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Mindful Fathering: An Investigation and Curriculum

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Mindful Fathering: An Investigation and Curriculum

Andrew Dobson

December 2017

Melissa Jean and Nancy Waring

Acknowledgements

The past three years of my life as a student at Lesley University has completely transformed the way I live my life and view the world. Through discipline, self-care, and persistence, I have come to value the interdependent nature of our world, and out of this, I have cultivated a newfound sense of awareness and compassion.

I want to first and foremost thank my loving wife, and mother of my children Angelica. You have put up with years of my studies, and I could not have done it without your love, patience and understanding. Our bond grows stronger every day, as does our love.

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Thank you to my grandfather, Thomas for your love, consistency and pride in your grandchildren. You've helped me more than you'd be willing to hear. Thank you to Lesley University, the Mindfulness Program, and all of the friends I have gained from the Lesley Sangha.

Abstract

This two-part paper explores the current state of fathering in the United States of America, and aims at highlighting the importance of active fatherly engagement in the lives of children. Statistics from the United States Census (2010) show that 29.5 percent of children under the age of 18 in the United States of America live in fatherless homes. When a father is engaged in the life of a child, developmental outcomes increase (Roopnarine, 2015). This signals a need to investigate solutions to this problem. Mindfulness is offered as a remedy, and mindfulness programs like Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindful Parenting courses offer teachings that promote non-judgment and awareness. No programs have been found by this author that promote fatherly engagement through Mindfulness.

The first half of this paper includes a personal narrative from the author that explores his own personal journey discovering mindfulness as a father, the sociocultural factors that contribute to the current state of engagement in the United States of America, and the limitations that prevent all men from being fully engaged with their children. It goes on to explain the benefits that being a fully engaged father can have on a child, and the negative effects that stress can have on children. When fathers can be made aware of the benefits and risks to their children, the author suggests that this creates a responsibility and opportunity for fathers to assume leadership roles by modeling awareness and non-reactivity to the many stresses that occur within family life. A mindfulness practice can help fathers to become aware of their own suffering, and begin to see that it is part of the human condition. Having a basic understanding of how Buddhism has brought the concept of mindfulness to the United States America, and learning ways in which it can be applied as a father can be helpful to maintaining a practice during these busy moments of life.

The second half of this paper includes the *Mindfulness for New Fathers* Curriculum. *Mindfulness for New Fathers* encourages fathers to begin a mindfulness practice in their lives that focuses on presence, beginning again, self-compassion, managing parental stress, and communicating mindfully. The themes all concentrate on fatherly mindful engagement with their children.

Keywords: mindfulness, fatherhood, engagement, children, parenting

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NfPBIRE4RIc>

<https://palousemindfulness.com/docs/yoga.pdf>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Teo0f1ab1PY&index=3&list=PLbiVpU59JkVaFMGi0A8Im_hfSh-SWsFwg

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Mindful Fathering: An Investigation and Curriculum

This thesis aims to highlight current research in the realm of mindful parenting, and specifically research related to mindful parenting for new fathers. While at one time, sociocultural conditions placed the mother at home for the early months to years of a child's life, research shows a steady increase in the number of dual earner families amongst homes with both mothers and fathers in the United States (US Department of Labor, 2017). Although this change is occurring, studies have found that mothers are still more engaged with their children and perform more household labors than fathers, creating varying levels of distress within families (Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2004). Positive paternal engagement has been found to be associated with healthy developmental outcomes for children at all stages of development (Hawkins, et. al., 2008). A shift in this paradigm is needed so that future generations do not continue to be caught in these stereotypical gender roles. It is to be noted that the focus of this thesis is on American families living in homes with both biological parents.

Mindfulness, a concept based on Buddhist teachings, has now been taught in the Western world for over 40 years, and many programs exist that teach mindfulness in a secular way. Western spiritual seekers returning from Asia in the mid 1970s came home to bring these teachings to those seeking clarity and focused attention. The teachings continue today, and a plethora of programs are now available both in person and digitally. Notably, the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Program (MBSR) has taught and trained individuals to use mindfulness specifically for the reduction of pain and other ailments occurring in the mind and body. This program, designed by Jon Kabat Zinn in 1979 began at the University of Massachusetts Memorial Hospital in Worcester, MA, and is now taught by thousands of teachers throughout the world.

Mindfulness can help people to begin to recognize the natural impulses arising, and instead of reacting, a person can learn that a response is a choice. This presents an opportunity for fathers and all parents to awaken to the conditions set in place, and respond in a way that decreases judgment and promotes awareness. Mindful parenting is one movement that aims at bringing mindfulness into the lives of parents and their children. In order to help the gender evolution move forward, a curriculum that is intended to bringing mindfulness to new fathers¹ will focus on filling the gap of positive engagement in the early lives of children, which will promote a thriving environment for the entire families.

This rationale includes a personal narrative that explains my own journey discovering mindfulness. By directing awareness to go within, and reflecting on my own experience as a child, this brought upon a more positive and active engagement with my own children as a new parent. The literature review captures current trends in households within America, and the common obstacles that get in the way of men being able to be fully engaged with their children. It explains the benefits to children when fathers can become actively engaged in their lives, but also the effects that a stressed parent can have on their development. The review goes on to suggest that this presents an opportunity for leadership within family, and that if new fathers can grasp ways to reflect upon their own conditioning and creatively respond to parental stress, this can have a lasting effect on children, and break long held patterns of conditioning within families. By learning about what mindfulness is, the tradition and wisdoms passed on, and then

¹ *The words 'Dad' and 'Father' are meant to include any adult primary or significant caregiver, including but not limited to stepfathers, uncles, mentors, grandfathers, etc.*

building a personal practice, this can help new fathers become mindful leaders within their families and actively engage in an attentive and responsive way.

Personal Narrative

As I share my story, I want this to be a resource or point of connection with others who have dealt with or dealing with the difficulty of becoming a new parent. All moments in life contribute to conditioning, and although the suffering I endured as a child created struggles for me, that is not to say there aren't other contributing factors in life that make becoming a new parent difficult, or that other children suffered more or less. In regard to parenting, the loss of sleep alone can create enormous challenges, but what I aim to highlight are the cyclical remains of unchallenged norms within family life in Western society. If a person has the ability to observe and reflect on their own experience, then this provides an opportunity for a challenge. An understanding of these conditionings of life and how they are impermanent created an opportunity for reflection and healing for me, and I hope that others can also share this experience.

Background

As a child, I grew up with a mother who suffered from alcoholism. My father had Bipolar Disorder and dealt with substance abuse issues. The earliest memories which I can recall involve big parties at my house with my parents drinking alcohol and being happy in the evening. Towards the end of the night, violent fights and screaming happened regularly. I remember sitting in the room with my brother and sister, scared to come out to find my passed-out mother or father, not knowing what happened to them. Sometimes my siblings and I would be awoken by someone in the middle of the night to be brought to another family member's house, or even several times to jail so that one of them could be bailed out.

As a child, I was angry all of the time. The slightest feelings of discomfort would set me off, and I would project this anger on to my brother and sister by hitting, or blaming them for something that I would do. My mother and father would yell or punish me when I got caught, but that was the extent of how my emotions were dealt with.

Moving was a regular occurrence. Whether it was legal trouble, or a change of scenery, this became a way for my parents to start their lives over, not basing their decisions by the impact that this had on their children. Originally from Rhode Island, we moved to Arizona, back to Rhode Island, Connecticut, Florida, and Rhode Island again. We lived with relatives, in temporary domestic violence shelters, and insect infested apartments. Not only were my parents splitting up and going through separation each time we moved, but we would also be transferring to new schools. At some point, the idea of having to meet new friends and build connections within social life became grueling. Any sense of permanency and belonging was gone, and most days were spent looking at the clock, waiting for the next big change in my life.

My parents permanently divorced by the time I was 13. I remember feeling a sense of relief, almost as if I was content with this. Maybe it would mean that this back and forth would finally be over, and this would become a new page in my life. But like most young teenagers, I was emotional, fueled by my hormones and discontent with the world. My anger was directed at my mother. I had a feeling within me that this was all her fault, and I resented her because of it. She would leave me to watch my brother and sister all day long during summer vacation, and sometimes wouldn't even come home at night.

My grandparents eventually intervened, and they decided to have my siblings and me live with them. This was the first time in our lives where we consistently sat down at the table to eat dinner every night as a family. We would engage in prayer and go to church on Sunday. My

Grandmother would take me out to talk, and would ask how I was feeling (something nobody had ever done). I started playing sports in school, and things were finally consistent. I latched on to my grandmother, and looked at her as a very special person in my life.

During visitation with my father, he would drive us around from one place to another, buying us presents and taking us out to dinner. He was still drinking, but I always liked “drunk dad” because he was fun, spontaneous, and there were no rules. As a child, I never thought he was putting us in any danger, but looking back, he risked all of our lives during the time we spent with him. My father was very angry at my mother for not taking him back, and was also resentful towards my Grandparents for taking us in and “destroying his life.” He would tell me horrible things about all of them and it was really confusing because while I wanted to believe what he was saying, my grandparents provided a sense of stability that I had never experienced before. He wanted me to move in with him, and at the time, I thought it was a great idea, but instead of going through the proper legal channels, I was encouraged to leave on my own accord.

At some point, my mother found some affordable housing and decided that my siblings and I were going to move out of my grandparent’s house. I revolted, did not want to go back to a life of watching my brother and sister while my mother was away drinking. When she finally packed our bags, I called up my father, told him to pick me up, took all my bags and was off. I thought I was doing the right thing at the time, but this was the beginning of a really dark adolescence.

My father’s mental health and substance abuse with alcohol and medication was nothing that I would have ever expected. He would hold on to jobs for a short amount of time, and then quit for unexpected reasons. Sometimes he would sleep on the couch for weeks in a deep and dark depression, and then burst into a bout of mania for some time until he crashed again. Most

times, he would end up in a mental hospital, and it would go on like this for six years. I didn't have my brother and sister to be angry at anymore. I was all alone, and when I would call up my mother begging to go home, she wouldn't believe anything that I was telling her. I found myself feeling numb, always wanting to be distracted from the issues that were going on.

I moved when I was 18 to live with some friends in Rhode Island. I discovered drug and alcohol use as a way to enhance life, but as the years went by into young adulthood, my body was literally revolting against me. I thought I had done everything to get away from such an ugly environment, but there was something lingering, and I had no clue what it was.

In my early twenties, I struggled a great deal. I found out that my blood pressure was really high for my age, and I was having frequent heart palpitations. The doctors didn't have an answer after all the tests cleared, and I really didn't have any support. The only thing to do that I knew best was to try to ignore the problems and continue on with my life. I began a career working directly with people, and for a while, it became easier to help others instead of myself. I found satisfaction in working directly with people in the Human Services field. I have a tremendous amount of empathy for those suffering and ignored in the world because I know what that feels like, but realized after a decade that empathy alone can take away the therapeutic value of service to people. Because I was so caught up in my career, I ignored myself and my own needs. This eventually caught up to me, and I suffered from burnout.

Several years after getting married, my wife and I got the news that we would be having our own child. This became a very testing moment in life for the both of us. I was scared and afraid, and so was she. I didn't know what to do, or where to turn, and was afraid that I was incapable of becoming a good father. Responsibilities at work seemed to fall on top of me. How was I going to become an engaged father and be an effective partner with my wife if I was

dealing with so much pain and discomfort inside? How could I take care of my wife and child if I couldn't get over myself first? It felt like I was stuck, and there was nowhere to turn.

Parenthood

The first moments of my children's lives were met with the warmth of their mother on her chest with just enough vision to make direct eye contact. These small, beautiful sentient beings were awoken to find love and warmth, only to be taken away moments later to be subjected to strong lights, sharp needles, and coldness. The first real lesson in suffering and impermanence moments after they were born are the first of many lessons to come for all of us in these early moments of life.

Babies require all of their needs to be met by others. As new parents, we knew nothing about sleep routines, feeding, and diaper changing. We did not understand how relational dynamics amongst our family members would change. We did not realize just how much the lack of sleep would affect us. My wife dealt with a tremendous amount of pain, both physically and emotionally, and I did not understand what to do to help her or myself. With our first born, she was in what was called prodromal labor, which caused her to have painful contractions for two weeks before he was born. At the hospital, all expectations of having a peaceful labor had been let down, and as time went on, the hospital staff pressured her into taking medications that she did not want, which we were told might be harmful for the baby. After taking the medication, she said the pain only increased. He was born with no health issues whatsoever, but the suffering in my wife continued with the sleepless nights and pains from feeding. I would do my best to support them, but often felt helpless, as I did not understand everything that they were going through.

After my first son was born, I had come out of a very toxic work environment and was riding on a wave of compassion fatigue that had done some serious bruising to my mind and body. I was just starting the process of healing. It was around this time I noticed a dull, fuzzy sensation in my right foot that would come and go. I would sense it and then forget about it. Throughout the years, anxiety would always find a way to exert itself in different areas of my body, so I figured that it was related.

It was also around this time that I had begun a serious personal meditation practice (something I had done on and off periodically in the previous several years). I had recently been accepted into the Mindfulness Studies Master's program at Lesley, and instead of meditating intermittently, I was now practicing for 10 minutes almost every day. I found myself falling asleep and wrestling with the "technicalities" of meditation, but understood that it was a process, and something that involved reconditioning. Soon enough, through body scans and other different practices, I began to feel moments of comfort in sitting without having to move forward or backward in my thoughts. This was new territory for me, and the practice continues to have a tremendous impact on cultivating my inherent parent skills that I didn't know existed.

After my son turned three months old, my wife went back to work and it was just him and I five days a week. I was so scared and felt alone. My wife had built a connection with him for the nine months that he was in her womb and then the first three months of his life. I was just the guy involved in the process of conceiving and I would think about how I could never come close to that connection. The next several months really surprised me. I was beginning to build a lot of self-awareness that would appear off of the meditation cushion. Certain insights had enabled me to see how my loss of a sense of control when I was a child had evolved into a need to control everything around me as an adult. When everything didn't happen the way I had

expected, that's when I would experience symptoms of anxiety. I soon learned that as a parent that there was no realistic way to control my son and I was left having to accept that. He was like a true Zen master, ready to test out all of my limitations, and I was open to it. I had to be able to understand what his needs were, which meant that I had to let go of my need to control the world. He helped me to learn about myself, and in the process, I was able to experience pure love and compassion for this child. I saw who he was as a person, but was also ready to get to know what I didn't know about him at the same time.

Several months into our time together, I learned that the best time for my sitting practice was during his morning naps. The combination of the sun shining on my face through the easterly window and the content that I felt knowing that he was safe and sound asleep brought me true serenity. One morning as I was meditating, I heard and felt something fall in his bedroom. Immediately, I sensed the dull, fuzzy sensation in my foot, and sprang up to his room. He was in his crib sleeping and the wind had knocked a box on the floor. It was at this moment that I made the connection between my foot and his security. It is only when I sensed he was in danger that my foot had this feeling, and I suppose that's what it had been doing all along. This natural instinct to care for a child exists, and when I brought awareness to the physical and emotional connections, I realized the true embodiment and calling of being a parent.

