



## A Path to Greater Ease

### *Mindfulness Based Caring*



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## The Truth Behind Caregiving

- 75% are concerned about their health.
- 61% suffer from high emotional stress.
- 53% experience strain regarding family issues.
- 43% experience high physical stress.
- 33% report symptoms of depression.
- Caregivers of a person living with a neurodegenerative disease are more likely to have high levels of stress hormones, reduced immune function, increased hypertension and coronary heart disease.

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I feel like I am in quicksand and can't  
find solid ground.

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"I struggle to adjust and adapt to so many changes. I feel so angry. Frustrated. Everything is such an endeavor.

I keep reminding myself to go slow, stay calm, and take it easy.

I am not doing so great in this role. I want to run away."

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Acceptance is not liking it, agreeing  
with it, or giving in.

It's letting go of the need to control  
it, and making peace with what is.



I find calm when I  
stop trying so hard  
to make things  
different.

### Making Room for Acceptance

- Accept that a diagnosis, with all its implications, will have a profound impact on your marriage, relationship, or friendship.
- Accept that you will not be perfect and you will get angry.
- Accept that everything changes.

The opposite of acceptance  
is resistance.

Resistance creates  
suffering.

Acceptance eases it.



Employ Empathy



The practice of  
understanding another  
person's experience from  
their perspective.

I kept trying to imagine what it was like to be in John's shoes, slowing, and surely losing abilities, self-esteem, status, and self-confidence.

When I was feeling frustrated I would tell myself, '**if he could, he would**'.

*Empathy sees*

Human Emotional Needs

**Need to feel respected.**  
**Need to have choice and control.**  
**Need to feel that life has purpose.**  
**Need to feel needed.**

"I am Sylvia. I was Sylvia before I was diagnosed, and I am still Sylvia after being diagnosed. I'm still the same person – treat me the same way. Talk to me the same way. Include me in the conversation as you would before."



## Need to feel respected.

Need to have choice and control.

Need to feel that life has purpose.

Need to feel needed.

- See the person first, not his or her disease.
- Treat like an adult at all times and under all circumstances.

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Elderspeak

- Sounds like speaking to a child
- Overly directive.
- Answers for the person
- “you don’t want to do that”
- Baby talk, patronizing

Study found:

*People frequently react to elderspeak by becoming withdrawn.*

## Enhancing Communication With Older Adults

Overcoming Elderspeak

**ABSTRACT**  
Older adults who are frequently spoken to in a condescending, patronizing, or infantilizing manner may experience negative effects on their self-esteem, social interaction, and overall quality of life. This article discusses a communication training program that significantly reduced the use of elderspeak by nursing assistants and led to more respectful, less controlling, and equally as caring communication between nursing assistants and nursing home residents. The program is an essential tool for nursing staff who provide health care to the growing population of older adults.

**Social interaction and the ability to respond to others is a key need of all humans from the cradle to the grave (Katz, 1985). As individuals age, their social interaction needs become more complex. The importance of social interaction is highlighted by the fact that older adults who are frequently spoken to in a condescending, patronizing, or infantilizing manner may experience negative effects on their self-esteem, social interaction, and overall quality of life. This article discusses a communication training program that significantly reduced the use of elderspeak by nursing assistants and led to more respectful, less controlling, and equally as caring communication between nursing assistants and nursing home residents. The program is an essential tool for nursing staff who provide health care to the growing population of older adults.**

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**KRISTINE WILLIAMS, PhD, RN, SUSAN KEMPER, PhD, AND MARY LEE HUMMERT, PhD**

**JOURNAL OF GERONTOLOGICAL NURSING**

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*Empathy sees*

Need to feel respected.

Need to have choice and control.

Need to feel that life has purpose.

Need to feel needed.

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What is the person hearing?




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No Choice or Control	An offering of choice and control
Let's get your robe on.	
I'll cut that up for you.	
I'll bet you'd like the television on.	
I'll take care of that.	

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No choice are control	An offering of choice and control
You need to take your medications.	
Why don't you sit over there.	
You don't really want to go do you?	
No, not like that.	

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Need to feel respected.  
**Need to have choice and control.**  
 Need to feel that life has purpose.  
 Need to feel needed.

- Ask.
- Offer choices, all day, everyday.
- Include in decisions every day.
- Adopt a “no wrong way” spirit.

This has been our most  
 delightful visit with my mother  
 in years, not because she  
 changed, but because we did.



