Mindfulness Meditation Lowers Stress Hormone and Decreases Inflammation in Body

Reprinted from the London Telegraph Sarah Knapton, Science Editor 24 January 2017

Mindfulness meditation, the practice of paying more attention to the present moment, helps lower stress hormones and decreases inflammation in the body, scientists have proven for the first time.

The training has been growing in popularity in recent years, with the NHS recommends mindfulness as a way to reduce stress and anxiety.

Studies have shown that mindfulness can decrease self-reported stress levels and make people feel calmer, but until now it was unknown if it was having a biological impact on the body.

Now scientists in the US have shown that an eight-week course of mindfulness, involving daily classes can help lower inflammatory molecules and stress hormones by around 15 per cent.

The therapy was shown to work better than non-meditation stress management course. Mindfulness could help lower stress levels and fight of illness, the new study suggests "Mindfulness meditation training is a relatively inexpensive and low-stigma treatment approach, and these findings strengthen the case that it can improve resilience to stress," said lead author Dr. Elizabeth Hoge, associate professor in Georgetown University Medical Center's Department of Psychiatry.

"The study adds to evidence for the effectiveness of mindfulness meditation in treating anxiety."

The study, published in the journal Psychiatric Research, included 89 patients with anxiety disorder, a condition if chronic and excessive worrying which is thought to affect around three million people in Britain.

The participants were divided into two groups, with one taking an eight-week mindfulness course and the other taking a stress management course over the same period.

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Dear Members and Friends,

In January, we had our first WA State audit of our Behavioral Health Services and passed with high marks. Of course, we were thrilled but had great confidence in the ability of our staff to ensure that this would be the result. We had just added three new part-time counselors and our services in Vancouver will be expanding even more this year we hope through grants that are pending. While our state inspector was here we also asked him to check out our new space in Longview. He did and we are in the process of getting that approved for licensure this year. Thanks to Janet Ragan, Melinda McLeod, and Becky Anderson who have spent many, many hours to help bring these services to our greater communities.

Our Annual Meeting was held on the eve of the “great snow”. We had about 25% of the turnout we usually have but were able to move through the necessary business of having the membership present approve our Board and the Board officers as well as the budget for 2017. We started early and ended quite promptly after those present enjoyed a short skit featuring Janet Ragan, Melinda McLeod, Suzanne Arnits, Jan Kell, and me. We had a great deal of fun preparing for this based on preparation Janet had done depicting a return from a long, tough safari during 2016. Janet and Melinda constructed simple costumes of head great and tails. We may have laughed harder than the audience did but all agreed that it is very, very good laugh once in a while when most of our days include hours of very serious work.

We will be sending hold-the-date announcements out to the community about a major fundraiser we will hold in April. Vanessa Gaston will be the speaker and will talk about the progress for the Diversion and Crisis Stabilization Center the mental health community hopes to build in Vancouver. State funding has been requested and by April we should know details. NAMI SW WA began discussion about the need for this in 2015 when participants in our Jean Lough Conference decided this was the number one priority for our community. A similar center has opened this past weekend in Portland.

Check our Bulletin Board on page 11 of this newsletter to find out more about the play that will be presented at R. A. Long High School at the end of this month. The play, written by a teacher and father in the Los Angeles schools is about a young man diagnosed with schizophrenia. NAMI SW WA will be helping the Long High School actors learn more about this diagnosis. Please plan to attend this important event.

Regards,

Peggy
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Before and after the training course, participants underwent the Trier Social Stress Test, a standard technique for inducing a stress response, in which the participants are asked at short notice to give a speech before an audience, and are given other anxiety-inducing instructions.

"We were testing the patients' resilience because that's really the ultimate question—can we make people handle stress better?" added Dr. Hoge.

People have self-reported that meditation lowers stress but it is the first time that the effect has been proven in the body. Credit: Rex Features

During the stress test, the team monitored blood-based markers of subjects' stress responses, including levels of the stress hormone cortisol and the inflammatory proteins IL-6 and TNF-a, which usually ramp up when the body is fighting illness.

The control group who took the stress management course showed a modest rise in markers on the second test compared to the first, suggesting a worsening of their anxiety from having to endure the test again.

By contrast, the meditation group showed big drops in these markers on the second test, suggesting that the meditation training had helped them cope.

