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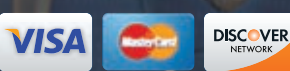
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MINDFUL LIVING

Psych professor and practitioner
research meditation BY CAROLINA REID

Meditation is not just some hippie trend or a simple means of relaxation. UO emeritus professor and researcher of psychology Michael Posner found that it can reduce smoking habits, and UO Substance Abuse Prevention Program teacher George Baskerville says it improves attention and helps practitioners better connect with others and the world around them.

Posner worked alongside Yi-Yuan Tang, a neuroscience and psychology professor with a lifetime of studies in mind-body methods and techniques, in their study "Brief Meditation Training Induces Smoking Reduction." The duo found that after two weeks of a short-term form of meditation that Tang called Integrative Body-Mind Training (IBMT), participants reduced their smoking habits by 60 percent in comparison to a less complex relaxation practice.

"Smoking is something you can study without having a lot of difficulty because it's legal," Posner says. The researchers did not advertise for subjects who were interested in quitting smoking but rather people who were seeking stress reduction. So although Posner is not a practitioner himself, he firmly believes in the long-term benefits of mindful practice.

Baskerville, on the other hand, has been practicing mindfulness since the 1970s. He defines it as the practice of "paying attention in a particular way with a nonjudgmental mind by focusing on the breath or some other anchor and, every time the brain wanders, bringing it back." After a quick transition away from drugs and the "hippie lifestyle," he started to integrate mindfulness into every aspect of his life. He has studied behavioral science and counseling and taught classes at the UO for almost five years.

"Mindfulness and awareness is the precursor for compassion," Baskerville says. He spent 20 years working for Benton County Mental Health and saw how many of his students were able to better connect with each other, themselves and nature through mindful meditation. He says it is one of the eight limbs of yoga, and practicing yoga helps to prepare and strengthen your body for still meditation.

Whether it is scientific research or personal practice that helps people to recognize the benefits of meditation, it is undeniable that this mindful way of living has paybacks for all. ■



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