Mindfulness Vs. Medication: A Natural Path To Emotional Balance Transcript

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Introduction to Mindfulness

Hi, ladies. Welcome back. It's Doctor Sharon Stills, your co-host for the summit. I am excited to be here and talk about something that is near and dear to my heart.

The act of mindfulness. To me, mindfulness is some of the best medicine you can get. Now again, we've talked about your thyroid. We've talked about your adrenals.

We've talked a little bit about your hormones. I have a lot more to say about that. But I did want to give a shout out and just spend a little time talking with you, about mindfulness.

I was fortunate enough to get introduced to the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn, who is the. I think he's the father of mindfulness medicine, mindfulness meditation.

In our society, he created Mbsr, which is an eight week course called Mindfulness based Stress Reduction.

Why Mindfulness Helps Anxiety and Depression

And I'm sure there's one near you. I got trained to lead and teach that, when I was in my first year of naturopathy medical schools in 1997. Quite a long time ago, and it really changed the way I live.

I had already been doing zazen, which is Zen Buddhist meditation, and mindfulness is just a little more palatable. So why mindfulness for depression? For anxiety?

Because it gives us a place to land and it gives us a place to observe. Often we are just in a loop. We are anxious about the same things we haven't really thought it through, and we're just so used to being anxious or feeling depressed that we don't even stop and examine.

And so what mindfulness does is it gives you an invitation to breathe, to be still, to observe. When we observe, we get a different perspective. And sometimes just shifting our perspective can shift our moods.

Now, what is the definition of mindfulness? To me, the definition of mindfulness is paying attention on purpose. Moment by moment. And then I like to add in with kindness and grace.

No beating yourselves up. This is a no beating yourselves up area. We have to be kind.

Defining Mindfulness and Building the Practice

We have to know that just like when we go to the gym, we don't walk in and bench press 500 pounds. Right. We got to work our way up. We got to go frequently.

We got to do repetitions. Maybe we need a coach, a trainer. And so it's the same with mindfulness. We are flexing the mindfulness muscle. And so you may lose track of the moment over and over and over again in the beginning.

And that's okay because it's paying attention. It's being aware. It's bringing awareness. And it's saying, oh, instead of breathing and feeling the beautiful sun or smelling that flower or enjoying who I'm with or feeling the music in my bones, I'm over here.

I'm in the past or I'm in the future, and it's an invitation to go, hey! I'm just going to come back in. I'm going to come back into my body. There's that saying.

The only way out is through. And with mindfulness, the only way out is paying attention. And so often if we have depression or we have anxiety and we're feeling it physically, we're having physical symptoms.

Maybe it's muscle tension, maybe it's nausea, maybe it's headaches, maybe it's heart palpitations. When we feel things we don't like, we freeze, we contract, we push them away.

Working Through Physical Sensations and Emotions

With mindfulness, it's an opportunity to say, hey, hello, muscle tension and to start to explore. What are you. Do you have a color? Do you have a vibration?

Do you have a sensation? Do you have a temperature or where are your boundaries? Do you have a message for me? By rather than constricting, but by inviting in and opening up, often things we're feeling will just, fade away.

They might come back, but then we have a tool. So learning to breathe and learning to be in the moment can be a phenomenal gift to give yourself. Now, I'm not saying I don't like guided meditation.

Sure, guide me to the beach. I'm in the middle of the desert and I would love to hear some ocean waves. Trust me. Pisces girl here. But that takes you outside of yourself.

Mindfulness. Another term is vipassana, takes you inside. Doesn't try to take you away to the beach so you don't feel it. Invites you to feel what you're feeling.

And I know some of you might be like, I don't really want to do that. That's scary. And I totally hear that. So go slow, Mbsr look up a class. You know, when the pandemic happened, so many things went online.

So now you can even find an eight week Mbsr class online. The work came out of UMass Amherst. Jon Kabat-Zinn.

Guided Meditation vs. Inner Awareness

He wrote many books for catastrophe. Living is a great one to learn about this. I love, wherever, wherever you go, there you are. Right. And so if we don't consciously make an effort to shift, to explore, to change, to get back to our center, to move through what's holding us back, then wherever you go, there you are.

It could be a relationship. It can be a different job. It can be a different city. But the same problems will follow us. The same challenges will follow us until we sit with them.

There's a beautiful poem. Whenever I'm talking about mindfulness, I talk about the poem by Rumi, the guest house, where? Envy knocks on the door, anger knocks on the door.

And instead of sweeping it under the rug or not opening the door, we say, come in, have a cup of tea. Let's talk. And it's so beautifully reflects what I'm talking about here.

Shifting the feeling, getting real, getting to understand why we're feeling the uncomfortable feelings that we're feeling. Everything can be our teacher.

Everything can be an opportunity to grow.

Jon Kabat-Zinn, MBSR, and Going Deeper

And now a lot of us have a lot of childhood baggage. We have inner girls, inner babies in us who are just just trying to get by because we had a very stressful childhood and so very often to get a regulated nervous system, to be able to sit in mindfulness, we do have to go back.

We do have to work through. And often this is with a professional. If you have a lot of trauma, don't take it on yourself. Get someone to guide you and help you, and hold your hand and teach you how to mindfully repair into yourself.

I have a little girl inside of me. We call her Shasha and she needed to be repatriated because when she grew up it was a scary place and things were not stable, and she learned to thrive on stress and chaos.

And she had to learn that it was okay to be safe and it was okay that I, Big Sharon, could take care of her. And so rather than being anxious now, I can be regulated and if this is available for me, this is available for you to.

I may be a doctor. I may know this stuff inside and out because it's what I've chosen. My life's work to be. Or I should say my the life's work that has chosen me.

But I'm a human too. And I have gone through my trials and my hard times, and so I want to be an inspiration to you, too. I'm no one special. My patients are just everyday people.

But if I can do it, if they can do it, you can do it too.

Healing Trauma and Reclaiming Calm

And when you learn and embody mindfulness, it colors become brighter. Music sounds better, hugs are deeper, laughter is more meaningful. Come recession is more profound.

Or maybe conversation is more mundane. But we see the beauty in the mundane. We see the beauty in just the gift of being alive. Life is precious, and the more we can be in the moment, the more we can appreciate it.

And again, if your anxiety or depression. Session or your neurotransmitter imbalance, sex hormones, if these things are out of order or out of balance, I should say, then balancing them will give you a stable base.

So then you can go do the deeper work, right? Because we're all here to learn and grow. And I look at it not as a chore, but as this beautiful gift, this opportunity to discover more about what it means to be human and what it means to be alive and to enjoy the the human adventure of, of senses, of touch, of taste, of sight, of hearing.

And so mindfulness can be a wonderful vehicle to drive you to a, a more balanced, more enjoyable, more grateful place. So I highly recommend checking out MSR.

Living with Presence and Gratitude

It's an eight week program. It could be a little stressful taking the stress reduction program. We always say that because it's homework and you know you got to show up.

It's a lot easier to take a capsule of theanine than to show up and do the work. But you can take fanning and then show up and do the work. So look up mindfulness, look up Jon Kabat-Zinn.

Stay in my community. We can meditate together and enjoy the rest of the talks today. Soak in the silence. Silence will scream truth at you if you just stop to listen.