The team also found that the meditation group patients, compared to controls, experienced significantly greater reductions in self-reported measures of stress after their course.

Dr. Hoge now wants to test whether mindfulness-related treatments can help other psychiatric conditions, and to compare treatments to standard psychiatric drug therapies.
Marijuana Use Linked to Schizophrenic-Related Brain Changes

A new study published in the *Schizophrenia Journal* found that marijuana use by teenagers who smoke daily can lead to brain changes resembling those seen in schizophrenics. The study was done at the Northwestern University Feinburg School of Medicine.

Participants included one group of people in their early twenties who started smoking regularly at the age of 16 or 17. Two other groups consisted of schizophrenics with no history of substance use disorders and schizophrenics who did have marijuana use disorders. Those who had a history of using were drug free for 2 years.

Results showed deterioration in the thalamus of the brain, even though participants no longer used the drug. This area is involved in working memory and leads to poor everyday functioning and academic performance. It is also involved in memory and communication. The subjects’ brains had not recovered, even though they had two years of abstinence. Researchers concluded there are long term effects from heavy use. They believe the substance THC, delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol, found in marijuana, is responsible for the changes.

These effects were also apparent in schizophrenic individuals who had a history of marijuana use. Of this group, 90% reported using the drug heavily prior to developing the disease. Researchers noted that a person with a family history of schizophrenia could increase the risk of developing the disorder by using. The scientists pointed out that further research is needed to fully understand the drug’s effect, but young users clearly run the risk of developing some brain damage. Marijuana, legally or illegally obtained, is the most common drug of choice today.

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NAMI SW WA wants to save money as well as paper. We currently print several thousand newsletters each month, for mailing and for distribution at community events. We know the newsletter is valuable, because we hear from readers about how much they enjoy it. The one way we can save both money, from postage, and trees from the reams of paper we use each month to print, is to cut back on our newsletter mailing. **If you receive your newsletter by mail and you have an email address please call or write us with your email address so we can send your next newsletter electronically.**

Thanks, NAMI SW WA
Does Gut Bacteria Steer the Development of Young Brains?

Scientists are studying how specific bacteria found in the intestinal tract of infants could be influencing the development of their brains. It seems like a stretch to get from the gut to the brain, but evidence shows an infant's journey through mother's birth canal leaves millions of these healthy microbes all over the baby's body. Among other things, these influence proper breakdown of breast milk or formula. Studies are finding that these bacteria and others introduced during a child's first few year might influence a person's later mental health.

Studies have been conducted with mice. They are finding that a mammal's gut bacteria affects the way its brain develops and grows. Evidence even points to how these invisible microbes might influence the animals behaves as an adult.

The researchers worked with two types of mice. One group was raised in a germ-free environment while the other group had healthy bacteria in their guts. The two groups clearly behaved differently. The germ-free group took more risks, were more active and less anxious. When gut bacteria from the healthy mice was introduced into those born in the sterile environment, they behaved like the normal group. They became more cautious, a trait that naturally protects young ones. This same situation did not occur when tried on adult mice. Researchers believe there is a window of time when behavior can be changed by introduction of healthy bacteria.

One study showed that gut bacteria can change the level of stress chemicals in the body. Noradrenaline and dopamine were processed more quickly in the sterile group of mice than those with normal levels of germs. Whether processed quickly or slowly in the brain affects how the young brain develops. If these results in mice correspond to how human infants evolve, the type of delivery a child experiences and what germs they are later exposed to can even influence whether a child will develop anxiety or depression.

The vagus nerve, which connects the gut to the brain, could be responsible for communicating the messages between the two. These germs, once thought to only be necessary in processing food are infinitely more complicated than once believed. The question of gut health influencing mental health is still in its infancy, but sounds exciting.
Let’s Talk Mental Health

Have you been diagnosed with a mental illness? Have you felt like you were given a label you didn’t want? Have you asked yourself, “Why me”? If so, you may have felt a combination of relief, hope, fear, shock, denial, shame, confusion, anger, guilt, and loss. Although these are common feelings, being diagnosed with a mental illness can be extremely hard. On top of dealing with these feelings, there is so much new information to take in—information from doctors, mental health professionals, family, and well-meaning friends. You don’t have to take it all in now, you can take your time. Right now, the important thing to remember is, although this has made a big impact on your life, you are not alone in your feelings.

