

# Mindfulness & Work-Life Balance During COVID-19

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<https://web.calpoly.edu/~vbennert/mindfulness/>



# Logistics

- Use headphones
- Leave your camera on (we want to see you!)
- Mute yourself (unless you want to talk)
- Questions: raise your “virtual hand” (under participants)

COVID-19

uncertainty

stress, worry, anxiety, fear

difficulties sleeping, mood swings, depression

A word cloud featuring various psychological states and emotions. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with some words being significantly larger than others. The colors of the words include shades of blue, green, purple, brown, and orange. The words are: Stressed (large, blue), Anxious (large, purple), Tired (large, green), Flustered (large, brown), Paranoid (large, green), Unsettled (large, green), Unsure (large, green), Frustration (small, orange), Concerned (small, red), Confused (small, orange), Good (small, blue), Hopefully (small, blue), Exhausted (small, blue), Withdrawn (small, red), Restless (small, purple), Capable (small, blue), Uneasy (small, red), Stable (small, green), Equanimity (small, blue), Introspective (small, purple), Pessimistic (small, green), Uncertain (small, purple), Neutral (small, orange), Unstructured (small, purple), Solitudinous (small, purple), Mindful (small, purple), Unmotivated (small, red), Coping (small, red), Numb (small, purple), Sad (small, green), Peace (small, orange), Gratitude (small, green), Conflicted (small, blue), Sympathy (small, red), Reflective (small, red), Misinformed (small, red), Grateful (small, orange), Stuck (small, red), Normal (small, orange), and Equanimity (small, blue).

