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Lightly Peaceful: Facilitating College Transition Through Instagram Delivered Mindfulness Experiences

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Abstract

This creative project is an investigation into the feasibility and efficacy of offering mindfulness experiences to college freshmen through Instagram, a popular social media platform. Research indicates that many college freshmen struggle with issues such as depression, social isolation, anxiety, substance abuse, poor academic performance, overeating, etc., all of which may increase the likelihood of dropping out of college or the establishment of long-term dysfunctional coping patterns. Mindfulness has been noted to mitigate many of the difficulties associated with making the transition from high school to college; however, very few studies investigate the effects of offering mindfulness experiences through social media applications. The research that is available in this area is limited in scope and focus, and frequently complicated by design issues. Thus, with a dearth of research available, it seems that there is a genuine need to create a mindfulness resource for college students that is delivered through the use of social media in order to investigate the efficacy of this delivery mechanism. Since over ninety percent of college students engage with social media regularly, the hope is that offering mindfulness through Instagram will be both appealing and engaging for students, thus enhancing participation. The goal is to create an enjoyable forum where students can learn about mindfulness and engage directly with mindfulness practices or experiences in order to enhance coping skills during this challenging period. Ultimately, the prediction is that regularly practicing mindfulness will mitigate the severity of the adaptive struggles that college students experience, perhaps resulting in higher levels of subjective happiness, improved decision-making skills, lowered incidences of substance abuse, decreased loneliness or isolation, better grades, and higher retention rates.

Keywords: Instagram, mindfulness, college transition, social media

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As technology has progressed in recent years, so has reliance on social media for personal connections. More people rely on social media platforms for social engagement and peer interactions than ever before; it has become the primary means by which many people interact with one another and their world. This deep engrossment with technological devices is largely evident, as people often walk with their heads down, deeply immersed in what is on their screens instead of the world around them, such that "texting while walking might be a form of addictive behavior" (Chen, 2019). Technological devices have become so addictive that in January 2019, 69% of people between the ages of 18 and 69 admitted to accessing their devices while driving (Teen Safe, 2019), thereby putting their own lives, as well as those of others, in danger. Additionally, 94% of college freshmen indicated daily use of at least one social media platform (Boyle et al., 2016, p. 22). One source even reports that college students between the age of 18 and 24 "estimate that they look at their phones more than 80 times per day" (Lattie et al., 2019, p. 2).

On the surface it appears that having the ability to communicate with more people and to not be limited by geographic proximity, would lead to greater happiness and a corresponding sense of social connection. However, this is not always true; instead of increasing a sense of belonging, many people seem to have more of a sense of disconnection than ever before. For example, one study of 1,787 people between the ages of 19 and 32 demonstrated that people who spent over two hours a day on social media sites were twice as likely to feel socially isolated as those who spent only a half hour a day; people who spent even more daily time on social media were three times as likely to feel lonely (Hobson, 2017). This is particularly concerning in regard

to those who are vulnerable to the negative psychological effects of emotional isolation. As rates of depression, anxiety, and loneliness, etc., appear to be increasing, overall happiness seems to be decreasing; over seventy percent of teens ages 13 to 17 claim anxiety and depression are significant problems for teens in their communities (Horowitz & Graf, 2020).

This is also particularly true for many first-year college students, who are especially vulnerable due to the huge changes and stressors they encounter when making the transition from high school to college life. The period of time between high school and independent adulthood, frequently known as "emerging adulthood," is often accompanied by "concerning levels of stress-related psychological conditions, including anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbance" (Greeson et al., 2014, p. 229). Additionally, at least 50% of college students "report significant levels of anxiety and depression, and 16.5% report a history of suicidal or self-harm behavior" (Greeson et al., 2014, p. 222). As stress increases, so does the likelihood of maladaptive coping measures which may include "poor coping strategies, unhealthy relationships, and deteriorating academics" (Dvoráková et al., 2017, p. 259).

These issues may culminate in significant mental health problems and physical problems (Dvoráková et al., 2017, p. 259). Over 95% of college counseling centers recently indicated "that the number of students with significant psychological problems was a growing concern on their campus[es]" (Lattie et al., 2019, p. 1) and

> because college counseling centers across the United States are frequently understaffed, have limited budgets, and operate on waitlists for much of the year, it might be in their best interest to support the incorporation of technology-enabled mental health programs into routine practice, as a supplement to their core services (Lattie, 2019, p. 3).

With coping skills being greatly challenged, particularly in the first year of college, success and

retention rates may be impacted. Students' long-term wellbeing may have "a determinant impact on adult success," which only further indicates the critical nature of assisting students to navigate this transitionary period successfully (Dvoráková et al., 2017, p. 265).

Thus, there is a greater need now than ever to foster a supportive, as well as an interconnected, environment for college freshmen; these students are often struggling with feeling disconnected from all that is familiar, while simultaneously finding themselves burdened with new responsibilities and expectations. The relevant question becomes how to change the nature of college freshmen experiences within peer groups and more global social structures, in order to facilitate a sense of support, community, and compassion, as well as to develop healthy long-term coping skills; this is currently particularly challenging, as feelings of isolation and encounters with intolerance are rapidly becoming societal norms. Perhaps an even more important question that begs to be asked is: how can new college students be taught to truly see one another, to extend compassion and friendship, even if they are complete strangers, particularly at a time when they are prone to primarily worry about themselves? And beyond this, is there a way that college students can learn to offer support and encouragement to others in little ways, making small gestures of caring that will ultimately make a difference for themselves and others?

Mindfulness appears to be one possible avenue for fostering an inclusive, socially supportive environment during the potentially difficult transition from high school to college, as well as a means to enhance personal well-being. Because the first year of college is "a very stressful developmental period for students and is associated with a number of academic, personal, social, and emotional difficulties" (Mettler et al., 2019, p. 39), it is critical to discern if mindfulness might be able to mitigate the severity of these issues, while simultaneously

promoting compassion and a greater sense of social connection. Since it is "beyond the ability of the individual to change the environment to reduce stress…it is important that methods be found to reduce the college students' responses to stress; to make them more resilient when high levels of stress occur" (de Castro, 2018). Research indicates that mindfulness training may decrease both anxiety and depression in college students, thereby lessening unhealthy stress responses; an additional benefit is that it also increases the capacity for self-compassion (de Castro, 2018). Students who are able to be kinder and more tolerant of themselves, less rigid with their expectations and more forgiving of their mistakes, are far more resilient than students who are not. Therefore, mindfulness should be investigated as a possible means for increasing psychological wellbeing in college students and for negating unhealthy coping methods.

The final question has to do with whether or not utilizing social media platforms to promote mindfulness would increase college students' receptivity and engagement with it, thereby increasing the likelihood that they would participate in mindfulness-oriented activities and practices for extended periods of time. College students are both adept at and often engrossed in the use of social media; in the 18 to 24-year-old age category, 94% use YouTube, 80% use Facebook, 78% use Snapchat, 71% use Instagram, and 45% use Twitter (Smith & Anderson, 2020). With such high engagement, it is important to consider whether it would be possible to use the very same social media that appears to sometimes promote disconnection in order to facilitate human connection, especially since "we are living in a time of unprecedented social connection and access to educational resources. Some may argue that we are simultaneously living in a time of unprecedented awareness of social exclusion and information overload" (Lattie, 2019, p. 2).

Since students are bound to experience stress, anxiety, social uncertainties, and a lack of confidence as they leave behind what is familiar in order to enter the university world, it is imperative to not only examine the difficulties associated with the transition to college; it is also critical to investigate the impact that social media may or may not have on these student's lives in order to ascertain whether or not a mindfulness oriented social media project would ease this transition. It is important to remember that

the social process of adjusting to college can be aided through social media. Digital

technology education should not be the introduction of tools; rather, it is the means by

which students take advantage of social media in their roles on campus, as active

members of the global community, and as future leaders in their chosen professions

(Woods, et al., 2019).

It is possible that social media might be a widely accepted delivery tool amongst college freshmen for fostering a different type of first year college experience.

Literature Review

Transition to College and Adjustment Challenges

It should come as no surprise that for most students, adapting to the college environment can be quite difficult; this is related to a multitude of factors, including changes in the social climate, increased academic expectations, different living arrangements, financial constraints and responsibilities, etc. (Cole et al., 2020, p. 278). Transitioning to college successfully is no small feat because

rather than involving a single negative event, transitions consist of a series of difficult

experiences over a period of time. Any one of these events may be only mildly troubling,

yet the cumulative and prolonged nature of the novel and difficult circumstances may

contribute to a high level of unhappiness and distress (Terry et al., 2013, p. 280). In 2008, over one third of college students who responded to the National College Health Assessment claimed that stress was the number one thing that adversely affected their ability to do well academically (Ramler et al., 2015, p. 179). There are quite a number of factors that overall contribute to college stress, which may include financial concerns, poor academic performance, worry about low grades, roommate difficulties, other social issues, sleep problems, adjustment issues regarding increased responsibilities, alcohol or drug use, etc. (Ramler et al., 2015, p. 179). Two large surveys taken over time give an indication of the alarming increase in rates of anxiety and depression in college students: moderate to severe depression increased from 23.2% in 2011 to 41.1% in 2018 and moderate to severe anxiety increased from 17.9% in 2013 to 34.4% in 2018 (Joseph, 2019). The implication from this data is that college resources are currently not able to keep up with or provide adequate assistance to students; in response to these statistics, Professor Daniel Eisenberg of the School of Public Health at the University of Michigan states he "believes colleges should also invest in online resources to supplement traditional on-campus counseling services" (Joseph, 2019).

The first year of college is particularly challenging, with research indicating that this inaugural year of higher education is more stressful than subsequent years (Ramler et al., 2015, p. 180). This is in part largely due to the new and unfamiliar nature of many of the experiences: academic demands are higher, independence is expected, social support systems are not in place yet, friend groups have not been established, homesickness often occurs, etc. (Ramler et al., 2015, p. 180). Unfortunately, higher stress levels in first year students appears to be correlated with greater adjustment difficulties; adjustment difficulties are then in turn associated with "important student-related outcomes [such] as retention and academic performance" (Ramler et

al., 2015, p. 180). The inaugural college experiences are often accompanied by depression, alcohol use, negative feelings or thoughts, and possibly other related health concerns (Ramler et al., 2015, p. 180). These struggles are largely characteristic of the period of time between eighteen and twenty-five that is frequently described as "emerging adulthood"; it is generally considered to be a bridge between childhood and adulthood, marked by "profound instability and exploration in work, education, intimate relationships, and identity" (Ramler et al., 2015, p. 180). Obviously, it is a time of great vulnerability.

For those students who decide to live on campus, homesickness is a common occurrence that frequently complicates and compounds the earlier mentioned transition challenges; those who "become homesick upon entering college may have difficulty adjusting to the college setting, leading to social and academic difficulties" (English et al., 2017, p. 2). Not only are students who experience homesickness more prone to depression, academic struggles, loneliness, sleep disturbances, trouble concentrating, stomach complaints, exacerbations of pre-existing physical or mental health issues, but they are also three times more likely to drop out of school than their counter parts who are not struggling with this issue (Terry et al., 2013, p. 279).

During the course of a ten-week investigation into the long-term implications of homesickness in college students, ninety-four percent of students reported some level of homesickness (English et al., 2017, p. 3). Using self-assessment questionnaires, it was determined that homesickness "was a robust predictor of lower overall adjustment to college, as well as adjustment in the social domain" (English et al., 2017, p. 4). Interestingly, homesickness was also associated with a tendency to draw upon pre-existing family and friend resources, which seemed to actually interfere with the establishment of new social relationships (English et al., 2017, p. 4). Perhaps the best way to deal with homesickness lies in the arena of prevention,

although this would require further research into risk factors associated with the development of homesickness (English et al., 2017, p. 4).

Relative to the question of how to best facilitate healthy college transitions, some interesting results from a study of at-risk students appears to be broadly applicable. In an attempt to provide support for those "from historically marginalized backgrounds based on factors such as income, race/ethnicity, and first-generation status," several colleges and universities have established comprehensive college transition programs (CCTPs) (Cole et al., 2020, p. 277). These programs have numerous components that try and meet the wide variety of needs the participating students may have (Cole et al., 2020, p. 277). Utilizing data that stems from a six-year, mixed methods study of CCTPs, Cole et al. (2020) focused on a quantitative analysis from first year college experiences within these CCTPs. The findings indicated that CCTPs foster a sense of belonging and a sense of mattering, which impacts college retention and success. A relevant side note is that "peer interactions that are social, where discussions of political opinions, religious beliefs, diversity, and personal values are shared, these interactions have a significant and positive association with students' sense of belonging" (Cole et al., 2020, p. 293). Additionally, "peer interactions that are academic, where peers share concerns about class, academic issues, group projects, and study with one another, these interactions have a significant and positive association with mattering" (Cole et al., 2020, p. 293). Thus, fostering a sense of belonging and a sense of mattering, both with peers and with academic instructors, may be a promising avenue for smoothing the college transition period and increasing college retention rates.