In addition to asking, “Why me?”, one of the first questions people newly diagnosed ask is, “Is it my fault?” It is not uncommon to wonder if you caused this yourself. Family members may also wonder if they are to blame. The fact is, no one is immune from mental health problems and like many other health conditions, it’s rarely due to one specific thing. Playing roles in a mental health condition are: family history, stressful events and situations, other health problems, substance use, environmental issues, and your personality and thinking style.

Complicating matters, is the fact that it can take a long time to get a correct diagnosis. Perhaps you realized that something was wrong, but it took time to make up your mind to get help. Then it takes time for your mental health professional to gather clues based information gathered from you and other sources. It may be necessary to see how your symptoms affect you over a period of time and if they follow a pattern. Other life problems will be considered as well as your thoughts feelings and behaviors. Additionally, it is not uncommon to be diagnosed with more than one mental illness at the same time.

Feeling comfortable with the diagnosis and explanations may take time. You may never feel completely comfortable with it, but it is important to ask yourself: Does my definition of the problem work for me? Do I understand what I need to do to maintain my well-being? Can I manage my symptoms so I can live well?

Asking the questions, “Why Me?” and “What now?” are the starting point. The next question is, “What now?” We will look at this in our next newsletter to help you plan, rebuild and recover.
**Psychoeducation and tools for a successful and sustained recovery from mental illness.**

**Drop in.** Support for friends and family of people who have a mental health diagnosis.

**Drop in.** Support for families of military personnel who are struggling with mental health issues.

**Drop in.** Peer support group for those affected by mental illness and sustaining recovery from mental illness.

**Psychosocial education and tools for a successful and sustained recovery from mental illness.**

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>500-5:00 pm</td>
<td>NAMI Walks and Talks (By Appointment)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00-12:00 pm</td>
<td>Peer Led Support Group (Weekly)</td>
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<td>2:00-3:15 pm</td>
<td>STRIVE First Steps (Weekly)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:30-11:45 am</td>
<td>Women’s Support Group (Board of Directors Meeting)</td>
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<td>6:00-7:15 pm</td>
<td>Family to Family Class (Weekly)</td>
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<td>6:00-8:30 pm</td>
<td>Family Support Group (Weekly)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:00-5:00 pm</td>
<td>STRIVE (Weekly)</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:00-1:00 pm</td>
<td>NAMI Walks and Talks (By Appointment)</td>
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**Unforeseen circumstances that cause a group or class to be cancelled. Please call 360-695-2823.**

**All listed events are held at our Vancouver office unless otherwise noted.**
**NEW LOCATION**

(360) 703-6722
Longview, WA 98632
1128 Broadway

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday-Friday</th>
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<tr>
<td>STRive First Steps</td>
<td>10:00 - 11:30 AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Support Group</td>
<td>10:00 - 12:00 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Orientation</td>
<td>4th Thursday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer Support Group for those with mental illnesses</td>
<td>Drop In</td>
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**Monday**

Office Hours 10 - 4
Family Support Group
STRive First Steps
Volunteer Orientation - 4th Thursday
Family Support Group (Drop in)

**Tuesday**

Office Hours 10 - 4
Family to Family (registrants only)
Family Support Group (Drop in)

**Wednesday**

6:00 - 8:30 pm
Family to Family (registrants only)

**Thursday**

ART Group
Volunteer Orientation - 4th Thursday
STRive First Steps
Family Support Group

**Friday**

Office Hours 10 - 4
Family to Family (registrants only)
Make Your Voice Heard on Monday 2-20-17!

Lobby for NAMI and NAMI SW WA
NAMI members and supporters are the most effective people to educate legislators about mental illness and the need to change our current "mental illness" system to a "mental health" system.

NAMI SW WA will hold a pre-lobby day training and organizational program on Friday, February 3rd from 10 am to noon. If you are interested in learning more about lobbying and about the mental health issues our lobbyists will be working for this year, please come to this session. You will find it informative, and you will be able to contribute your stories that our group can take to our legislators in Olympia. Call to pre-register at 360-695-2823.

In 2015 approximately 264 billion cigarettes were sold in the U.S. and adults with mental illnesses smoked almost a third of them.

NAMI SW WA can connect you with tobacco cessation programs.
Cowlitz Corner

Welcome to the Cowlitz Corner. We look forward to helping you along your journey with mental illness recovery.

