

***Mindfulness and Stress
Resilience for Professional
Caregivers in the Time of
COVID-19***

Interactive Activity on Participant's Experience During COVID-19

COVID-19 Stressors

Healthcare workers in the time of COVID-19 may experience stress related to:

- physical strain of protective equipment (dehydration, heat, exhaustion)
- physical isolation (restrictions on touching others, even after working hours)
- constant awareness and vigilance regarding infection control procedures
- pressures regarding procedures that must be followed (lack of spontaneity)

COVID-19 Stressors

Risk of disease transmission

Infection control is a significant concern that can be exacerbated by:

- common flu and cold symptoms being mistaken for COVID-19
- the extended symptom-free incubation period of COVID-19
- a relatively higher mortality rate compared to influenza
- the tension between public health priorities and the wishes of patients and their families regarding quarantine

COVID-19 Stressors

Multiple medical and personal demands

The complexity of responding to COVID-19 may result in conflicting personal and professional demands, including:

- continued daily workload demands competing with COVID-19 preparation and treatment measures
- a need to maintain high standards in the face of ongoing policy changes
- possible separation from and concern about family members
- inner conflict about competing needs and demands

COVID-19 Stressors

Stigma

Healthcare workers can be affected by both internal and external stigma related to the COVID-19 virus and its impact, such as:

- others' fear of contact with those treating patients with COVID-19
- healthcare workers' self-stigma about voicing their needs and fears

Common signs and symptoms of professional caregiver stress

- Anxiety, depression, irritability
- Feeling tired and run down
- Difficulty sleeping
- Overreacting to minor nuisances
- New or worsening health problems
- Trouble concentrating
- Drinking, smoking, or eating more
- Cutting back on leisure activities

Interactive Activity on Stress Reactivity

When we're stressed, our brains persistently mis-predict and mis-read situations.

The tactical mode works for survival, but minimizes creative thinking and empathy.

The skills for survival, though useful, are different than those for long-term happiness and wellbeing.

