

# INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS BASED STRESS REDUCTION

Spring 2021 Flex Presentation -  
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# Agenda

What is Stress?

Mindfulness Based  
Stress Reduction

Practice Mindfulness  
Meditation



STRESS



# Stress

- Stress triggers a particular **biological** response.
- Stress triggers your **fight-or-flight response**.
  - Stress hormones are released into your body to prep for the flight or fight!
  - Typically, after the response occurs, your body should relax.
- However, too much constant stress can have **negative effects** on your long-term health.

### headaches

Stress can trigger and intensify tension headaches.

### increased depression

Chronic stress can wear you down emotionally and lead to depression.

### heartburn

Stress increases the production of stomach acid, which could lead to heartburn or make it worse.

### insomnia

Stress makes it harder to fall asleep and stay asleep, which can lead to insomnia.

### rapid breathing

When you're stressed, the muscles that help you breathe tense up, which can leave you short of breath.

### weakened immune system

Long-term stress weakens your immune system's defenses, leaving you more vulnerable to infections.

### risk of heart attack

Over time, an increased heart rate and high blood pressure damage your arteries, which could lead to a heart attack.

### high blood sugar

Stress causes your liver to release extra sugar (glucose) into your bloodstream, which over time puts you at risk for type 2 diabetes.

### pounding heart

Stress hormones make your heart pump faster so that blood can quickly reach your vital organs and limbs.

### high blood pressure

Stress hormones tighten blood vessels, which can raise your blood pressure.

### fertility problems

Stress interferes with the reproductive system in both men and women, and may make it harder to conceive.

### stomachache

Stress affects your body's digestive system, which can lead to stomachaches, nausea, and other tummy troubles.

### erectile dysfunction

Your brain plays an important part in the process of getting an erection. Stress can interfere with this process.

### low sex drive

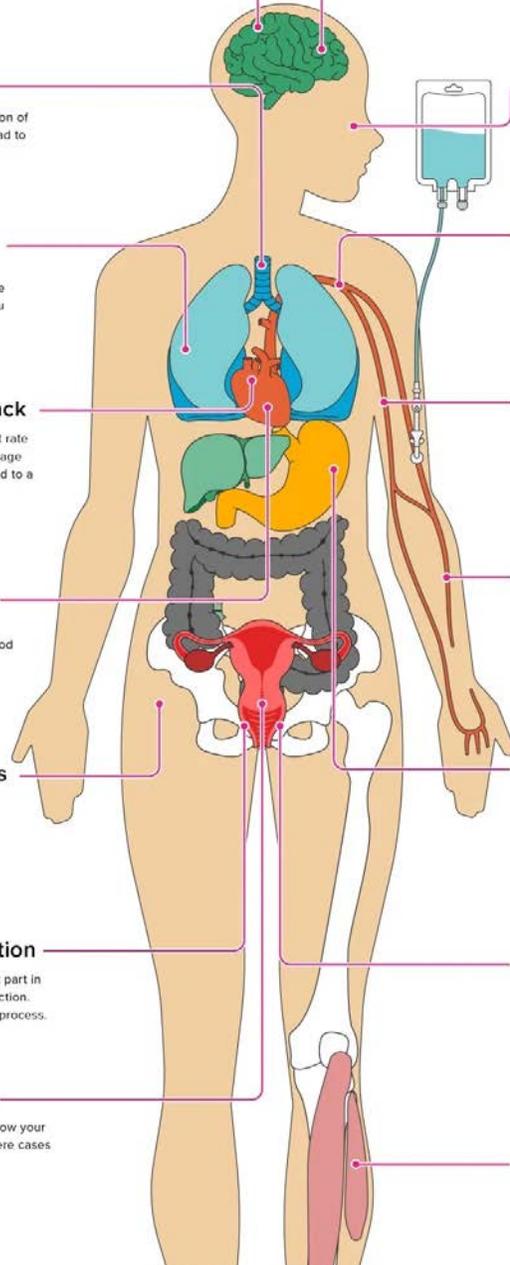
Stress — and the fatigue that often comes with it — can take a toll on your libido.