Stressed

Anxious

Tired

Flustered

Paranoid

Unsettled

Unsure

Frustration

Concerned

Confused

Good

Hopefully

Exhausted

Withdrawn

Restless

Capable

Uneasy

Stable

Equanimity

Introspective

Pessimistic

Uncertain

Neutral

Unstructured

Solitudinous

Mindful

Unmotivated

Coping

Numb

Sad

Peace

Gratitude

Conflicted

Sympathy

Reflective

Misinformed

Grateful

Stuck

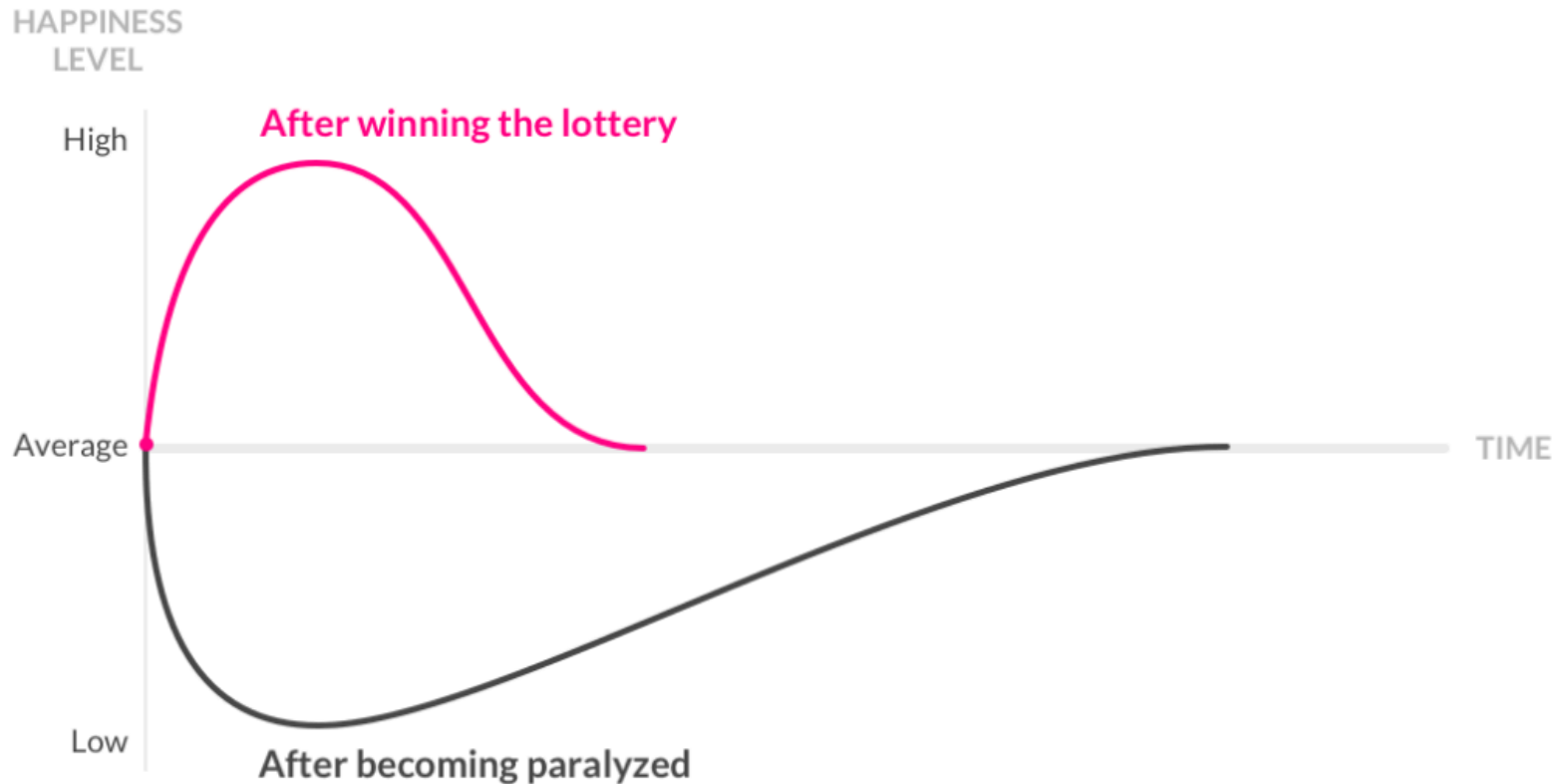
Normal

The way out is in.

*Thich Nhat Hanh*

# The Happiness Baseline

External circumstances cannot change your happiness baseline





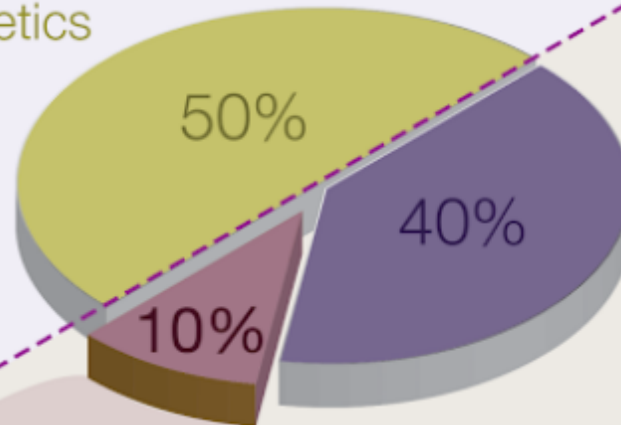
# HAPPINESS

by Anna Vital



genetics

depends on your



cannot control  
can control



internal  
state of mind

circumstances



Funders and Founders

source: Sonja Lyubomirsky "The How of Happiness",  
Penguin Books

We are happier when we are present.



# There is no magic pill or magic trick

- Based on my experiences and practices
- You have to find out what works for you

# Confidentiality!

- What **you can share** with others after this workshop
  - Anything that I said
  - Anything that you learned
  - Your own experience
- What **you cannot share** with others after this workshop
  - Anything anyone else said
- Important to create safe container here



# Mindfulness Talking & Mindfulness Listening

How are you doing?

# We are all researchers

- (Some) Important traits of a researcher:
  - Curiosity
  - Openness
  - Observant
  - Reflection
  - Commitment
  - Discipline
  - Patience
  - Persistence
- Also important for mindfulness and finding a healthy work-life balance

