

# Enhancing Wellness through Mindfulness Principles

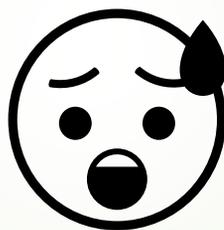
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Operations Manager – University of Washington  
Dementia Palliative Education Network



Stress



Anxiety



Depression

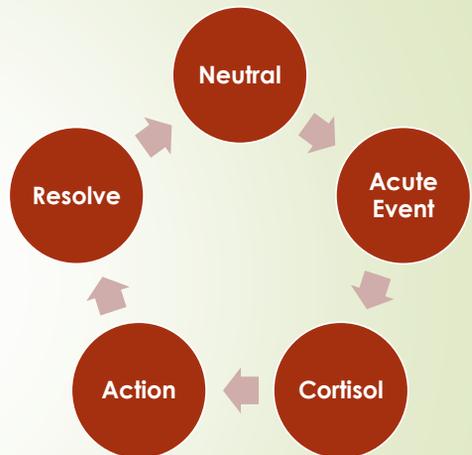


# Stress!



## Stress cycle

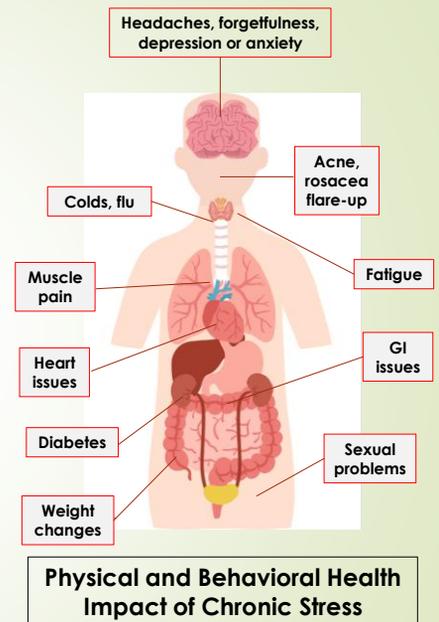
- Neutral State
- Acute Event
- Stress hormone (cortisol)
  - Redistribution of energy
  - Boost immune response
- Behavior or action
- Resolution
- Return to neutral



Schneiderman, N., Ironson, G., and Siegel, S.D. (2005). Stress and Health: Psychological, Behavioral, and Biological Determinants. *Annu Rev Clin Psychol*, 1: 607-628. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress/art-20046037>

## Risks of Chronic Stress

- Chronic Events or Repeated Stress Response
  - Physical/medical issues
  - Emotional and Behavioral Health challenges
    - Risk for depression, anxiety, substance use



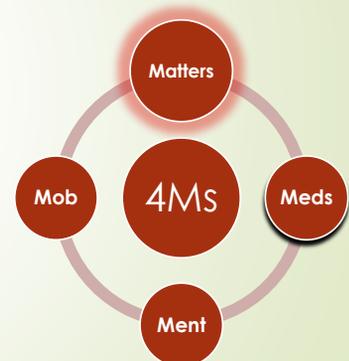
Almeida, D.M., Mogle, J., Aldwin, C.M., Charles, S.T., Drewelles, J., Spiro III, A. (2020). Charting Adult Development Through (Historically Changing) Daily Stress Processes. *American Psychologist*, 75(4): 511-524. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/amp0000597>

## Stress Across the Lifespan

- Increased difficulty to manage physiological arousal
- Multimorbidity increases vulnerability to stress

### GOOD NEWS!

- Decrease in daily stressors
- Gentler appraisal of stressors
- Differentiate problems vs. stressors
- Identify situations to avoid
- Shift towards positive aspects



Almeida, D.M., Mogle, J., Aldwin, C.M., Charles, S.T., Drewelles, J., Spiro III, A. (2020). Charting Adult Development Through (Historically Changing) Daily Stress Processes. *American Psychologist*, 75(4): 511-524. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/amp0000597>

# Anxiety



## Anxiety

- Emotion characterized by apprehension and somatic symptoms of tension in which an individual anticipates impending danger, catastrophe, or misfortune (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2018).
  - Worries, nervousness
  - Physiological response – faster heartbeat, sweating, muscle tightness
  - Internal “warning system”
  - Helps with decision making and increasing safety