### missed periods

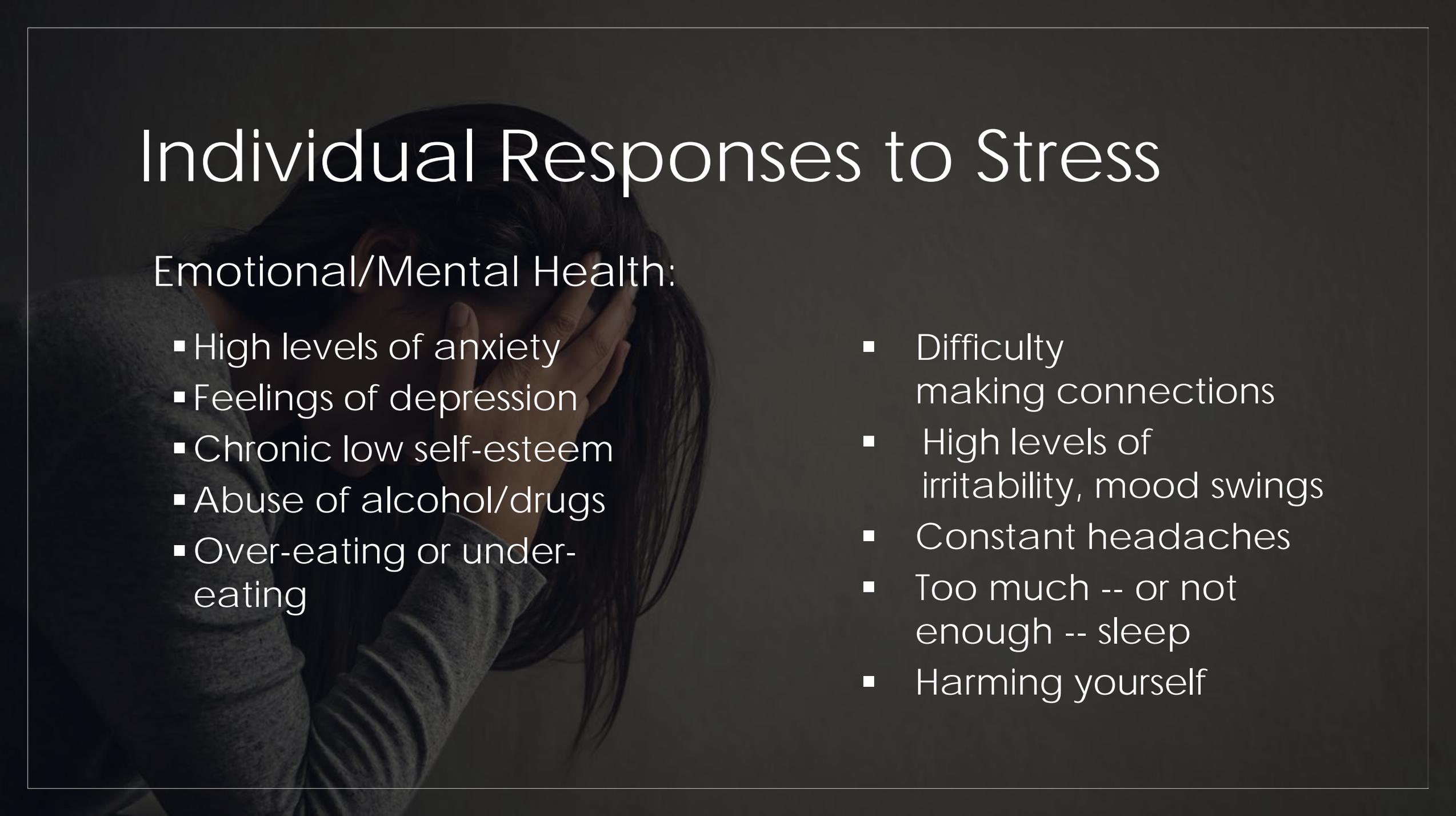
Fluctuating hormones can throw your menstrual cycle off, or in severe cases stop it altogether.

### tense muscles

Stress makes muscles tense up, and chronic stress can lead to tension-related headaches and backaches.



# Individual Responses to Stress

A person with long dark hair is shown from the side, covering their face with both hands. They are wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt. The background is a dark, solid color.

## Emotional/Mental Health:

- High levels of anxiety
- Feelings of depression
- Chronic low self-esteem
- Abuse of alcohol/drugs
- Over-eating or under-eating
- Difficulty making connections
- High levels of irritability, mood swings
- Constant headaches
- Too much -- or not enough -- sleep
- Harming yourself

# Individual Responses to Stress



## Physical Health:

- Heart rate increases
- Blood pressure increases
- Oxygen need increases
- Breathing rate increases
- Palms, face sweat
- Adrenalin flows
- Blood sugar increases
- Blood vessels constrict in hands, face
- Tension
- Jaws Clench
- Body Braces for Action
- Lingering illnesses and aches and pains

# Examples of Stressors

- Inability to balance responsibilities (work, family, leisure time, etc.)
- Career/professional challenges
- Childcare difficulties
- Financial difficulties
- Transportation difficulties
- Housing instability
- Food instability
- Relationship issues (family, friends)
- Parenting challenges
- Injury or illness
- Abuse or neglect
- Loss of a family member/loved one
- Environmental challenges/disasters (pandemic, wildfires, etc.)
- Legal issues

# Stress Isn't All Bad



Stress isn't necessarily a bad thing. It's what helped our hunter-gatherer ancestors survive! It can be healthy when it helps you avoid an accident, meet a tight deadline, or keep your wits about you amid chaos.