Mindfulness practice became a way for me to become fully engaged in my family. Sensing distractions, anxieties, and emotions in the present moment, and choosing how to respond to them had never occurred to me in my 28 years of existence. Watching judgments pass, and finding the space to feel and express true compassion opened up my heart to see the pure beauty of existence. While many of the conditioned discomforts never went away, a

disciplined practice of concentration and compassion helped me to find the space to accept and allow them to be there without worry.

Throughout my personal and professional experience of working with families and children, I have found that self-care and a strong support system are very important to a healthy family. I have taken on the role as the primary caretaker of our now two children family and have maintained a deep practice along with my graduate work in Mindfulness Studies. I have learned how mindfulness can be applied to communication, leadership, and social engagement. I have studied how a disciplined practice literally changes the brain's structure and function and how it responds to stress. Everything that I have researched and practiced has allowed me to completely transform how I relate to and engage in the world, but most importantly how my wife and I have decided to parent our children.

Although it was unfortunate that I had experienced such difficulty as a child, I now understand that it has given me the opportunity to reflect on and see how to mindfully check in with my life and stay present as a father. I can observe the pain and ugliness with acceptance and non-judgment, and honor them with full attention instead of ruminating and losing myself to it all. This allows me to engage with my children in a loving, supportive and accepting way. It also permits me to minimize distraction in life, knowing that technology, substances, or boredom are all ways of numbing myself instead of remaining present.

A mindfulness practice can serve as a tool for helping to prepare new fathers to be engaged in all aspects of life. If they can be taught skills that help them pause from emotional reactivity and observe from within without judgment, much of the suffering associated with being a new parent could potentially be eased. This is why I have decided to create a mindfulness curriculum designed specifically for new fathers. Not only do I want to contribute towards the

deconditioning of traditional societal norms, but I also want to create a supportive resource that new fathers can have and share with others to rid suffering from the world. It is important to consider the ongoing research into parenting to understand where to begin.

Literature Review

Most children born with two-parents who are well-educated, well-functioning, and employed are more than likely going to be on a different developmental prognosis than a child born addicted to illegal drugs, without the presence of a father, and from a poverty-stricken community (Roopnarine, 2015). With limited resources at hand, the latter child will live a life with less resources and opportunity structures than that of the first child. When beginning the fathering journey, fathers are emerging from these situations, and they begin equipped with the resources that they have gathered along the way (Roopnarine, 2015). Engagement and involvement from a father positively affects a child's development (Hawkins, et. al., 2008), but unfortunately statistics show that there are a large number of fathers not involved in the lives of their children. The United States Census Bureau (2010) recorded that 29.5% of children under the age of 18 live in homes without a father. This signals a need to discover why there is a lack of active engagement amongst fathers in the United States, and what can be done to begin to reverse these statistics.

Within the United States, much has changed within the past 100 years. The end of the Civil War, women's rights, World War II, and the countless movements that have occurred since have brought many women into the workforce, and eventually changed the dynamic of the household in the United States of America so that women were not just staying home with the children anymore. Men have begun sharing the responsibilities, but research indicates that there is still lacking equality amongst shared responsibilities in households (Goldberg & Perry-

Jenkins, 2004). It is important for fathers to have their roles defined so that they can become more engaged, but there are many contextual factors to consider when understanding what these roles are (Doherty et. al., 1998). The benefits of having a fully engaged father are highly beneficial to children, and research indicates that it can increase their socioemotional development (Hawkins et. al., 2008). But one thing is certain, and that is to say parenting is stressful. Whether considering the change in hormones within the perinatal period for both mother and father (Storey et al., 2000), or dealing with behavioral outbursts from a toddler, it is not easy. As humans, we have relational brains, and when considering that a child's brain develops with a strong influence from their parents (Siegel & Hartzell, 2003), this creates a responsibility for them to lead their children into a thriving environment that promotes healthy ways of dealing with stress. Mindfulness, an ancient Buddhist teaching has been practiced for thousands of years, and within this century it has been brought over and used as a secular practice, from which the field of mindful parenting has emerged. Mindful parenting offers a path for fathers who wish to become more engaged with their families, and by building a curriculum that focuses on fathers, this opens a door to begin changing society for the better.

This literature review will take into consideration current sociocultural trends within the United States in two-parent homes, define fatherly engagement, and describe the limitations that men are faced with when attempting to make an active effort to be fully engaged with their children. It will then go on to describe the many benefits of having an engaged father for children, but also how factors such as parental stress can have a serious impact on a child in both the mind and body. When fathers can draw awareness to this stress and be made aware of the potential risks for their children, this offers a unique opportunity for leadership. Fathers can begin to look within themselves, and begin the process of drawing attention to their style of

parenting, but also begin to make conscientious responses to the difficulties that arise instead of automatically reacting. The review goes on to suggest that a mindfulness practice for new fathers would be ideal in helping to maintain focus on their children, and describes various mindful parenting programs that currently exist that could help shape a mindful curriculum for new fathers that focuses on fatherly engagement.

Sociocultural Context

To understand the current trends, it is important to consider gender roles in family and work domains within homes of the biological mother and father, and how they are now in a state of change in the United States. The stereotypical view of a male providing the primary source of income for a family has changed over time, and currently, the majority of men and women share both roles in work and family (Perrone et. al., 2009). The United States Bureau of Labor and Statistics reported in 2017 that in 2016, 65 percent of households with children under the age of 18 included income from both parents. This is up from 59 percent in 1986, representing an increase in dual income families (US Department of Labor, 2017).

Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins (2004) say:

the transition to parenthood has been recognized as a critical time for examining the effects of multiple roles on men's and women's mental health, as couples renegotiate and widen their repertoire of roles to make room for a new person in their lives. Research indicates that even among couples in which spouses work an equal number of hours, women typically perform two or three times more of the daily, repetitive, and necessary household labor than men. (p. 225-226)

This inequality of responsibilities was shown to have a decrease of reported mental well-being for women (Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2004) and does not account for why this continues to occur.

Research has found that mothers also spend more time than fathers in developmentally appropriate activities with their children in the first nine months of life (Lang et. al, 2014). The study found that between mothers and fathers, there was a significant inequity in the amount of positive engagement spent with infants. The authors suggest that gender evolution concerning equality amongst the mother and father might be delayed in this aspect of family life. This could have strong implications for children, since the study also demonstrated that children's levels of attention and mastery motivation increased as fathers increased their positive engagement (Lang et. al, 2014). Although certain cultural or structural forces should be considered as factors, this inequity in time investment suggests that fathers may be choosing to devote their time towards other aspects of life, which the authors state is reflective of the individualistic cultural values of modern American middle-class society. To answer this problem, fathers need their roles to be defined (Ferguson & Morley 2011), and require continued support from the mother, other family members, and community (Doherty et. al., 1998).

Paternal Roles and Father Engagement

Although dual earner families are on the rise, this does not account for the inequity in responsibilities and engagement with younger children. Ferguson & Morley (2011) state that over the past decades, the definition of the role of a father has expanded in to the role of caretaker which includes providing love, support, guidance, protection, supervision and being a confident role model, collaborator with the mother, and educator. Just like mothers, fathers need to stay engaged with their children if they are to maintain this role. They need to receive

social support, be physically accessible, monitor behavior, and share in responsibility with the mother (Ferguson & Morley, 2011). Roubinov et. al. (2015) suggests that paternal involvement encompasses engagement, accessibility and responsibility. They say:

Engagement refers to activities through which fathers directly interact with their children (e.g., feeding, dressing playing). Accessibility is represented by the amount of time fathers spend in the child's presence and available to respond to the child's needs, but not interacting with the child (i.e., father is nearby as child engages in solitary play). The final element, paternal responsibility, has been the most difficult to define and remains the least understood. Responsibility has been hypothesized to reflect the "managerial" tasks of fatherhood, such as arranging resources, planning for the future, and other types of indirect care. (p. 277)

Without the support of their partner, extended family or community members, this can make it very challenging for a father to always be engaged, accessible, and responsible for the day to day needs of their children.

So how do fathers get the necessary support to be fully engaged caretakers for their children? Fathering is very sensitive to contextual influences from both personal and environmental perspectives. Fathering is a multifaceted relationship, in addition to a one-on-one relationship. Influences such as the mother's expectations, the quality of the co-parenting relationship, economic factors, institutional practice and employment opportunities all have very strong effects on fathering (Doherty et. al., 1998). When these influences do not support the bond between father and child, "a man may need a high-level identification with the father role, strong commitment, and good parenting skills to remain a responsible father to his children,

especially if he does not live with them” (Doherty et. al., 1998, p. 289). The figure represented below from Doherty et. al. (1998) is a conceptual model based on the influences of fatherhood:

Image 1

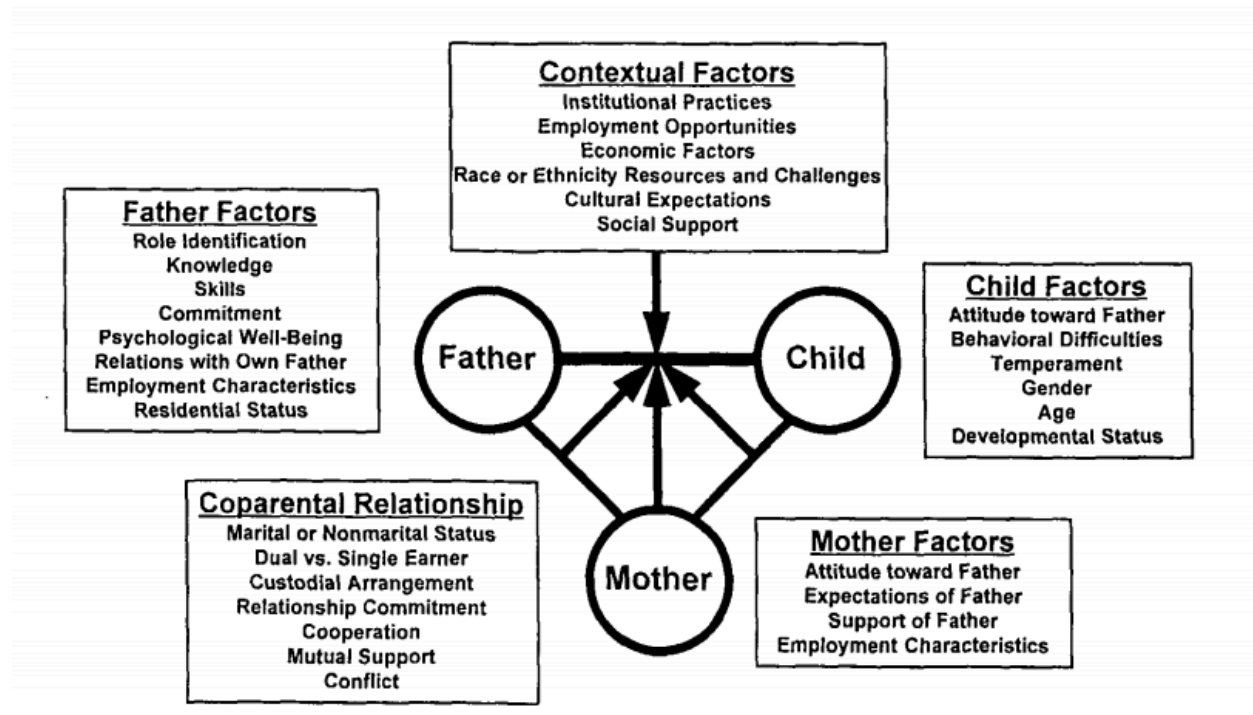


Figure 1. Influences on Responsible Fathering: A Conceptual Model (Doherty et. al., 1998)

Although this model takes into consideration the mother-child relationship, the focus is on the direct father-child interaction. Theory and research on parenting is often derived from work on mothers, and the work of Doherty et. al. found it important to highlight the differences on fathering. The model captures four domains of responsible fathering: co-parental relationship, paternity, contextual factors, child factors and mother factors (Doherty et. al, 1998).

Co-parental relationship. Fathering and co-parenting appear to go hand in hand within American culture. One reason for this is that the standards and expectations for fathering are more variable than they are for mothering. Take for example the consideration of how the father being married to the children’s mother affects how a man considers himself within the role of

being a father. Doherty et. al. (1998) found that for most heterosexual fathers from the United States of America, the family environment most conducive to the support of fathering was a marriage that was caring, committed, and collaborative. They also concluded that outside of this type of marriage, that there are many barriers that can get in the way of maintaining an active and involved fathering role.

Mother Factors. Evidence suggests that even in the above-mentioned marriage, a father's engagement with his young children can be contingent upon the mother's attitudes, expectations and support of the father's decision to take on an active fathering role (De Luccie, 1995; Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, & Melby, 1990 from Doherty et. al., 1998). Mainstream cultural forces in the United States of America expect women to maintain their mothering role, and Doherty et. al. (1998) suggest that it is possible that an actively engaged father might threaten a woman's identity and a sense of control over this important domain within their life. There must be a social consensus that responsible mothering supports the father-child bond (Doherty et. al., 1998).

Contextual Factors. Factors such as economic forces, ethnic and cultural values, and social support have an impact on a father's ability to take on a caretaking role. Doherty et. al. (1998) argue that fathering can be conceptualized as being more contextually sensitive than mothering. Because the cultural norms are focused more on the relationship of the mother-child, the father-child relationship is less supportive, and must come from within the family as well as into the larger environment. Unless a strong individual commitment from the father exists, any level of undermining from the mother or social institutions that they are involved in might make it more difficult to continue being a responsible father.

Child Factors. Although included in the model, these factors are not as important as the other areas in influencing fathers. Fathers have been shown to be more involved with their sons than their daughters (Marsiglio, 1991 from Doherty et. al., 1998). This is especially so for older sons, as fathers are thought to relate more to them. but most of the other factors influence mothers as well. One area in which fathers have been shown to withdraw has been around parent-adolescent conflict (Doherty et. al., 1998). Doherty et. al. (1998) go on to say that more research is needed in determining how the child's beliefs about father engagement influences the expectations and behaviors of both the mother and father.

Father Factors. There is a high level of variability in regard to these factors. Although role identification, skills and commitment are influential, these can change with contextual factors such as residential status with the children and the interpersonal relationship with the mother. This can lead to a high level of confusion, and because a positive support from the mother is so influential, a negative relationship can really affect a father's ability to maintain active engagement with his children. It is important to mention that a high level of motivation can overcome these barriers and lack of support (Lambs, 1987 from Doherty et. al., 1998). Other factors within the father category include the father's relationship with his own father. By identifying with or understanding their father's shortcomings, this can contribute to a father's own role identification, sense of commitment, and self-efficacy (Doherty et. al., 1998). Job loss can contribute to decreased psychological well-being, but commitment to positive family practice within a work schedule increases engagement (Doherty et. al., 1998).

These contextual influences lay out a map of what is needed to address the lack of fatherly engagement with children. Support is required for men to make this shift. When these needs are met, it is the children that benefit the most.

Benefits of the Child with an Engaged Father

Children benefit from having an engaged father in their life. A father's involvement in their child's life can positively affect their child's development. Hawkins, et. al. (2008) say:

Father sensitivity to infant needs has been correlated with infant secure attachment and toddler ability to regulate negative feelings. Father sensitivity, warmth, and playful interaction further influence toddler and preschooler cognitive and language outcomes independent of the effect of mothering. There is also evidence that the father-child relationship and the mother-child relationship provide unique relational settings for children's development. (p. 49).