## Anxiety Disorder

- Excessive and persistent fear and anxiety that impacts daily functioning
- Emotional/cognitive symptoms: frequent and persistent worries, feeling tense, restlessness, fearfulness, increased irritability, panic or sense of doom
- Physiological symptoms: increase heart rate, rapid breathing, trouble sleeping, nausea, upset stomach, sweating, shaking
- Physical health risks – similar to chronic stress
- Prevalence of anxiety symptoms in older adults
  - 11% - 14% (vs. 18.2% of all adults)

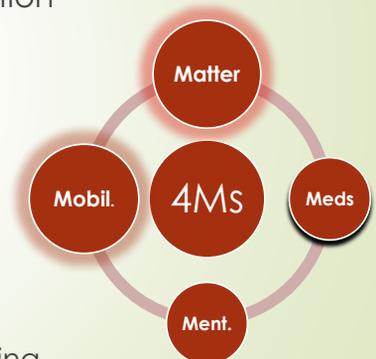
National Institute of Mental Health. Any Anxiety Disorder. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/any-anxiety-disorder>  
National Health Statistics Reports. Symptoms of Anxiety and Depression Among Adults: United States, 2019 and 2022. National Health Statistics Reports, No. 213. November 7, 2024.

## Anxiety – Risk Factors in Older Adults

- Chronic medical conditions (e.g. COPD, cardiovascular disease, diabetes)
- Pain, limited physical mobility, isolation
- Stressful life events, life changes
- Sleep disturbance
- Substance misuse or abuse

### GOOD NEWS!

- Likelihood decreases as one ages
  - Increased coping or meaning making



# Depression



What if I were never sad?  
What would I be missing?



# Depression

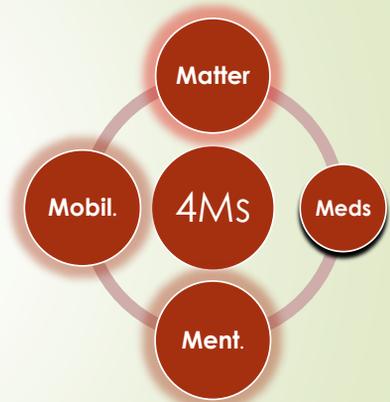
- Negative affective state
  - Unhappiness, discontent, extreme sadness, pessimism, despondency
  - Interferes with daily life and functioning
  - Two or more weeks
- Symptoms
  - Hopelessness, guilt, worthlessness
  - Decreased energy, loss of interest in usual activities
  - Difficulty with memory, concentrating, or making decisions
  - Changes in sleep and appetite, increased substance use
  - Physical symptoms – pain, digestive issues, cramps
  - Suicidal ideation
- Prevalence among older adults
  - 8.7% in U.S.
  - “U” shaped trajectory



National Institute on Aging. Depression and Older Adults. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/mental-and-emotional-health/depression-and-older-adults>  
American Psychological Association (2018). APA Dictionary of Psychology – depression. <https://dictionary.apa.org/depression>

# Depression – Risk Factors in Older Adults

- Medical conditions
  - Decrease in physical, health, or cognitive functioning
- Personal and/or family history
- Loss of partner, social support
- Loss of life purpose
- Financial stressors
- Substance use



## GOOD NEWS!

- Intervention options exist!

Sozeri-Varma, G. (2012). Depression in the Elderly: Clinical Features and Risk Factors. *Aging and Disease*, 3(6), 465-471.

# Mindfulness



## Mindfulness – What is it?

- Attention and awareness to the present moment
- Non-evaluative attitude
- Strategy to regulate emotions and attention
- State of well-being, psychological or spiritual state
- Personal development
  - Lifestyle
  - Self-Knowledge
  - Connection to self and/or environment
- Jon Kabat Zinn (1994) - "**Pay attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally**"
  - Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

Alvear D, Saler J, Cebolla A. Meditators' Non-academic Definition of Mindfulness. *Mindfulness* (N Y). 2022;13(6):1544-1554. doi: 10.1007/s12671-022-01899-3. Epub 2022 May 24. PMID: 35634214; PMCID: PMC9127491.

## Seven Principles of Mindfulness

- ▶ Non-judging
- ▶ Patience
- ▶ Beginner's Mind
- ▶ Trust
- ▶ Non-striving
- ▶ Acceptance
- ▶ Letting Go

## Case Study

- ▶ 79 yo, recent stroke
- ▶ Lives at home with spouse
- ▶ Uses wheelchair
- ▶ Previously able to walk, engage in community activities, manage household tasks



## Principles of Mindfulness: Non-judging

- ▀ Judgement
- ▀ Good vs. Bad
- ▀ Impact reactions



- ▀ Awareness
- ▀ Observation
- ▀ Witnessing



Kabat-Zinn, J. (2005). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness* (15th anniversary ed.). Delta Trade Paperback/Bantam Dell.