The Impact of Social Media on College Students

Another possible means for easing college adjustment difficulties has to do with social

media, which over ninety percent of eighteen to twenty-four-year-olds have indicated they use on a regular basis (Perrin & Anderson, 2019). Utilizing social media sites to facilitate a sense of belonging may also very well help ease the transition to college, as students "who believe that they have social resources available on campus more successfully handle the transition to college" (Deandrea et al., 2012, p. 15). Additionally, a sense of belonging facilitates positive emotions, such as a feeling of social acceptance and academic competence," which in turn creates positive perceptions of campus experiences (Deandrea et al., 2012, p. 16). Social media platforms offer a unique opportunity for students to connect with peers prior to the beginning of classes, enabling the exchange of support, tips, and ideas that create greater preparation for the new environment they will be encountering (Deandrea et al., 2012, p. 16). Perhaps more importantly, "having the ability to seek out help and express feelings and concern has been shown to play a role in students' adjustment to college" (Deandrea et al., 2012, p. 16).

An interesting and positive aspect of social media is that "reducing the uncertainty about college and sharping positive expectancies through social media can go a long way in facilitating a healthy transition to college" (Deandrea et al., 2012, p. 16). For example, one Midwestern university created a website for peer interaction the summer before beginning college in order to assess if this impacted student's perceptions of self-efficacy and if it eased the transition to college; this website allowed students to meet people who would be living near them in the dorm, create personal profiles for sharing, plan events, share photos or videos, as well as share tips, relevant information, advice, or resources (Deandrea et al., 2012, p. 17). Pre and post website usage involved qualitative assessment of 265 incoming freshmen in regard to their academic and social expectations (Deandrea et al., 2012, p. 18).

Interestingly, use of the website did lead to increased confidence in student's perceptions of their own academic abilities. While this research does not appear to include a comparison of actual academic performance versus perceived or projected performance, it nonetheless demonstrates greater confidence and comfort within the transition experience (Deandrea et al., 2012, p. 19). It is critical to note though that the above stated use of social media as designed specifically for the college orientation experience is quite different from how students transitioning to college may choose to utilize social media for personal use (discussed below), which may have negative implications as well as positive.

Two qualitative studies reiterate that a sense of belonging has been linked to academic motivation, success, and persistence (Vaccaro et al., 2015, p. 45). These studies found two primary applications of social media in college freshmen: as an instrumental resource and as a relationship resource (Vaccaro et al., 2015, p. 37-42). College freshmen appear to utilize social media to maintain family and pre-college friendships; this support is critical and appears to buoy students through difficult adaptation periods, although the literature does indicate that it is important that students do not cling to old relationships to the exclusion of making new ones (Vaccaro et al., 2015, p. 31). In contrast, instrumental use of social media throughout the freshmen year involved sharing information about the university (including precollege preparation), assignments, projects, as well as study group meetings or social meeting opportunities. Therefore, it is important to note that social media was used to either maintain already established relationships or to tend to the business of accessing college resources; however, making actual friends on campus was more relative to face to face meetings and not through the use of social media (Vaccaro et al., 2015, p. 29-48). It is important to keep these very distinct uses of social media, each of which serves a different purpose for enhancing student

adjustment, in mind when developing tools to facilitate the college transition period.

Thus, social media may have quite positive benefits, such as when it is used to encourage others or access information, but this entails being cautious to use it with a specific purpose for set amounts of time (Perlmutter, 2020, p. 65). Additionally, being mindful as opposed to mindless in using technology means periodically asking purposeful and investigative questions such as, "does scrolling through a photo feed make you feel self-conscious, envious, inadequate, or inferior?" (Perlmutter, 2020, p. 68); it is important to note that it may be very difficult for students who are too deeply engaged with social media to be able to distance themselves enough to ask these types of personally exploratory questions. Social media may also be used to disseminate information on a wide range of topics, such as providing education on the consequences of risky behavior, creating health awareness, establishing prevention initiatives, etc. (Groth et al., 2017, p. 90). However, with social media being closely tied to students' personal lives, using it as an educational tool may be perceived by some students as intrusive; thus, it is uncertain how students may perceive or receive these types of efforts and further investigation into student receptibility is warranted. Further research into the impact of social media on college students is also needed in relation to a wide variety of topics such as "how online identity cultivation relates to risky behaviors," students' perceptions of the impact of social media on their lives in general, and whether or not students believe that what someone else posts directly impacts their own behavioral choices and outcomes (Groth et al., 2017, p. 90).

It is critical to note there are also many negative ramifications of the use of social media in college students, which merits thorough investigation as well. One of the primary dangers of social media is the disconnection it may create from real live interactions. When people are engaged with their devices, they are not employing their senses to observe social cues and as

they "learn to live without these emotional connections, [they] lose part of what makes [them] social beings interconnected through humanity, grace, and love" (Perlmutter, 2020, p. 60-61); in other words, people are foregoing authentic personal connections in favor of engaging with their electronic devices. A study at the University of Pennsylvania examined what happened when one hundred and forty-three undergraduate students were asked to try to limit their time on each social media platform that they were using to under ten minutes a day for three weeks. The results compared subjective reports of loneliness and depression with those of students who did not limit their use; both loneliness and depression were found to have decreased in those who lessened their exposure time to social media (Perlmutter, 2020, 65). A survey of social media users between the ages of eighteen and thirty-two indicated that people "who used social media the most" were three times more likely to experience social isolation than those whose usage was less (Perlmutter, 2020, p. 65).

Engagement with social media has also been linked to various risky behaviors, such as drinking alcohol or using tobacco (Groth et al., 2017, p. 90). Sharing photos involving drinking and smoking may create a perception that everyone else is engaged in this activity, depending on whether students view photos or texting as a "more trustworthy source of peer behavior" (Groth et al., 2017, p. 90). According to social norm theory, students who view photos of students engaging in risky behavior tend to overestimate the number of their peers engaging in the behavior; they may assume that "everyone" is doing it. This can lead to a sense of peer pressure, to be like everyone else; additionally, those who are posting photos of risky behaviors such as drinking on social media may get more "likes," thereby reinforcing their behavior (Groth et al., 2017, p. 89). Also, social media targets advertising and students may be exposed to frequent alcohol advertisements. Additionally, chronic exposure to positive tweets or comments about

tobacco, marijuana, and even illegal drug use, may normalize these things for college age students (Groth et al., 2017, p. 89).

A qualitative study of four hundred and eight college freshmen at a small private university indicated that students viewing photos on Instagram or Snapchat of alcohol-related partying or binging during the first six weeks of school was predictive of the fact that these same students would be indulging in similar behavior six months later (Boyle et al., 2016, p. 28). Viewing people engaging in drinking situations seems to normalize these behaviors and desensitize students. Not only do social media depictions romanticize interactions associated with alcohol, they also offer students the added encouragement of having their photos "liked" (Boyle et al., 2016, p. 22). This research provides a glimpse into how important it may be to try to change the trajectory of what students both post and view on social media, particularly before and during the first year of college.

Mindfulness: Definition and General Information

Mindfulness is described as a way to pay attention to the present moment, in a nonjudgmental manner, with awareness (Dvoráková et al., 2017, p. 259); one classic definition of mindfulness is "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment" (Messer et al., 2016, p. 1). This awareness is all encompassing and includes being aware of feelings, body sensations, and thoughts (Dvoráková et al., 2017, p. 259). By attending to this awareness with a nonreactive, nonjudgmental, and caring approach, holistic health (mental, physical, emption) may be improved (Dvoráková et al., 2017, p. 260). Studies on mindfulness assert that it may facilitate improvements in "well-being, reducing worry, anxiety, distress, reactivity and bad behavior, improving sleep and self-esteem, and boosting calmness, relaxation,

self-regulation and awareness" (Lin & Mai, 2018, p. 366). Mindfulness practices are taught in a

very wide variety of formats including self-teaching, eight-week MBSR courses (Mindfulness

Based Stress Reduction), KORU programs for young adults , Learn to BREATHE courses for

classroom settings, guided meditations, audio lecture style teaching, self-paced workbooks,

meditation retreats, working with individual teachers, etc.

  Mindfulness-based interventions in the first year of college "may prevent a decline in

mental health and promote students' wellbeing and health behaviors" (Dvoráková et al., 2017, p.

265). The fact that mindfulness decreases rumination, increases empathy, improves ability to pay

attention, enhances retention of academic material, facilitates relaxation, and reduces anxiety

means that it may be a tool that is of great benefit to college students, particularly those who are

struggling to adapt to the new environment and related expectations (Messer et al., 2016, p. 1).

Mindfulness may in fact actually be a "potential protective factor for the stress experienced by

university students" (Mettler et al., 2019, p. 39) and it has also been shown to decrease mind-

wandering, which in turn leads to improvements in cognitive function, academic performance,

grades in general, and even high stakes test outcomes such as the GRE (Mrazek et al., 2013, p. 3-

5). Additionally, "integrating contemplative practices into curricula, such as mindfulness and

yoga, fosters deeper and more reflective learning as well as creativity among students"

(Mahalingam & Rabelo, 2019, p. 52). Another potential benefit of mindfulness for college

students is the fact "that integrating mindfulness in higher education will promote an awareness

of interdependence and privilege, thereby raising critical consciousness," which is particularly

relevant given the current social climate (Mahalingam & Rabelo, 2019, p. 52).

  Several research studies have directly investigated the impact that mindfulness practices

may have on college students. One such study involved using qualitative data from a fifteen-

week undergraduate meditation course that was largely experiential; Crowley and Munk (2017) reported that students found that "meditation practice impacted their outlook on life and relationships with others in three major areas; mindfulness, psychological well-being, and compassion" (p. 94). In terms of mindfulness, students reported increased capacity to be present, to be reflective about what they were feeling or how they were reacting, and to have a better perspective regarding what is important and what is not (Crowley & Munk, 2017 p. 94). Relative to psychological well-being, students experienced gratitude, increased feelings of peace, and decreased feelings of stress (Crowley & Munk, 2017 p. 94). In terms of compassion, empathy, self-compassion, and interconnectivity were all enhanced (Crowley & Munk, 2017 p. 95). Perhaps the most critical finding was that "through the exploration of the mind and emotions, meditation can facilitate exploration of [the] emotional states that support the process of self-actualization" (Crowley & Munk, 2017 p. 97); this is incredibly significant as personal growth during college should extend beyond mere academic progress, in order to include emotional and spiritual growth as well. While this research involved a small fairly homogenous group of twenty-eight participants, the results are still promising and relevant.

"Given that mindfulness is a core component of self-compassion" (Neff & Germer, 2019), research regarding compassion is particularly relevant and important in reference to college students who struggle during the transition period. Terry et al. (2013) offers self-compassion as one solution to the problem of homesickness and the associated concerns in college students. Self-compassion is generally considered to contain three critical components: self-kindness instead of self-criticism in difficult situations, recognizing the universality of one's struggles or desires, and mindfulness, which has to do with neither suppressing nor over-identifying with one's experiences (Terry et al., 2013, p. 279). Self-kindness can mitigate the

effects of homesickness because "people who treat themselves especially kindly when things are going badly (self-kindness), recognize that homesickness is a natural and nearly universal experience that indicates nothing peculiar about them (common humanity), and face their feelings with equanimity (mindfulness)," which acts as a "buffer" against the sequelae associated with homesickness (Terry et al., 2013, p. 280).

This research study measured self-compassion four to six weeks prior to students arriving on campus in order to obtain baseline levels of self-compassion; these results were compared with questionnaires completed at the end of the semester relative to depression, satisfaction, and homesickness scores (Terry et al., 2013, p. 283). The findings indicate that those who are able to moderate their reactions to life (neither suppressing or exaggerating their feelings) and have self-compassion, experience less depression, life dissatisfaction, and homesickness than their fellow students who do not have self-compassion (Terry et al., 2013, p. 288). This is in direct contrast to the self-blame that students typically heap upon themselves when experiencing homesickness (Terry et al., 2013, p. 280). The implications are that overall dropout rates for first year students might decrease and student perceptions of the college experience might be more favorable with the presence of equanimity (mindfulness) and self-compassion practices (Terry et al., 2013, p. 288).

High levels of anxiety can impair self-tolerance or self-compassion, and mindfulness-based interventions have been suggested as one means to decrease the overall stress levels of college students (Ramler et al., 2015, p. 180). Several MBSR (mindfulness-based stress reduction) research studies indicate that a wide range of benefits may occur with the implementation of these eight-week courses, some of which were adapted specifically for college participants. These benefits have been noted to include decreases in negative attitudes, anxiety,

stress, and depression (Ramler et al., 2015, p. 180). Physiologic benefits have also been

observed, such as enhanced sleep patterns, increased physical activity, improved dietary choices,

and better decision-making regarding alcohol consumption (Ramler et al., 2015, p. 180). Perhaps

more importantly, programs participants have frequently reported enhanced self-esteem, greater

confidence, as well as increased capacities for forgiveness and self-compassion (Ramler et al.,

2015, p. 180).

One particularly relevant study involved adaptation of a MBSR program to meet the

scheduling challenges of a university setting. Fifty-six students at two liberal arts colleges in the

Midwest were split into a control group (from a required first year psychology course) and an

experimental group (from a required first-year seminar) (Ramler et al., 2015, p. 181). These

students were not volunteers, as there was an attempt to omit any personal interest or motivation

that might affect the results (Ramler et al., 2015, p. 181). Students in the experimental group

received MBSR training from a certified instructor for approximately two hours a week for eight

weeks, starting in the first week of school; they also completed pre and post-interventional

mindfulness questionnaires (Ramler et al., 2015, p. 182). When the course was completed, both

groups completed a sixty-seven item self-survey for assessing student adjustment and both

groups also participated in salivary cortisol stress assessments (Ramler et al., 2015, p. 182).