But stress should be temporary. Once you've passed the fight-or-flight moment, your heart rate and breathing should slow down and your muscles should relax. In a short time, your body should return to its natural state without any lasting negative effects.

# Stress Isn't All Bad

- On the other hand, severe, frequent, or prolonged stress can be mentally and physically harmful.
- And it's fairly common. In "pre-pandemic times," **80 percent** of Americans reported they'd had **at least one symptom** of stress in the past month. **Twenty percent** reported being under extreme stress.
- Life being what it is, it's not possible to eliminate stress completely. But we can learn to avoid it when possible and **manage it** when it's unavoidable.



# MBSR

MINDFULNESS BASED STRESS REDUCTION – WHAT IS IT?



# What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is **paying attention...**

- On purpose,
- And without judgment

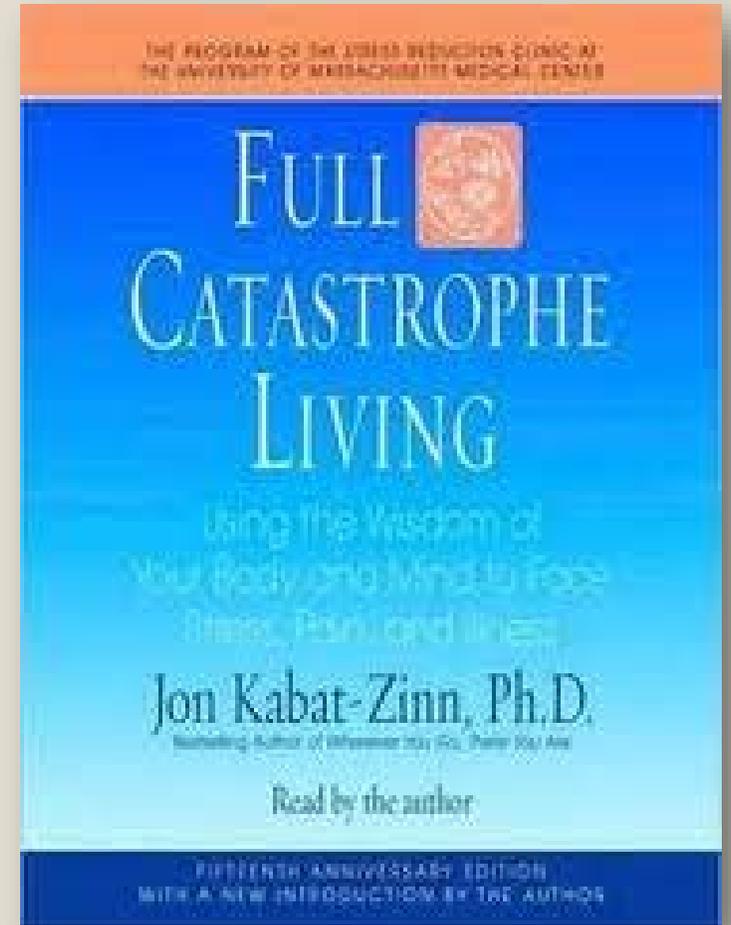
We can be mindful of our **senses**, and of our inner world of **thoughts** and **emotions**.

It helps us to **respond**, not **react**.

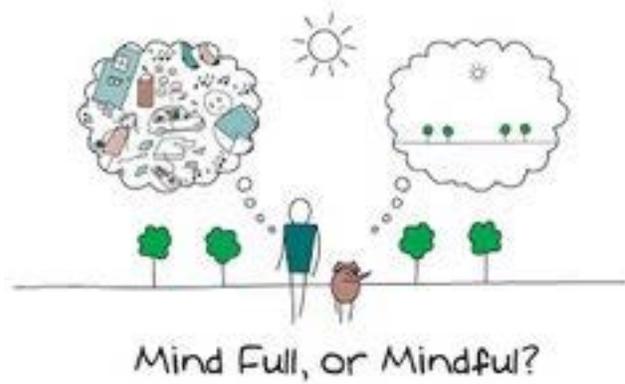
It can be a **simple concept**. But it is not often **easy**.