We’ve moved! Please visit us at 1128 Broadway in Longview, WA. The schedule for our classes and groups have changed, please look in the Cowlitz schedule in the Newsletter for accurate information.

This month, Peggy, Sharon, and David made a presentation to the East Hills Alliance Church in Kelso. They presented the movie “Paper Tigers” and also discussed “ACEs” with the congregation. Thank you to Doug and Becky Radke for giving us the opportunity to reach out and serve those in our community who are living with mental illness and their loved ones. Together we can do great things.

We’re excited to announce that we are able to offer the Family-to-Family class at our office in Cowlitz County. The start date is February 7, 2017. The class will meet on Tuesday’s and Thursday’s from 6 PM - 8:30 PM. Family-to-Family is a 6-week course. It’s an educational program for family, significant others and friends of people living with mental illness. It is a designated evidenced-based program. Research shows that the program significantly improves the coping and problem-solving abilities of the people closest to an individual living with a mental health condition.

NAMI Family-to-Family is taught by NAMI-trained family members who have been there, and includes presentations, discussion and interactive exercises. Pre-registration is required. please call 360.703.6722 for more information. All of our services and groups are no charge to the consumer.

DID YOU KNOW?
Self-talk can have a great impact on your confidence. It can be positive or negative, and have different effects on how you feel. Here are some tips on how you can help take control of your self-talk.

  - Turn “I always” or “I never” into “Just this time” or “Sometimes”.
  - Replace judgmental statements like “I’m an idiot” with factual ones like “I made a mistake”.
  - Accept responsibility for your actions and no one else's.

It’s not always easy to do. However, taking control of self-talk can become a habit and positive self-talk helps in recovery.
### Bulletin Board

- **Our Kelso office has moved to Longview!**  We have a wonderful new location at 1128 Broadway, Suite A, Longview, WA 98632. Please stop by and visit us in our new office.

- **A focus group sponsored by Beacon Health Options** will be held on Thursday, February 9th from 4-6 pm. Family members/caregivers who have loved ones with a mental health diagnosis are encouraged to attend. This group will be held at our office at 5411 E Mill Plain Blvd, Suite 4, Vancouver, WA.

- **Family to Family classes are starting up at both of our locations.** Family to Family is a twelve week education course for families with adult family members with a mental health diagnosis.
  - **Vancouver:** Feb 9-April 27, 2017 (Thursday evenings for 12 wks) 6:00-8:30pm call 360-695-2823 to register
  - **Longview:** Feb 7-March 14, 2017 (Tues & Thurs eves for 6 wks) 6:00-8:30pm call 360-703-6722 to register

- **The Mental State** - A play presented by students at R.A. Long High School (2903 Nichols Blvd, Longview, WA 98632) depicts the life of a student diagnosed with schizophrenia. NAMI SW WA peers are helping train the actors and will have a literature table at each performance.
  - Friday, February 24th - 7:30 pm
  - Saturday, February 25th - 7:30 pm
  - Friday, March 3rd - 7:30 pm
  - Saturday, March 4th - 2:00 pm and 7:30 pm
NAMI SW WA commends R.A. Long HS and theatre director Susan Donahue for courageously taking on this project.

- **Basics Teacher Training Class** February 10-12. Call 360.695.2828 to register. Basics is an education program for parents and other caregivers of children and adolescents living with mental illness. It is taught by trained teachers who are the parent or other caregivers of individuals who developed the symptoms of mental illness prior to the age of 18 years.
- $50 ($35 membership fee plus $15 donation)
- $100 ($35 membership fee plus $65 donation)
- $35 Individual membership
- $3 Open Door annual membership
- Free—membership scholarship
- Donation $ __________

☆ We are a registered non-profit organization 501(C) (3) and donations are tax deductible.

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Phone: (_____) _________________________
E-Mail: ________________________________

NAMI Membership Includes:
- NAMI National Advocate Magazine, quarterly
- Washington Friday Facts, weekly e-mail by request
- NAMI SW WA Newsletter, monthly

Member Discounts on NAMI Events & Materials,

Please return your payment and completed form to:

NAMI Southwest Washington
5411 E Mill Plain Blvd, Suite 4
Vancouver, WA 98661

To use a credit card and join online, go to www.namiswwa.org and click on Join NAMI.