This contribution to child well-being continues into school-age children to adolescence. Fathers who are positively involved help with self-control, school achievement, and positive attitudes towards self in adolescence (Hawkins, et. al., 2008). When exploring both stages of infancy and childhood, fathers can play a major role in shaping their child's developmental progression.

Infancy. Parental responsiveness plays an important role in how infants form attachments to parents who are responding to their needs. When fathers are responding to their infants sufficiently, attachments are created. LeMonda and Cabrera (2013) say:

Attachment formation represents one of the first steps in social and emotional development. According to Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory, infants come to focus their bids for attention on a small number of familiar individuals over the first few months of life. When adults respond promptly and appropriately to infant signals, infants come to perceive them as predictable or reliable and secure infant-parent attachments result, whereas insecure attachments may develop when adults do not respond sensitively (Thompson, 2006). (p.121)

When fathers can become actively engaged at this level, this begins to ensure that they are building secure relationships with their children at an early age. Attachment theory explains how these relationships are formed.

Attachment. Children are naturally going to become attached to whoever functions as their primary caregiver. There are several forms of attachment that occur in children as stated by Siegel (2010):

- Secure Attachment- This occurs when parents are sensitive to a child's need for attention.
- Avoidant Attachment- This occurs when parents don't reliably respond to a child's needs.
- Ambivalent Attachment- This occurs when parents inconsistently respond to a child's needs, leaving the child seeking for the parent's reunion but not soothed when they get it.
- Disorganized Attachment- This occurs when parents are severely lacking attunement to their child. The parents can often express or give fear to the child resulting in an inability to cope.

As infants grow, the effect of these attachment styles solidifies, and determine how they relate to others in the world. For fathers interested in becoming fully engaged with their children, having knowledge of the above-mentioned attachment stages can be helpful into building awareness towards their own personal style of parenting.

Childhood. During this stage of life, parents begin to fall in to one of Baumrind's (1975) three patterns of parenting. These are the well-known authoritative, permissive, and nonconformist patterns. Authoritarian parents typically exert a strong level of control over their children, often forcing their will. Permissive parents are not as forceful, and make themselves available for support. Nonconformist parents are opposed to authority, but less passive than permissive parents (LeMonda & Cabrera 2013). Supportiveness outside of authoritarian styles by both parents at age 2 predicted the children's language and mathematics scores before the

school age of 5. This was the same for the support of independent thinking related to autonomy. Fathers who read to their young children had strong cognitive outcomes later in development (LeMonda & Cabrera 2013). “Paternal involvement in childhood also predicts social interaction styles, adjustment to spousal relationships, and self-reported parenting skills in adulthood” (Lamb and Lewis from LeMonda, Cabrera, 2013, p.124). Children obviously benefit from active engagement from their father, but stress can have a major impact on a child’s life, and fathers should be aware of the potential risks of stress for themselves and their children.

Stress as Parents

With all of the benefits that being an engaged parent brings, there are roadblocks that get in the way that cause stress. Stress affects both mother and father before and after the birth of a baby. Storey et al. (2000) demonstrated that cortisol significantly increases amongst both men and women before and after the birth of a baby. Becoming a new parent can change many things about a person’s life, and in this change, it brings demands, challenges and stress never experienced before.

Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn (2014) call parenting the full catastrophe. They go on to say: Being a parent compounds stress by orders of magnitude. It makes us vulnerable in ways we weren’t before. It calls us to be responsible in ways we weren’t before. It challenges us as never before and takes our time and attention away from other things, including ourselves, as never before. It creates chaos and disorder, feelings of inadequacy, occasions for arguments, struggles, irritation, noise, seemingly never-ending obligations and errands, and plenty of opportunities for getting stuck, angry, resentful, hurt and for feeling overwhelmed, old and unimportant. And this can go on not only when the

children are little, but also even when they are full grown and on their own. Having children is asking for trouble. (p.91)

Stress as many people define in life is external or situational, and typically involves financial strain, family safety, job security, etc. Stress can be internalized, and end up manifesting as physical symptoms. This can lead to guilt or shame, and an endless cycle that often gets projected onto the people involved in our lives (McEwen, 2002).

Defined, stress is a vague term to describe either a stress response or stressor. A stressor is a stimulus that produces a stress response, and a stress response is the physiological reaction caused by the perception of aversive or threatening situations (McEwen, 2002). From a biological standpoint, upon perception, the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis is activated. Once the threat or aversion is perceived, a signal is sent to the amygdala. The amygdala then signals the hypothalamus to secrete a neurotransmitter named corticotrophin releasing factor (CRF) which acts as an arousal, and is sent to the pituitary gland which releases another neurotransmitter called adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH). Traveling through the bloodstream, ACTH secretes into the adrenal gland, and in turn, the adrenal gland releases cortisol in the body, increasing heart rate and alertness. A constant supply of cortisol in the blood is associated with illness and poor well-being.

Clearly stress affects people in different ways, but it generally creates a negative impact on both parent and child. If children are to thrive, their parents must be aware of how much their stress actually affects their children. While children are growing, their brains are like sponges, making connections at rapid rates.

The Relational Brain

When parents can recognize that children, like all young mammals have strong social ties, then they can begin to understand how much their stress can affect their children. In childhood, the developing brain is constantly making new neural connections, and when this can be looked at from a physiological perspective, it becomes clear that some parents might need to begin to work on a plan to decrease their own reactivity. Understanding major physical components involved in stress, and how they can affect children, can help fathers in beginning this reflection.

The limbic system. This has two important processes which include balancing the heart, respiration, and sleep-wake cycles. It also takes information in from the outside world—especially from the social world (Siegel and Hartzell, 2003). The amygdala plays a crucial role in perceiving and outwardly expressing facial responses. It is also responsible for emotional regulation, making it so that both of these processes allow people to focus on the internal states of others—especially parents with their children, which helps them to balance their internal regulatory states (Siegel and Hartzell, 2003).

Mirror neurons. In parenting, it can become easy to notice that right away, infants begin mimicking your movements. After a while, they start to predict what will happen next, and before most people know it, whenever they are feeling stressed so are their children. Discovered during the 1990s in monkeys, humans have recently been identified by neuroscientists as containing limbic circuitry that allows them to read and experience the internal states of others by observing the external expressions as signals for what may be occurring. Called mirror neurons, these have allowed humans to evolve into the social creatures that they are today (Siegel and Hartzell, 2003). When considering the relationships of parents and children, the knowledge of this neural mechanism can help parents understand the effect that this

level of empathy can have on a child, but also realize how powerful of a tool this can be to help a child thrive when a parent has strengthened their ability to be aware and express their own internal events (Siegel and Hartzell, 2003):

Mirror neurons may also link the perception of emotional expressions to the creation of those states inside the observer. In this way, when we perceive another's emotions, automatically, non-consciously, that state is created inside us.

For example, we may begin to cry when we see someone else crying. We learn how someone is feeling by putting ourselves "in the other person's shoes"—we know how others are feeling by how our own body/mind responds. We check our own state to know the state of mind of another person. This is the basis for empathy. (p. 63)

It should be noted that mirror neuron theories provide a fascinating outlook on the relation of the brain and behavior, but the research is in limited supply. More recently, scientists have identified problems with these models of empathy, suggesting that mirror neurons are not designed specifically for empathy, and that future research is needed to determine whether or not society should be so enthusiastic to link empathy only to the mirror neuron system (Lamm & Majdandžić, 2015). Although relying on "gut" sentiments might seem like the better option, there needs to be increased scientific knowledge on the correlation between empathy and mirror neurons before people begin to drift away from the facts.

What is apparent, is that the brain is a social organ. Knowing that the brain and neural networks of people are so embedded in relationships, parents have the ability to make positive change in themselves, which in turn affects their children and puts them in environments that allow them to thrive. With this knowledge, it becomes a responsibility for parents to lead by example in modeling positive, fulfilling engagement with others, and especially their children.

Parenting as a Leader: A Natural Calling to Look Within and Model Awareness

Parenting is a natural phenomenon, but leadership is too. Parenting is also a calling because people bear a responsibility to nurture their young, but as seen throughout society, it can sometimes be more of a responsibility than a journey. Leadership and parenting can become much more than an obligation, but a true calling for connection and positive change. Both parenting and leadership share a nurturing aspect that involves compassion and teaching.

In leadership, Sinclair (2007) says that families and childhoods provide a child's first encounter with leadership, and the roots of their leadership aspirations and styles. When children finally break free from the nest, many choose to build upon their individuality that they began identifying with in adolescence. Whether they are going to college and choosing a major, or deciding to travel to Europe for the first time, they are adults and can begin to identify with that. Sometimes people can become lost in this identity, and forget where they came from, especially if their childhoods were filled with unpleasant memories. The further people distance themselves from their backgrounds, the more susceptible they are to becoming easily corrupted or led by their own egos.

How can parents nurture and lead their children so that they can become servant leaders without having a basic understanding of themselves? Sinclair (2007) says that family is the first experience of leadership, as children follow their parents, caregivers or other siblings. The family is also a child's first experience of learning about leadership, and other tactics of influencing others. Through their sense sphere, children begin to understand how to get attention and how to gain scarce resources of time and love. Children learn in families how to get their way, or by imposing their will or physical superiority. They negotiate, listen and attend to other family members by entertaining and being amused; forming alliances; by eliciting pity or guilt.

Children learn how to compete and how to differentiate themselves from others (especially siblings), and to claim their special place in the world (Sinclair, 2007).

A parent's understanding of themselves and their own background in regard to their upbringing is crucial. If a parent's background may have been complicated, then it could be beneficial to seek psychotherapy or some other form of counseling which will more than likely incorporate a mindfulness meditation practice (which can also be done independently if the person is ready). Whether parents are leaders in professional settings, or at home with their children, being able to step outside of the lens of their ego allows them to truly see the moments how they are. Building self-knowledge can help people to also see the cravings and vulnerabilities that have arisen out of their personal histories (Sinclair, 2007). Understanding backgrounds can also help parents to see the impulsivities that arise within group context. As difficult as it may be, parents have a responsibility to take care of themselves, as what they do ultimately reflects the dynamic of the atmosphere in which they are leading in regard to followers and their children. Having an understanding of attachment theory can be a first step.

Parents have the opportunity, as Dan Siegel says, to be the first teacher of our children. They can promote kindness and resilience by slightly changing the way they look at their children and their behavior. Through Siegel's work, he has attempted to define what the mind is in a field called Interpersonal Neurobiology. He says that the mind exists in relationships and the body, unlike modern science which insinuates that the mind and the brain are one. Parents can help to "integrate" their children by using their relationships to shape the circuitry of their neural system. In challenging moments, parents can help to reframe them by showing their child what is happening in the brain. Siegel's classic example is the thumb tucked in a fist which

demonstrates the role of the limbic system (emotions or default mode) and the medial prefrontal cortex (attentional control) (Siegel, 2010).

When people can adopt the mindset that they are leaders in the world as parents, the potential is endless. People are at a moment in time where they are starting to see that the mind is both embodied and relational. This is about leading culture and education. People can use intentionality to change the pathway of cultural evolution on this planet. We are incredibly creative creatures. What better place to start than parenting (Siegel, 2010)? Considering a mindfulness practice can help parents to connect with the present moment and see this more clearly

Mindfulness

Many of these issues fathers are dealing with are socially conditioned and often left unquestioned. If fathers want to become more engaged with their children, yet feel restrained by the factors listed above, it might be helpful to begin with a practice that looks within. A mindfulness practice provides an opportunity for fathers to do just this. This practice encourages stillness, reflection, and can help awaken fathers to the hindrances that might hold them back from being entirely engaged with their children.

History. People have been practicing mindfulness for approximately two and a half thousand years. Stemming from Buddhist philosophy and practice tradition, it is an effective practice without the religious context, but it is important to understand the complexity of the original teachings so that they do not become distorted and lost in time. A brief history of Buddhism can help put a mindfulness practice into perspective.

The Buddha, born by the name of Siddhartha Gautama from a wealthy royal family, grew up in an environment where his father purposely shielded him from being exposed to the

sufferings that all humans are typically exposed to. It was not until he was older that he had left the palace and witnessed suffering in other people for the first time. He witnessed disease, old age, and a corpse. He realized that the nature of the body makes it exposed to sickness and disease, that old age is a process of life, and that death was certain, but life continues on. He also encountered a spiritual seeker for the first time, someone dedicated to understanding reality, and from that point, made it his life mission to overcome suffering and awaken to the truth of life (Levine, 2007). Siddhartha left his home to seek spiritual awakening, leaving his riches behind.

After seven years of practicing with various spiritual traditions and rejecting attachment to both pleasure and aversion, Siddhartha set off on his own to find what he thought of as the “middle way.” After nearly dying of starvation, he began to eat again, and in contemplation of suffering, he realized that he had not been practicing something which he thought to be entirely important, and this was mindfulness. By observing his mind and body in the present moment, this allowed him to see the all of the sense processes unfold more clearly (Levine, 2007).

It is said that Siddhartha sat under a Bodhi tree paying attention to his mind and body, meditating on the causes of suffering. He sat, aware of his breath as it came in and out, feeling the pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral sensations arise and fall, and allowed himself to do this without judgment, in a compassionate and loving way. He was determined to not leave until he was free from all forms of misidentification, attachment, and aversion (Levine, 2007). After some time, a demon named Mara shows itself to Siddhartha. Mara is the personification of all of the negative emotions that cause us to suffer, which can be lust, fear, anger, and doubt (Levine, 2007). Siddhartha overcame Mara by sitting in awareness, not moved by the arising and passing phenomenon of the mind. Mindfulness through investigative, compassionate, present-time awareness allowed Siddhartha to sit there, feeling his breath and sensations, which ultimately led

to a realization that everything is impermanent. Everything arises and passes, everything ultimately arises out of causes and conditions in life, and that we all create suffering for ourselves through our resistance, and through the desire to want things different than how they are, or rather clinging and aversion (Levine, 2007). He understood that when he eventually let go, remained mindful, and accepted without judgement he would be free in life. With this understanding, Siddhartha transformed and awakened into the Buddha. “He was no longer asleep; no longer subject to identification with greed, hatred, or delusion; no longer subject to rebirth” (Levine, 2007, p. 17).

After becoming enlightened, the Buddha developed the five faculties that led him to his awakening. These were faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom (which encompassed compassion). Mindfulness became broken down into four levels which included the body, feelings, mind and the truth of suffering. After all of this, he synthesized everything into the Four Noble Truths, and the Eightfold Path, which became the main teachings of Buddhism.

Four Noble Truths. The first of the Four Noble Truths the Buddha had articulated was the prevalence of dukkha, or suffering. As he had discovered as a young Siddhartha, he found that all humans are faced with the inevitability of sickness, old age, and death. Referred to by Jon Kabat Zinn (2005) as the fundamental disease of the human condition, suffering occurs even in pleasure, because it does not last. There is suffering that cannot be controlled (pain), but there is also suffering that is self-created. Because everything is constantly changing, there can be a tendency to get attached to impermanent experiences, and this can make life seem inadequate (Levine, 2007).