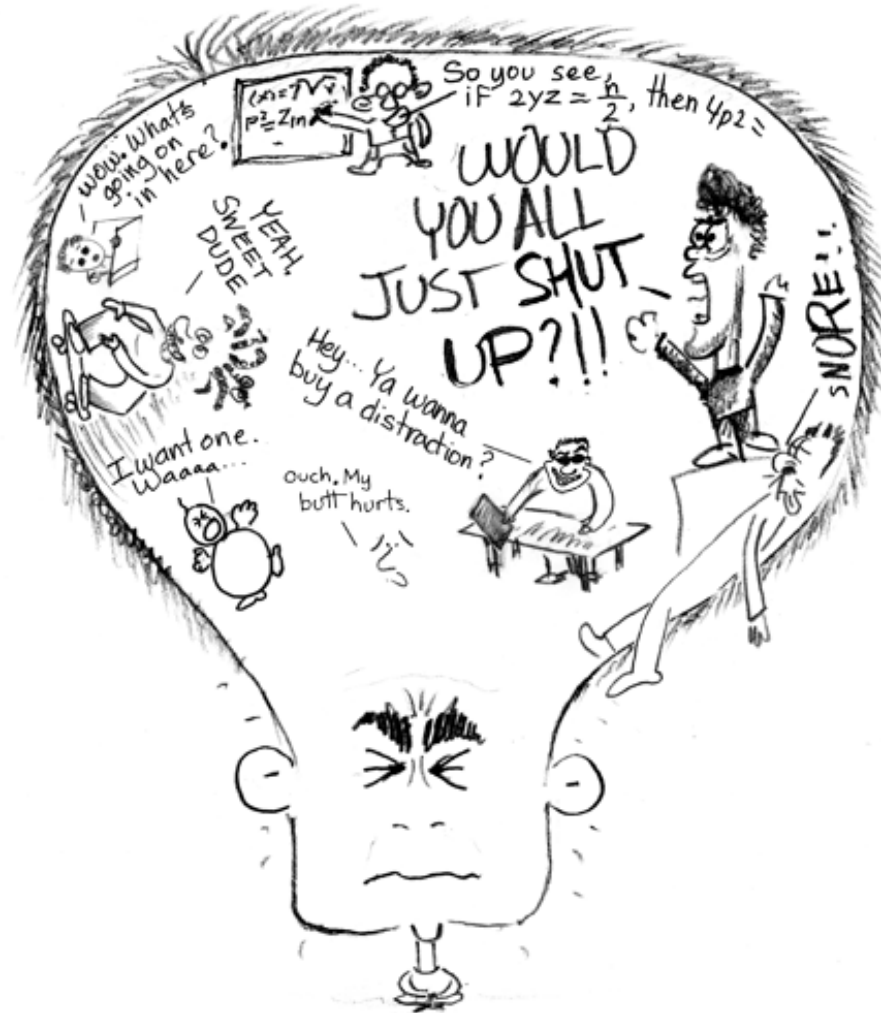
# Meditation

A state of deep peace that occurs when the mind is calm and silent

A state of no-mind



# Often, in reality...



# What you practice grows stronger

Are you practicing meditation or judgement & frustration?



# Mindfulness

Paying attention with loving kindness

Practicing awareness in a non-judgemental way



Curiosity –  
the magic trick?

# Guided Meditation

# Mindful Walking

# Mindful Eating

How was this experience for you?

All there ever was,  
all there ever will be,  
is the present moment.

Everything can become a meditation.



# Research shows: Mindfulness works

- **Improves immune system & energy level**
- **Helps sleep better**
- **Lessens worry, anxiety & impulsivity**
- **Lessens stress, fear, loneliness & depression**
- **Improves resilience against pain & adversity**
- **Increases optimism & relaxation**
- Enhances self-esteem & self-acceptance
- Helps prevent emotional eating & smoking
- Better cognitive skills & creative thinking
- Better decision making & problem solving
- ...

# Yoga

Designed to:

- raise level of consciousness through natural effects of yoga postures
- harmonize body, mind, & soul

Includes:

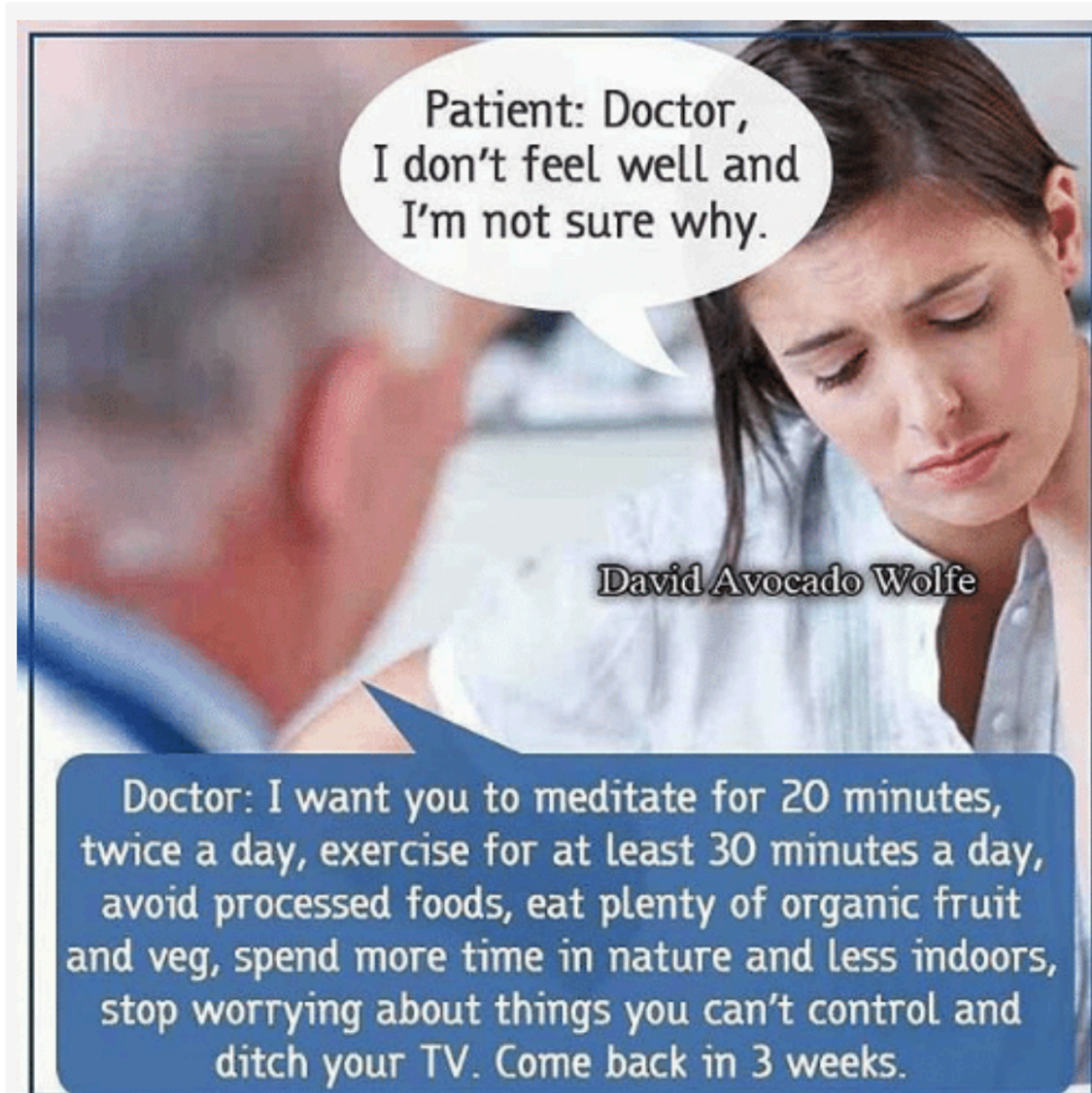
- *Asana* (yoga postures)
- *Pranayama* (breathing and energy-control techniques)
- Meditation
- Applied yoga philosophy

