The Human Condition

• Stress and anxiety are an unavoidable fact of life
  – Rapid advances in communication
  – Tsunami of information-news, www, social media
  – Global/environmental change
  – Daily hassle of life
  – Even when change is good, it’s stressful
    • New job
    • Move
    • Relationship
Stress and Health

• Embodied stress is directly linked to sympathetic activation: (increased heart rate, sweating, blood pressure) which results in:
  – Blood clot formation
  – Irregular heart beats
  – Fat deposits
  – Plaque formation, atherosclerosis
  – Immunosupression

• Over time, this may result in CHD, kidney disease, infections...
Stress and Health

• When we have poor coping strategies to deal with the stressors that life throws at us, it can be indirectly linked to negative behaviors:
  – Increased alcohol intake
  – Deterioration in diet
  – Reduced exercise
  – Smoking
  – Increased accidents
Stress and Coping

• Adaptive/positive strategies for coping with stress include:
  – Seeking social support, laughter
  – Increasing aerobic exercise
  – Participation in communities of faith
  – Alternative medical practices (e.g. manipulative and body based therapy, energy therapy)
  – Guided relaxation, baths
  – Time in nature
Stress and Coping

• Nirvana Sessions
  – T/H from 12-12:20pm in the chapel

• Massage Therapy
  – Wed from 4-6pm

• Exercise Programs
  – Mind/body classes (yoga, Alexander Technique)
  – Personal training and individual Pilates sessions
  – Group fitness classes
Darts of Suffering

First Dart

Second Dart
Attachment

• We run toward what we desire and away from what we dislike.
• According to Buddhist philosophy, this is the essence of suffering.
• When we have something we want, we:
  – Want more of it
  – Cling
  – Fear its loss
• In order to escape what we dislike, we:
  – Numb
  – Sublimate and repress
  – Busy ourselves so that we don’t feel
Emotional Reactivity

“Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is the power to choose our response. And in our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

-Viktor Frankl
Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

• Moment-to-moment, non-judgmental awareness of what is happening at the present time in both your mind and body

• As you open yourself to what is imbalanced in your unconscious habitual tendencies, you can begin to make new choices that promote well-being and balance
Formal vs. Informal Practice

• **Formal**
  – Taking time each day to sit, stand or lie down and focus on the breath, bodily sensations, sounds, other senses, thoughts or emotions.

• **Informal**
  – Bringing mindful awareness to daily activities such as eating, exercising, chores, and relating to others.
Formal Practice: Meditation

- Increases activity in the left frontal lobe of the brain-area responsible for positive affect and emotional regulation
- Increases in thickness in prefrontal cortex which is responsible for decision making
- Decreased activation in the amygdala (responsible for processing fear and aggression)
MBSR Resources

• 8-week course in MBSR with Micki Fine (www.livingmindfully.org)
• Retreat Centers located nationally and internationally
• Books and journal articles