The second truth is the cause of dukkha. This attachment and clinging to impermanent experiences can leave people seeking only pleasure in life. When desire goes on unexamined, this limits a person's ability to reach an acceptance of the fact that both pain and pleasure exist on the same plain of life.

The third truth was that cessation of dukkha is possible. Just as he had let go of clinging and aversion, the Buddha found that there was a way to relate to experience understanding that the reality of life is impermanent. With this, greed, hatred and delusion become irrelevant in life, and all that is left is peace and happiness. The Buddha was a human after all, and through a disciplined practice, one can find freedom in their life.

The fourth truth consisted of a path or systemic approach towards the cessation of dukkha. When ignorance, dissolves, liberation becomes attainable. This became known as the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path. The eight steps of the path are in order from one to the next, culminating in the transformation of ignorance into liberating wisdom and awakening (Goldstein, 2013). Each step falls into three groups of training: Wisdom, Conduct and Meditation. In Pali, these are known as the trainings in Prajñā, Sīla, and Samādhi.

Right View	Understanding of the Four Noble Truths	Wisdom
Right Intention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restraint from desire • Lovingkindness • Compassion 	
Right Speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truthfulness • Refraining from slander and gossip. • Refraining from harsh, angry and abusive speech. • Mindful listening 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refraining from useless or frivolous talk (idle chatter). 	Conduct
Right Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abstaining from physical harm • Abstaining from taking what is not given. • Abstaining from sexual misconduct 	
Right Livelihood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A profession that is not involved in harming the world. 	
Right Effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent unarisen unwholesome states. • Abandon unwholesome states that have arisen. • Arouse wholesome states not yet arisen. • Develop arisen wholesome states. 	Meditation
Right Mindfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindfulness of the body • Mindfulness of feeling • Mindfulness of mind • Mindfulness of the dharma. 	
Right Concentration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice of the four jhānas. 	

The Five Hindrances. Through the Buddha's teachings he gained followers who accepted and understood that he had found the true path to spiritual awakening and freedom. Although the path was described in detail, the Buddha also taught that it will not be easy, and that there will be specific hindrances along the way for most people. These five experiences, often referred to as the Five Hindrances are: desire, aversion, sloth and torpor, restlessness worry and anxiety, and doubt. Goldstein (2013) says of the hindrances:

When we're not mindful of them, the hindrances envelop the mind and obstruct it from developing wise discernment regarding skillful and unskillful actions. They hinder the mind's developing concentration and other awakening factors, and they prevent the realization of the four noble truths. In order to proceed on the path, we first need to know how to work skillfully with what impedes our journey. (p. 122)

Desire. To consider desire as a hindrance is to understand that attachment to pleasure is part of the biological response of humans (Levine, 2007). Although there are healthy desires, they can also be not inappropriate and/or harmful. A healthy desire would be wanting to eat, but this is not always appropriate in certain settings such as when sitting in the doctor's office. A desire to drink alcohol before driving would be harmful. People can become overwhelmed by obsessive passions, or the wanting and desire of addictive cravings. It can become easy to get lost in fantasy, or indulge in our own internal dramas and stories. Desire can also be in the form of expectations, or wanting something else to happen. When desire is present and people are not aware of it, they can become lost in its distorting energy. When awareness of desire occurs, this can lead to the path of awakening (Goldstein, 2013), as one may see the suffering that occurs with it.

Aversion. The next hindrance, aversion is a completely normal reaction in the mind and body to pain. The body often experiences painful sensations, and the mind, unpleasant thoughts. The heart experiences pains from the past, present and future (Levine, 2007). When people do not want things to be the way they are and push them away, this is aversion. This also includes fear, which is an aversion to something that hasn't yet happened, but is not limited to violent rage and hatred, anger, ill will, animosity, annoyance, irritation, fear, and sorrow and grief (Goldstein, 2013).

Sloth and Torpor. In developing a mind that is tranquil and alert, it is common for those attempting to develop awareness to enter into a dreamlike, pleasant state. While relaxing, it is not beneficial towards strengthening mindfulness. Sloth occurs when the mind has low energy, there is no motivation, almost as if there is a sinking sensation. Torpor is the pressure to fall asleep, nod, or droop. These states often present themselves together in different variations such as sleepiness, procrastination, and avoidance. This is something many people experience when seeking a meditative path.

Restlessness, Worry, and Anxiety. Also included in this hindrance is anxiety and worry. Restlessness can present itself as agitation or over-excitement, worry occurs when there is a fear of something that will happen, and anxiety is a generalized experience of fear that will happen in the future. When stillness is difficult to achieve, this hindrance is being experienced. Restlessness can take on different forms such as planning, self-judgment, dwelling on past unskillful actions, ideas, and/or memories (Levine, 2007).

Doubt. Described by the Buddha as being one of the most difficult hindrances, doubt can present itself as self-doubt where the meditator thinks that they cannot meditate or change the relationship to the mind. Other times it can take the form of philosophical doubt, where a person is unable to believe that they can find freedom from suffering (Levine, 2007). This can become a state of hesitancy, causing people to hold back and get lost in disconnection. Goldstein (2013) says:

Unnoticed, doubt is the most dangerous of the hindrances because it can bring our practice to a standstill. When doubt is strong and paralyzes us with indecision, it doesn't even give us an opportunity to take a wrong turn and then to learn from our mistakes. With doubt, we're always checking ourselves, vacillating, trying to decide. (p. 164)

When doubt can be understood as a thought, passing through like all experience, this helps to create a place for investigation. Contemplation and reflection on how the conditions gathered to bring doubt to the surface should be considered in and off of the meditation cushion. When doubt has become dissipated, this opens the doorway for the possibility of faith in the spiritual journey.

While the above teachings are complex in nature, they do require years of practice and teaching to fully understand. For anyone beginning a meditation practice, having an understanding of the Four Noble Truths can bring about realizations of suffering that may have gone unnoticed for years. When the cause of the suffering can be determined, a person can focus on eliminating the problem. The Eightfold Path is a wisdom tradition that provides a guideline for helping to pick up the pieces that the problem left behind. The Five Hindrances are obstacles faced by most people throughout the span of their meditation practice, and when attention can be drawn to them, they can help to strengthen the ability to see clear and concentrate. As a new parent, these lessons can be useful both in and out of a sitting practice, and can help to strengthen equanimity and mindfulness during the difficult moments that occur when raising children. Over time, these ideas from Buddhism made their way to the Western World, and have helped build programs and courses that have helped parents and others alike.

Western Integration. From these teachings, as well as others began Buddhism, and they have continued for thousands of years through various forms, eventually making it to Western world during the 1970s. Spiritual seekers returning from Asia such as Joseph Goldstein, Sharon Salzberg, and Jack Kornfield began teaching at meditation retreats where they introduced the basic concepts, and after some time, programs such as the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy began popping up (Goldstein, 2013). Going out into the street or browsing the internet, the term mindfulness is well-known, and is continuing to

grow in popularity, but it is important to remember the basic roots so that the Buddha's teachings are not misinformed or lost. People have found that mindfulness helps in creating an interconnectedness of all dimensions of experience (Greeson, Brantley, Suarez, 2011).

Defined by Jon Kabat Zinn (2003) mindfulness is "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment" (p.145). Mindfulness promotes intentional action over emotional reaction. "Increased awareness of cognitive, affective, and behavioral distinctions has been hypothesized to increase cognitive complexity and emotional awareness over time (e.g., Bishop et al. 2004)" (Parent, Mckee, Rough, Forehand, 2016, p. 191). Not only does mindfulness bring positive outcomes for the individual, it fosters self-compassion, which ultimately has a positive effect on interpersonal relationships.

This 8-week program developed by Jon Kabat Zinn is called the Mindfulness Based Stress Program (MBSR). The structure of the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program consists of an orientation, eight weekly classes, one all-day retreat and home practice for 45-60 minutes a day. It involves guided instruction in mindfulness meditation practices, mindful yoga, group dialogue and discussions, instruction in MBSR practices, daily homework assignments, and a practice workbook (umassmed.edu, 2016). This program tends to be the most reliable and secular teaching of a mindfulness practice, and is something that could be taken into the consideration when building a mindfulness program for new fathers. Since the MBSR inception in 1979, mindfulness has continued to flourish within Western Society.

Mindful Parenting

When considering a mindfulness program for new fathers, it can be helpful to explore the field of mindful parenting. Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn (2014) say that parenting can (and should)

be looked at as an extended, and difficult meditation retreat covering a large part of our lives. Our children can be considered our teachers, providing parents with endless opportunities to get at the internal work of “understanding who we are and who they are so that we can best stay in touch with what is important and give them what they most need in order to grow and flourish” (Kabat-Zinn, 2014, p. 23). When children can be seen with stronger clarity, and parents can learn to trust their hearts, this is what mindful parenting is all about. Mindfulness builds wisdom and allows people to be great sources of unconditional love for their children (Kabat-Zinn, 2014).

Duncan, Coatsworth, & Greenberg (2009) suggest that mindful parenting should encompass five dimensions relevant to the parent-child relationship: (a) listening with full attention; (b) nonjudgmental acceptance of self and child; (c) emotional awareness of self and child; (d) self-regulation in the parenting relationship; and (e) compassion for self and child. When parenting can be approached mindfully, it can promote secure attachment relationships with children (Siegel and Hartzell, 2003). When parents can live fully in the moment, children can fully experience themselves in the present. Although children don’t need us to be mindful all of the time, parents should be present while interacting with their children. This means that a parent should place intention upon these moments, purposefully choosing their behavior with the child’s well-being in mind. Children pick up on these intentions and thrive during these moments with their parents (Siegel and Hartzell, 2003). Parent, Mckee, Rough, Forehand, (2016) suggest that parents who are more mindful might be able to understand their own and their child’s behaviors nonjudgmentally, and to effectively separate themselves from negative emotions (Dumas, 2005). Maladaptive emotional impulses may start to decrease as parents grow in their practice, creating a stronger capacity to parent calmly and consistently.

Existing Mindful Parenting Programs. Self-care through mindfulness practice can provide a way for parents to prepare for the new and upcoming challenges that are ahead of them. If engagement is the problem, a mindfulness practice can be an effective way of training of the mind to stay engaged with the present moment purposefully throughout the day and in a formal practice. Described below are several existing programs that are specifically designed for parents.

The Healing Power of Mindful Parenting. Jon and Myla Kabat-Zinn (2012) developed a three-exercise program that focuses on mindful breathing, reacting versus responding, and creating a haven in the home. In their work, they describe how mindful parenting is an opportunity of bringing the quality of mindfulness to relationships with children at all ages, and across the lifespan of being a parent. They remind people that parents are not expected to be perfect or mindful all of the time, but if they could be even the slightest bit more present, that this would be revolutionary, profoundly healing, and that capturing even a few moments in the present with discernment, but without judgment can be extraordinarily life affirming and nourishing for children, as it is growth enhancing, and in some way, deepening of our own being (Kabat-Zinn, 2012). Here are the exercises:

- *Mindful Breathing (Being in Touch with the Present Moment)*- This involves reaching a level of stillness and silence. Once this can be attained, a person brings awareness to the feeling of their breath. Closing their eyes, they feel the breath moving in and out of the body, maintaining a level of awareness on the breath the best that they can. Expanding their awareness towards the body, feelings, and thoughts and when distracted, nonjudgmentally returning towards the point of awareness. This helps a parent to bring awareness towards their children, and learning to accept them even when they are having

difficult feelings. Parents can have a natural tendency to stop a child when they are in a difficult situation, but if the parent can stay present with situation, this opens up the door for a learning experience. Children can be tremendous teachers if parents are more present and aware of the fact that they can learn from them (Kabat-Zinn, 2012).

- *Reacting Versus Responding-* Here, they pose the challenge to parents as to whether or not they can stop in moments where negativity would typically exist. Is it possible to pick up on early cues to stop, and navigate in a different way? By allowing themselves to experiment with situations where they can creatively change the outcome into something more positive, parents are essentially altering the future, and can choose to be mindful in these moments. There are 12 steps from Kabat-Zinn (2012) that describe this exercise which include:
 - Stop. Be aware of the impulse to react automatically through fear or anger.
 - Bring attention to this moment via the breath.
 - Bring awareness to the whole body, feelings and thoughts.
 - Bring awareness to the child and how he or she is in this moment.
 - Try to see this moment or situation from the child's point of view.
 - Ask, "What does this child and this situation need in this moment?"
 - See the possibility of new and imaginative openings and choices.
 - Respond mindfully rather than react on the basis of what is being seen and understood, staying in touch with the breath and the present moment.
 - If confused, consider not doing anything for the moment and just being present without a resolution.

- *Creating a Haven in the Home.* Kabat Zinn (2012) discuss how western society has become dictated by mass media and new technologies that continue to create distracting environments for families. This step is about parents cultivating an environment for their children that take time away from these distractions, and which help to build the family culture, which includes values and the quality of relationships. There are three steps to this exercise:
 - Come to your senses. As a family, get in touch with what is being seen and heard. Create a home that is nurturing does not always mean that it will be peaceful and quiet.
 - Ask what changes can be made to make the home a healthier place. Examine the interruptions, and be aware of when to create opportunities for children to relax after school instead of placing many demands. Focus on family rituals such as bath time, going to bed, or talking while driving in the car. See these ordinary moments and find ways to make connections with the children together.
 - Create a technology free zone. Take time to find moments of uninterrupted engagement. This could be singing in the morning, breathing with a child to bed, family meetings with a talking stick. Sometimes this even means that a person takes time to look deeply within themselves to see what might be limiting this from occurring.

Kabat Zinn (2012) remind parents that this is something that takes courage, and remembering what is important during the moments that count. When parents can be aware of the seductions of the addictive dimensions of their lives such as recognition, money, status, and others, they can choose to be somewhere else; with their children.

Conscious Parenting. Jack Kornfield (2012) lays out his idea of what he calls “Conscious Parenting.” With this model, he suggests four principles including: attentive listening, respect, integrity, and loving-kindness.

- *Attentive Listening.* This principle refers to listening what children are really telling their parents. Kornfield (2012) says that “we have to listen and pay attention to the rhythms of life. Just as we learn to be aware of breathing in and out, we can learn to sense how deeply children want to grow. Just as we learn in meditation to let go and trust, we can learn to develop a trust in our children so that they can trust themselves” (pg. 47). If parents can relearn how to value dependence and interdependence, this is essentially both fulfilling their personal and parenting mindfulness practice. By modeling to children that they can trust their bodies, instincts and feelings, the children intuitively pick up on this, and grow to value their place in the world.
- *Respect.* The respect that that parents learn for themselves is the respect that they teach their children. It is important to teach respect for one another. People should value their bodies, feelings, lives, and imagination. If respect is something that a parent did not get when they were children, this hole in the spirit may need therapy and spiritual practice (Kornfield, 2012). By relearning self-respect, parents can really begin to teach their children what this is. Children are most certainly aware of how parents treat them, but much more interested in seeing how parents value themselves. One aspect of respect that Kornfield (2012) states is that respect comes in the form of boundary and limit settings that are appropriate for the child. This can be done in a respectful way by compassionately using the word no and explaining what the problem is.