# Origins - Now

- Mindfulness meditation is based on Buddhist teachings.
- In the 1960s and 1970s, Westerners visited Southeast Asia and practiced mindfulness meditation. They brought these teachings back to the West.
- In the 1970s – 1990s, clinicians learned that mindfulness meditation could be used to treat a variety of physical and mental health illness.
- In 1979, Jon Kabat-Zinn created Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) at the University of Massachusetts Medical School to treat chronically ill patients.
  - MBSR-trained practitioners teach individuals how to manage their stress through mindfulness meditation.



# Cultivating Mindfulness

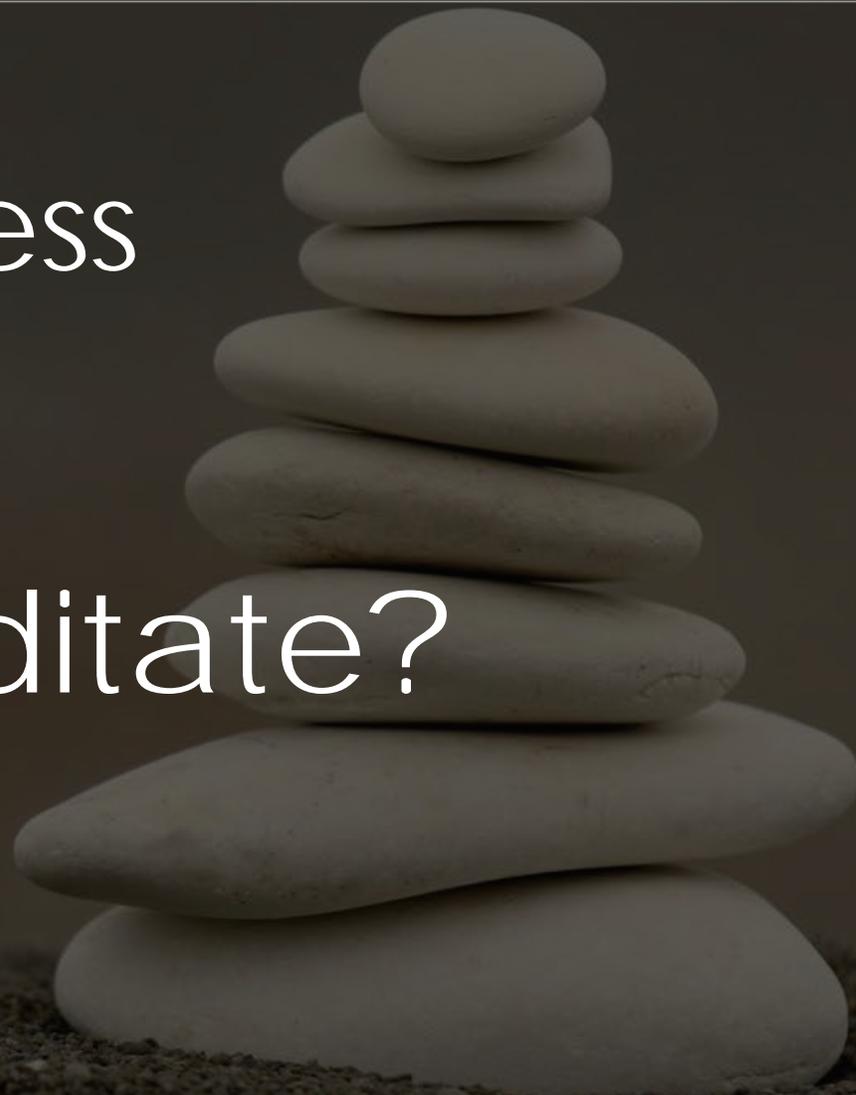


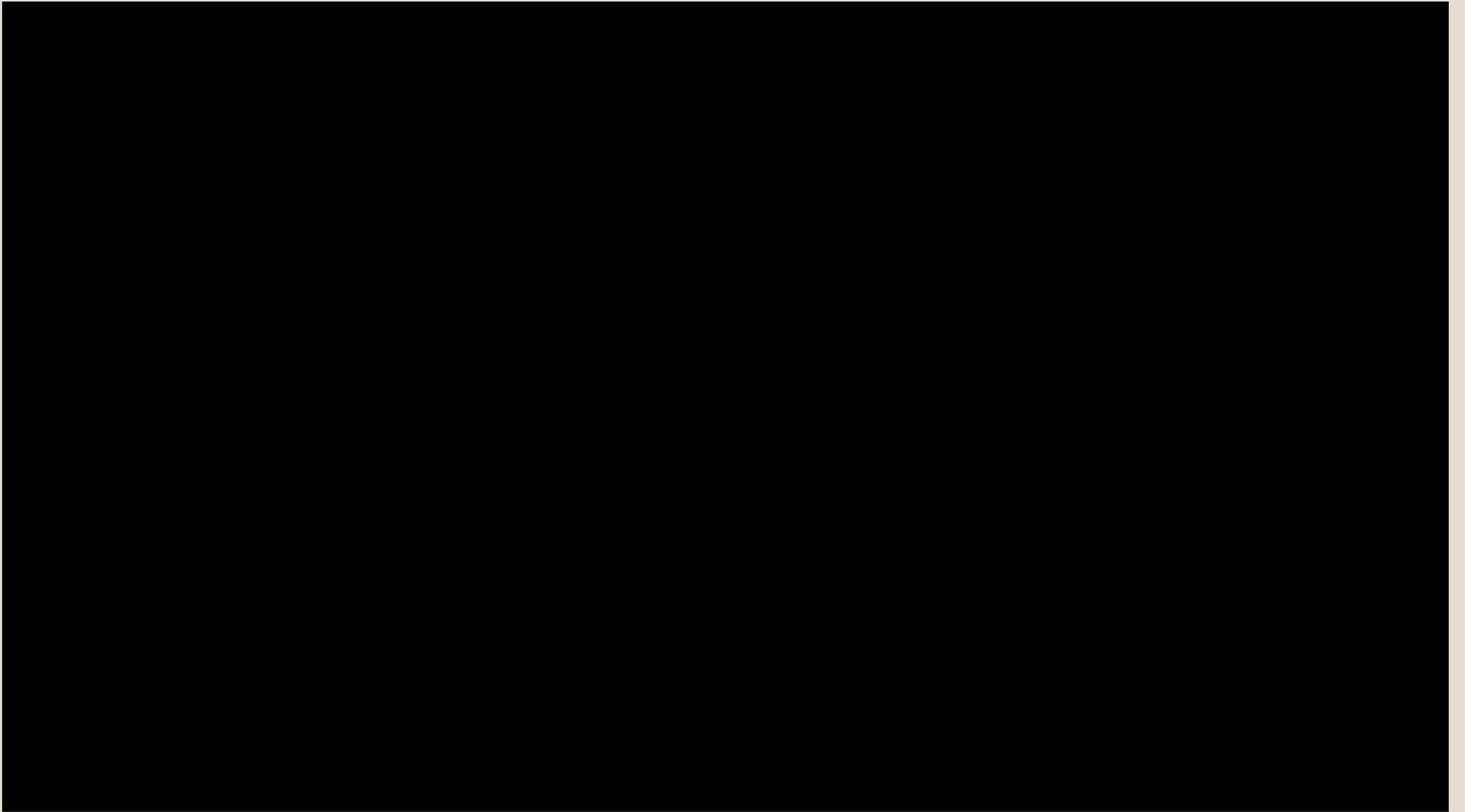
# Cultivating Mindfulness

- Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction
  - Meditation
  - Training your mind to think differently – recognize all experiences change. Moments will be different.
  - Think creatively to solve problems, barriers.