The results of this research was quite hopeful, demonstrating lower levels of salivary

cortisol, as well as better adjustment skills in a number of areas in the experimental group

(Ramler et al., 2015, p. 185); this indicates that even a relatively brief period of instruction given

through an eight-week MBSR class may help with regulating stress (biological/physiological)

and emotions (psychological) in general (Ramler et al., 2015, p. 185). It is critical to note that

this study involved a very small sample size, did not provide long term follow up assessments,

and warrants attempts at replication; however, the results are nonetheless promising. Two critical

suggestions that emerged from the study are that future research should include making

mindfulness instruction a required part of a first-year orientation class and that computerized

delivery instructions should be considered for this purpose, as this would require less time and

commitment for students (Ramler et al., 2015, p. 187).

Another research project founded on MBSR type classes involved adapting a well-

established adolescent mindfulness curriculum, Learning to BREATHE (L2B), to meet the

specific needs of university students (Dvoráková et al., 2017, p. 260). L2B is modeled after

traditional MBSR courses which are typically eight weeks long; this study, however, involved

eight sessions that occurred over only six weeks. There were two sessions the first two weeks

and one each of the four subsequent weeks; the sessions were eighty minutes long, had between

twenty and twenty-five participants, and consisted of one lead and one assistant instructor.

Students were volunteers and were either assigned to the experimental group or a waitlist control

group. It is critical to note that students did receive small payments for completing their pre and

post intervention analysis questionnaires, which were extensive and involved mindfulness, sleep

patterns, compassion, social connection, anxiety, alcohol use, depression, etc. (Dvoráková et al.,

2017, p. 260-263).

While many students did not attend all the sessions, participation was voluntary (thus

self-selected), and the sample size was small, results are still very encouraging. This course,

when offered in the first semester of college, "led to significant improvements in students' life

satisfaction, depression, anxiety, sleep issues, and alcohol consequences in comparison with the

control group" (Dvoráková et al., 2017, p. 264). Growth in these areas leads to greater academic

success, enhanced adjustment to college responsibilities, and better decision-making capabilities

(Dvoráková et al., 2017, p. 264). One interesting facet of this training involved teaching students to identify and note the difference between mindful and mindless practices in daily life (Dvoráková et al., 2017, p. 264). Perhaps the most encouraging piece of data is that students indicated they liked the program well enough that they would be willing to take it for course credit (Dvoráková et al., 2017, p. 265). Researchers associated with this project suggested the next step may involve making this course part of a freshmen orientation class, a residence hall course, a course in the counseling centers, or a "freestanding 6-week class that is only offered for freshmen" (Dvoráková et al., 2017, p. 265).

Koru is another mindfulness-based program that has been designed specifically for college students, especially since they are often dealing with identity issues during this emerging adult developmental phase (Greeson et al., 2014, p. 222). Koru offers instruction in meditation, mindfulness, and other mind-body practices (Greeson et al., 2014, p. 223). Several features make Koru appropriate for this age group including: relatively simple tools for decreasing stress, short duration of the program (four 75 minute group sessions and 10 minutes daily of personal practice), small group learning setting, hands-on/active experiences, as well as that it is designed to meet the interests, concern, and language of this developmental group (Greeson et al., 2014, p. 223). Koru also attempts to create feelings of self-compassion and gratitude, which are frequently associated with lowered stress levels and increase mindfulness (Greeson et al., 2014, p. 223).This research project utilized ninety volunteers who were randomly placed into one of two groups, either an experimental group who would participate in a four week Koru program or a control group that would be waitlisted and take the course at a later date (Greeson et al., 2014, p. 223). Students were expected to attend a minimum of three out of the four Koru 75 minutes

session, meditate ten minutes a day, keep a daily gratitude journal, and read *Wherever You Go,*
There You Are by Jon Kabat-Zinn (Greeson et al., 2014, p. 224).

At the end of the four-week period numerous self-assessment surveys were given to both
groups via an online format. Results indicate the following significant changes in the
experimental group, but not in the control group: decreases in perceived stress, improvements in
sleep quality, increases in mindfulness (particularly in relation to thoughts and feelings), and
increases in self-compassion (Greeson et al., 2014, p. 226). The Koru program appears to have
positive effects on students' overall well-being, which is especially impressive given the fact that
the program is much shorter in duration than typical MBSR programs; this abbreviated duration
is thought to be relevant to high retention rates for the course (Greeson et al., 2014, p. 331).
While this research relied on subjective self-assessments and did not assess the duration of the
results, it still offers promising results regarding the implications of incorporating mindfulness
practices into college life.

Promising results regarding the effects of mindfulness meditation on college students
were also noted in a research meta-analysis project. Fifty-seven articles were reviewed,
investigating the effects of mindfulness meditation on anxiety, stress, physiological stress, and
mindfulness in college students (Bamber & Schneider, 2016, p. 29). It is critical to note that the
studies included consisted of a wide range of approaches to mindfulness, including MBSR
(mindfulness based stress reduction), MM (mindfulness meditation), MBCT (mindfulness based
cognitive therapy), ABBT (acceptance-based behavioral therapy), and other individually
developed concepts of mindfulness practices (Bamber & Schneider, 2016, p. 3); thus,
mindfulness meditation in this particular review could refer to any of the previous stated
methods. It is also important to note that the duration, frequency, intensity, and actual activities

involved in these research papers were quite diverse and that future studies will need to control

for these variations (Bamber & Schneider, 2016, p. 1).

Regardless of future replication challenges, the results are quite impressive. Forty studies

examined whether or not mindfulness meditation reduces anxiety in college students; thirty-three

of the studies found significant reductions in anxiety and the remaining seven showed downward

trends as well (Bamber & Schneider, 2016, p. 29). Reductions in self-reported stress were noted

in twenty-nine out of thirty-eight studies, with downward trends noted in the women in the nine

remaining studies (Bamber & Schneider, 2016, p. 29). Finally, increases in mindfulness was

notable in twenty-two out of twenty-four studies (Bamber & Schneider, 2016, p. 29). The

hopeful conclusion from this study is that mindfulness interventions "could be used to facilitate

first-year transition and aid in learning" (Bamber & Schneider, 2016, p. 29).

Another interesting study involved the attempt to ascertain if mindfulness and enhanced

adaptability is mediated by nonattachment, and if so, what the effects of that nonattachment

might be (Elphinstone et al., 2019, p. 784). The research was conducted through a voluntary

online survey of seven hundred and twenty-five university students and required the completion

of several self-assessment questionnaires on topics such as mindfulness, nonattachment,

adaptability, academic engagement, and grades (Elphinstone et al., 2019, p. 788-789).

Quantitative analysis of the surveys indicates that mindfulness is indeed associated with greater

levels of nonattachment; this in turn leads to cognitive flexibility and improved adaptability

(Elphinstone et al., 2019, p. 791); with mindfulness, students are better able to determine what is

worth focusing on and what is better to let go of. This is important is because the ability to

"flexibly engage or disengage with situations" promotes overall academic engagement

(Elphinstone et al., 2019, p. 791); academic engagement ultimately affects grades and long-term

academic success (Elphinstone et al., 2019, p. 792). As such, this research "study provided the

first indication that mindfulness and nonattachment may indirectly contribute to higher grades as

a result of greater adaptability and academic engagement" (Elphinstone et al., 2019, p. 793).

Ninety-two first year volunteer college students participated in a similar research project

that primarily involved analysis of qualitative questionnaires completed online in order to

determine if dispositional mindfulness was a reliable predictor of students' adjustment to college

(Mettler et al., 2019, p. 42). These assessment tools used included the MAAS (Mindfulness

Attention Awareness Scale), the GSE (General Self Efficacy scale), the MSPSS

(Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support), and the SACQ (Student Adaptation to

College Questionnaire). The findings were encouraging regarding the capacity for mindfulness to

assist students through the university adjustment phase. Dispositional mindfulness was found to

enhance social, personal, emotional, and academic adjustment, as well as to facilitate

"institutional attachment" (Mettler et al., p. 46); this means students are more likely to feel

connected with their given school when they are practicing mindfulness. Of particular interest is

the fact that student's perceptions of support from others (family, friends, and new social groups)

increases in conjunction with higher levels of mindfulness (Mettler et al., 2019, p. 46); this

means that how students' perceive things and how they react to those perceptions may be

positively altered with mindfulness. This finding is in keeping with the fact that mindfulness

decreases maladaptive coping methods and mitigates the effects of real and unavoidable life

stressors (Mettler et al., 2019, p. 46).

Social Media, Internet, Apps, and Mindfulness

There are currently many mindfulness related apps available for various phone or

electronic devices. With over ninety-six percent of people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine owning smart phones (Mobile Fact Sheet, 2019), it is worth examining if apps might be a viable method to offer mindfulness to university students. A 2015 investigation of more than six hundred and six apps that purported to offer mindfulness was quickly winnowed down to a mere twenty-three that met criteria for offering mindfulness training and education (Mani et al., 2015, p. 3). Reasons for exclusion had to do with everything from too high of a cost (over $10), offering only timers, offering only guided meditation (without teaching), etc. (Mani et al., 2015, p. 3). A MARS (mobile app rating scale) was used to evaluate each of the acceptable twenty-three apps (Mani et al., 2015, p. 2). With a "5" being an excellent score, only two apps, Headspace and Smiling Mind, received a score of "4" which was rated as "good"; additionally, only Headspace offered community engagement which has been purported to possibly substitute for actual face-to-face support (Mani et al., 2015, p. 8). Regardless, a score of "4," which was awarded to only two apps in the study, indicates that there is much room for improvement in app design if the intent is to deeply engage college students with mindfulness content.

There are a very limited number of research studies that specifically address the impact of mindfulness when instruction is delivered via social media. One such study compared online delivery of mindfulness versus relaxation therapy, using a third "no treatment" group as a control (Messer et al., 2016, p. 2). Participants were volunteers who were offered extra credit for course work and included one hundred and fifty-seven students from a large university; pre and post-tests were given, which included the PSS (Perceived Stress Scale), the FFMQ (Five Factors Mindfulness Questionnaire), and the CISS (Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations) (Messer et al., 2016, p. 2). Group assignments to one of three groups were randomized, with mindfulness and relaxation exercises being given via internet links over a three-week period; both groups

were asked to practice the activities they were taught about three times a week (Messer et al., 2016, p. 3).

Interestingly, the findings indicate that the relaxation intervention and the mindfulness intervention both effectively decreased stress and positively impact coping (Messer et al., 2016, p. 5). However, only mindfulness training increases mindfulness, which is particularly relevant for college students because of all the associated positive implications (discussed elsewhere in this paper) that have been noted to accompany mindfulness (Messer et al., 2016, p. 5). Admittedly, this study was of short duration, fairly small sample, and has not been replicated yet; in spite of that, the results demonstrate that online delivery of mindfulness training is affordable and fairly simplistic to administer, and thus, may have the capacity to improve mental, emotional, and physical health on university campuses (Messer et al., 2016, p. 6).

Another very small, yet relevant study involved sixteen young people with a mean age of sixteen years and nine months who were provided with a mindfulness app (Donovan et al., 2016, p. 219). The purpose was two-fold, with the first goal being to track student usage over a thirty-day period in order to determine content learning and student usage. The second goal was to obtain feedback from the students about the experience and the app through a focus group (Donovan et al., 2016, p. 218). Students used BodiMojo, an app that was designed to "teach mindfulness-based stress management to adolescents during a sensitive phase of development for the teen brain and body" (BodiMojo, n.d.); the emphasis is on self-compassion and the activities consist of "tracking feelings and reviewing/practicing a wellness tip" (Donovan et al., 2016, p. 218). This app design includes a customized animated "buddy"; sometimes daily tips are linked to audio clips relevant to mindfulness, acceptance, compassion, and self-regulation (Donovan et al., 2016, p. 218).

Consistency was an issue with using this app, as the results indicate that the average days the app was used was only fourteen out of thirty days (Donovan et al., 2016, p. 219). However, the focus groups did reveal that over ninety-two percent of the students reported liking the app very much; seventy-four percent stated the app helped them with their feelings and sixty-four percent stated they would recommend the app to a friend and would continue using it if possible (Donovan et al., 2016, p. 219). Although this is a very small sample, the results were promising and the students had many helpful suggestions to offer in the focus group for ways to improve the app in order to make it even more enjoyable for students (Donovan et al., 2016, p. 219, p. 220).

A rather unique research study utilized a mixed methods design to compare the effects of engaging with image based social media platforms versus those that are text based. Viewing photographs of actual people was predicted to increase a sense of intimacy, due in part to the immediacy that social media platforms provide (Pittman & Reich, 2016, p. 158). Two hundred and fifty-three college undergraduates accessed online surveys, responding to questions about happiness, life satisfaction, loneliness, social media use, attitudes towards the platforms they used, and demographics; they were compensated with extra credit or partial credit in their courses (Pittman & Reich, 2016, p. 158). They were also asked to use a few words to describe their feelings regarding people using each specific platform, and they were given an opportunity to answer open-ended questions as well (Pittman & Reich, 2016, p. 159).

Quantitative analysis of results indicated that users of "image-based platforms," such as Instagram and Snapchat, find that "loneliness may decrease, while happiness and satisfaction with life may increase, as a function of image-based social media use" (Pittman & Reich, 2016, p. 155). It is surmised that images create a sense of human presence and communication, while

effectively depicting feelings and thoughts (Pittman & Reich, 2016, p. 164). This research had several limitations, including the fact that it was correlational (not causal); additionally, more research is needed to determine the threshold at which increased time factors begin to negate these positive findings (Pittman & Reich, 2016, p. 164). Nevertheless, the findings are interesting, especially in light of the fact that in contradicts most contemporary research, which usually indicates decreased happiness in relation to social media usage.