- *Integrity.* Children learn by who their parents are, what they do, and not by what they say (Kornfield, 2012). By watching and learning from their parents as they grow, parents become their direct conduit to the world. Kornfield (2012) gives a quote from the Tibetan master Kalu Rinpoche where students asked about which age they should teach their children a meditation and spiritual practice. He stated:

How do you know that you should teach it to them at all? Don't bother doing that. What your children need to learn is what you communicate from how you are. What matters is not that you give them any spiritual practice, but that you do your own. (p. 50)

- *Loving-Kindness.* This is the last principle. Kornfield (2012) suggests that parents should cultivate loving-kindness for themselves, children, and all beings in the world. Instead of controlling children with discipline, shaming, hitting or blaming, turn towards meditation to see that much of this is pain that is held is from blaming oneself. This is sadly something that occurs often in society, and many parents and teachers have placed an unintended shame upon the child. Something that a person is told in Elementary school might limit them from their full potential into adulthood. Instead of finding the next book, or best daycare center, a parent can choose to become engaged with their children, and to value the fundamentals of parenting. If a love for parenting is regained, it allows people to find the child in themselves again. To see the unconditioned love has the potential to bring peace to not only children, but the world.

Mindful Parenting. Kristen Race (2013) has developed a program for mindful parenting that focuses on these five core lessons:

- *Creating space.* This lesson focuses on learning to use the breath as an anchor, and becoming more resilient to stress. Acting reflectively instead of impulsively is taught to avoid acting upon emotions. Because stress can have such a crippling effect on the prefrontal cortex and the nervous system, it is important to maintain a basic sitting meditation practice to avoid further problems. The breath can slow the heart rate, decrease blood pressure, and can offset the amygdala's response to stress. Race (2013) says "When we focus on our breathing through a daily practice, it strengthens the neural pathways in the prefrontal cortex and teaches our brain to focus on the breath in response to stress, allowing us to react mindfully and reflectively, instead of impulsively or with anger or panic" (p. 173). Parents can learn to do this themselves, and then practice with their children in fun and creative ways.
- *Increasing awareness.* Race (2013) teaches the reader how to use mindfulness in everyday activities. Whether washing the dishes or listening to someone in conversation, this core lesson teaches different ways of avoiding multitasking and living in the moment. Race (2013) suggests that a person's brain must be in a calm and receptive state in order to truly experience engagement, competency and achievement. Activities such as mindful listening and other ways of paying attention, strengthen the reticular activating system (RAS), which is the part of the brain that helps people to be less distracted and focus attention (Race, 2013).
- *Growing seeds of peace and happiness.* This stage helps to increase an awareness of interconnectedness, especially within the family. Different activities are taught to express appreciation. Humans are typically more attentive to threats and other forms of negative stimuli than they are of the beauty in life or positive stimuli (Race, 2013). With an

intentional practice of paying attention to the positive things in life, neural pathways associated with those memories strengthen. A gratitude practice can be a very effective way of building these connections, and when children are taught this, it has been shown to increase their grades and self-reported quality of life (Race, 2013).

- *Cultivating empathy and compassion.* When parents are engaged with their children using face to face contact, this helps to build empathy. In a society where so many children would prefer to be in front of a screen, eye contact is scarce. When repeated eye contact with peers occurs, this increases a child's ability to see them as other people with feelings (Race, 2013). A practice of mindful seeing, allows the children to strengthen their neural pathways in the prefrontal cortex and become stronger in their ability to observe details, slow down, and focus their attention (Race, 2013). This is also the same for compassion. When kindness can be taught to children, neural pathways related to compassion strengthens. "Practicing compassion builds the social and emotional competence that children need to become confident and resilient" (Race, 2013, p. 197).
- *Developing patience and persistence in the face of adversity.* This introduces the concept of mindful praise, which considers effort that a child has made by acknowledging the process of a situation rather than the outcome. This can lead to stronger resiliency to adversity and challenge, as well as less judgment of themselves and others (Race, 2013).

While these are only a few selections of many programs available in mindful parenting, there are limited options for programs directly targeting fatherhood. A mindfulness curriculum that aims at fathers hoping to develop mindfulness skills that helps support them with active engagement in their families might just be the spark needed for the cultural evolution that brings

equality in the roles of both parents. As described, fathers need support in helping to reflect upon their own childhood and how it affects their parenting today.

Mindfulness for New Fathers Curriculum Rationale

The literature offered suggests that fathers are not as engaged as mothers in the early stages of child development. There are multiple factors in place that can hinder a father's ability to maintain active engagement with their children (Doherty et. al., 1998). As the mindful parenting movement has demonstrated, mindfulness offers a way for parents to gain an understanding of themselves, and therefore their children by engaging with the present moment nonjudgmentally moment by moment. A curriculum that helps fathers to understand the basic teachings of mindfulness and mindful parenting, could help them to be more engaged with their inner life experience, and how it relates to the outer relationship to the world, most importantly, their children.

This curriculum is based on experiential learning, as well as inquiry and practice into the field of mindful parenting. It can be used as a framework for the development of programs for fathers within different contexts such as social services agencies, parent education classes, and workshops designed to promote fatherhood. Ideally, this curriculum will be used for newer fathers to promote engagement with their children during the infant months, but the practices do leave it open for fathers of children of all ages. It addresses the basic Buddhist teachings outlined in the literature review, such as the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and the Five Hindrances.

It is intended that this program meet the needs of all new fathers, but it is understood that many people often enroll in programs like this to address various stressors in life. It will require support from the other parent as this program requires a significant dedication for five weeks. It

promotes fatherly active engagement, and like many mindfulness programs, the creation of a “sangha” or community of people is quite typical. The hope would be that out of the teaching of this curriculum that multiple sanghas are formed which support the progression of fatherly engagement within modern society.

The main teachings of this curriculum will include:

1. What it means for a father to be engaged with their children.
2. Child attachment theory and development.
3. The effects of stress on parents and children.
4. Mindfulness history, teachings and practice
5. Mindful Parenting

Why a Curriculum?

Mindfulness for New Fathers will encourage fathers to build upon their parenting skills to connect with their children more often in a deeper way that allows them to present in the moments that count, worry less about outcomes and more about experience, feel comfortable with vulnerability, teach by example, and learn how to meditate. By learning how to incorporate mindfulness into their lives, they can learn how to slow down, observe what is happening, and eliminate the distractions. While there are many other mindful parenting programs out there, the research above suggests that support is needed for men to be more engaged in their families. What better support then to have men come together in a program where they can support one another? Based on this author’s research, there exists no programs specifically for men to address this gap.

MBSR as a Template. The template of the 8-week, nine-session MBSR program provides a methodological example of how to conduct a mindfulness based course. Over the

past 35 years, it has shown a consistent and reliable demonstration of reductions in medical and psychological symptoms amongst a diverse range of diagnoses which include chronic pain, psoriasis, and anxiety (University of Massachusetts Memorial Hospital Center for Mindfulness, 2016) Within the MBSR course, participants attend a 2.5-hour session, once a week for eight weeks with a full-day (7-hours) class between the sixth and seventh sessions. The class each week is divided among formal meditation practices, presentations by the teacher of instructive material, small and large group discussions, and inquiry during the group time that allows individuals to share their experiences regarding the present moment. The formal practices of MBSR include a body scan, sitting meditation with concentration on the breath and other focuses of attention, and Hatha yoga. Additional meditations such as metta, walking meditation and mountain meditation are taught at the full-day session (McCown, Reibel & Micozzi, 2011).

By using MBSR as a foundational model, the *Mindfulness for New Fathers* curriculum will draw upon its teaching to help design a shorter 5-week program that takes into account the busy life of parents. Within mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs), many of the answers for what, when, and how are included in the template curriculum of the MBSR program. Programs like mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, mindfulness-based art therapy, and others all take on the original MBSR curriculum of formal practices. This ability to customize the original program allows the teaching of mindfulness to unfold consistently from one intervention to the next (McCown et. al., 2011).

Modeling a curriculum on MBSR provides an opportunity to rely on methods that have demonstrated measurable success throughout different variations. A curriculum that is based on credibility will more than likely attract a larger audience and help to continue the success of these MBIs. The template program for MBSR allows for customization based on local

populations, settings, and teacher factors, allowing for frequency and duration of classes to be altered (McCown et. al., 2011).

Empty Curriculum. The idea of creating teacher intentions instead of learning objectives allows the teacher and participants opportunities to openly reflect on the themes, learning objectives and practices instead of the teacher telling the participants what, when, and how to conduct themselves (McCown et. al., 2011). Experiences in practicing and learning mindfulness are most of the time beyond the limits of language. Events and insights come and go, creating unique and individualized experiences that can really only be discovered through teacher and group discussion. The theme of parenting for fathers, this will allow for fathers' subjective experiences to be listened to and taken into consideration.

Conclusion

This literature review has been written with the intent of highlighting the importance of the biological father's role of engagement with their children. Something important to consider is that fact that this review does not capture information about families with single parents, two fathers or mothers, or any other family structure. What is apparent is that stress affects all parents, and while many resources are available for mothers such as maternal groups and classes around being a mother, there are limited options for fathers who wish to break the cycle of the father being in the shadows, and be more involved with their children. For a child to have a secure attachment, both parents need to understand their own attachment first. When caught in the cycle of stress without the skill of observing themselves, both parent and child become at risk. It is important that the caretakers in a child's life are modeling behavior that promotes safety and comfort. Through educational programs for fathers that promote healthy engagement with their children, this can hopefully be achieved.

Fathering programs and policies that focus only on fathers will benefit mainly fathers who already have a supportive social and economic environment. Fathers whose context is less supportive—for example, fathers who do not live with their children, who have strained relationships with the mother, or who are experiencing economic stress—will need more extensive and multilateral efforts to support (Doherty et. al, 1998). With the proper resources, and teachers, mindfulness can be taught within these programs.

The use of mindfulness interventions for new fathers provides the possibility to change emotions and behaviors that unchallenged, might end up manifesting as stress, anger, and/or violence. An improved ability to deal with these manifestations cannot only improve their wellbeing, but help to decrease the chance that any of this stress or anger would increase. A mindfulness program designed for new fathers that embodies elements from both MBSR and other pioneering mindful parenting programs will help prepare them to take on the challenges of becoming a new parent. This will enable them to learn how to respond, instead of reacting to discomforting situations. It can be a program where they can build a community of other fathers interested in being parental leaders, up for challenging social norms and providing nourishing, thriving environments for their children. If all fathers could be empowered to practice patience and persistence, the world could be a better place for us all.

Mindfulness for New Fathers Curriculum

This curriculum is designed to be used by the teacher of the course. It provides the basic outline and suggested materials to facilitate this online Mindfulness for New Fathers Curriculum. As with many mindfulness based courses, materials and suggestions should be tailored to meet the individual needs of the participants of the course.

Course Description

The course will be a teacher facilitated 5-week online experience aimed at promoting engagement through mindfulness for new fathers. An online program allows for flexibility in time for new fathers who are often very busy. It is an introductory course adapted from the traditional 8-week Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Program (MBSR) by Jon Kabat Zinn and the Mindful Parenting Program developed by Susan Bögels and Kathleen Restifo. The program will retain the basic structure of MBSR in the sense that the same meditation and yoga practices will be taught and facilitated, but will be different because the core components throughout the weeks will have a focus on fatherly engagement. It will also take place over fewer weeks, due to the fact that parenthood already requires a tremendous amount of time and energy.

Mindfulness training can help fathers learn to slow down and attend to their children and themselves with greater awareness and compassion, so that they can better manage their responses and fully appreciate all of the precious moments that come along with raising children. Mindfulness practice can also support fathers in working with difficult parenting experiences. Fathers can learn to share mindfulness with their children by exemplifying within the relationships with them. This modeling will help children to develop stronger socioemotional skills, an overall higher well-being, and will be an activity that fathers and children do together.

The participants will engage in several forms of mindfulness practice, including body scans, sitting meditation, and hatha yoga. Various readings in the field of mindfulness and mindful parenting will be assigned as supplementary material to engage participants in the origins and practical application of mindfulness. There will also be an opportunity to engage in a weekly video chat, which will involve group exercises and discussion, as well as an optional full day self-guided retreat which can be done between the fourth and fifth week.

This program was designed for men who have recently become fathers, but the program is appropriate to fathers of children under 18 as well. The participants must read and speak English, as well as be willing to participate in the 5-week online mindfulness program. This program requires immense dedication from the participants, and fathers must be aware that they will need some level of support from their partners or others involved in their children's lives.

The purpose of this course is to deliver an online mindfulness program designed to teach mindfulness techniques that reduce stress and improve emotional wellbeing as part of the transition to parenthood. This online mindfulness intervention for men who are new fathers provides the possibility to change emotions and behaviors that unchallenged might otherwise manifest as stress, anger and violence. Online mindfulness interventions afford the opportunity for men to identify a beneficial and potentially effective approach in helping those who may have an increase in emotional challenges during this difficult transition time in life.

Format

Prior to the course beginning, the facilitator will email each student with a packet of all handouts and weekly practice instructions. Each week will have a different theme, and begin on Monday. A 90-minute synchronous online video conference via Zoom Video Conferencing will be held at 8PM every Monday night by the facilitator. This block of time will include weekly

lessons, guided meditations, and dialogue, as well as instructions for weekly practice.

Participants will be given the opportunity to enroll in a Private Facebook Group dedicated to building social connection and various asynchronous discussion prompts will be made by the facilitator. Supplemental texts will be made available, but will not be required for this course.

The course is not graded, but participation and dedication to the program is highly encouraged.

Required Materials

- A device (PC, laptop, tablet smartphone) capable of streaming live video data with an internet connection.
- A meditation cushion, stool, or chair (whichever feels most comfortable)
- Yoga mats
- A box of raisins
- A journal or notebook

Supplemental Texts

While not required for the course, the literature below can serve as helpful guides during this five week program:

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2005). *Coming to our senses*. London: Piatkus.

Kabat-Zinn, M., & Kabat-Zinn, J. (2013). *Everyday blessings: The inner work of mindful parenting*. New York: Hachette Books.

Siegel, D. J., & Hartzell, M. (2003). *Parenting from the inside out: How a deeper self-understanding can help you raise children who thrive*. Brunswick, Vic.: Scribe Publications.

