



SOUTHWEST COUNSELING AND MINDFULNESS CENTER

Does Stress Rule Your World? Lucy K. Ziegler LPC, MBSR-QT, LLC

When I ask people how they define stress they typically describe physical sensations that are uncomfortable such as pain, muscle tension or tightness, headaches, teeth clenching, racing heart, lack of energy, jittery-ness and problems with sleep or appetite. They also describe issues related to mental and cognitive abilities such as difficulties with concentration, decision making, planning and the ability to focus. Definitions of stress also include emotional symptoms such as anxiety, depression, lack of patience, irritability, problems with emotional regulation and even loss of sense of humor.

Stress is accumulative. My clients frequently come to counseling seeking relief from the effects of what turns out to be chronic stress. Often what first appears to be the uncomfortable, unwanted feelings connected to a single significant loss or event is recognized as an interaction of numerous contributing factors. This awareness allows us to begin to develop adaptive coping techniques to help them deal with the stress of what has happened in their life in the past as well as with the stress resulting from what is going on in their life currently.

I decided to take my first Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction class, rather than one of the many other mindfulness classes being offered nationally, based on the amount of research that the originator, Jon Kabat-Zin, and his associates at the University of Massachusetts Medical School conducted that proved its effectiveness. Due to being a Masters Level counselor in private practice for over 20 years and working with clients dealing with Loss and Grief as well as specializing in Trauma, it appealed to the science-sided-ness of my reasoning. I was drawn to the well-constructed, valid, controlled experiments that produced reliable, replicable results. They have continued to do so with the advancement of imaging and other non-invasive medical technology. These efforts have repeatedly proven the effectiveness of MBSR in improving the ability to cope with aversive life events for persons with chronic pain, cancer, cardiac procedure recovery, PTSD, addictions and, of course, chronic stress. It was in the first class of the course that I recognized the need to learn how to teach Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction. I am ready. Are you?

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction enhances your awareness of your thoughts, physical sensations and surroundings so you can master the challenges of everyday life. It has been proven to decrease medical symptoms and perceived stress. It is also credited with increasing non-reactivity, observational skills and non-judgement, all of which contribute to better life satisfaction, improved physical and emotional well-being and the ability to choose responding over reacting.

There is a short YouTube video of Anderson Cooper's 60-minute Special Report on Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction that I highly recommend. In this report, he describes MBSR as a growing movement in America to train people to better manage the stresses of daily life that is filled with distractions, where you are constantly connected to technology and rarely alone with just your thoughts. It answers more questions about MBSR than we have space here to talk about.

I invite you to contact me to register for the next class or schedule an appointment to talk.