Another Instagram-related research project investigated the impact Instagram images may have on young women's body images, self-compassion, and negative mood. Four Instagram sites were set up with a focus either on neutral images such as home interiors (control), fitspiration images (young, lean women in snug fitting workout clothes), self-compassion quotes (without any human bodies in the background), or a combination of fitspiration and self-compassion images (Slater et al., 2017, p. 89). One hundred and sixty undergraduate women were recruited to view one of the four Instagram sites, each of which had only twenty photos (Slater et al., 2017, p. 88). Participants were under the assumption that the project was related to Instagram and memory recall; they were instructed to view the photos for a mere five minutes (Slater et al., 2017, p. 88). Pre and post-viewing questionnaires were given regarding things like body image, negative mood, body satisfaction, body appreciation, self-compassion, and a few more (Slater et al., 2017, p. 90). The findings were astonishing, with "women who viewed self-compassion quotes on Instagram [reporting] greater body satisfaction, body appreciation, self-compassion, and lower negative mood" (Slater et al., 2017, p. 93). Viewing fitspiration body images does not generate an increase in negative body image or mood, contrary to researcher's predictions; but it does lead to significantly reduced in levels of self-compassion (Slater et al., 2017, p. 89).

While this research was not directed at teaching or exposing participants to mindfulness, it is relevant to include here because of the results regarding self-compassion. In a mere five minutes of viewing positive messages on Instagram regarding self-compassion, these young women appeared to gain something of a buffer against the usually negative impact of body-image related photos. With mindfulness being a component of self-compassion, this is pertinent information when considering using a platform to teach mindfulness practices. In light of this exciting finding, the next question becomes how viewing images on Instagram related to mindfulness or encouraging mindfulness practices might affect resiliency, stress levels, anxiety, etc., as well as other issues that freshmen college students frequently find themselves dealing with. Slater et al. (2017) suggest that offering "compassionate content into women's social media feeds offers a way to mute the negative impacts of exposure to such [negative] content" (p. 94).

One extremely small Australian study, consisting of only eight university students, is relevant if for no other reason than to examine the insights participants shared regarding reactions to a mindfulness based mobile (app) health care delivery and preferences for a theoretical mindfulness app design; their analysis may be representative of larger populations of university students, making the research worthy of inclusion in this literature review (Lyzwinski, et. al, 2018, p. 342). Given that "a recent systemic review found positive relationships between mindfulness and healthy weight-related behaviors in university students," this qualitative study was focused on delivering mindfulness-based weight-loss support via a mobile health care platform; it was primarily comprised of focus group meetings and individual qualitative interviews (Lyzwinski, et al., 2018, p. 342).

According to Lyzwinski, et al. (2018), many college students do not know anything about mindfulness or else they perceive it as being difficult to practice, indicating a genuine need for

mindfulness education and exposure to the practice (p. 344).There are also issues regarding

social acceptance, as research indicated that having many other students participating in

mindfulness practices "removes a social barrier" (Lyzwinski, et al., 2018, p. 345). Regarding the

future design of a mindfulness app, participants felt it should be focused on mindfulness

education, and not have too many whistles and bells (Lyzwinski, et al., 2018, p. 345). Overall,

students felt the app should encourage students to seek mindful sights, sounds, or experiences

within their own environment; thus, an ideal app will help students identify and appreciate

sources of mindful experiences within their own world, instead of merely tying them to learn

about mindfulness through reading or lectures.

Several other studies have also investigated the efficacy of pairing mindfulness with

mobile apps as well. One study at Arizona State University specifically addressed the

effectiveness of the "Calm" mindfulness mobile app in order to ascertain the impact upon stress,

mindfulness, self-compassion, and other healthy behaviors in college students (Huberty et al.,

2019, p. 2). A total of eighty-eight students were assigned to either an intervention group or a

wait-list control group; anyone with prior or current experience with mindfulness practices was

eliminated from the study (such as yoga, meditation, qigong, etc.). The intervention group

downloaded the Calm app, which was free for this project, with instructions to spend ten minutes

a day for the first seven days following the introductory program "Seven Days of Calm"; this

program introduced a wide range of mindfulness practices including body scans, meditation,

loving kindness practices, etc. (Huberty et al., 2019, p. 4). After the first seven days, the students

were able to choose which programs within the app they wanted to utilize; the main instructions

were that they interact with the app a minimum of ten minutes a day for the total eight-week

period. Pre-assessments were followed with a post intervention at the eight-week mark, and a follow up-up at twelve weeks.

Qualitative self-review questionnaires indicate significant differences between the control (wait listed) group and the intervention group, which continued to exist through the follow-up period. The intervention group showed an increase in mindfulness and compassion, while perceived stress levels decreased; other secondary health measures did not appear to change, with the exception of decreased sleep disturbances (Huberty et al., 2019, p. 10-11). In spite of the small sample size, the lack of an active control group, the need to determine daily meditation time (versus weekly total), and the relative homogeneity of the intervention group (primarily young white females college students), the results are quite promising (Huberty et al., 2019, p. 12). Records showed that in spite of what they were asked, students interacted with the meditation app around only thirty-eight minutes a week, and yet results still persisted through the follow up period (Huberty et al., 2019, p. 12). Additionally, over eighty-five percent of students claimed to find the app both enjoyable, and worthy of recommendation to others (Huberty et al., 2019, p. 12). The conclusion was that the Calm app "may be a cost-effective, convenient, easily disseminated, and enjoyable way to manage stress among college students" (Huberty et al., 2019, p. 13).

Discussion

There is no doubt that the first year of college can be a defining period of time, as students attempt to straddle the developmental divide between childhood and adulthood. Newfound expectations and responsibilities often make self-care difficult. Perhaps most critical, these young people are also experiencing a time of social transition; former ties with family and friends may be lessened by geographic distance or because their lives have taken divergent roads

from high school classmates. Evidence suggests that there is a very thin line between maintaining adequate social support from family and pre-college friends versus clinging to these people to the point that it impedes the development of new friendships. As pressures and isolation mount, unhealthy coping mechanisms may develop and prevail; the resulting behaviors may manifest as avoidance, withdrawal, substance abuse, and even withdrawal from school, all of which impede long term academic success and self-esteem. Unfortunately, chosen methods of dealing with stress may quickly become habit over time, resulting in implications that prevail and extend far beyond the college experiences. Therefore, it is critical to reach these students early in order to offer support, information, and hands on experience in dealing with change and stress; doing so will not only enhance the possibility of a healthier transition to the college environment but may extend well beyond into adult life as well.

Mindfulness appears to be a potentially powerful tool for empowering students and preparing them to be able to better handle their own thoughts, feelings, emotions, and experiences, thereby aiding with successful adjustment to the college environment. Mindfulness practices give students an opportunity to take a break from internal chaos, to quieten the mind, and to get some distance from their thoughts. Teaching mindfulness to college students may be the key to lowering anxiety and depression (mental health issues), bolstering confidence, enhancing sleep patterns, improving concentration (which improves grades and possibly retention rates), creating connections with others, offering alternative coping measures to drinking, facilitating improved decision making, all while simultaneously increasing compassion for self and others. Overall, mindfulness appears to be a means of assisting college students in establishing resiliency and a feeling of belonging or connection.

However, it is important to ascertain the most effective method for teaching college students about mindfulness given the variety of options available, which includes everything from conventional eight week or semester-long courses to simply providing them with reading material. One of the critical developmental tasks of this period has to do with burgeoning independence and thus it is important to find a method that offers as much autonomy as possible, while also maintaining student interest. Additionally, time and interest are two other relevant factors concerning how to assist students with navigating their new responsibilities and environment; requiring too much time or additional work to teach them mindfulness will result in avoidance or dismissal of the content presented. Similarly, boredom or disinterest in presentation format will result in little engagement with mindfulness.

It is clear that social media may be used in either a positive or a negative manner in the college setting. When social media is used for excessive periods of time, particularly for things such as making comparisons regarding body images, alcohol consumption, or the sensation of "missing out" on social events, it has the power to exacerbate or compound depression, anxiety, and isolation. However, when social media is used for shorter and more purposeful periods of time, such as for contacting friends and family or for accessing information and support regarding navigating the university, the outcome is much better, especially as "social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, are increasingly seen as venues for self-disclosure and for establishing and maintaining social connections" (Lattie, 2019, p.2). Given that well over ninety percent of students access social media regularly, it is critical to attempt to provide some healthy, empowering, supportive experiences in regard to social media usage (Social Media Fact Sheet, 2019). Students have a great need to feel a sense of belonging and that they matter; social media may be one venue that assists with these types of connections (Cole et al., 2020, p. 277).

Additionally, it has been demonstrated that social media has the potential to facilitate healthy

matriculation, when used purposefully.

Initial research indicates that when mindfulness is delivered through social media,

internet, or apps, student responses and outcomes are largely positive. Given their natural

propensity for spending time on social media, this appears to be one avenue for teaching

mindfulness that will increase the likelihood of student interest, attention, and participation; it is

also relevant that "mental health interventions for college students demonstrates that website and

computer-delivered programs can be effective for improving depression, anxiety, and well-

being" (Latie, 2019, p. 2). Admittedly though, the data in this area is somewhat limited,

especially regarding the specific marriage of mindfulness and Instagram. Research done by

Pittman and Reich (2016) is applicable here though, indicating that the use of image-based social

media may decrease loneliness, while increasing happiness and life satisfaction (p. 155); while

this study is definitely relevant, a deficit of other research resources into this topic may very well

justify the need for an experimental project investigating the outcome of teaching mindfulness

practices through Instagram.

Thus, the challenge becomes how to deliver information about mindfulness and related

practices in a manner that will garner maximal college freshmen participation and interest. While

it is true that "Smartphone apps, when well designed, are increasingly seen as effective for

delivering mental health interventions. Early trials of mobile phone programs designed

specifically for college students are promising and have demonstrated improvements in users'

stress, depression, anxiety, and productivity" (Lattie, 2019, p. 3), it is also critical to note the

attrition rate associated with apps in general. As many as "21% of users abandon using an app

after only one use, 57% of users stop using the app within the first 4 weeks, and average

retention by 90 days is only 29%" (Huberty et al., 2019, p. 12).

This is where social media, and Instagram in particular, become relevant. Most students

are already familiar with and deeply engaged with Instagram; sharing pictures is one of the few

aspects of social media that has been noted as having the possibility to facilitate and strengthen

human connections (Pittman & Reich, 2016). One research study that required students to

assemble and analyze photos representing compassion towards self and others, discovered that it

"enabled emerging adults to document sources of stress and support they notice and experience

in the world around them" (Mahalingam & Rabelo, 2019, p. 61); one student even stated, "I

would suggest a Photovoice project to anyone, as it fosters a realization of the true

interdependence within one's life and how that can create social change" (Mahalingam &

Rabelo, 2019, p. 62). As Instagram is a photo-based platform that is already widely embraced

and currently used by many college students, it is a logical choice for attempting to determine the

efficacy of offering mindfulness practices via a social media platform. The hope is to create a

community of college freshmen who are engaged with mindful photography, experiences,

practices, and resources; practicing mindfulness as students interact with this Instagram project

should lead to increased levels of awareness, intentionality, and compassion for self and others.

It is also critical for any social media-oriented mindfulness delivery resource to enable

students to immediately begin engaging in simplistic mindfulness practices, regardless of their

prior knowledge base levels. The belief behind this is that much of the learning in the first year

of college is already passive learning and that students will be more likely to practice

mindfulness if they experience the benefits immediately and firsthand through an active delivery

model. This theory appears to be supported by college students in Lyzwinski's et al. (2018)

research, who indicated that they "preferred being given real-life mindfulness exercises to reflect on rather than being told about the benefits of mindfulness" (p. 346); additionally, these same students "thought the [mindfulness] app should encourage students to search for mindfulness in their real lives through inspiration rather than making the [mindfulness] app the source of inspiration" (Lyzwinski, et al., 2018, p. 345). While there are currently many meditation apps, many of them do not seem to be tailored to garner college student interest or participation; there are also many mindfulness related websites, Facebook accounts, and Instagram accounts, but most of these involve merely reading mindfulness articles and motivational quotes. Thus, there appears to be a genuine need for a social media-based account that provides actual mindfulness experiences and teaches mindfulness practices in real time.

In summary, there is no doubt that college freshmen are at high risk for encountering transition difficulties, and that currently universities are struggling to find an effective means for mitigating either the stressors or the unhealthy coping methods that many students adopt. Research indicates that practicing mindfulness can have a positive effect on several facets of student life, including the following: decreasing anxiety and depression, improving sleep quality, enhancing the capacity to pay attention, facilitating compassion, increasing confidence, improving physical health, perhaps even decreasing the tendency to reach for addictive substances, etc. (Thimmaiah, 2020). Given that mindfulness has the potential to be an effective means for changing how students cope both in the short and the long term, the challenge becomes how to best expose students to the positive benefits of establishing a mindfulness practice. The first hurdle in dealing with the challenge involves snagging student interest, as it greatly increases the likelihood of initial and continued participation; this means being willing to consider the use of programs delivered through technological means, which is how students

largely prefer to communicate. The added benefit of using technology, specifically a social media-based platform, to teach mindfulness is that it fills a true need, as "there appears to be a significant research-to-practice gap such that technology-enabled mental health programs are largely underutilized on college campuses" (Lattie, 2019, p. 3).