Suzuki, S., & Dixon, T. (1970). *Zen mind: Beginners mind*. New York: Walker/Weatherhi

Course Outline

	Weekly Theme	Lesson	Mindfulness Training Exercises	Mindful Fathering Exercises
Week One	Fatherly Presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Mindfulness • Mindful Fathering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body Scan • Standing Yoga 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindful observation of child.
Week Two	Beginning Again	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginner's Mind Fathering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sitting Meditation (Awareness of Breath) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindful presence during child routines.
Week Three	Self-Compassion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of Pleasant Occurrences in Parenting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking Meditation • Sitting Yoga 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindful play
Week Four	Managing Fatherly Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of Stressful Occurrences in Parenting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sitting Meditation (Awareness of Sounds and Thoughts) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindful breaths during stress
Week Five	Mindful Communication as a Father	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rupture and Repair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sitting Meditation (Choiceless Awareness) • Lovingkindness Meditation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindful Communication with the other parent

Curriculum

Week One- Fatherly Presence

Overview	<p>This week includes an introduction to mindfulness and mindful parenting as it relates to being a father. Mindful eating and the body scan meditation will all be practiced experientially and modeled via YouTube, or another video service. A home practice is assigned that includes the body scan meditation which helps the participants become familiar with mindful awareness of the body.</p>
Theme	<p>Using the breath, we find an anchor into the present moment. As a new father with all of the different challenges, it can become easy to retreat into automatic pilot mode, but when life can be perceived from the view of the present moment, this brings about an opportunity to pause and reflect, allowing for a thoughtful response to these challenges, instead of reacting to ourselves and others. This mindful awareness helps to work through difficult moments, and become a more engaged father.</p> <p>By simply remembering to be aware in moments with our children, we can shift the need to be getting something done, to being present and ready for the challenges that are presented. When we are preoccupied with what's going to happen next, or what already happened, this limits our ability to truly see our children. When intentions of mindfulness are set to observing ourselves in stressful parenting situations, we can be aware of this automated mode, and choose to be engaged in the moment with our children.</p>

	<p>This week will also be about building trust within the group of new fathers. Having a shared sense of community and experience through the practice of mindfulness can be helpful. It is about beginning to explore the different perspectives, and seeing the possibility of looking at the world through new lenses.</p>
Video Chat Session	<p>Video chat session on Monday evening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Introductions- The teacher states that this is a time to listen, and cross-talking is discouraged. It is ok for the teacher to make remarks in response to the individuals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Everyone is encouraged to at least state their name, but students can bring up what came up for them during the intention meditation. • Class Rules- Talk about the importance of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Confidentiality, and the concept of a safe space. ○ Self-care ○ Instructor availability ○ Limiting advice giving • Guided Intention Meditation (Box 1.1) • Eating Meditation- The teacher leads the chat session with a raisin eating exercise. Participants are encouraged to have a raisin or other small food item prior to beginning the chat session.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Mindfulness and Mindful Parenting (Box 1.2)- The teacher leads a presentation on the history and trends of mindfulness, as well as mindful parenting as a father. • Body Scan (See Resources)- The teacher leads the class with a guided body scan meditation. After it is completed, the teacher opens up for discussion about participants' experiences. • Home Practice Discussion- The teacher states the readings and practices to be done during the week and then answers any questions that the participants may have. • Closing Meditation (Box 1.3)- The class finishes with a brief awareness of breath exercise.
Practice for the Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optional Readings: <i>Everyday Blessings</i>, Part One-The Danger and the Promise p. 12-38 • Formal Practice: Do the body scan once a day throughout the week. • Mindful Fathering: Observe your child, similar to the raisin eating process where you are attending to all of your senses, as if this was your first time seeing them. Attempt this several times during the week. • Informal Practice: Set the intention to mindfully eat the first bite of your food during meals. What do the senses experience? Cultivate moments of awareness throughout the day in regular activities, tuning into the senses.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journal your practices as much as you can, using the provided template. (Box 1.4)
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guided Raisin Eating Video- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PXiRvdDDCQ Guided Body Scan Meditation- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4gZgnCy5ew Jon Kabat Zinn- “The Joy and Miracle of Parenthood”- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FC_X7tgy_M

1.1 Guided Intention Meditation (Suggested for Facilitator to lead)

Here, the teacher explains to the students that they will begin a short meditation, and begins with a meditation bell.

1. Find a comfortable, upright position with your feet on the floor or folded on a meditation cushion.
2. Allow yourself to rest into your sitting bones, releasing obvious areas of tension in the body.
3. Connect with the present moment, nonjudgmentally and ask yourself: what brings you here? Why did you decide to take this course? What are your expectations?
4. Sit with these reflections, and when you hear the bell, you can open your eyes.

1.2 Handout- Introduction to Mindfulness and Mindful Parenting

Self-care through mindfulness practice can provide a way for parents to prepare for the new and upcoming challenges that are ahead of them. Defined by Bögels and Restifo (2013):

Mindful parenting is an ongoing creative process, not an end point. It involves intentionally bringing non-judgmental awareness, as best we can, to each moment. This includes being aware of the inner landscape of our own thoughts, emotions and body sensations, and the outer landscape of our children, our family, our home, and the broader culture we inhabit. It is an on-going practice that can grow to include (1) greater awareness of a child's unique nature, feelings and needs; (2) a greater ability to be present and listen with full attention; (3) recognizing and accepting things as they are in each moment, whether pleasant or unpleasant; (4) recognizing one's own reactive impulses and learning to respond more appropriately and imaginatively, with greater clarity and kindness. (p. 306)

Parenting is challenging and stressful, but entirely important, as how it is approached ultimately influences the entire next generation of people. Many of us parents, and ours before us received no training or preparation, without much guidance in a world that places value on what our children are going to do, and not how they are loved and nurtured (Kabat Zinn, 2013). “Mindful parenting calls us to wake up to the possibilities, the benefits, and the challenges of parenting with a new awareness and intentionality, not only as if what we did mattered, but also as if our conscious engagement in parenting were virtually the most important thing we could be doing, both for our children and for ourselves” (Kabat Zinn, 2013, p. 22).

1.3 Handout- Mindful Parenting as a Father

The father-child relationship is a precious one, and one that is filled with challenges and opportunities. As a new father, you must learn to adapt to this new role, and through this

adjustment period, it includes bolstering relationships, and overcoming guilt at home and at work to ensure proper balance of time spent in both. As a mindful father, you will learn to cultivate gratitude and gain perspective through meditative practices that will help with coping through these overwhelming times filled with stress and anxiety. A disciplined mindfulness practice will help you to build good relationships with your child, learn to be flexible with your time, and handle the unexpected. These next 8 weeks provide an opportunity to become a leader within your family and community, all while learning new skills that can be practiced throughout your life.

Similar to mindful eating, take several moments throughout your week to do the same practice with your child. Put the phone down and limit as many distractions as possible. Go outside or play in their room with them while openly observing with all of your senses what is going on internally as well as the interactions you are having. Record your experiences in the handout.

1.4 Closing Meditation (Suggested for Facilitator to lead)

1. Find a comfortable, upright position with your feet on the floor or folded on a meditation cushion.
2. Allow yourself to rest into your sitting bones, releasing obvious areas of tension in the body.
3. Find the natural rhythm of the breath and follow it with awareness.
4. It is completely natural for our minds to wander, but this practice is about remembering. Each time you find that the mind has wandered, gently, without judgment, return to the focus on the breath.

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Week Two- Beginning Again

Overview	<p>This week will include extensive experiential mindfulness training and skill development where the teacher will help practice sitting meditation and talk about how perceptions affect how we react or respond to situations. When we can be with our children with full awareness, without having to change things, and letting go of judgment, this opens up the possibility of creatively responding to the many difficult moments that occur within parenting.</p>
Theme	<p>When we can be with our children with full awareness, without having to change things, and letting go of judgment, this opens up the possibility of creatively responding to the many difficult moments that occur within parenting. So often we instinctually react, without observing our bodies and mind first.</p> <p>Through mindfulness practice, we begin to see that these perceptions of different life experiences, as well as our children are not completely accurate (Bögels and Restifo, 2013). In moments of stress, we typically experience thoughts, feelings, and body sensations together as one, but when awareness is drawn to each separately, we begin to reach insights that see certain expectations or interpretations can influence impulsive actions, which may or may not always be the best way to deal with certain situations, especially under stress. Through examples like the monkey business video (listed under resources), we can see that when we are told to watch a basketball game, and something as random as a gorilla walks through, our brains typically will not register this because the</p>

	<p>expectation for such a silly thing is simply not there. This video is shown so that parents can see how much our expectations can shape what we perceive, or better yet, what we don't perceive (Bögels and Restifo, 2013).</p> <p>Fathers are taught the concept of beginner's mind, which begins to move us away from dualistic thinking. By experiencing moments with clarity, without expectations, or automatic interpretations, we can look at each moment as a new experience unfolding before us. Just as the breath, each changing moment is different from the last. This allows us to expand our views of our children because we are not striving for the next experience. If we are focusing too much on one thing like a negative behavior, this may limit our attention, filling our entire perceptual and emotional awareness (Bögels and Restifo, 2013).</p> <p>Sitting meditation with an awareness of breath helps to expand our ability to direct our attention. By focusing on a single object, and arriving back to it when our attention shifts, we become more aware, allowing for more spaciousness of mind.</p>
Video Chat Session	<p>Video chat session on Monday evening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided Body Scan (See Resources) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The teacher inquires how the body scan exercise went last week at home. ○ Discussion amongst the class about what worked, and what did not. ○ The teacher reassures the fathers that resistance during the first few weeks of intensive practice is completely normal, and that an

	<p>openness, curiosity and kindness to their practice will help to bring insights. Although they have dedicated themselves to this, it is natural for them to start questioning their motives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Bringing Kindness into Your Lives<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The teacher explains how kindness and self-compassion is necessary in a mindfulness practice, as it is a basic stance in traditional Buddhist teachings. Kindness to ourselves is very important, and that this basic attitude will help fathers to make the connection between kindness for others and kindness for themselves (Bögels and Restifo, 2013).● Observing Your Child<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The teacher discusses the previous week's practice of observing your child similar to how you would experience the raisin.○ Through discussion, the fathers are invited to share their experiences with the group.<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Listening and responding with curiosity, teachers must realize that this can be a difficult experience for fathers to engage in beginner's mind with their children.▪ Teachers can ask the group who had difficulty, and elaborate on how it can be difficult to move away from savoring moments with their children, and that the reality is that not all moments will bring pleasure, and that when
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	<p>you can accept this, it creates less resistance and stress, and more openness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The teacher discusses the difference between reacting and responding (see box 2.1). <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Group Presentation and Discussion<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The Monkey Business Illusion (See Resources)<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The teacher will have the participants mute their microphones and watch this video (in resources).▪ They will then ask if them if they noticed anything unusual, and if not, they will explain to them that there was a gorilla that had walked by. Teachers will have them watch it again, and see how surprising and obvious it is after they were told what to expect.▪ The students will be taught how this lesson is a demonstration on how our vision and other senses are not always keen to everything that occurs within our environments, and how if they don't meet our expectations.▪ Teachers ask how might this affect what we don't see with our children or other aspects of life? If our expectations blind us, we can be missing the moments that are here. Using a beginner's mind can help create more space to see our children (Bögels and Restifo, 2013).
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginner's Mind (See Box 2.2)- The teacher introduces the concept of beginner's mind. • Sitting Meditation (Awareness of Breath) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The teacher introduces sitting meditation with an awareness of the breath as the primary object of attention ○ The teacher first begins by exploring different options for posture. ○ A guided meditation is conducted (See resources) • Home practice discussion- The teacher states the readings and practices to be done during the week and then answers any questions that the participants may have. • Brief Closing Meditation- Continue with the same as the first week.
Practice for the Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optional Readings: <i>Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind</i>, Part One- Right Practice p.6-34 • Formal Practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Practice the body scan at least 6 times during the week. ○ Practice awareness of breath for 10-15 minutes a day without a recording. ○ Continue to journal your process in the Practice Log • Mindful Fathering Practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Find an everyday routine activity such as bedtime each day during the week to practice present moment awareness. Just like when you are meditating with the breath, each time you drift away from

	<p>awareness, bring yourself back, without judgment, and continue to stay engaged with your child.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal Practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pleasant Occurrences Calendar (Box 2.3): This should be filled out every day for the week.
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Guided Sitting Meditation (Awareness of Breath)- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UOuce4vXnZo ○ Guided Body Scan Meditation- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4gZgnCy5ew ○ The Monkey Business Illusion- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGQmdoK_ZfY

2.1 Handout- Reacting vs Responding

1. Stop. Bring awareness towards the impulse to react automatically through anger or fear.

- This requires some level of awareness.
- When speaking of anger, could this refer to somebody not doing something you wanted them to do? Look inwardly and observe the impulse nonjudgmentally in the present moment and choose to respond.

- When speaking of fear, could this refer to an uneasiness about what's going to happen, or what might happen again? Look inwardly and observe the impulse nonjudgmentally in the present moment and choose to respond.
2. Bring attention to the present moment using the breath.
 - The breath can serve as an anchor that is dependable, and when awareness is focused here, it provides a natural calming effect.
 3. Bring awareness to the whole body, feelings, and thoughts.
 - When recognizing different sensations in the body, find connections to feelings and/or thoughts that arise simultaneously.
 - Identify the triggers that create the fear or anger and learn to recognize them.
 4. Bring awareness to the child and how he or she is in this moment.
 - Limit judgment, and learn to observe their natural movements.
 5. Try to see this moment or situation from the child's point of view.
 - When a parent walks through the door, the child knows that they are there, even if it seems like the opposite. These normal moments are important opportunities for engagement.
 6. Observe any needs that the child may have in this moment.
 - This could be anything, or nothing.
 - Even if there is no observable need, be in the present moment rather than pouring out negativity.
 7. See the possibility of new and imaginative openings and choices.
 - By observing inwardly, and limiting impulses, find creative ways to respond to a child.

8. Respond mindfully, rather than react on the basis of what you are seeing and understanding, staying in touch with your breath and the present moment.
 - This is the focus of any mindfulness practice.
9. If confused, consider not doing anything for the moment—and just being present without a resolution.
 - In certain moments, it is completely normal to not know what to do next.
 - Understand that an immediate resolution to a difficult struggle with a child is not always going to make things better.

2.2 Handout- Beginner's Mind

“Our original mind” includes everything within itself. It is always rich and sufficient within itself. You should not lose your self-sufficient state of mind. This does not mean a closed mind, but actually an empty mind and a ready mind. If your mind is empty, it is always ready for anything; it is open to everything. In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities; in the expert's mind there are few” (Suzuki, 1970).

2.3 Pleasant Occurrences Calendar

Name the pleasant experience	Did awareness of the experience happen during, or after it had occurred?	What was going on in the body in this experience?	What emotions, and/or thoughts were part of this experience?

2.4 Practice Log

[illegible]

Week Three- Self-Compassion

Overview	<p>During this week, fathers will be introduced to mindful lying down yoga (ending in a body scan) and continue practicing sitting meditation, but this time with an awareness of breathing and physical sensations. The topic of self-compassion is introduced as a way of understanding that becoming an engaged father requires one to be nurturing compassion, first for themselves, and then for others.</p>
Theme	<p>It is quite often within family life to be multitasking. We can be feeding our children breakfast, getting them dressed, trying to communicate with other family members, all while trying to get out the door for work, and easily forget about our own needs. This doing mode becomes so habitual, and it becomes very simple to lose track of our bodies. Our bodies send us signals that can indicate whether or not we are healthy, and too often individuals wait until it is too late to give themselves the help they need.</p> <p>But our bodies provide us an amazing opportunity to overcome this habitual pattern and check in with the present moment, whether it be through the breath, or other body sensation. A simple check-in every now and then can immediately reduce tension in the muscles, stomach, shoulders, or neck, and slow down the breath. As we begin to do this more often, we become familiar with certain sensations and the signals that they are sending.</p> <p>Eventually, with practice, we find ourselves less often in doing mode, but in being mode, where we are able to better assess specific situations in the</p>

moment to respond in the best way possible, not only for ourselves, but also for our children. For example, we may see that rushing through time may only make things worse, and that if we take our time with things, the outcome will be better.

