benefits linearly associated w extent of meditation practice.
 - *Clinical Psyc Review 2011*
- PTS W/DM: DiaMind study - MBCT (mindfulness based cognitive therapy) resulted in reduction of emotional distress and increase in health quality of life in diabetes patients
 - *Diabetes Care, April 2013*
- MBSR decreases fasting glucose in overweight and obese women.
 - *NIH-funded study; poster presentation at Endocrine Society conference March 2015*

Evidence for HCPs

- PHYSICIANS:
 - Mindful Medicine study in Portland, OR. Grant from Providence.
 - 33 primary care physicians studied
 - Modified MBSR training over a weekend
 - Significant improvements in:
 - Stress scores
 - Mindfulness scores
 - Emotional exhaustion
 - Depersonalization
- NURSES:
 - 8 wk MBSR for nursing students significantly reduced anxiety
Journal of Nursing Ed. 2004
 - 4 wk mindfulness-based intervention (vs leadership intervention) for nurses and nurses aides; mindfulness group experiences significant improvements in burnout sx, relaxation, and life satisfaction.
 - *Applied Nursing Rsch 2006*

Mindful Appreciation: A Practice

- **Gratitude** – “grateful people are happy people”
 - GLAD practice
 - Grateful
 - Learned
 - Accomplished
 - Delighted
- “Gratitude is strongly related to well-being”
 - *Clinical Psychology Review, 2010*



Compassion



Compassion defined at Stanford

- Awareness of suffering (cognitive)
- Sympathetic concern related to being emotionally moved by suffering (affective)
- A wish to see the relief of that suffering (intentional component)
- A readiness to help relieve the suffering (motivational component)

What about the evidence?

- Diabetes patients whose provider scored high (versus moderate or low) on compassion had better metabolic control and fewer metabolic complications
 - (Del Canale S, Louis DZ, Maio V. et al. *The Relationship between empathy and disease complications. Acad Med* 2012, 87: 1243-1249)
- Individuals who engage in compassionate actions show improved health and longer lifespans.
 - *Psychol Sci* 2003; *Health Psychol* 2012

Does anyone ask to have diabetes? Or “deserve” it?

- Diabetes entails a lot of suffering.
- As health care providers, compassion is our natural response.
- Mindful presence is part of compassion.
- ***We know this, right? And still, we can get burned out and lose sight of the other's suffering. What can we do then???***



Self-Compassion

(important for genuine, sustained and sustainable compassion towards others...)



Self Compassion

Dr. Kristen Neff: 3 Elements of Self-Compassion

Self-Kindness:

Understanding,
not punishment

Sense of Common Humanity:

Everybody
goes through
this

Mindfulness:

Neither
ignoring nor
exaggerating
feelings of
failure

Let's Practice Together.



Self Compassion

- Studied in pts with diabetes (type 1 and 2)
- Mindful Self-Compassion Curriculum – 8 wks (like MBSR)
- MSC training increased self-compassion, and produced statistically significant reductions in depression and diabetes distress in intervention group vs. control.
 - *Diabetes Care July 2016*



Review of Practices

- **Positivity Practice:** What do I like/what is pleasant at this moment? (*our brains are hardwired for the negative!*)
- **Neural Integration:** Hand on heart, hand on belly, close eyes, 5 deep breaths. (*this soothes our nervous system*)
- **GLAD:** Gratitude, Learned, Accomplished, Delighted (*cognitive/affective reframe and perspective-taking*)
- **Self-Compassion:** Name the suffering; connect to universal nature of suffering; offer genuine self-kindness. (*emotional, heart-centered reset; meeting our own needs for love and appreciation and comfort*)

No matter how
dark the
moment, love
and hope are
always
possible.

George Chakiris

Next Steps for you?

- Please take a moment to envision how you could be just 10% more mindful and/or more compassionate – towards self and others.
- What might that feel like? What might that look like?
- What could you do on Monday when you return to work?
- ***What do you need to help you*** increase your mindfulness and self-compassion practice?



Thank you! Enjoy the weekend!

