



Balance and Mindfulness

By Kristin Shelesky, Ph.D., Licensed Psychologist

at the WCU Philly site

In recognition of the various roles that West Chester University students manage on a daily basis (I'm always impressed), balance is one of the keys to your personal and professional success. Since resuming classes and assignments after spring break, the timing is right to try to maintain a portion of the relaxation that you may have experienced during your break. Even if you didn't experience much relief from stress over the break, considering ways to **enhance the balance of your multiple roles** can serve you well beyond the rest of this semester.

Incorporating mindfulness into your life is one strategy to accomplish balance. **Mindfulness is the process of cultivating moment to moment awareness and intention in all that you do without necessarily trying to change or alter what you do.** Mindfulness practice is without judgment or evaluation, and rather is noticing your internal world to promote your health and well-being. Research supports substantial physical and emotional benefits of mindfulness, including in promoting a better work-life balance (e.g., Michel, Bosch, & Rexroth, 2014). By being mindful in your daily life, you can determine how best to balance your life. For example, based on your internal state, you can mindfully discern what you need most in each moment, whether it be to finish your paper or spend time with loved ones.

Mindfulness can be practiced in a myriad of ways, both informally and formally. To **practice mindfulness informally, people pay attention to their daily activities and internal states moment by moment.** One way to informally practice mindfulness would be to pay attention to your experiences moment by moment in your daily tasks. You might pick one task today, such as driving, and **focus on the sensations, thoughts, and feelings** you experience when driving. You might notice mindfulness may help you to be a better, more focused driver, in this example. Mindfulness **can be practiced more formally via meditation.** One of the most practiced and accessible ways to begin meditation practice is by **paying attention to your breath** without judging or changing your breath for a few minutes each day. Body scan meditations are particularly helpful for those who may notice they are holding stress in their bodies. **Lovingkindness meditations** allow people to access loving and kind feelings towards themselves, others, and the world around them. (There are many great **online resources** for guided meditations-here are just a couple of links: <http://www.freemindfulness.org/>; <http://marc.ucla.edu/body.cfm?id=22>).

I wish you the best in your mindfulness practice and in your home-work-school-life balance. Counseling services are available on Thursdays from 11am-2pm and 3pm-6pm while classes are in session. Please contact our staff support person, Ms. Keeya Faison, at 267-386-3026 or kfaison@passhe.edu to schedule an appointment.

A few mindfulness references:

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2005). *Coming to our senses: Healing ourselves and the world through mindfulness*. New York: Hyperion.

Michel, A., Bosch, C., & Rexroth, M. (2014). Mindfulness as a cognitive-emotional segmentation strategy: An intervention promoting work-life balance. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 87, 733-754.

Stahl, B., & Goldstein, E. (2010). *A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook*. Oakland: New Harbinger Publications, Inc.

Questions or comments about something in this newsletter? Would you like to contribute? Contact Philly Program Counselor, Marcie Cohen, at mcohen@wcupa.edu