## Principles of Mindfulness: Patience

- ▀ Impatience
- ▀ Rushing towards the outcome



- ▀ Trust and allowing
- ▀ Acceptance of the moment



Kabat-Zinn, J. (2005). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness* (15th anniversary ed.). Delta Trade Paperback/Bantam Dell.

## Principles of Mindfulness: Beginner's Mind

- Holding on to beliefs
- Expectations



- Receptive to new possibilities
- Uniqueness of the moment



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## Principles of Mindfulness: Trust

- External guidance
- Uncertainty



- Trust and listen to self
- Honor your feelings



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## Principles of Mindfulness: Non-striving

- Finish line, checklist
- Goal orientation



- Present moment
- Paying attention



Kabat-Zinn, J. (2005). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness* (15th anniversary ed.). Delta Trade Paperback/Bantam Dell.

## Principles of Mindfulness: Acceptance

- Denial or resistance
- "I hate the rain! Why does it rain so much? I'm moving away!"



- Acceptance
- "Yup, it's raining. And I hate it."



Photo generated by Canva AI

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2005). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness* (15th anniversary ed.). Delta Trade Paperback/Bantam Dell.

## Principles of Mindfulness: Letting go

### ▶ Holding on



### ▶ Letting go, accept as is

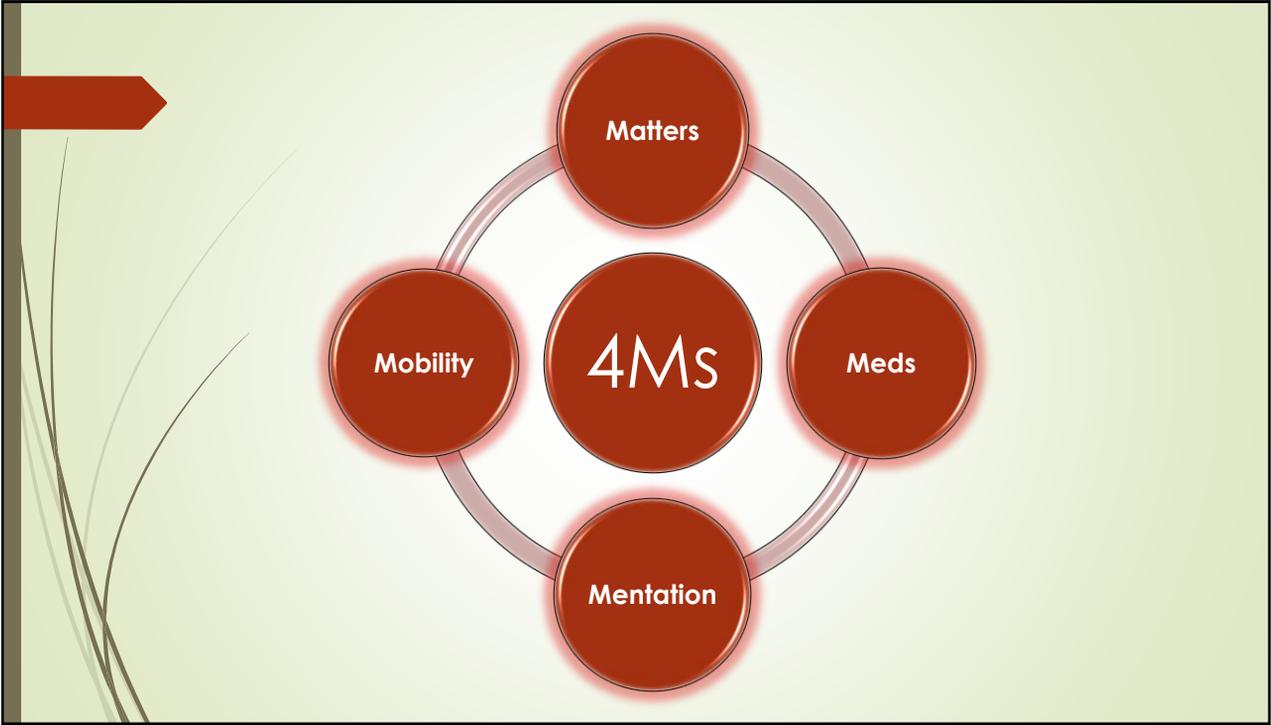


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## Benefits of Mindfulness

- ▶ Decreased stress, anxiety, depression
- ▶ Changes how we focus our attention and respond
- ▶ Increases capacity to cope with challenging situations
- ▶ Increased working memory, mental clarity and focus
- ▶ Improved sleep
- ▶ Improved quality of life
- ▶ Improved personal productivity
- ▶ Can improve pain management and reduce experience of pain