The second hurdle involves embracing and working from the "learning by doing" theory, which "is the process whereby people make sense of their experiences, especially those experiences in which they actively engage in making things and exploring the world" (Bruce & Bloch, 2012, p. 1821). In this "pedagogical approach…teachers seek to engage learners in more hands-on, creative modes of learning" (Bruce & Bloch, 2012, p. 1821). With the typical collegiate environment largely consisting of passive learning experiences, it is imperative to offer students the opportunity to do something different; allowing students to actively practice mindfulness, even from their very first encounter with it, will help to facilitate an authentic, hands-on mindfulness practice that might spark interest in extended engagement with it. Thus, whatever form of technology or social media that is chosen to teach about mindfulness, it should enable students to immediately begin approaching the world around them in a new way.

Conclusion

Mindfulness may be one affordable option to assisting students navigate the often tumultuous and stressful transition period to college, especially

given that students' wellness is increasingly becoming a priority on university campuses, it [is] important for university mental health and counseling services to provide psychoeducation on mindfulness and mindfulness-based training as part of the resources offered to first-year students in order to better support them as they transition to university (Mettler et al., 2019, p. 49).

While many studies on mindfulness still suffer from common limitations, such as small sample sizes or the use of subjective questionnaires, it is still apparent that mindfulness has something to offer college students. Given this fact, as well as the time required and the financial cost of many mindfulness courses, it is critical to find a means to offer mindfulness instruction and practices to college students in a manner that is both affordable and also likely to garner interest in participating. It is also critical to remember that "students are living an increasing part of their lives online, and thus, it may be wise to meet them where they are" (Lattie, 2019, p. 2); thus, it makes sense to approach students on their own ground, in the world they are most comfortable in, which means embracing social media as an educational and engagement tool. Since research into using Instagram as a means to teach mindfulness practices is scant, further investigation is certainly warranted. The fact that little to no further research in this area has been identified, justifies the need for an experiment to do so. The next step then is to develop a resource geared for college freshmen students that presents mindfulness practices through the Instagram platform with the aim of decreasing stress while increasing compassion for self and others; implementing and evaluating the responses to this resource will help indicate the efficacy of offering mindfulness instruction through a social media platform, particularly one that is image based.

Creative Thesis: A Mindfulness Instagram Teaching Resource

Purpose of This Instagram Mindfulness Resource

This resource, Lightly Peaceful, has been created for the purpose of offering mindfulness experiences through the use of a social media platform as a teaching resource; it is for those who are transitioning to college and adapting to increased expectations, as well as a new environment. The goal is to incorporate mindfulness into a pre-existing photography-oriented social media platform, Instagram, with the objectives of changing both the nature of the social media experience, as well as the customary methods for teaching mindfulness, which are often relegated to traditional classroom or MSBR settings. By teaching mindfulness and exposing students to mindfulness related experiences through a platform that students already enjoy and engage deeply with, the hope is that there will be more interest in participation and a greater likelihood that students will continue to engage in mindfulness practices long after their interactions with this resource have been completed. Additionally, with the emphasis mindfulness places on compassion for self and others, a possible bonus to this resource is that it may influence students to use social media as a means to reach out to one another in a healthy, supportive, and compassionate manner, thereby enhancing a sense of connection with others. The ultimate goal is to facilitate a smoother transition to college by enhance coping skills, resiliency, human connection, compassion, and the ability to live in the present moment by exposing students to mindfulness experiences, activities, and teachings that do not take too much time or require too much commitment for this already very busy group of students.

While this Instagram mindfulness resource may be adapted for any group for whom social media is an appropriate tool, the original design has been created specifically with the challenges associated with transitioning into college in mind. Thus, the targeted audiences of this

resource are either high school seniors or college freshmen; hopefully, Lightly Peaceful will offer a fun, engaging, and interesting approach to mindfulness that will pique interest, without overwhelming college students with excessive time commitments or costs. Practicing mindfulness in this manner should assist in enhancing or improving the likelihood of positive and successful adaptation to the college environment. Although college students are the intended recipients of the benefits of this resource, Lightly Peaceful has been devised to be implemented by those individuals who will be working with these students in a leadership capacity, such as teachers, group leaders, orientation counselors, residence hall assistants, guidance counselors, etc.; these people will be acting as facilitators or conduits, determining the frequency of engagement with Lightly Peaceful, as well as the expectations that are variable, such as reading assignments, expectations for responding to classmates posts, journal assignments, etc. However, once students have been given instructions for usage and expectations for working with the resource, the bulk of the interactions with the resource should be largely independent; this is an important feature of Lightly Peaceful, as establishing autonomy during the developmental period of emerging adulthood is an important skill.

The Lightly Peaceful template has been created in a manner that has students actually practicing mindfulness related activities, even as they are just beginning to learn about it. In essence, the hope is that by simply jumping in and practicing mindfulness right off the bat (before even having been assigned reading about it or before taking a formal course), the benefits of a mindfulness practice will be readily apparent to students; the expectation is that as students begin to reap the positive effects of a mindfulness practice, interest and willingness to continue practicing mindfulness should be triggered. Hopefully, this will become a positive feedback loop.

Teachers, coaches, college orientation programs, teachers of high school seniors, and others may utilize and modify posts as needed in order to meet the needs of their own groups; more information about how to do this is detailed below. Additionally, it is important to note that this resource can be adapted and modified to a variety of formats that may better meet a group's needs, such as Blackboard, Facebook, blog posts, or perhaps even something as simple as an in-class PowerPoint presentation. Each daily assignment post will be centered around a photography assignment. While these may at times appear to be superficial assignments, they are actually designed to enhance a mindful approach towards the world we live in, our life experiences, ourselves, others, etc. The idea is to take the focus off of the stories people tell themselves and the related thoughts that often run rampant in their minds, redirecting it towards mindfulness, as well as sharing and connecting with others. If there are any "selfie" type photography assignments, they will be directed towards self-acceptance, honesty, self-compassion, and authenticity; this is in contrast to the typical photographs posted on social media where the emphasis is frequently upon a contrived image designed to impress others. The assignments and activities also attempt to increase and enhance awareness of others, compassion, gratitude, and a connection with the natural world.

Lightly Peaceful is steeped in creating awareness of and interest in other human beings, in essence addressing the questions: "Can we get to know and accept ourselves? "Can we learn to really see each other?" and "Can we learn to live in this present moment as much as possible?" This resource is a way to take action right away; sometimes action proceeds interest, commitment, knowledge, or involvement. The point is to get the student "doing" mindfulness, at the same time they are learning about it. However, Lightly Peaceful is not a stand-alone curriculum designed to cover an entire course in mindfulness, but instead is an activity to be

done in conjunction with a class, a group, or a college orientation project in order to promote

mindfulness-related activities and experiences, as well as to facilitate personal reflection and

interconnectedness with others. Lightly Peaceful was created for college students, but can be

easily adapted for high school seniors, as well as other groups such as youth groups, teacher

support groups, yoga groups, families, etc. Hopefully, college students will find the experience to

be socially inviting and welcoming, as well as fun; in order to ensure this, students should be

asked to support one another with likes and positive comments throughout the course of the

project as part of the resource expectations. Additionally, as authenticity is a critical part of

mindfulness and self-compassion, students should be asked not to filter or enhance photographs.

Materials/Resources needed

Primary resources needed: Two primary resources are needed for this Mindfulness

Instagram project: access to a mobile device with internet connection and a download of the free

Instagram app. Unfortunately, while Instagram can always be viewed from a computer, photos

can generally only be uploaded from a mobile device such as iPhones, androids, iPads, and

tablets. There are other third-party apps that make it possible for photos and videos to be

uploaded to Instagram from desk-top computers and laptops; however, doing so may cause

accounts to be flagged by Instagram, since these apps are not created by Instagram. Thus, this

option should be an individual choice that is accompanied by significant research into the

validity of the third-party app, especially relative to compromising passwords or anything

relevant to personal security. Because of possible risks, instructions for this third-party method

will not be presented in this resource.

Because admittedly, this project requires access to devices that can be costly and the

related internet access, this project has the potential to be exclusionary for some students. While

most students have regular access to mobile phones, some schools may need to consider loaning

tablets to those students who do not have mobile phones. The important thing is that leaders who

plan on using Lightly Peaceful should survey their students ahead of time and modify how

content is presented in relation to the availability and accessibility of mobile devices. This is first

and foremost meant to be an activity that facilitates connection and inclusion; therefore,

adjustments must be made as needed in order to avoid inadvertently excluding anyone.

There are many different ways to deal with the challenges encountered if some students

do not have access to mobile devices. First of all, the project could proceed as planned, with

students accessing the leader's Instagram account for viewing daily posts on their laptops and

computers; they could then post their responses elsewhere, such as on class Blackboard sites,

leader created blogs, or possibly Facebook sites that have been created for sharing content

directly related to this project. Also, for those students who do not have a mobile device or a

camera, photos accessed online are an acceptable option for sharing, as long as students adhere

to copyright and citation/photo credits laws; these rules should be directly explained to students

who will not be taking their own photos in order to ensure that they are adequately prepared to

follow acceptable citation guidelines and to avoid plagiarizing. Regardless of how group leaders

or teachers may wish to use this project, two things will definitely be needed: an electronic

device with internet connection and some sort of platform that allows sharing of responses,

which will be composed of photos and personal posts.

Primary reading resources needed: There are additional optional items that may be

helpful, depending on the goals and needs of each group that is engaging with this mindfulness

project. Supplemental mindfulness reading resources are highly recommended; while students

will hopefully be putting mindfulness into action right away, having short, regular reading

assignments serves to enhance the depth of learning, as well as offer resources to those who have a deeper interest in learning more about mindfulness. There are numerous books, websites, magazines, etc., that address mindfulness and group leaders may select their own materials based on what their group's needs are. Daily posts (below) created for this mindfulness Instagram resource will have attached reading suggestions; these are only suggestions and should be modified as needs be. However, it is suggested that several different mindfulness books be used instead of a single book; if a student does not connect with an assigned mindfulness resource, they may think it is representative of all information about mindfulness and decide that they are not interested. It is critical, given the diversity of individual personalities, that as wide a spectrum of resources be used as possible in order to increase the likelihood that each student will find at least one source that will ignite their interest.

The books chosen for the purpose of this project were selected for their readability; they are fairly clear, basic, and simplistic in their approach to mindfulness; additionally, they do not present with a strong Buddhist approach, which may initially make students uncomfortable. The six books detailed below have been used as the primary assignment-related resources in the Instagram Lightly Peaceful posts, but they can easily be replaced with whatever specific source a group leader might choose. In the assignment portion of the Lightly Peaceful posts, these titles will be abbreviated for the sake of brevity because of the character limitations associated with Instagram.

1. *Real World Mindfulness for Beginners: Navigate Daily Life One Practice at a Time* edited by Brenda Zalgado

2. *Mindfulness: An Eight-Week Plan for Finding Peace in a Frantic World* by Mark Willians and Danny Penman

3. *Practicing Mindfulness: 75 Essential Meditations to Reduce Stress, Improve Mental Health, and Find Peace in the Everyday* by Matthew Sockolov

4. *The Mindful Twenty-Something: Life Skills to Handle Stress ... and Everything Else* by Holly Rogers

5. Kabat-Zinn, J. (2005). *Coming to Our Senses: Healing Ourselves and the World through Mindfulness.* New York, NY: Hachette Books.

6. *Why Meditate? Working with Thoughts and Emotions* by Matthieu Ricard

Recommended supplementary reading resources: The following resources are also helpful, and may spark student interest, as well as ideas about how to engage in meditation or mindfulness practices.

1. *The Little Book of Mindfulness: 10 Minutes a Day to Less Stress, More Peace* by Dr. Patrizia Collard

2. *Quotes for Mindfulness: Timeless Wisdom for the Modern World* edited by Carol Kelly-Gangi

3. *Resilient: How to Grow an Unshakable Core of Calm, Strength, and Happiness* by Rick Hanson

4. *Neuro Dharma: New Science, Ancient Wisdom, and Seven Practices of the Highest Happiness* by Rick Hanson

5. *Wherever You Go There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life* by Jon Kabbat-Zinn

6. *Falling Awake: How to Practice Mindfulness in Everyday Life* by Jon Kabbat-Zinn

7. *Inner Peace: A Guided Meditation Journal for Beginners* by Jordana Reim

Journal resource: Students should also maintain a mindfulness journal; this is a very important component of the project. The journal might be a hard copy journal, a spiral-ring notebook that can be hand-written in, or possibly even an electronic journal that is kept on the computer. The journal should be kept for personal growth, not for grades or sharing with others (unless a student so choses).

Additional possibilities: Finally, it may be helpful to furnish lists of other mindfulness-related Instagram accounts or lists of well-established mindfulness websites to the students; encouraging students to "follow" already well-established mindfulness resources is another method of piquing interest, increasing knowledge, and (hopefully) moving interest from social media sites that may adversely affect esteem to those that will uplift students and provide inspiration.