Emphasis on relaxation & adaptation

A “Work-in” rather than a Work-out



# Mindfulness: one aspect of a bigger picture



# Pillars of a balanced life style

## Health:

- Sleep (7-9 hours/night)
- Exercise (30 min/day)
- Nutrition (lots of produce, go for whole grains; limit sugary foods & beverages & refined grains; limit highly processed foods & saturated fats)

# Pillars of a balanced life style

## Social:

- Family
- Friends
- Find your tribe

Humans are social creatures.  
We are wired for connection.

# Pillars of a balanced life style

## Nature:

- Spend more time outdoors and less online



What is your relationship  
with your cell phone?



“Your life is what you pay attention to. If you want to spend it on video games or on Twitter, that is your business.  
But it should be a conscious choice.”

~ Kevin Roose, New York Times ~

# What about work?

- Find something you are passionate about, or that brings joy or meaning to your life
- Think about ways to work more effectively
- Work as a team – increases creativity
- If you work, work
- Don't procrastinate
- Take “healthy” breaks (move body, get fresh air, drink water)
- You are most productive when working 40 hours a week
- Learn to say no
- Learn time management

Healthy food, sleep, exercise, nature, social  
connections, mindfulness and yoga

=

more productive and creative work  
& happier and healthier life

My invitation to you:  
Try it, be your own experiment.

Even if we are aware of what nourishes us,  
we often do not make room for that in our daily lives.

Why not?  
What is keeping us?

# Challenges

- (Bad) Habits
- Convenience/easy life style; being lazy
- Going for short term gratification; lack of urgency for change
- Social setting/expectations
- Culture/upbringing
- Lack of role models
- Rebellion
- Unconscious beliefs such as:
  - “I have to do XYZ in order to be loved.”*
  - “I feel like belonging when I am stressed out.”*
  - “It seems egocentric if I nourish myself and put myself before others.”*
  - “I am young and invincible.”*
  - “If I am not stressed out it means I am not working enough.”*

# Possible Solutions

- Become aware of the choices we make daily and why
- Choose your battle, start with something small that is reasonable and that you can commit yourself to
- See if you can find a shift in mindset, one that values self-nourishment
- Make a schedule that includes healthy habits
- Find a community of like-minded people for support
- Don't beat yourself up if you "fail", just try again
- If you are stuck, ask for help

IT takes  
COURAGE  
TO SAY YES TO  
REST AND Play  
IN A CULTURE WHERE EXHAUSTION  
IS SEEN AS A STATUS SYMBOL.



- BRENE BROWN



# What about COVID-19?

- Limit time on news
- Listen to experts and reliable resources
- Connect with friends and family (e.g., phone, Zoom)
- Have a regular daily schedule, but also take time to do nothing
- Come back to the present moment as often as you remember
- Think/talk about what you are grateful for, what brings you joy

This, too, shall pass.

# (Some) Resources

<https://web.calpoly.edu/~vbennert/mindfulness/>

Cal Poly Counseling Services:

<https://hcs.calpoly.edu/counseling>

Student Mindfulness Club: calpolymindfulness@gmail.com

# Questions/Comments/Feedback?