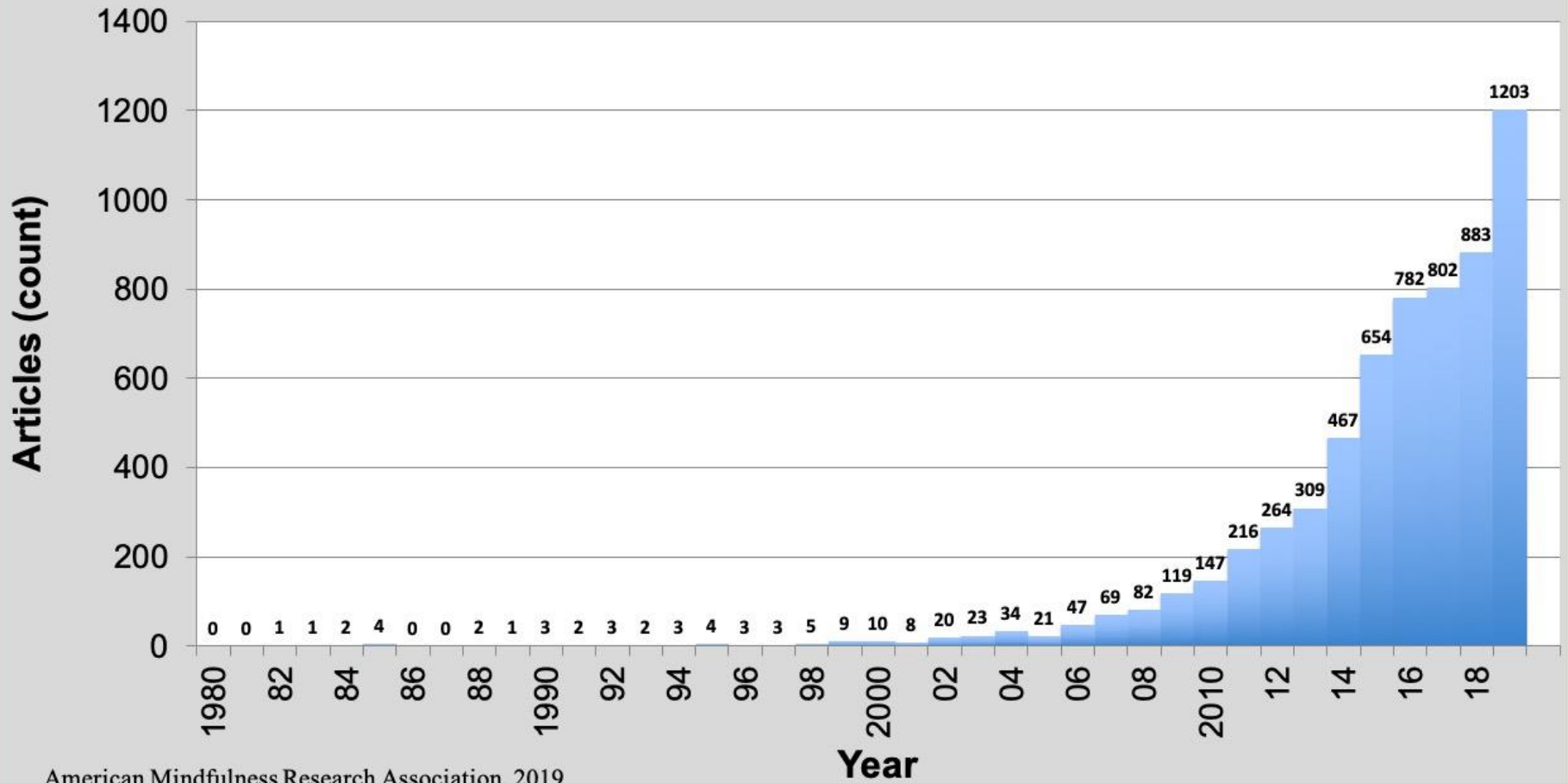


What is Mindfulness?

"Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally"