Instructions for Working with Instagram

Creating the group leader or teacher Instagram account

There are two ways to create an Instagram account, one of which is through the use of a mobile device and the other is through the use of a computer. For a mobile device, the first step is to download the Instagram app through either the App store (Apple products) or the Google Play Store (Android products), depending upon what type of device is being used. After opening the newly downloaded Instagram app, the next step is to create an account; for iPhones, tap "create a new account" and for android devices, tap "sign up with email or phone number" (Instagram Help Center, n.d.). A confirmation code may be sent to devices being used; if so, this will need to be entered before proceeding. The final step is to create a username and password; many usernames are already taken, and it is important to remember that "an Instagram username is limited to 30 characters and must contain only letters, numbers, periods, and

underscores. You can't include symbols or other punctuation marks as a part of your username"
(Herman, et al., n.d.). Signing up for Instagram on the computer is a matter of simply going to
Instagram.com and clicking on "sign up." From there, it is a matter of following the same
prompts as stated earlier.

There are a couple of things to keep in mind when selecting a username for the group
leader account. Obviously, one constraint is that the username cannot be one that is already
taken; it may be challenging to find an unused username and adding underscores or numbers
may be of some help in creating a username that has not been taken. Additionally, it is important
to select a username that will make it easy for students to find and remember the account name,
preferably something relevant to the school or organization that will be offering this Instagram
mindfulness experience. Regardless of what leaders or teachers decide to use, it should be a
name that can be modified for student usernames, keeping in mind the thirty-character limit.

Instructions for group participants to create an Instagram account

The above instructions regarding how to set up an Instagram account are the same for
students as well. The primary difference comes in determining whether or not to allow students
free reign in choosing their Instagram username for this project. Many students will already have
Instagram accounts and may ask if they can use their personal accounts for this mindfulness
project. Using personal accounts is not advised because it may hamper students' willingness to
try and create a new type of experience through social media; additionally, it is likely that most
students would become distracted by the social feed in their personal accounts, which are not
typically oriented towards mindfulness. Since the primary goals of this project are to provide
mindfulness experiences and teachings, as well as to change the nature of the social media
experience, it would be best to create a new account specifically for the purpose of working with

this project. Different email addresses or phone numbers must be used for each Instagram account; therefore, in the case of those with pre-existing Instagram accounts, it may be necessary to use school email addresses (depending on university policies) or a preferred junk email account, in order eliminate the complication of needing different email accounts for each Instagram account.

Additionally, group leaders may want to think of a specific "pattern" to ask students to use when setting up their accounts; this might mean something like the university acronym, the year, the enrollment term, and a student's last name or assigned number. An example of a possible username might be something like "utkfall2020smith1." The reason this may be helpful is that it will enable students and group leaders to easily find and view one another's accounts. Ultimately, it is up to group leaders to provide preferred username instructions to the students, keeping the thirty-character limit in mind. Once established, a list of usernames for each group should be compiled and distributed to all the students in a group so that they can "follow" each other's accounts. Being able to view and comment on one another's posts is a critical part of this project. Student's should be required to respond to a minimum number of posts from other students in the group; these responses should demonstrate compassion, hopefully facilitating a sense of interconnection with other students who are also making the transition to college.

How to modify, format, or copy and paste daily posts into Instagram

The first step after creating a username and password is to create an Instagram bio. This is a short description of the purpose of the account or perhaps even simply relevant words that describe it, such as "Mindfulness | Freshmen | UTK | 2020." The bio may consist of up to one-hundred and fifty characters; note that characters include spaces, as well as emojis. The bio basically notes the purpose of the account, as well as any brief and relevant information; it may

include links to other sites as well. It may be beneficial to look at other Instagram bios in order to

gather ideas for creating a bio. The bios created for this Instagram project should include

identifying information, such as some title identifying it as the group leader or teacher's account,

the school it is affiliated with, perhaps even the semester (fall, spring, summer), the year, etc. It

would also be beneficial to have links to other resources relevant to the university, such as

discussion boards, Blackboard groups, dorm groups, etc. For convenience and ease of use, the

"Bio and Daily Post Resources" section below has a sample bio that may be copied, pasted, and

modified as desired.

Perhaps the most difficult facets of using Instagram, whether it is the bio or daily posts,

are related to character count constraints and spacing issues; Instagram does not allow for

skipping lines or creating neat paragraphs. However, there is a formula for creating spaces

between lines: hit return after typing a line of text, chose a symbol (such as an asterisk), click on

it, and hit return again. This creates a somewhat-blank line between lines of text; it will have the

chosen symbol visible at the beginning of the line, but no other text on that line. Additionally, it

is important not to hit the space bar at the end of each line of text or this option for spacing will

not work. Another option is to use the notes app on mobile devices or laptops, typing in text as

usual, and then copying and pasting into Instagram. This should hold the spaces as they were

typed and eliminates the need for the "trick" above. A final option is to use third party line-break

generators for posting text, but again, this can be tricky with Instagram.

For daily posts, the character count limit is more generous; there are 2,200 spaces

allowed, which roughly translates into about 400 average length words. One of the greatest

challenges of Instagram involves the need for brevity. However, this is also probably one of the

reasons that Instagram is popular with college students; there is a certain appeal to allowing

photographs do the majority of the "talking" and ensuring that posts are very concise, with only

the most important information shared. The spacing issues apply to posts as well and because of

this, it is recommended that posts are created elsewhere, then copied and pasted into a character

counter to ensure that it is not too long. Once the post is the appropriate length, it can then be

copied and pasted directly into Instagram. These extra steps save a lot of time and frustration

when working with Instagram, which does not allow a post to upload if it is too long but

unfortunately, does not directly identify that this is the problem. For the sake of ease of use, the

daily posts provided below will be in a format that can be directly copied and pasted into

Instagram, if the user does not wish to make any modifications to them. This means that the

formatting and spacing does adhere to Instagram requirements, making it easy to copy, paste,

and upload the posts to Instagram.

Uploading photos to Instagram

To begin uploading photos, simply tap the plus button. The first time you post a photo,

the "+" button will be in the middle of the screen; thereafter, it will be at the bottom center of the

screen. You will then be able to see the photos from your camera roll, with the most recent photo

you took showing at the top of the screen. You do not have to use this photo though; simply

scroll through all the photos in the lower half of your screen and tap on the photo that you would

like to post. If you would like to post more than one photo, there is a small icon that looks like

two pieces of paper stacked on each other in the middle right portion of the screen; tap on this

icon and you will then be able to select up to 10 photos for posting.

When you have finished selecting your photos, tap "next" in the upper right-hand corner.

At this point you may choose to filter or edit, although for the purposes of this project that is not

recommended. Tap "next" again in the upper right-hand corner. Where it directs you to "write a

caption," paste in or type in the text that you would like to post with your photos. Then tap the "share" button in the upper right-hand corner; your photos will post along with the text. If you need to fix anything with the text, tap the three little dots that will now be at the top right-hand corner of your photo; choose "edit" and fix your text as desired. In order to fix the photos, you must delete and start the post over; in this case, tap the same three dots and then select "delete." For more directions or assistance see the following:

Posting photos in Instagram: https://help.instagram.com/442418472487929

Editing, cropping, etc.: https://help.instagram.com/search/?query=editing%20photo

Hashtags

Hashtags are used in order to help find related content; this means that the hashtags will help other people find your account and they are also a means for you to search for related accounts. It is recommended that students tag their posts as follows: #lightlypeaceful. This will help connect students from all over the country who will be participating in this specific mindfulness related college orientation resource; one of the goals of mindfulness is to facilitate a sense of global connection, making the world a little bit more intimate, creating a sense of relationship beyond the boundaries of the people we know and the areas we live in. Hopefully, doing this will help students find, view, and respond to one another's posts. Other hashtags are encouraged and would definitely be appropriate, such as: #mindfulness #collegestudents, #mindfulnessphotography, #collegefreshmen, etc.

Introduction to daily Instagram posts and usage information

Components of each daily post

Each daily post consists of the following five primary components, although the order may vary:

    1. Mindfulness quote(s) for the day

2. Mindful photography challenge

3. Mindful journaling/reflection

4. Reading Assignments

5. Mindful actions, such as:

    a. Physical activity: walking, yoga, biking, qigong, time in nature, etc

    b. Compassion/reaching out (noticing, complimenting, caring, etc., for others)

    c. Link to short meditations (which should grow in length over time)

    d. Mindful sharing: responses, comments, & likes, supporting and engaging with members of the mindful "Lightly Peaceful" community.

Timing modifications (to meet the group's needs)

These resources may be modified to fit a group's specific intentions. Group leaders and teachers are the decision makers as to how many days a week they would like their students or group members to interact with the Lightly Peaceful Instagram activity; however, expectations should be directly relevant to the purpose of the group using this resource. For example, a teacher who will be using this course in conjunction with a semester long course may want students to access new posts and respond accordingly as infrequently as once a week as a supplement to regular instruction or as an outside "homework" assignment; one a week interactions would ensure that students are not overburdened during the academic semester, especially since attitudes are likely to be more positive with minimal time commitment requirements. Other groups, such as summer freshmen orientation groups, may want students to interact with this Instagram project either on weekdays for a set number of weeks prior to an on-campus meeting, or perhaps only once a week all summer long before arriving on campus for the fall semester.

Thus, there are no right or wrong number of times that students should be encouraged to interact with the Lightly Peaceful project; it may be anywhere from one day a week to five days a week. The main thing to keep in mind is that it is critical that freshmen students are not burdened in terms of time and commitment; the goal is for them to experience the benefits associated with a small, yet consistently regular dose of mindfulness, rather than an intensive, short lived experience. Too many requirements in terms of weekly interactions or time consumptive assignments associated with this project will inevitably result in decreased student participation, which defeats the purpose of trying to create a resource that enhances daily mindfulness practices. Thus, interacting with the site more than five days a week is not recommended, as saturation may lead to disinterest, resentment, or increased stress.

Project duration possibilities

This project may be used for an entire semester, the entire freshman year of college, the summer before college starts, or even for short intensive bursts during class breaks. It may alternatively be used the entire senior year of high school or the last semester of high school, in preparation for college (*with students in high school and under 18 though, parental permission must be obtained for the use of social media before it should be given as an assignment). Another alternative is to start working with Lightly Peaceful the summer before college begins, and to use it in conjunction with college orientation programs. The duration should be determined by group needs. Right now, there are 15 posts available, with more to be added over time; please send a direct message via the Lightly Peaceful Instagram site with requests for more posts if they should be needed before they appear on the site.

The most important factor to keep in mind is that the experience should be fun and engaging, allowing students to get to know themselves and other students better; additionally, it

should offer mindfulness experiences, practices, and short activities or reading assignments in order to begin to integrate mindfulness into daily life. Obviously, the more time students have to interact with the materials presented, the more opportunities they will have to engage with mindfulness and the greater the likelihood that they will internalize some of the practices. However, even interactions with a shorter duration offer the possibility of sparking interest and perhaps planting the seeds of mindfulness.

Mindfulness themes associated with daily posts

The daily posts reflect a wide range of mindfulness related themes and may have quite a bit of overlap. These themes include topics such as: an introduction to mindfulness and meditation, using the senses, compassion for others, compassion for self, forgiveness, resilience, interconnection, global awareness, gratitude, vocations, courage, awareness (of body/food/thoughts/actions), intentionality, non-judgement, insight dialogue, mindful communication, mindful eating, mindful walking, etc.

Modifying or personalizing posts

Each "daily" entry will have many components. Please select only those parts that you feel will work for your particular group of participants and copy and paste accordingly. This means that your post may not, for example, have a journal assignment or perhaps it will not have an associated reading assignment. You are welcome to post the entire Instagram post as it is presented here, but one of the key pieces of information relevant to introducing college students to mindfulness reveals that college students are less likely to practice mindfulness if it is too time consuming. Initial exposures with mindfulness should not overwhelm students or take too much time or students will be less likely to embrace the practice. If this project is used in conjunction

with a semester-long mindfulness, health, or psychology course, then it would be more appropriate to use the posts in their entirety.

If posts do need to be altered, the best way to do this is to copy and paste the desired post into a notes app and to then make the changes as needed, keeping the total character count in mind; when this has been done, the entire post can be entered into an online character counter to check for length issues (a total of 2,200 characters per post). This is a critical step, as Instagram will fail to post if the word count is too long and valuable time may be lost trying to trouble shoot the reason that posting is not occurring successfully. If group leaders are inserting quite a bit of personally selected material, then they should be careful to omit some of the original material from the post in order to make sure there is enough room for their additions.

Using the sample Instagram account

To find the sample Instagram site, simply type in "lightlypeaceful" in the Instagram search section, which appears as a magnifying glass; the formal handle is @lightlypeaceful. Lightly Peaceful begins such that the oldest posts (the ones at the bottom of the feed) are from the first post listed in this resource. Thus, you will find the Lightly Peaceful Instagram sample is in reverse order with the first post in this resource paper appearing last in the Instagram feed. The reason to for mentioning this is so that you will be able to see what your own account will look as you progress with your posting; Instagram layers the posts so that new posts appear at the top of the feed (as the first thing you see) and older posts are pushed further down as new material is added. You are welcome to copy and paste from the Instagram site itself or from the text version embedded in this document, which is directly below.

Bio and Daily Post Resources

Sample Bio

☀️ LightlyPeaceful: Making Moments Matter

📷 Authentic Photography & Mindful Experiences

🦋 Creating Compassion & Connection in College

Daily Posts

Introduction to Mindfulness and Meditation

Day 1

Mindful Quote: Mindfulness is simply being aware of what is happening right now without wishing it were different; enjoying the pleasant without holding on when it changes (which it will); being with the unpleasant without fearing it will always be this way (which it won't) ~ James Baraz

*

Reading Assignment: The Mindful Twenty-Something: Life Skills to Handle Stress…and Everything Else by Holly Rogers, pp. 1-19.

