Mindfulness

In the recovery, health, and wellness fields we often hear people talk about being present and being mindful as they attempt to manage the stress and the challenges they experience in life. While it all sounds well and good to some, it gets interpreted by others as fluff and a little “out there”. This often times occurs because the person discussing it doesn’t bring the concept into daily life. We came across the following quote at a conference discussing it doesn’t bring the concept into daily life. “Out there”. This often times occurs because the person to some, it gets interpreted by others as fluffy and a little easy.

We invite the reader to explore the skill more thoroughly. Sometimes it is an idea that needs to be addressed on an ongoing basis. Maternal-child health provides the foundation for a healthy start in life and ensures that kids are ready to learn in school. Quality Counts (QC), a Qualidigm Company, has worked tirelessly during the past nine years to identify, analyze, and implement ways to positively impact the health of Maine’s youth. We are proud to report that our programs have already produced significant results; however, challenges remain, that require a response both at the practice and state level.

Maine Child Health Improvement Partnership (MECHIP)

QC has a long-standing commitment to improving child health through partnerships and collaboration with public and private sectors. QC worked with MaineCare in support of the “Improving Health Outcomes for Children” (IHOC) program to establish MECHIP which is part of the National Improvement Partnership Network (NIPN). MECHIP brings together partners to serve as an advisory group on QC child health initiatives, as well as developing strategic priorities for future child health work. QC has worked with partners to significantly improve the rates of childhood immunizations, developmental screening, autism screening, lead screening, and interventions on healthy weight and oral health.

Perinatal Quality Collaborative for Maine (PQ4CE)

QC is working to develop a Perinatal Quality Collaborative for Maine (PQ4CE) with statewide partners to improve maternal and newborn health in Maine. The intent of the PQ4CE is to strengthen existing health systems to improve maternal, fetal, and neonatal outcomes through interprofessional educational programs and quality improvement projects. Currently the PQ4CE has two initial priority areas: improving care for moms with perinatal substance use and substance exposed infants, and evaluating infant mortality rates in Maine.

• Snuggle ME: In response to the opioid crisis and the concern that more than 7% of infants are born exposed to substances in the state, QC collaborated with the Maine CDC and the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics to develop guidelines to standardize and coordinate care for women with substance use during pregnancy and their newborns. Currently QC is working to provide education on the “Snuggle ME Guidelines” for the care of moms and substance exposed newborns across the state. The PQ4CE is also teaming up with statewide partnership, Northern New England Perinatal Collaborative (NNEPQCN), to roll out Eat, Sleep, and Console (ESC), an initiative to improve hospital care of substance exposed infants by strengthening maternal/family involvement and the use of nurturing as a first line of treatment. The program has demonstrated a reduction in the number of hospital days for infants with neonatal abstinence syndrome through non-drug treatment while fostering optimal parental caregiving behaviors. Seventeen Maine hospitals were recently trained on the ESC approach and the PQ4CE is providing training, quarterly coaching calls, and technical assistance around quality improvement and data collection.

• Maine Infant Mortality Research Project: According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2016 Maine had a higher infant mortality rate than all other New England states. The PQ4CE recently started the Maine Infant Mortality Research Project, a one-year initiative designed to identify the drivers of infant mortality (IM) in Maine. The PQ4CE project is a fact-based assessment of the primary drivers of IM and will explore implementation strategies to reduce Maine’s infant mortality rate (IMR). QC is currently working to develop an Advisory Group to oversee the project, identify and review data, and explore successful strategies to lower the IMR.

If you are interested in participating in this work, or learning more about other strategies to help improve child health in Maine, please contact: Amy Beisile, MD, MBA at abeisile@mainecountycounts.org.

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So many people tell us that they can relate to this statement because their lives are so busy and hectic, juggling many different things in their lives (work, partner, kids/family, education, among other things). Many people speak to the fact that this is what life is about these days with different priorities. What if we told you the quote above was from Leonardo DiVinci, (1452-1519) and that this has been part of our ‘human condition’ longer than we realize (500+ years).

This whole idea of stress and burn-out are not new, it just looks a bit different throughout the years/decades/centuries.

The quote states clearly that we are not paying attention to the things that we are experiencing. Our minds and attention are elsewhere.

Mindfulness is the ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we’re doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what’s going on around us. It is an awareness that arises by intentionally paying attention to what is happening at the present moment. Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, author of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, adds a third component “without judgement”.

We have worked in a profession for many years that requires simultaneously juggling multiple priorities, high volume, at breakneck speed, while at the same time teaching wellness & mindfulness to others because “they need it”. It is an interesting paradox.

What do we need to shift in order to help us all be mindful? What would need to occur in the health & wellness fields for us all to learn how to pay attention fully and on purpose, in the present moment, without any judgements?

Developing mindfulness is a skill and we know and understand that skills need to be learned and practiced (it doesn’t happen through osmosis). William James (1842-1910) stated:

“The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgement, character, and will. An education to improve this faculty would be the education, par excellence. But it is easier to define this idea, than it is to teach it.”

Learning and developing mindfulness is simple, but not easy. Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn is an excellent resource you want to explore the skill more thoroughly. You can find more at https://www.mindfulnesscds.com/.