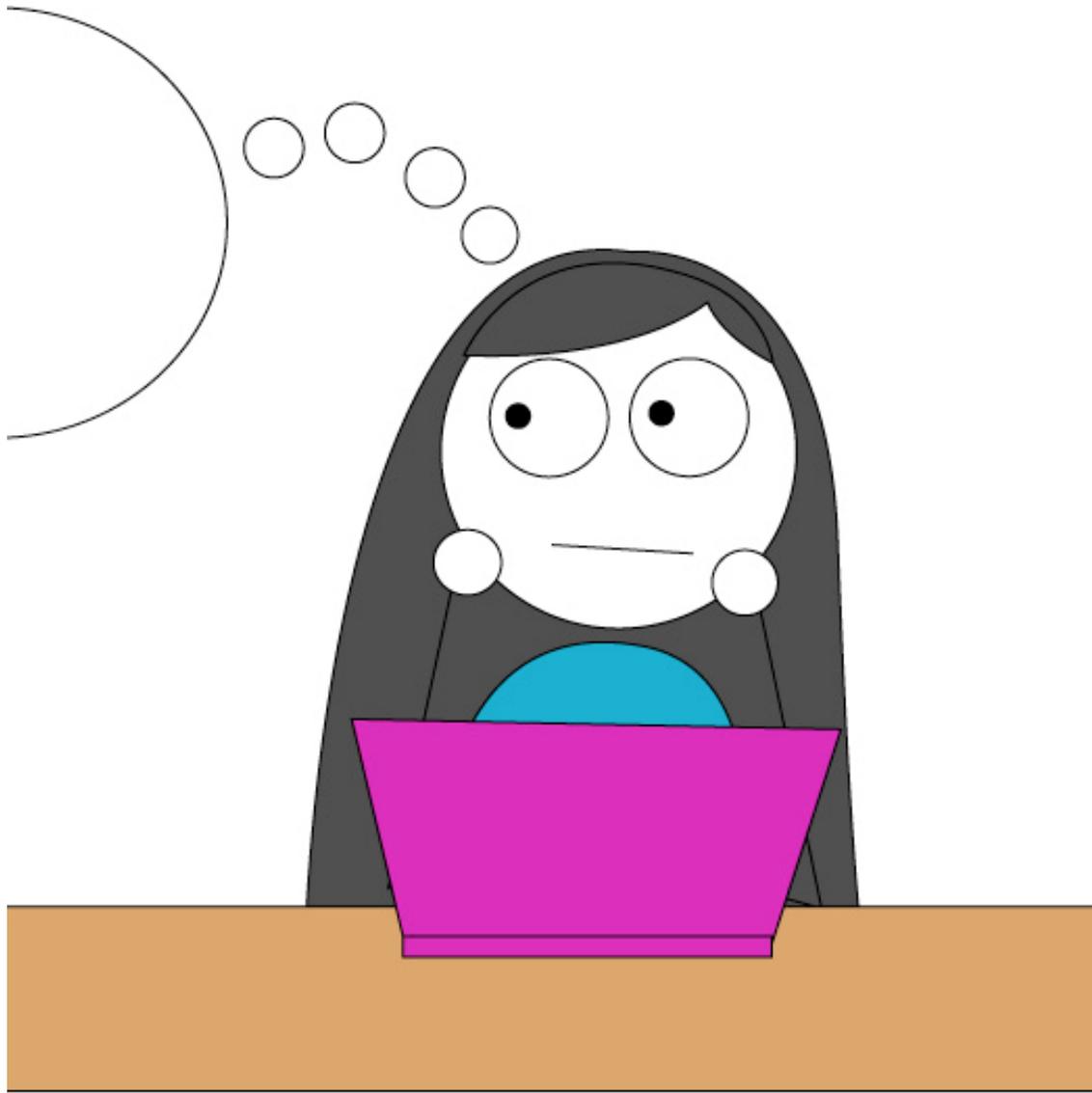
Cultivating Mindfulness

How do I meditate?









## What Mindfulness is NOT

- "Thinking about nothing."
  - *It's being aware of our thoughts.*

# What Mindfulness is NOT

- Being happy ALL THE TIME and loving EVERY SINGLE MINUTE of life.
  - *It's bringing non-judgmental awareness to the present moment.*



- Religious.
  - *It can be a secular practice.*
  - *It is mental training.*
  - *It is supported by clinical research.*
  - *It is integrated into many workplaces, including Google, General Mills, and the Huffington Post*

What  
Mindfulness is  
NOT

# What Mindfulness is NOT

- Long periods of passive sitting.
  - *It can be active!*
  - *Yoga, walking, daily routines...*





# What Mindfulness is NOT

- Living only in the present. Never thinking about the past or planning for the future.
  - *It is awareness and deliberate attention – even on the act of planning...*