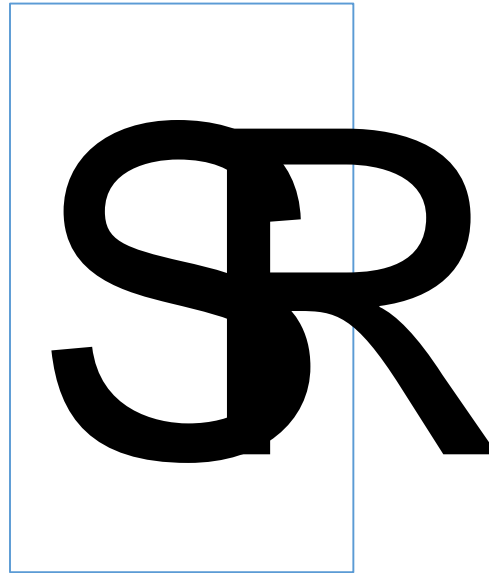
-John Kabat-Zinn

"Mindfulness" journal articles published by year: 1980-2019

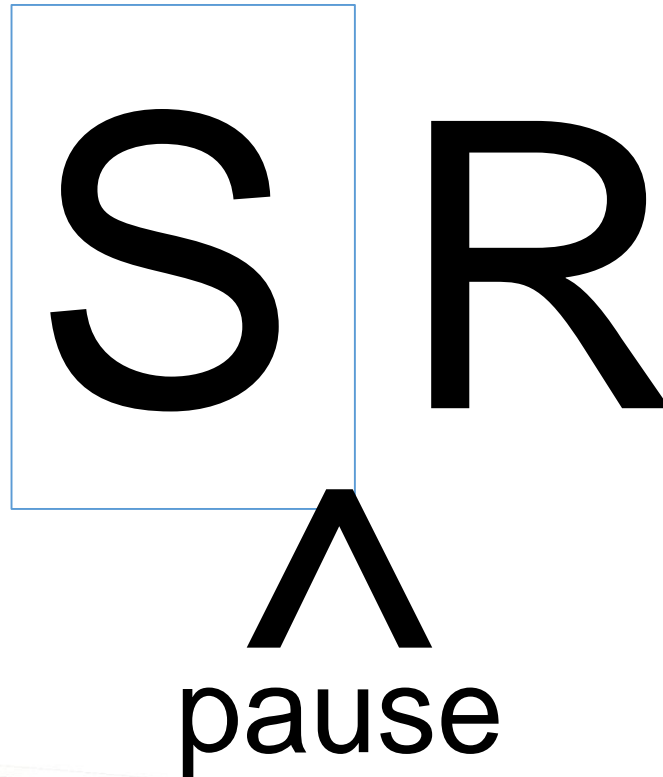


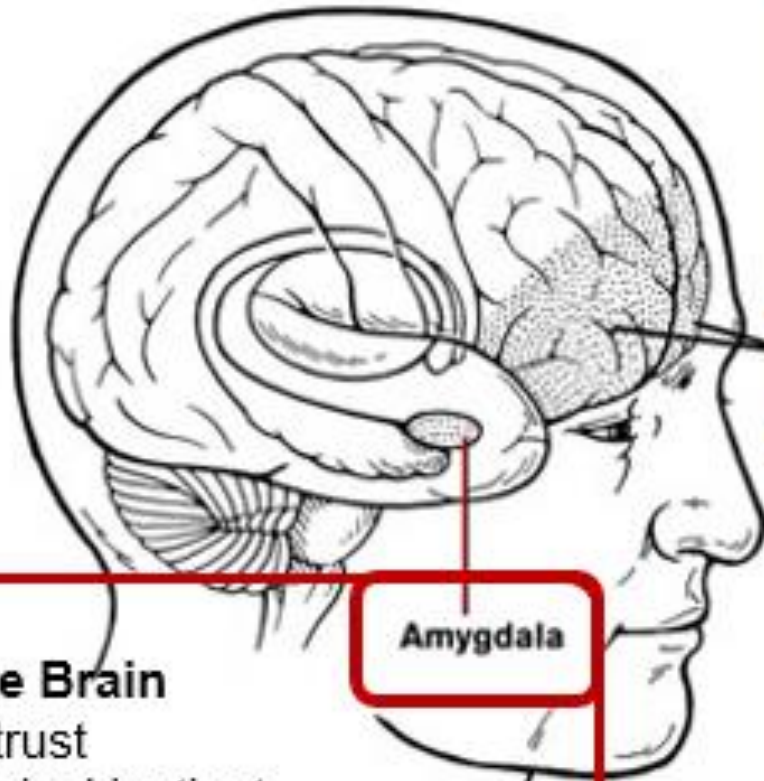
American Mindfulness Research Association, 2019
Source: goAMRA.org

stimulusresponse



Stimulus ... Response





Executive Brain

- Build and sustain trust
- Problem solving
- Focus on goals
- Ability to socialize

Prefrontal cortex

Primitive Brain

- Distrust
- Survival instinct
- Wanting to win at all costs

Amygdala

Formal Mindfulness Practices

- Sitting meditation
- Lying down meditation
- Mindful gentle yoga
- Walking meditation

Interactive Mindfulness Exercise

In-the-flow Practices

3 Mindful Breaths

- upon waking up
- prior to bed
- whenever you feel stressed, tired or think of mindfulness
- at the sound of a timer or other regular signal

“Meditation is not about getting rid of all your thoughts; it’s learning not to get so lost in them that you forget what your goal is. Don’t worry if your focus isn’t perfect when meditating. Just practice coming back to the breath, again and again.”

— Kelly McGonigal, PhD



“You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf.”
— John Kabat-Zinn

Resources

Managing Healthcare Workers' Stress Associated with the COVID-19 Virus Outbreak, www.ptsd.va.gov, March 2020

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full catastrophe living*. New York, NY: Delacorte Press.

McGonigal, K. (2013). *The willpower instinct: How self-control works, why it matters, and what you can do to get more of it*. New York: Avery.

Phone apps: Headspace, Calm, Insight Meditation Timer, Mindfulness Bell

Classes: Center for Mindfulness, UMass, Mindfulness Center, Brown University.



What else is in your self-care toolkit?

Thank you!