When we practice mindful yoga, we become more familiar with the body: what it feels like when we make specific movements, what it feels like when analyze our limits, and what it feels like when we exceed a limit. Practicing mindful yoga is also an answer to struggling. It's not about doing the movements perfectly or increasing flexibility and strength. It is about experiencing the physical sensations arising from the body; appreciating what the bodies can actually do, and learning to listen to and respect the bodies' limits. When we can pay attention to the bodily limits, we become better able to pay attention to the emotional or psychological limits as well, which is important for taking care of ourselves and for setting limits on children (Bögels, Restifo, 2013).

While a child and their mother are part of the same body to begin with, connection with the father's body is also a very normal experience, such as holding our children close to our bodies. For babies, there is so much contact with the parent's, whether they are climbing up our bodies, being held, or resting on our stomach. When we are able to be in touch more often with our bodies, this allows us to tune in to our child's physical and emotional state much easier and at more of a depth (Siegel and Hartzell 2003).

Video Chat Session	<p>Video chat session on Monday evening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sitting Meditation (Awareness of Breathing and Physical Sensations) ○ Group Discussion (Prior Week's Home Practice and Pleasant Occurrences Calendar) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mindful Fathering Exercise- The teacher asks which routine activities were chosen to do with their child mindfully. What was it like to use beginner's mind attention? ○ Pleasant Occurrences Calendar- The teacher inquires to students about what pleasant moments they had experienced, and whether or not their awareness was focused on bodily sensations and the connection between joy, pleasure and other bodily experiences (Bögels, Restifo, 2013). ○ Lying down yoga and inquiry (Resources and Box 3.1, 3.2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The teacher leads a talk on the importance of mindful yoga and how it plays a vital role in helping to unify the body and mind. ○ The teacher models and guides a lying down yoga for the class. ○ Self-Compassion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The teacher reviews the three components of self-compassion (Neff, 2003) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-Kindness- Taking care of self.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Common humanity- Seeing that we are part of a larger experience, and not alone. ▪ Mindfulness- Naming the painful emotions and sensations as they are without running away. ○ The teacher explains the Pathways to Self-Compassion (Germer and Neff, 2016) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Physical- Caring for the body without harm ▪ Mental- Allowing thoughts to occur ▪ Emotional- Accepting feelings ▪ Relational- Connecting authentically with others ▪ Spiritual- Nurturing your values ○ Review “Self-Compassion Break” ○ Home practice review ○ Closing brief guided meditation
Practice for the Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Optional Readings: <i>Coming to Our Senses</i>, Yoga p. 273-277 ○ Formal Practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An alternation of the body scan recording with lying down yoga recording every other day. ○ Practice Walking Meditation (See Resources) several times throughout the week. ○ Mindful Fathering Practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Practice 15 minutes of mindful activities with children each day.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can be anything such as playing with toys, sports, puzzles, etc. ▪ Be aware of self, child, and interaction. ○ Fill out the fathering stress calendar this week. ○ Informal Practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Take a self-compassion break at least once this week
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Guided Mindful Sitting Yoga- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Teo0f1ab1PY&index=3&list=P_LbiVpU59JkVaFMGi0A8Im_hfSh-SWsFwg ○ Mindful Yoga Worksheet by Jon Kabat Zinn- https://palousemindfulness.com/docs/yoga.pdf ○ Guided Walking Meditation- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NfPBIRE4RIc ○ Walking Meditation Demonstration- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFvablc6EI

3.1 Handout- Mindful Lying Down Yoga

“In mindful yoga, exquisite attention is paid to the body and body sensations, which are so rich because of the various configurations the body assumes and rests in during posture practice. But our field of awareness also includes the full spectrum of thoughts, moods, and emotions, obvious and subtle that are part of the interior landscape in any given moment. Allowing the field of awareness to be inclusive enough to contain our feeling states (however neutral, joyful, or painful they may be) expands our ability to become intimate with our own

heart as well as our body. It allows us to experience the connection between emotions, thoughts, and sensations in the body, often in specific and meaningful locations. It invites us over and over again to observe the arising and passing away of sensations and thoughts and emotions like clouds or full-blown weather patterns within the all-embracing sky-like spaciousness of awareness, and to observe our reactions to them. And in making a gesture of this magnitude, moment by moment, as we practice in any posture, for any length of time, we may actually experience ourselves as being larger than we think we are, larger than our feeling states and our thinking mind. We may experience our essential self as being more akin to awareness itself, and we can listen to our thoughts and feelings and come to know them as events in the field of this awareness.” Jon Kabat Zinn

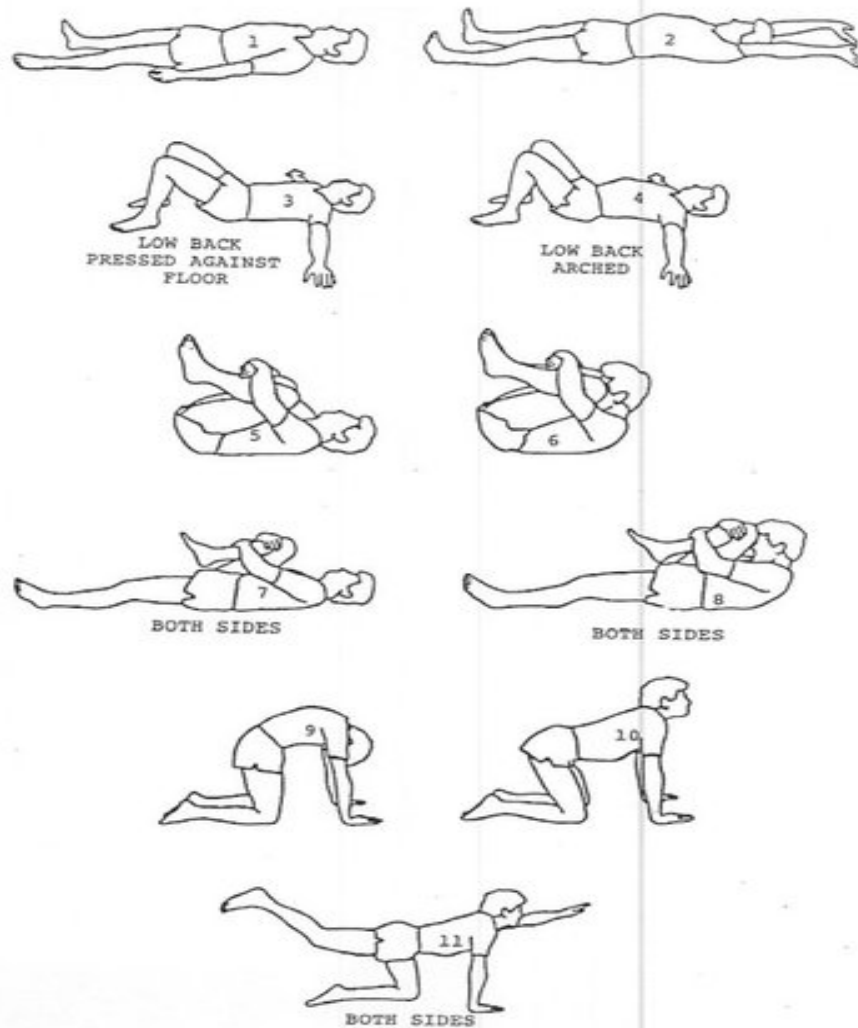
(<https://palousemindfulness.com/docs/yoga.pdf>)

3.2 Handout- Lying Down Yoga

Retrieved from

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/547568a2e4b07ece73a72acf/58791189ff7c50655da83825/587911a1b3db2b93e9e2ec91/1484329416635/Yoga.3-page-001.jpg?format=500w>

SEQUENCE OF YOGA POSTURES LYING DOWN



3.3 Fathering Stress Calendar

Name the stressful experience	Did awareness of the stress happen during or after it had occurred?	What was going on in the body in this experience?	What emotions, and/or thoughts were part of this experience?

3.4 Handout- Self-Compassion Break (Germer and Neff, 2016)

When in a moment of stress, or difficult emotion, try to find the discomfort in your body.

Where is felt strongest? Make an effort to draw awareness towards these sensations as they arise in the body.

Say to yourself:

1. “This is a moment of suffering”
 - a. This is mindfulness. Other options:
 - i. *That hurts, this is stressful, ow!*
2. “Suffering is just another part of life”
 - a. This is common humanity. Other options:
 - i. *I’m not the only one. There are others out there.*
 - ii. *Everyone struggles*
3. “May I find kindness in myself” or “May I give myself what I need”

There are other options for word usage, based on your needs in the moment. These could be:

- May I accept myself
- My I learn to forgive myself.
- May I be strong
- May I live with love and compassion.

See if you can do this for your child who might be having a similar problem. What would you say to them? What message would you like to send them during moments of suffering?

3.4 Practice Log

[illegible]

Week Four- Managing Fatherly Stress

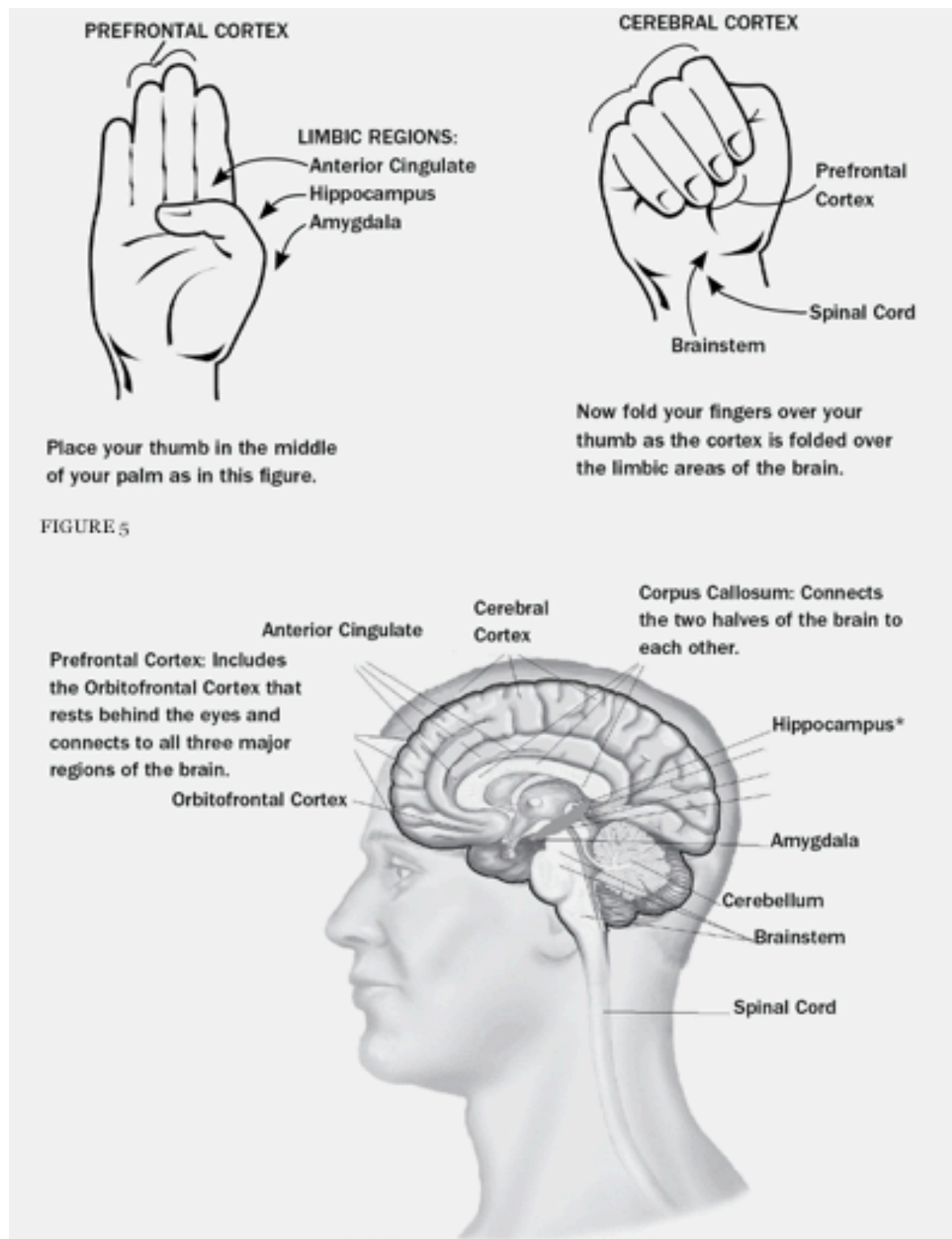
Overview	<p>This week, fathers will explore stress, and how it relates to parenting. They will work on being aware of stress reactions and behaviors during the week without trying to change them, and notice the moments where they might be feeling stuck, blocking, numbing, or shutting of the moments when they happen. The Hand Model of the brain provides an easy way of describing moments when we are retreating to fight or flight, and not using our thinking brains to respond to difficult moments.</p>
Theme	<p>Parenting stress brings out the worst in many of us. As our children get older, and are less out of our control, this can make it harder to not react out of fear. Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn (2014) call parenting the full catastrophe. They go on to say:</p> <p>Being a parent compounds stress by orders of magnitude. It makes us vulnerable in ways we weren't before. It calls us to be responsible in ways we weren't before. It challenges us as never before and takes our time and attention away from other things, including ourselves, as never before. It creates chaos and disorder, feelings of inadequacy, occasions for arguments, struggles, irritation, noise, seemingly never-ending obligations and errands, and plenty of opportunities for getting stuck, angry, resentful, hurt and for feeling overwhelmed, old and unimportant. And this can go on not only</p>

	<p>when the children are little, but also even when they are full grown and on their own. Having children is asking for trouble. (p.91)</p> <p>One of the main themes of this week is bringing awareness of what happens as a parent when we are under emotional stress, and how to shift the reaction to a wise response. By examining the automatic responses that we have recorded last week, we will see that they may stem from “(1) evolutionary survival mechanisms, (2) our tendency to grasp at what we like and reject what we dislike, (3) how we experienced our relationship with our own parents, and (4) our lack of self-compassion, as well as lack of felt partner support (Bögels, Restifo, 2013, location 4482). With the introduction of a sitting meditation with a focus on sounds and thoughts, this helps to build awareness of automatic responses. Automatic responses to sounds could be labeling, or becoming startled. Thoughts are usually added to stress that create extra discomfort, potentially making the suffering worse.</p> <p>We discover skillful ways of coping with our stress. Instead of struggling or avoiding the problems, we use mindfulness to help create spaciousness that sees the difficulties from a fresh perspective. By finding a way to pause in the moments before the reactions, a simple mindful breath creates the first step of interrupting the habitual patterns of reaction ((Bögels, Restifo, 2013). These mindful breaths can become a useful tool not just in fathering, but in all arenas of life.</p>
Video Chat Session	<p>Video chat session on Monday evening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sitting meditation (Awareness of Sounds and Thoughts)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ See Resources ○ Group discussion regarding new sitting meditation practice. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The teacher asks if any fathers would like to share their experiences. ○ The teacher makes sure to ask about typical tendencies to label sounds (judge) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evolutionary connection (seeing a bear, and instinct to run). ▪ Shutting off background sounds that are irrelevant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Necessity for sleeping, focusing, or listening. ○ The teacher talks about how in meditation, we can become aware of all of the sounds, fully experiencing the present moment. ○ Teacher also probes for comments about the concentration of thoughts, and how seductive they can truly be. Thoughts have a strong influence over emotions and can increase our stress, especially within parenting. When we can recognize them, we can observe the effect that they have on us, allowing our thoughts to be less influential in how we parent our children. ○ Group discussion regarding stressful occurrences calendar. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The teacher focuses on how fathers naturally want to push away the unpleasant and strive for only pleasant experiences.
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	<p>By looking at and discussing the calendars, the fathers can draw commonality and see that with both pleasant and unpleasant experiences, it is better to stay present in the body, find space, and choose to respond with wisdom.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stress in parenting presentation and discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Biological Demonstration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Watch Dan Siegel’s Hand Model of the Brain video ▪ See Box 4.1 ○ Experiential Exercise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ See Box 4.2 ○ Home practice review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teachers discuss upcoming optional at-home retreat for those fathers interested. ○ Brief sitting meditation on sound and thoughts.
Practice for the Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optional Readings: Parenting from the Inside Out- How We Keep It Together and How We Fall Apart p. 173-212 • Formal Practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An alternation between the body scan and lying-down yoga every other day. ○ Sitting meditation as often as possible. ○ Mindful Fathering Practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Breathing through stressful parenting moments. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Record experience in Parenting Stress Calendar