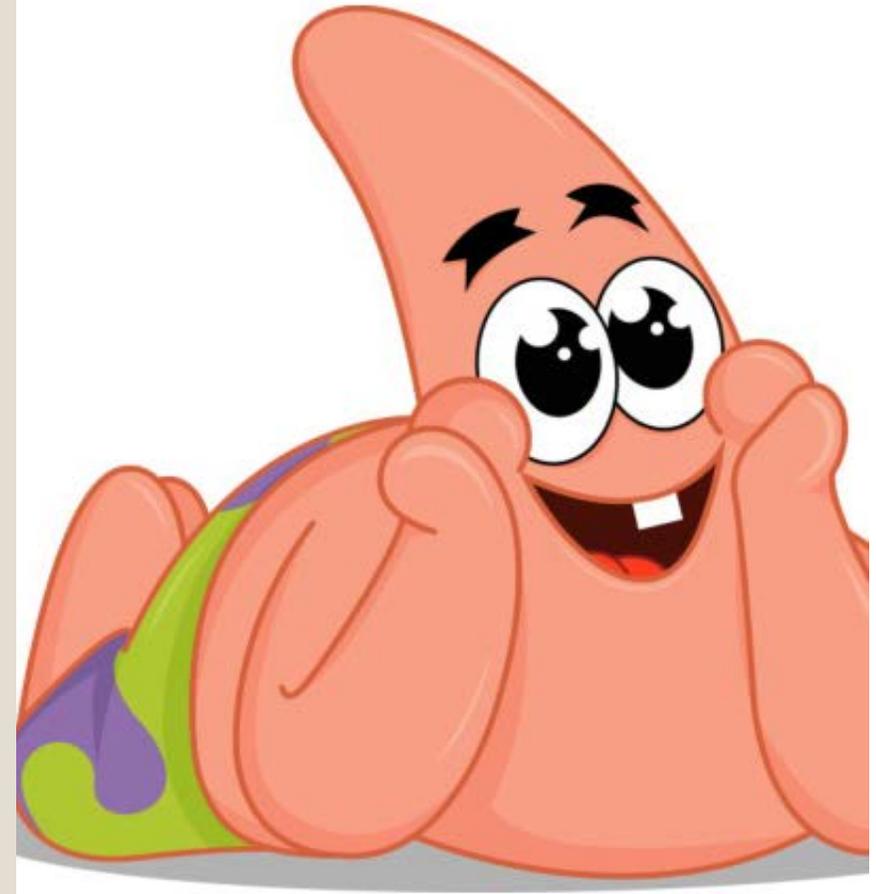


## What Mindfulness is NOT

- Relaxation.
  - *It might be relaxing. It might be boring and annoying. It's being with WHAT IS.*

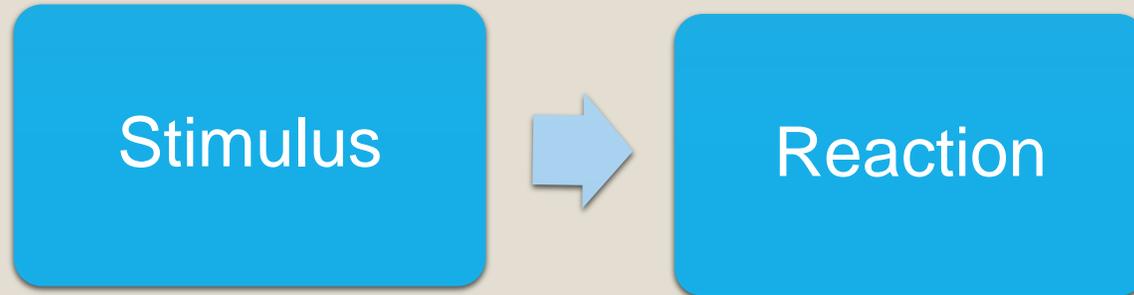
# What Mindfulness is NOT

- Zoning out.
  - *It's zoning IN. It is purposeful awareness.*

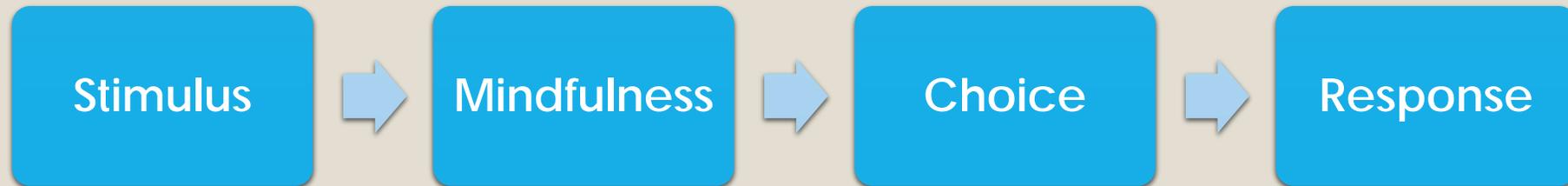


# Why Practice MBSR?

Without Mindfulness



With Mindfulness



# The Benefits of Mindfulness

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Reduce Stress!

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Reduce the negative physical and emotional consequences of stress.

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Improved attention, focus, and concentration

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Increased self-awareness (ability to recognize emotions)

# The Benefits of Mindfulness

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Improve pain and suffering  
associated with chronic illnesses

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Improve impulse control, immunity,  
recovery from surgery, sleep, and  
decision-making

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Increased empathy (for self and  
others)

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Can be especially helpful for  
people with ADHD