*

Part of mindfulness is about learning how to see slow down, be present, and not to be consumed with our thoughts. Most of us generally run around caught up in all that we are thinking about or worrying about, rarely noticing the very things that might give us joy. For example, how many times have you gotten to your destination and never even noticed any facet of the trip that got you there?

*

Mindful Actions: Sit down and close your eyes wherever you may be at this moment. Simply take deep breaths in and out; focus on the rising and falling motion of your stomach or the air going in and out of your nostrils. Don't worry if your thoughts are racing; for now, just let the thoughts come and go, simply refocusing on taking deep breaths. This time may feel interminably long or be difficult to do; be patient, as it is normal to feel squirmy, itchy, or restless.

*

After 5 minutes of doing this, try to key in and listen for sounds that you normally do not notice because of the busyness of your life. Next, gently open your eyes, continuing to sit still. What things do you notice? What is in your line of vision that you would normally overlook?

*

Photo Challenge: Take a picture of something that you noticed when you opened your eyes, something you might normally overlook; it will depend on where you are sitting as to what you might see, such as a leaf, a hole in your shoe, etc. Focus in on this item and try to capture how vivid it appeared when you first opened your eyes, noticing and sharing the minutia of this item.

*

Journal Prompt: What does the word mindfulness mean to you? What do you think of when you hear it? Was it difficult or easy to sit in silence? Describe the sounds and the sights you noticed after sitting quietly.

*

#Lightlypeaceful #mindfulness

Day 2

Mindful Quote: Mindfulness is the aware, balanced acceptance of the present experience. It isn't more complicated than that. It is opening to or receiving the present moment, pleasant or unpleasant, just as it is, without either clinging to it or rejecting it ~ Sylvia Boorstein

*

Reading Assignment: Real World Mindfulness for Beginners: Navigate Daily Life One Practice at a Time, Brenda Zalgado (ed.), pp. 9-25.

*

Mindful Action: One part of mindfulness is tuning into our bodies and becoming aware of the physical sensations we are experiencing. Sometimes the easiest way to do this is to simply lay flat on your back, arms at your sides with your hands palms up. This should be a relaxing position; allow the earth and the ground beneath you to support your body fully. Close your eyes and take slow deep breaths, trying to allow all the muscles in your body to relax and sink into the ground as you exhale. Begin to notice the sensations you encounter in each part of your body; you may start with your feet, paying attention and slowly working your way upwards. Your thoughts may come and go during this time or even race, and it's okay when they do; simply return to noticing the physical sensations that you are experiencing. Continue to take slow deep breaths, especially when you notice parts of your body that are tense or have uncomfortable sensations. When you open your eyes, look at the sky above you; noticed the clouds, trees, birds, etc. with "new," fresh eyes.

*

Photo Challenge: Take time to appreciate the sky, in all its glory. Share a

photograph of the sky, which may include scenes such as, a clear sky, a storm

filled or cloudy sky, the night sky, a sunset, or even the sky as viewed through the

branches of a tree.

*

Journal Prompt: Think about the sky, the weather, the seasons, and the feelings

(such as cozy, exuberant, sentimental, etc.) associated with them. Write about the

memories, sensations, colors, sounds, etc., that come to mind when you think

about: a summer storm, a sunrise, a sun set, a night of star gazing, or a blustery

winter snowstorm. Pick one memory in particular and describe it in as vivid detail

as possible.

*

#Lightlypeaceful #mindfulness

Day 3

Mindful Quotes:

*

The little things? The little moments? They aren't little ~ Jon Kabat-Zinn

*

Live the actual moment. Only this actual moment is life ~ Thích Nhất Hạnh

*

Reading Assignment: Practicing Mindfulness: 75 Essential Meditations to

Reduce Stress, Improve Mental Health, and Find Peace in the Everyday by

Matthew Sockolov, pp. xi-xxvi

*

Most of us are often living in the past or else worrying about the future. How

often do you spend time feeling angry or hurt about something that happened long

ago?   We might hold grudges for years or worry about what the future holds,

feeling anxious about everything that is far beyond our control. The sad truth is

that being caught up in our thoughts about the past or the future prevents us from

living in the present, from noticing all the things that could bring us joy every

single day. We need to recognize that it's okay not to spend every waking moment

focusing on things we can't do anything about right now; this doesn't mean we are

pretending to ignore valid concerns. Things we do not let those concerns consume

us because life is what's happening when we're waiting for something big to

happen; it's about all the individual precious moments.

*

Mindful Action: Wherever you may be, close your eyes and take deep breaths for

at least 5 minutes. Before you open your eyes, choose a color; when you open

your eyes try to find everything in your sight that is the color you chose,

particularly things you would normally overlook.

*

Photo Challenge: Choose a color that you feel reflects your mood at this moment

or that you feel represents your personality overall. Take several photographs,

both inside and outside, of things that are this color. Try to make the items that you photograph the centerpiece of your pictures. Make sure to pay attention to detail, trying to notice this color in places or items that you would normally overlook, or be in too big a hurry to appreciate.

*

Journal Prompt: Colors are often tied to emotions and mood. Which colors make you feel happiest? If you could only choose one color, what would it be? Write about the different emotions and memories that you associate with specific colors.

*

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Day 4

Mindful Quote:

*

The present moment is the only time over which we have dominion ~ Thích Nhất Hạnh

*

In today's rush, we all think too much-seek too much-want too much-and forget about the joy of just being ~ Eckhart Tolle

*

Reading Assignment: Mindfulness: An Eight-Week Plan for Finding Peace in a Frantic World by Mark Williams and Danny Penman, pp. 1-14.

*

Time is a precious commodity; society tends to view busyness as a sign of

productivity. We are often driven by clocks, alarms, deadlines, and associated

commitments. Most of us often feel as if there is a stopwatch in our minds,

keeping an exact count on how long or how often we can afford to be take a break

from our stressors. We miss the importance of non-doing, of simply being. This is

why vacations are so restorative, because we stop watching the clock, giving

ourselves permission to just enjoy the sounds of nature, the warmth of the sun on

our faces, the smell of the salt in the air, etc., and how it feels to live and the

present moment without the artificial constraint of time.

*

Mindful Action: Using any meditation app (Insight Timer has interesting

ambient sound choices) or even a YouTube resource, choose a background sound

that you can get lost in, such as the sounds of the beach, the rain, a rainforest, or

even meditation bells. Lie flat on your back, arms at your sides with palms up,

eyes closed, with recording playing in the background. Try to relax, breathing

deeply in and out, letting go of any worries about time.

*

Photo Challenge: Think about the items in your life that are related to your

awareness of time. Look around your home or your dorm room and share

photographs of things that represent your relationship with time.

*

Journal Prompt: Things can look different with the perspective of time. How

have your attitudes, opinions, or beliefs already changed over time? Give specific

examples. If you were to jump ahead 50 years and look back, what do you think the really important things about this point in your life would be? Do you think the things that you are most stressed about right now will be things that you will remember then?

*

#Lightlypeaceful #mindfulness

Day 5

Mindful Quote:

*

Don't believe everything you think. Thoughts are just that-thoughts ~Allan Lokos

*

Nothing can harm you as much as your own thoughts unguarded ~ Buddha

*

Reading Assignment: Coming to Our Senses: Healing Ourselves and the World through Mindfulness, by Jon Kabat-Zinn, pp. 1-17.

*

One of the most important things that mindfulness can help you learn is that "a thought is just a thought." Subconsciously, we believe that if we think something, then it must be true; we believe every passing thought we have, especially harsh self-criticisms, which may lead to depression, anxiety, lack of self-esteem, etc. Believing our thoughts leads to self-intolerance and the assumption that other people's thoughts are incorrect if they don't match ours; we begin to pass judgment, believing that others are wrong if they don't think like us. Mindfulness

gives us an opportunity to step back and simply watch our thoughts come and go, observing the frenetic and unpredictable nature of those thoughts, without engaging with them; it gives us an opportunity to distance ourselves, to be dispassionate and unreactive. We might continue to have the thoughts, but we can recognize their ephemeral nature, realizing that we don't have to act upon or react to them, especially since they are tied more to mood than reality. Mindfulness is an opportunity to liberate ourselves from the prison that our own thoughts can create.

*

Mindful Action: Light a candle somewhere cozy and quiet (be safe). Sit up, take slow deep breaths, and stare at the candle. Allow your thoughts to come and go for 10 minutes. Observe the changing nature of your thoughts, the way your mind leaps from one thing to another, desperate not to quieten down. Try to just watch your thoughts, without getting caught up in them.

*

Photo Challenge: Take photographs of things that you give you a sense of peace, tranquility, happiness, or quietude. This may be photos of places, people, or specific items.

*

Journal Prompt: Reflect about 5 memories, events, or occasions that made you happy or inspired a sense of peace; describe the situations and note if there is a common theme between them.

*

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Day 6

Mindful Quote:

*

Look at other people and ask yourself if you are really seeing them or just your

thoughts about them…. Without knowing it, we are coloring everything, putting

our spin on it all ~ Jon Kabat-Zinn

*

Reading Assignments:

The Mindful Twenty-Something, pp. 20-27

Real World Mindfulness for Beginners, pp. 27-29

Why Meditate? pp. 3-16

*

Meditation is part of establishing a mindfulness practice. If you have

preconceived ideas about meditation, try to let them go in order to give meditation

a try with an open mind. While meditation cannot cure all that ails our world, it

may: decrease stress, depression, anxiety, and sleep issues. It may also increase

awareness, compassion, decision making abilities, healthy coping methods,

concentration, as well as overall physical and mental wellbeing. Perhaps most

importantly, it gives us awareness of our thoughts, which are often running amuck

on overdrive. Much of the time, it is our own thoughts and our mental ruts that are

the roots of some of our greatest sources of unhappiness. Meditation enables us to

distance ourselves somewhat from those thoughts and to become less reactive to

everything we think or dwell upon. This does not mean that we are disengaged with our lives or emotions, but simply that we have more choices in how we feel, respond, think, and react to the world around us. These choices enable us to positively improve and change our relationships with ourselves, as well as those with others, resulting in greater life satisfaction. Don't worry if it is difficult to conceive of what meditation is; we will address this over the next several posts.

*

Mindful Action: Try each of the following activities with an open and curious mind: Real World Mindfulness for Beginners, pp. 30-35 & Practicing Mindfulness, pp. 3-7.

*

Photo Challenge: Share photos of eyes (human or animal!), which are symbolic of the desire to "see" things more clearly.

*

Journal Prompt: What negative thoughts about yourself do you tend to dwell on? Make a list of at least 5 things you like about yourself; write a persuasive paragraph about each of these traits, detailing the value of these traits. Give specific examples.

*

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Day 7

Mindful Quotes:

*

When we walk like we are rushing, we print anxiety and sorrow on the earth. We have to walk in a way that we only print peace and serenity on the earth... Be aware of the contact between your feet and the earth. Walk as if you are kissing the earth with your feet ~ Thich Nhat Hahn

*

In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks ~ John Muir

*

Reading Assignment: Mindfulness: An Eight-Week Plan, pp. 15-31. Coming to Our Senses, pp. 55-57

*

How often do you walk with your thoughts so totally consuming you, not even remembering how you got somewhere? Do you ever pay attention to the walk or think about how much you rely upon your feet to do their job? We expect our bodies to function, never truly taking time to appreciate the wonder of the human body and all it is capable of; nor do we appreciate the gift of the natural world we live in.

*

Mindful action: Walk barefoot somewhere for at least 5 minutes, outside if possible. You may pace a short distance, or you may take a long walk. Concentrate on the sensations, the temperature, texture, pressure, etc. Walk slowly, with purpose, observing the flexion and extension of your foot, the way it supports you, and every sensation that you feel; keep the focus on where your foot

is "kissing the earth" for those 5 minutes instead of everything that may be distracting.

*

Photo Challenge: Slip your shoes off and take some photos of your feet in your favorite places to be shoeless, whether it is outside or inside. You may also wish to share photos that contrast bare feet (small/large, young/old, tattooed/not, jewelry/none, etc.)

*

Journal Prompt: Connect your memories with your experiences of going barefoot, which may include anything from a beach trip, to simply taking your shoes off at the end of a long hard day, or even to childhood memories of barefoot summers; describe the physical sensations and the associated emotional feelings you had at that time. Create a vivid sensory description that would transport potential readers into your experiences.

*

Link: Walking Meditation

https://www.mindful.org/daily-mindful-walking-practice/

https://tricycle.org/magazine/walking-meditation-move/

*

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Day 8

Mindful Quote:

*

Empathy is the art of stepping imaginatively into the shoes of another person, understanding their feelings and perspectives, and using that understanding to guide your actions ~ Roman Kzrnaric

*

When another person makes you suffer, it is because he suffers deeply within himself, and his suffering is spilling over. He does not need punishment; he needs help. That's the message he is sending ~ Thich Nhat Hanh

*

It is tremendously liberating when you don't take things so personally ~ Jack Kornfield

*

Reading Assignment: The Mindful Twenty-Something, pp. 41-48. Real World Mindfulness, pp. 51-55.