Daughter

*Empathy sees*



**Need to feel that life has purpose.**  
**Need to feel needed.**



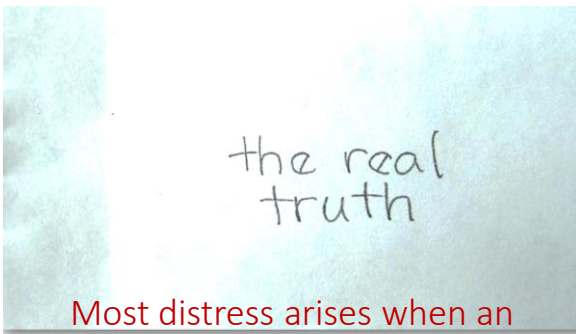
Need to feel respected.  
 Need to have choice and control.  
**Need to feel that life has purpose.**  
 Need to feel needed.

- Recognize and support the need to contribute.
- Focus on strengths and abilities.
- Avoid assuming the person is incompetent —these beliefs will influence your attitude & your behaviors.
- Encourage often.
- Praise often.

The person living with dementia  
 is not unhappy or upset simply  
 because of their disease or me.

They are living with unwanted  
 dependency and loss.

They need to feel useful,  
 respected and loved.



Most distress arises when an  
 emotional need is threatened.

- ☐ Feeling shamed or humiliated; a loss of dignity and/or respect.
- ☐ Being told what to do; a loss of control or choice.
- ☐ No reason to get up in the morning; a loss of a meaningful and purpose-filled life.



Care partners who 'overcome' recognize that it is not the actual situation that causes excess anger or stress and limits their ability to cope.



It is their thoughts.

Mindfulness Based Caring

what is  
mindfulness?



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## Mindfulness is **Not**

- panacea or a cure for every ill
- a religion
- a state of bliss
- an empty mind
- controlling the mind
- mind control
- something to harass yourself about
- an assurance that you will always be happy, well, safe, and stress-free.



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“Mindfulness means  
paying attention  
in a particular way;  
On purpose, in  
the present moment,  
and non-judgmentally.”

Jon Kabat-Zinn



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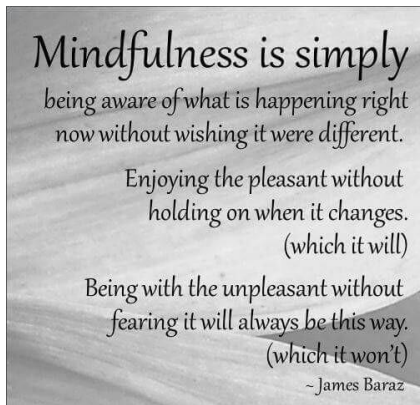
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## Mindfulness Is

- a practice.
- choosing to notice what we feel.

Worry

Anger

Guilt

Resentment

Loss



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In order to change negative feelings,  
we first have to notice them.

To be in relationship with what  
you're going through, to hold it,  
and, in some sense to befriend it, is  
where the healing lies.



Jon Kabat-Zinn



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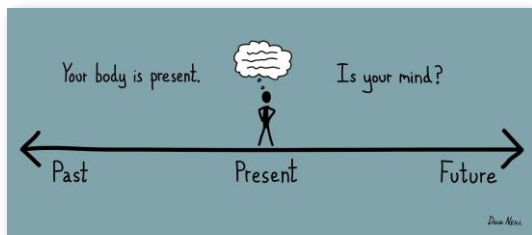
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## Mindfulness Is

- being aware of our pattern to become entangled in our stories, lost in our incessant thinking and doing.



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50% of the time we are lost in our thinking  
What's the Problem?



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The tendency to think about what is NOT happening comes with an emotional cost.

“Some terrible things have happened in my life, some of which have actually happened.”

~Mark Twain



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Mindfulness **Is**



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Mindfulness **Is**

- the practice of creating space (pause) between the stimulus and our response.



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## Mindfulness **Is**

- focused attention on the 'now'  
(many ways)



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### 3 Everyday Mindfulness Practices



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*Joyful awakening*



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## S.T.O.P and Pause Practice

**S**top

**T**ake a Breath

**O**bserve

**P**ause and thoughtfully respond



**Pause**

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## Self-Compassion Break




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**1. This is a moment of suffering**

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**2. Suffering is a part of life- I'm not alone.**

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Put your hands over your heart, feel the warmth of your hands and the gentle touch of your hands on your chest.

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**3. May I give myself the compassion that I need.**

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This practice can be used any time of day or night.

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I'm able to recognize that  
caregiving is now the major chapter  
in my life.

My future holds other chapters. But  
for now, I'm being remade and  
reformed by my role of caregiving  
into a gentler, more compassionate,  
more patient, kinder person.

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