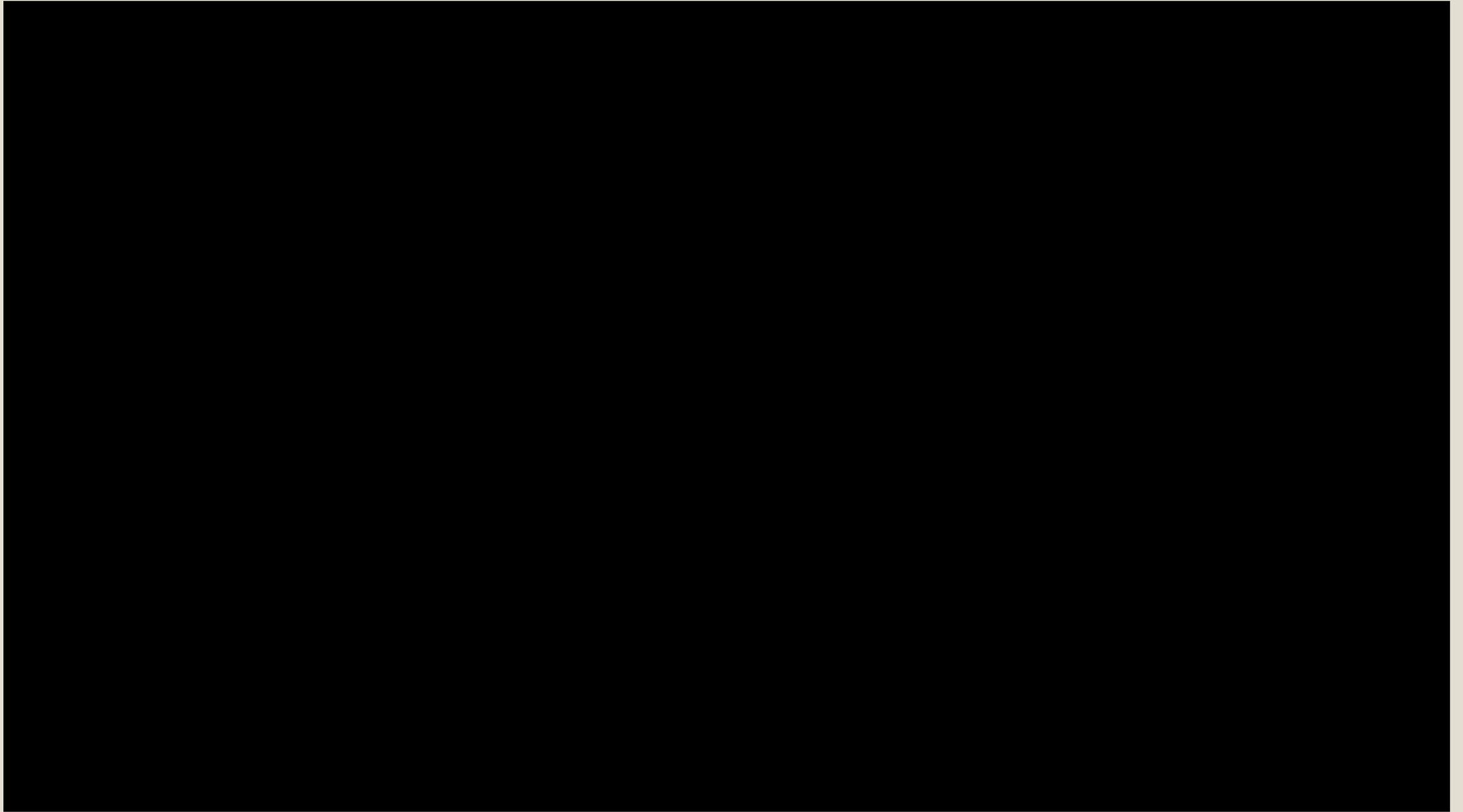
Let's  
Practice!



**" Acting with Intention is  
Active Mindfulness Meditation "**

# Meditation

## Getting Started



# Meditation

Tips -

- Sit in a relaxed comfortable position (floor or chair, back is supported).
- Breathe – in through your nose, out gently through your mouth
- Soft eyes – let your gaze go unfocused.
- Body scan – paying attention to different parts of the body (feet, legs, torso, arms, hands, neck/shoulders/head) and how they're feeling (tingly, heavy, light, hot, cold, etc.)
- Non-judgmental awareness – it's okay if your mind wanders. No judgements. Just notice and bring it back.

# Meditation

## Guided Meditation

# Regular Practice

- Create “mindful pauses” throughout your day.
- Take 1-5 minutes to practice slowing down, feeling the body, breathing more fully, letting go of thoughts, and returning to the present moment with gratitude and acceptance.
- Set aside 5-30 minutes a day for meditation, yoga, art, or another mindful activity you enjoy.
- Surround yourself with support. Get books, audio, phone apps to learn more and keep you motivated in the practice.
- Take a mind-body class
- Do a meditation retreat

# Resources

## MBSR Trainings

- [Palo Alto Medical Foundation](#)
- [Stanford Health Care](#)
- [Mindfulness and Therapy Center](#)
- [UCSF Osher Center for Integrative Medicine](#)
- [StressCare - Berkeley](#)

## Mindfulness Meditation Apps

- Headspace
- Calm
- Insight Timer

## Retreat Centers

- Google MBSR/Mindfulness/Meditation Retreats. Lots of spaces in the Bay Area to practice!

# Flex Day Survey

- Thank you for attending!
- Please complete the [Flex Day Survey](#) to provide feedback about this workshop.
- You can access the asynchronous, recorded version of my workshop [here](#).