Talebislovareshani F, Mohammadi-Sarfang M. The Effect of Mindfulness-Based Interventions on Mental Health and Cognitive Function in Older Adults: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *J Aging Health*. 2025 Dec;37(10):619-631. doi: 10.1177/08982643241263882. Epub 2024 Jul 24. PMID: 39046424.  
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Mindfulness practice

Let's try a mindful meditation together!

# Mindfulness Resources

## Palouse Mindfulness Course

➤ <https://palousemindfulness.com/>

- 8-week, self-paced, online

## Insight Timer App – guided meditations

➤ <https://insighttimer.com/>

- Free and paid versions

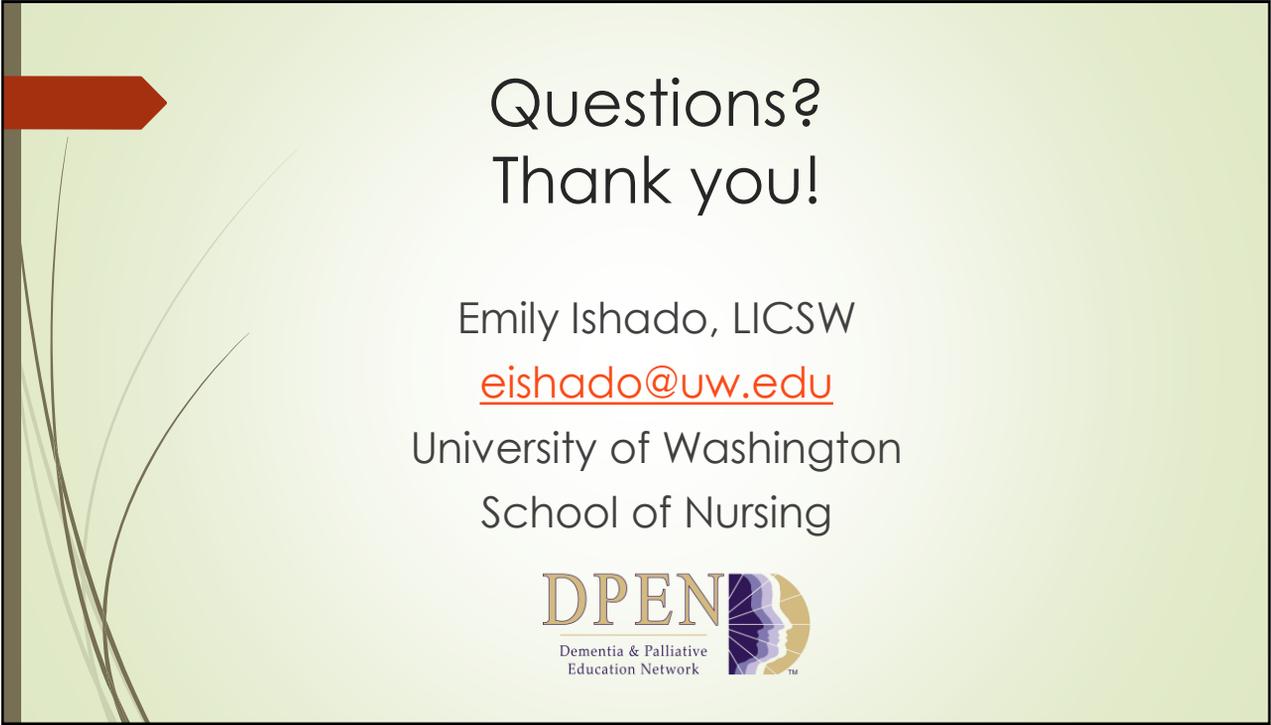
## Mindfulness Books – Jon Kabat Zinn

➤ <https://jonkabat-zinn.com/offerings/books/>

➤ Mindfulness Meditation for Pain Relief

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# Questions? Thank you!

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