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Reflect upon your own childhood and relationship with your parents, and then compare it to your own child.○ Informal Practice:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Awareness of automated stressful reactions and behaviors through the week, setting an intention to not try to change them.○ Practice “Inside out Exercise” throughout the week during difficult moments.○ Review hand model of the brain video and example.
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Dr. Dan Siegel’s Hand Model of the Brain Video- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm9CIJ74Oxw○ Sitting Meditation (Awareness of Sound and Thoughts)- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M6gWHAGZdTY

Handout- Dan Siegel's Hand Model of the Brain (Siegel & Hartzell, 2003)


4.2 Handout- Reflective “Inside-Out Exercise” (Siegel & Hartzell, 2003)

1. Reflect on specific times when you have been emotionally reactive with your children. How did you act? How did your children respond? Can you recognize when you are starting to react? When you can understand your triggers, and are able to recognize when you are starting to feel stressed, these are the first steps towards changing the way these triggers may be influencing your life and your ways of relating to your children.
2. What are the typical interactions that cause you to go into a high stress mode with your children? There might be recurring themes that you can pick up on which may help you understand these experiences more. Which interactions with your children fill you with overbearing emotions like fear, anger, sadness, or shame? Feeling abandoned or invisible for some people are often triggers. Others might consider incompetence to be theirs. Try to deepen your understanding of these themes in your life. What makes it harder to bring yourself back out of the stress?
3. While you are within the confines of your stress, self-reflection can become very difficult. It might be best to remove yourself from your children so that you can do things like a short breathing exercise, or stretching and walking. When calmness begins to set in, observe your internal sensations and interpersonal interactions. Self-compassion exercises might be very helpful in these moments. Even if nothing ends up working to calm down, taking a pause reduces the possibility of some of the destructive impacts that that a strong reaction might have on your child. Repeating

these strategies over and over again can gradually decrease the occurrences of these episodes, and help to build wiser responses.

4. Consider changing patterns that come from long ago. Know that alternative pathways are possible, and when a trigger begins to create stress, take a breath, stop and get a glass of water. Take a quick emotional break to reflect on what was happening. Look at the roots of it all, and see that these paths are worn out, and no longer needed. Ask yourself how you might respond differently next time.

4.3 Practice Log

[illegible]

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All Day (Optional)- Self at Home Retreat

Overview	This week will be an optional self-guided day retreat with specific instructions for those fathers who have enough support to spend an entire day engaged in mindfulness.
Theme	<p>Bogels, Restifo (2013) say:</p> <p>Being mindful for a full day, as best as you can, in the midst of your family, is a practice that helps you to generalize the learned mindfulness practices and skills to daily life. It is also a nurturing practice that may have surprising effect on you and your family. Choose a day in which you are around your family, but can be without obligations or appointments, for example, a Saturday or a Sunday. Explain your partner that you are going to have a mindfulness day, and describe briefly how you are planning this day and what you need from your partner and the family. On your mindfulness day, detach yourself from external input such as television, music from recorded sources (playing music yourself or listening to music of family members is okay), newspaper, e-mail, Internet, phone, and mail. Make sure that there is no computer, TV or music on, or phones. Avoid also reading and the work that you usually do in your office. Do whatever you are doing mindfully. When you are doing housework, or other chores, do it like a monk,</p>

	<p>fully dedicated to the chores (washing dishes, peeling potatoes) without rushing to reach a goal, to have it finished. The work you have decided to do on your mindfulness day, you fully commit yourself to, without asking yourself why some other family member is not doing it. Make a program for the day, that consists of periods of meditation and yoga, mindful eating and drinking, work meditation (non-stressful, repetitive work such as cleaning, gardening, ironing), and doing mindful activities with the kids or being mindfully with the kids and with the partner. (p. 102)</p> <p>Although the day is spent with the family, this can possibly present a discomforting situation in a family that is not acquainted to this type of practice yet, or lack a strong family support network. Each family is different, and this is why this day is made optional.</p>
Typical Day Sequence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sitting meditation (Preferably before the children wake up). 2. Mindful breakfast preparation. 3. Tea drinking 4. Waking up with family members mindfully. 5. Mindful breakfast (Eating, speaking and listening) 6. Outdoor activity with or without the family. 7. Mindful engagement with children. 8. Mindful yard work. 9. Tea drinking. 10. Mindful lunch preparation

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">11. Mindful lunch12. Resting13. Mindful engagement with children.14. Mindful physical activity15. Mindful reading or art.16. Mindful dinner preparation17. Mindful dinner18. Mindful engagement with children19. Mindful bed preparation.20. Final sitting meditation21. Sleep (maintaining continuity until you drift off into sleep).
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4.4 Practice Log

[illegible]

Week Five- Mindful Communication as a Father (Final Class)

Overview	<p>This is the last week, and fathers will engage in all prior meditative practices that have been introduced within the past weeks. The concept of mindful communication will be discussed, and teachers will provide ways in which these practices can be continued outside of this context going forward.</p>
Theme	<p>Parenting will most likely involve stressful communications, not only with your children, but with everyone involved in the child's life. When we can build awareness of our feelings, and find patterns of communication within interpersonal relationships, this can help fathers to find ways to creatively respond to others with openness and compassion.</p> <p>While there will be moments of extreme emotional reactivity within family life at one point or another, it is important to remember that this is normal, and how we choose to repair these moments will have an immense effect on our children. Conflict comes out of people who love one another, and they can be resolved. This “rupture and repair” process when modeled to children, help to calm their distress, and contribute towards their</p>

	cognitive, social, and interpersonal skills. Mindfulness can serve as a tool for creating the necessary space to work on repairing these ruptures.
Video Chat Session	<p>Video chat session on Monday evening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sitting Meditation (Choiceless Awareness) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ See Resources ○ Discussion ○ Rupture and Repair <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ See box 5.1 and present to the class. ○ Mindful Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ See box 5.2 to present to the class about Insight Dialogue ○ Suggest that this practice be experimented with at home, and if others are interested. ○ Continuing Your Practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ See box 5.3 and 5.4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teachers open this for discussion and promote the idea of fathers reaching out to one another to stay connected outside of the course through social media or other another platform. It can be very valuable to have connections to others who are experiencing similar changes in their lives. ○ Read Poem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ See box 5.5

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teachers, read this poem and go right into the Lovingkindness Meditation ○ Lovingkindness Meditation ○ See Resources
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Choiceless Awareness Meditation_ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RTBbKJXKbhs ○ Loving-Kindness Meditation_ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YeeDo-c3lDI

5.1 Handout- Rupture and Repair (An excerpt from Bogels & Restifo (2013))

Conflict is a part of all close relationships and will invariably occur at times in our interactions with our children (and partners), especially when there is stress. These conflicts can sometimes feel like small “ruptures” in the relationship. However, it is useful to remember that conflicts are important opportunities for learning and growth in the relationship between parent and child. When you feel a conflict with your child arising, the first step is always: breathe. Take a breathing space, however small. Notice what happens in your body, and say to yourself, “it’s okay, let me feel it.” Even if the conflict has already escalated, you can stay in the moment and slow down your further reactions by simply staying with your breathing. It is important to remember that after a rupture occurs, we can always repair it. You may need to take time to prepare yourself, by taking a breathing space or a sitting meditation. Take the time to feel the conflict situation again. See if you can go back to what happened between you and your child. Can you see what your role was in it? What patterns do you recognize from your own relationship with your parents or from the history you and your child have built up

together? We tend to fall into conditioned reaction patterns with the people whom we are closest to – children and partners. Can you understand what made your child so angry? Can you let go of your pride? Can you go back to your child with an open and compassionate heart? It's important to wait to come back to your child until you are emotionally ready for it, when your anger has subsided, and you are able to look at your own role in the conflict. If taking a breathing space is not enough, you can try doing a walking meditation or a longer sitting meditation. When you're ready, come back to the rupture with a "repair conversation." See if you can create a feeling of spaciousness large enough to hold your own and your child's experiences and an attitude of compassion and forgiveness for yourself and your child. See if you can find the space in your heart to accept what you may have done in this conflict, to forgive yourself for it, and to acknowledge it to your child. This is a wonderful way to model for your children how to take responsibility for their own role in a conflict. On an emotional level, you are teaching your child that conflicts are solvable and can even lead to feeling closer to each other once they are resolved. (section 5721)

5.2 Handout- Insight Dialogue

Gregory Kramer developed a practice called Insight Dialogue, which he says is "an interpersonal meditation practice that encompasses verbal communication. Like many other practices, it helps people realize greater happiness by providing an effective means with which they can free themselves from grasping, aversion, and confusion. To do this, we pay attention to what is going on inside and outside ourselves. We remain present to pleasant and unpleasant experiences alike. We let go of reactive habits, usually a little bit at a time. Unlike

most meditation practices, Insight Dialogue is practiced with two or more people and, rather than being practiced in silence, we listen, pause, and speak” (Kramer. 1999, p. 25).

There are six guidelines that Kramer developed for practicing Insight Dialogue. These guidelines are:

1. Pause- this is essentially stepping into mindfulness. Kramer says, “Interrupting automatic habit is the first step on any path. For anything new to happen, conditioned patterns of thought and emotion must be interrupted” (Kramer, p.109, 2007).
2. Relax- if we are able to catch our habit thoughts before they begin to cause discomfort, hopefully we can begin to relax. “We bring mindfulness to those parts of the body where we tend to accumulate tension and allow the tension to relax” (Kramer, p. 119, 2007).
3. Open- once we have been able to step out of our habit mind and become relaxed, we step into a place where we can become mindful not just internally, but externally as well. “The extension to the world outside ourselves opens the door to mutuality: it is the basis for interpersonal meditation” (Kramer, p. 129, 2007).
4. Trust Emergence- This is to have comfort in the impermanence that exists in the world. “Trust emergence is rooted in the wisdom aspect of Insight Dialogue. That is, it supports our seeing things, as they are- unstable and far more complex and fluid than the mundane glance can know. The dynamic quality of experience demands robust practice and provides the object of that practice: change itself” (Kramer, p. 139, 2007).

5. Listen Deeply- Listen deeply is comprised of two components. The first being serenity, which is the ability to rest with mindfulness and steadiness. The next is stability. Stability is receiving language, and continuing to be present. “Listen Deeply opens the sense, heart, and mind to receive this moment fully. To listen deeply is to listen with mindfulness, surrendering fully to the unfolding words and presence of our co-meditators and others in our lives” (Kramer, p. 150, 2007).
6. Speak the Truth- To speak the truth; we must understand what the truth is. The only way to know what the truth is through mindfulness. “At a very basic level, Speak the Truth is Right Speech that will do no harm” (Kramer, p. 164, 2007).

The Insight Dialogue meditation guidelines are a tool for people to use when beginning to practice Insight Dialogue, but can be used outside of practice as well. We all find ourselves in difficult interpersonal situations, and sometimes cannot help but become emotionally reactive to things we may agree or disagree with. “When emotional attachments arise—anger, desire, fear, and the like—we may benefit from the specific suggestion to calm the body and to meet pain and grasping, our own and other’s with acceptance and love. This is Relax” (Kramer p. 182-183, 2007). If we feel that we are not able to attend to a situation, we might be able to pause to slow things down, and allow our mind to catch up to our body. While a dialogue is the ultimate goal to using these guidelines, they are all tools to bringing us to that goal. “Mutuality impermanence, and the freedom to speak, or not speak are recognized as natural. Guidelines are there if we need them, but there is no attachment to form” (Kramer, p. 185, 2007).

5.3 Handout- Tips for Maintaining and Cultivating Your Mindfulness Practice

It is important to give yourself the support that you need to continue this important investment of time, attention and care that you have made. Even in a busy home environment, it is possible to create a space that is yours, even if it is in a closet, and taken out early in the morning or at nap time when the kids are sleeping. Here are some ordinary essentials that support an ongoing mindfulness practice:

- Space- As stated above, this can be anywhere, whether it be in a closet, corner of the room, outside in the yard, or your car.
- Props- It is important to have the necessary equipment such as a chair, bench, cushion, recordings, and/or apps on your phone.
- Prompts- Reminders and cues that support ongoing intentions for your practice such as reminders on your phone, post it notes, or your calendar.
- Time- Understand that time within family is precious. There will be inevitable changes and surprises that make an ordinary practice time not possible. Remember that even five minutes is better than none at all.
- People- Having a friend or partner that supports your ongoing practice can help you feel connected and give you a chance to share experiences. Even better would be to organize and find other fathers who want to or already have a mindfulness practice.
- Other- Practice with your family. Find moments throughout the day where you can be still with your children. Go for a walk, a hike, or go camping. Practicing with your family will model and give your children an opportunity to see you engaged in the moment.

5.4 Handout- Everyday Mindful Parenting (Inspired by Bogels & Restifo, 2013)

1. Think of a flight attendant telling you to always put the oxygen mask on first. If you can't breathe, how can you take care of others? Take care of yourself, if not for you, but for your child.
2. Find meditation bells throughout your life. Reminders are everywhere. These can be the phone ringing, fighting with your partner. Use these moments to pause, and find a creative response.
3. Take mindful breaths before getting out of bed.
4. Observe your child daily with "beginner's mind." Every moment counts!
5. Listen mindfully to your children and others.
6. Speak mindfully to your children and others.
7. When stress is overwhelming, don't avoid, go in, and feel. Doing this will bring you into the moment.
8. Pay attention to breathing whenever, wherever, however you can.
9. Practice mindfulness during routine daily chores, self-maintenance.
10. Read more books about mindfulness.
11. Dedicate a space in your house that is yours, and find time between naps, after work, after the children go to bed. There are always moments in between to sit in stillness.

5.5 Handout- Rumi-Guest House

Guest House

Translated by Coleman Barks

This being human is a guest house.

Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.

He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

Jalaluddin Rumi

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