

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

University of Massachusetts Medical Center's Successful 8-Week Program for People Facing Stress, Pain, or Illness

What Is Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)?

MBSR is an 8-week course that instructs participants in mindfulness meditation and stress reduction practices. The course was developed by Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn of the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in 1979, and has since been completed by over 20,000 people worldwide. MBSR has an extensive research basis and is the most widely replicated stress reduction program in the world.

What Happens in an 8-Week Class?

Mindfulness is our innate capacity to be aware of what is happening in the present moment. In contrast to mindlessness, or the sense of living on “autopilot,” mindfulness is being awake and experiencing the fullness and complexity of our lives. By cultivating mindfulness, through regular practice, we both experience relaxation and become more aware of creative ways of working with and responding to the stress and challenges of our lives.

Each week, course participants learn mindfulness meditation practices in a supportive group environment. Classes engage in group discussion to develop awareness of our bodies, emotions, belief systems, and how stress operates in our lives in order to learn how to better work with our challenges. At home, participants practice mindfulness meditation daily, both formally, using guided audio CD's, and informally, by bringing greater awareness into daily life. The formal meditation practices that are instructed include body scanning, sitting, and walking meditation, and gentle, mindful yoga.

How Does MBSR Help?

According to over two decades of published research, people who completed an eight-week MBSR program experienced results including:

- Reduced pain levels
- Reduced levels of anxiety and depression
- Increased ability to relax
- Lasting decreases in physical and psychological symptoms
- Increased resilience to both short-term and long-term stress
- Increased self-esteem and sense of self-in-relationship
- Increased ability to act effectively under high levels of stress
- Increased sense of ability to positively influence one's own health

An overview of MBSR research can be found at: <http://www.umassmed.edu/Content.aspx?id=42426>

Who Should Take This Class?

The MBSR program has helped people facing stress related to work, school, money, relationships, grief, sleep, time, food, or the sense of being out-of-balance. The program has also helped individuals address a variety of physical and psychological health issues, including cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure, headaches, chronic pain, fibromyalgia, fatigue, skin disorders, sleep disturbance, depression, anxiety, and mood disorders.

MBSR Program Graduates Have Said

“The techniques I learned, particularly meditation, have proven so powerful and helpful.”

“I became aware that when I was acting on impulse, I could stop and not just react. It changed my life.”

“One of the best gifts I’ve ever received... Real tools for a healthy, vibrant, mindful life.”

“I never thought once I started living in constant pain that I would ever be able to have peace of mind and enjoy life again. Thank you for proving me wrong.”

“This is the first time I have been relatively pain-free in five years.”

“The problems and issues haven't gone away, but the way I choose to handle them has changed... I feel so much more positive about this life.

About the Instructors

Eric Widerstrom, Ph.D. completed the 2-year teacher training program at the Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, and has taught MBSR privately and in groups for ten years. A longtime meditation practitioner, he is a psychotherapist in private practice.

Nick Boyar, MAT is a 2002 graduate of the Integral Yoga Academy in Buckingham, Virginia, and a certified teacher of yoga and meditation. He teaches yoga, meditation, and stress reduction in Ithaca, NY at Island Health & Fitness.

Registration

The MBSR program meets for eight consecutive weekly sessions at Island Health & Fitness, 411 Taughannock Blvd., Ithaca, NY. The class meets Sunday afternoons, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. New 8-week sessions begin regularly; please contact an instructor for more information on the next start date. The cost of the program is \$360, which is an average of \$45 per two-hour session. A deposit check of \$90 payable to Nick Boyar, and mailed to 175 Calkins Road, Ithaca, NY 14850, secures a space in the program. Receipt of deposit will be confirmed by email or phone. The balance of payment is due at or before the second class of the series. This fee includes a set of four compact discs and other supporting materials. Sliding scale and extended payment options are available in cases of need.

To register or obtain further information, please call or email instructors Nick Boyar at 272-2062 or nickboyar1@yahoo.com or Eric Widerstrom at 546-2629 or erwiderstr@aol.com