*

So much anger, resentment, hurt, etc. is related to the way we perceive people and situations; in turn, our perceptions (or more accurately misperceptions), then drive our reactions and behaviors. The rose-colored glasses we wear taint our views with insecurities, defensiveness, and "me first" attitudes. What if most of our hurts, disappointments, and fears were actually grounded in misperceptions? What if we could make things better by simply learning to see things the way they actually are, rather than how we believe them to be? Mindfulness offers this liberation and it results in greater self-compassion, as well as compassion and empathy for others.

*

Mindful Action: This week offer compassion and kindness to at least 2 people. This may mean doing something unexpectedly for someone or perhaps simply being a compassionate listener. Real World Mindfulness, pp. 56-61.

*

Photo Challenge: Continuing with feet-related themes: Photograph favorite pairs of shoes (yours or someone else's), or a pair you wish you had They may be old, new, in-between, and on your feet or off.

*

Journal Prompt: Write about the places you have been and the things you have done in those shoes, or if you choose someone else's shoes, share the memories they spark. If you could have any shoes in the world, which style/pair would you want and why? Write descriptively.

*

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Day 9

Mindful Quote:

*

Mindfulness is not about adding anything to your life, but simply uncovering and seeing clearly what is already there. It's more about subtraction than addition ~ Marta Patterson

*

Furthermore, as muddy water is best cleared by leaving it alone, it could be argued that those who sit quietly and do nothing are making one of the best possible contributions to a world in turmoil ~ Alan Watts

*

Reading Assignment: Coming to Our Senses, pp. 42-50. Mindfulness: An Eight-Week Plan, pp. 32-55

*

One of the most important things we can learn to do is allow our minds time to settle. Emotional reactions occur almost instantaneously after we have a thought. We become locked into those initial thoughts and reactions, which is dangerous because our initial thoughts are NOT always accurate or even correct; yet, we spend days and years reacting to them. For example, if we think someone has hurt us, we may spend a complex mental web of unkind and resentful thoughts about that person that last an entire lifetime. However, if we allow the "muddy water" of our mind to settle, with time and clarity, we may realize this person doesn't know they hurt us and that they are in need of compassion and support. Mindfulness enables us to see clearly, weather a hurt with resilience, and reach out to others.

*

Mindful Action: Practicing Mindfulness: 75 Essential Meditations, pp. 33-35. Create a "wind down" jar as directed by the link (don't be fooled, this activity is perfect for adults!). There is also a "calming bottle" app (there may be others as well). Use this daily this week for a least 5 minutes.

https://www.mindful.org/how-to-create-a-glitter-jar-for-kids/

*

Photo Challenge: Photograph things that represent the words "clarity" or "depth" to you, such as reflective surfaces, liquids, things beneath surfaces, things with unexpected depth, etc.

*

Journal Prompt: List five things that currently frustrate or bother you. How can you change the way you see or approach these situations? With people, write about how it might look from their point of view. With situations, write about what can you change versus what you need to just let go of.

*

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Day 10

Mindful Quote:

*

We find out what we really value in the daily decisions that we make, so we might do well to stop occasionally and respectfully ask ourselves: What truly matters? Asked regularly and fearlessly, it is the single question that will help you get to the heart of your life ~ James E. Ryan

*

The things that matter most in our lives are not fantastic or grand. They are moments when we touch one another ~ Jack Kornfield

*

In the end, just three things matter:

How well we have lived

How well we have loved

How well we have learned to let go

~ Jack Kornfield

*

Reading Assignment: Mindfulness: An Eight-Week Plan, pp. 67-89. Real World Mindfulness, pp. 74-85

*

Mindfulness is associated with paying attention in a number of ways, such as whether we are living our lives in alignment with our priorities. Life gets busy; we get caught up in our routines, our worries, and our goals, rarely slowing down to assess what is most important to us in life. Do you spend your time doing things that are truly important to you? We often inadvertently allow things that may not be truly meaningful to us dominate our lives. If you looked back from 20 years in the future, what things would you remember most, what things would seem important? It is likely that your relationships with those you love, being happy in some capacity every single day, and working towards a meaningful goal that contributes to the world (without letting it consume you), would be high on your list. Mindfulness not only helps us discern our priorities; it also helps us discover how to find true joy in the present moment instead of waiting for some nebulous time in the future to be happy.

*

Mindful Action: Keep a detailed record of how you spend your time for a few days. Do this with an open mind and curiosity, but NOT judgement.

*

Photo Challenge: Share photos of your priorities: people you love (with permission!), places that make you happy, hobbies you enjoy, etc.

*

Journal Prompt: Were you surprised to discover how you spend the bulk of your time? Is the time you spend in alignment with your priorities? How can your routine change to honor creating more quality time in your life?

*

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Day 11

Mindful Quote:

*

Every minute can be a holy, sacred minute. Where do you seek the spiritual? You seek the spiritual in every ordinary thing that you do every day. Sweeping the floor, watering the vegetables, and washing the dishes become holy and sacred if mindfulness is there. With mindfulness and concentration, everything becomes spiritual ~ Thich Nhat Hanh

*

Begin doing what you want to do now. We are not living in eternity. We have only this moment, sparkling like a star in our hand--and melting like a snowflake ~ Sir Francis Bacon

*

Reading Assignment: The Mindful Twenty-Something, pp. 49-82, Mindfulness: An Eight-Week Plan, pp. 90-110.

*

Meditation is the primary means that enables us to become mindful, and the effects of meditation and being mindful impact far more than just our thoughts. Because mindfulness can provide clarity, awareness, and discernment, it then enables us to be more intentional in our actions as well. Since mindfulness teaches us to truly be present, it becomes possible to engage fully in whatever we are doing. For example, walking to class can become a joyous experience wherein we note the sun on our faces, the glorious signs of whatever season it may be, the scent in the air, the feel of the grass under our feet, etc. A walk where we previously never even noticed a single facet of the trip now becomes an experience grounded in joy and gratitude for the natural world. With mindfulness, meals where we never even registered what we ate can become savory and soothing, delightful experiences. Similarly, our interactions with other people are impacted as both our ability not to take things personally increases and so does our capacity for compassion.

*

Mindful Action: Try the following walking and eating meditation exercises. Practicing Mindfulness: 75 Essential Meditations, pp. 12-14, pp. 28-29.

*

Photo Challenge: Photograph your favorite foods, restaurants, snacks, etc., or

share photos of your favorite places to take walks.

*

Journal Prompt: Identify your favorite foods. Have you ever cooked them

yourself, savoring the process? What feelings/emotions do you associate with

specific foods or food related occasions?

*

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Day 12

Mindful Quote:

*

If the problem can be solved why worry? If the problem cannot be solved

worrying will do you no good ~ Buddha

*

Whatever the present moment contains, accept it as if you had chosen it. Always

work with it, not against it ~ Eckhart Tolle

*

Reading Assignment: The Mindful Twenty-Something, pp. 83-107,

Mindfulness: An Eight-Week Plan, pp. 111-135.

*

A big part of mindfulness involves finding the capacity for acceptance. This is a

difficult topic to explain because people often assume that accepting your inner

thoughts and emotions is synonymous with resignation to whatever is happening

to you. This is not what mindful acceptance means. Mindful acceptance means acknowledging whatever you are feeling or experiencing in the moment, honoring your current feelings. With this comes the capacity to be patient, resting in the knowledge that everything is impermanent so then, we can rest assured that even uncomfortable, unpleasant sensations will abate in time; our anger, pain, resentments, etc., will not last forever. Accepting our thoughts and feelings allows them to effectively run their course; resisting, denying, or avoiding what is going on in the mind simply results in amplifying and magnifying everything; thus, acceptance assists in the ability to let go.

*

Mindful Action: There are a number of exercises to help with developing acceptance. Chose the things you would like to address (such as anger, self-forgiveness, aversion), etc. from the following mindfulness activities; they are brief and simple activities, so please try several. Real World Mindfulness for Beginners, pp. 82-83, 87-109.

*

Photo Challenge: Photograph things you would like to change but have learned to accept, things you are still working on accepting, or something that is symbolic to you of those things (e.g. your grades, your nose, your weight, something you own, a job, a symbol of a relationship, etc.).

*

Journal Prompt: Write a letter to yourself as if you are a caring third party, giving yourself compassion, support, and tolerance for something you have been struggling with.

*

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Day 13

Mindful Quote:

*

The significance is hiding in the insignificant. Appreciate everything ~ Eckhart Tolle

*

The most fortunate are those who have a wonderful capacity to appreciate again and again, freshly and naively, the basic goods of life, with awe, pleasure, wonder, and even ecstasy ~ Abraham Maslow

*

Reading Assignment: Practicing Mindfulness, pp. 38-40, Real World Mindfulness, pp. 37-50

*

It seems to be human nature to register negative things in our lives more than positive. We need to retrain our brains so that we vigilantly note all the good things that touch our lives every single day. It takes practice to do this; mindfulness helps us disengage from the chaos in our minds enough that we can see things more clearly, which includes being able to appreciate the many gifts in

our lives. It also helps us to process trials, misfortunes, rough times, or simply "bad days" with more grace and acceptance, ensuring that we do not take things personally or perceive that the world is singling us out.

*

Mindful Action: Start a daily gratitude practice. There are a number of ways to do this. You can simply keep a small notebook and jot down 3 to 5 things that you felt grateful for each day; it could be things that happened that day or memories & thoughts of things you feel grateful for. Another alternative is to use a large jar (decorate it as you wish), write the things you are grateful for on colorful pieces of paper, and drop them in. This allows you to pull the slips out and read them any time you might be having a bad or down day; it also allows for others (family members, dorm roommates, etc.) to participate in this daily act.

*

Photo Challenge: Share photographs of the people, places, or material items (for example, a book that brings back memories of your parents reading to you) that you feel grateful for.

*

Journal Prompt: Either describe some experiences you have had where you were surprised, touched, humbled, etc., by someone's unexpected kindness or write letters of gratitude to people who have had a positive impact on your life or touched you in some small way. Consider actually sending those letters (they will mean a lot to others!)

*

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Day 14

Mindful Quotes:

*

You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf ~ Jon Kabat-Zinn

*

Everything that has a beginning has an ending. Make your peace with that and all

will be well ~ Jack Kornfield

*

The mind is just like a muscle - the more you exercise it, the stronger it gets and

the more it can expand ~ Idowu Koyenikan

*

Positivity is like a boomerang. The more we put it out there, the more it comes

back to us ~ Jon Gordon

*

Like the tide, there is an ebb and flow to everything; this is life's natural rhythm

and yet, it is human nature to resist it. We desire eternal happiness without any

pain; we mistakenly believe life is not going well if we have anything

disappointing happen. This is unrealistic; sadly, nothing wonderful can last

forever, but happily, neither can hard times. Therefore, our reactions to what

happens is far more important than what actually happens; if we can learn to

remain calm in the eye of storm-knowing it won't last forever-and if we can learn

not to cling too hard to the good times because we know they cannot last forever

either, then we can find equanimity and joy in each and every day. Being mindful offers us the capacity to be resilient, no matter what trials we may encounter.

*

Reading Assignment: The Mindful Twenty-Something, pp. 108-117, Mindfulness: An Eight-Week Plan, pp. 111-135.

*

Mindful Action: Try the following three mindfulness practices related to mindfulness and resiliency.

1. Practicing Mindfulness, pp. 148-149

2. Practicing Mindfulness, pp. 165-166

3. https://www.mindful.org/a-mindfulness-practice-to-cultivate-nonjudgmental-awareness/

*

Photo Challenge: Take photos of things that restore you, that help you recharge your emotional/mental battery…this can be sounds (such as favorite music or bubbling water), special foods, favorite places to hang out, or even people whose presence helps calm and soothe you.

*

Journal Prompt: Write about a time you overcame a challenge that you originally thought you would not get over (a break-up, an illness, a major rejection, a disappointment, etc.). What did you learn about yourself? What hidden strengths do you possess? What can you do to be more resilient?

*

#Lightlypeaceful #mindfulness

Day 15

Mindful Quote:

*

When we feel love and kindness toward others, it not only makes others feel loved and cared for, but it helps us also to develop inner happiness and peace ~ 14th Dalai Lama

*

A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feeling as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty ~ Albert Einstein

*

I offer you peace

I offer you love

I offer you friendship

I see your beauty

I hear your need

I feel your feelings

My wisdom flows from the highest source

I salute that source in you

Let us work together

For unity and peace ~ Gandhi's Prayer for Peace

*

One of the most important things we can to do to contribute towards healing the

world AND ourselves, is to find the capacity to extend our heartfelt, most sincere

wishes for other beings to be happy, healthy, and free from sorrow or suffering.

When we do this, bitterness, anger, resentment, jealousy, loneliness, and isolation

naturally fade away; we can then become compassionate, loving people who are

to forgive, to extend compassion, and to share pain. We begin to realize that we

are more alike than we are different, and we all want the same things in life,

which facilitates a global sense of interconnection.

*

Reading Assignment: The Mindful Twenty-Something, pp. 165-174,

Mindfulness: An Eight-Week Plan, pp. 185-210.

*

Mindful Action: Try the following activities. Real World Mindfulness, pp. 111-

121, Practicing Mindfulness, pp. 23-25, pp. 30-32.

*

Photo Challenge: Share photos of people who have given you compassion,

support, or even just acknowledgment in some way (with their permission).

*

Journal Prompt: Write about any time you have been a recipient or a facilitator of random acts of kindness; write in a stream of consciousness format, allowing your mind to take you where it will.

*

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Appendix

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