

- First impressions count - the primacy effect
- Paying closer attention to what is
- Brain creates patterns
- Mindfulness
 - Quality of awareness (not thoughts)
 - Paying attention in a particular way, with curiosity
 - We retreat from reality because of strong emotions
 - Wish to avoid triggers
 - With openness
 - With flexibility
 - We have a choice to direct our attention in a different way
 - Awareness is like a flashlight
- We can be mindful in the way we live or with a formal practice - 2 ways of mindfulness
- We can change the structure of our brains - neuroplasticity
 - Jugglers, violin players, cab drivers have larger parts of their brains associated with their actions
 - The more we worry, the better our brains get at worrying
- Brain science:
 - Amygdala
 - Almond shaped, deep in the brain
 - Fight-flight
 - School avoidance, PTSD
 - Anxiety disorders
 - Expands with stress
 - Mindfulness reduces size of the amygdala - emotional regulation
 - Manage responses better
 - Hippocampus
 - Memory
 - Limbic system
 - Sleep, digestion
 - Learning
 - Grows by paying attention to present moment
 - Prefrontal cortex
 - Influenced by culture not genetics
 - Executive functioning
 - Grows with mindfulness
 - Begins to decline at age 25
 - Mindfulness preserves the brain over a lifetime
 - Telomeres grow back with mindfulness - cells rejuvenate
 - Mindfulness adds positive chemicals to the brain

Qualities of Mindfulness

- Intention, non-judgment, and acceptance
- Intention
 - 50% of the day lost in thought
 - Conserves energy
 - Real happiness happens in the present
 - Get more joy out of life
 - What kind of person do I want to be?
 - What are my core values?
 - There is a competition for attention in the world
 - High distractibility
 - Are we living the way we want to? How much time is spent on social media, distracted?
 - Worry is wired into us because it helps us survive
 - Change through gratitude practice
 - Gratitude journals - 3 good things a day - changes the brain
- Non-judgment
 - Don't assign a label to self or others, or to circumstances
 - We draw cognitive threads through negative experiences - confirmation bias
 - Learn to notice judgment
 - Thoughts happen to us, not something we do
 - People suffer from their thoughts
 - Seeing things how they are leads to grounding
 - 5-4-3-2-1 practice
 - Look - listen - feel - smell - taste
- Acceptance
 - Problems with blocking feelings - need to experience feelings
 - With emotions - compost instead of landfill
 - Problems with not letting go of feelings
 - We need to let feelings pass through us
 - Emotions should be allowed to arise and then leave when they fulfill their cycle
 - Let go to live fully in the present

Gratitude Practice

- End of day to replace end of day worry
- Write it down
- Be specific
- Sleep better and longer
- Rewires the brain - leads to more happiness long-term
- Pathways created

- Stimulates hypothalamus - helps digestion

Random Acts of Kindness

- 6 per week lessens social anxiety
- Releases oxytocin - positive chemical
- In stress:
 - Adrenal gland secretes cortisol and adrenaline
 - Cortisol suppresses systems, including immune system
- Acts of kindness counteract these chemicals