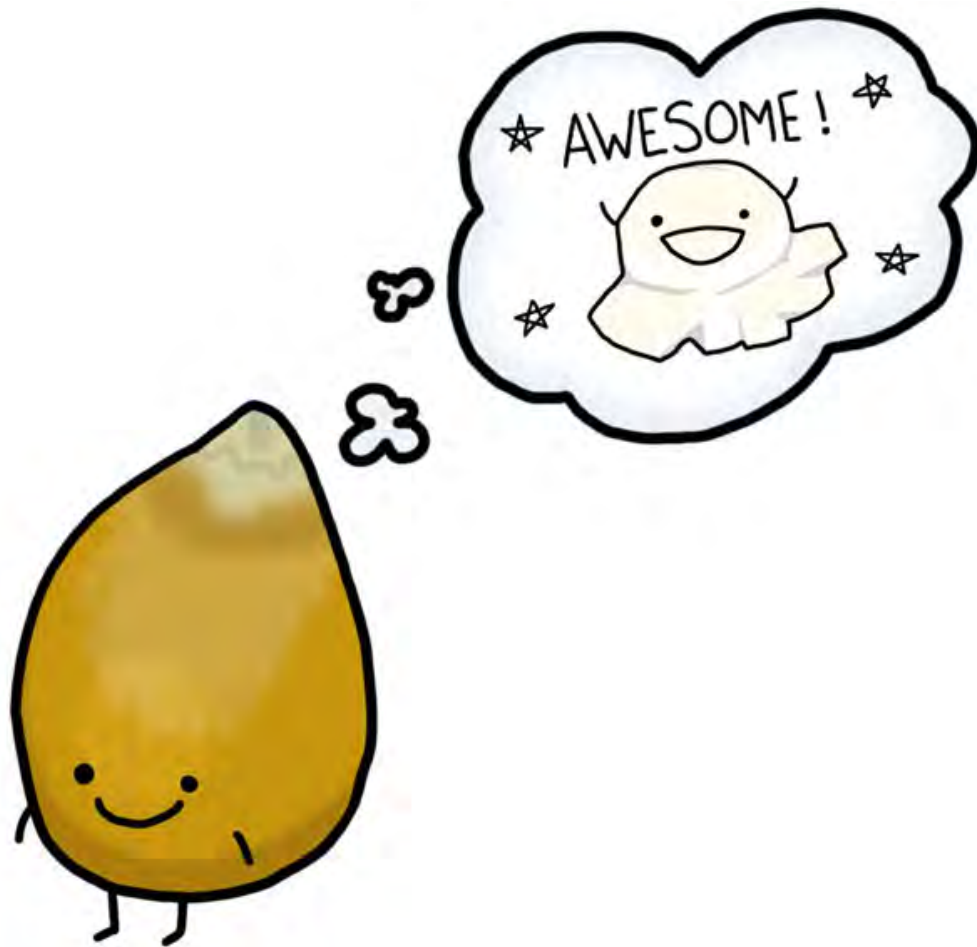


Pop into the Present!



Sustainable Happiness:

Uncovering Our Greatest Strengths in the Midst of Life's Challenges



AdvanceLA

May 2018

www.elishagoldstein.com

Overview

- Sustainable Happiness Made Simple
- What Gets in the Way
- The Science of Play for Learning and Integration
- Environment Matters
- The X Factor for Sustainable Change
- Ultimate, take what is useful and leave the rest 😊.



Positive Brain Change Made Simple

Mindful strengths are grown from experiences of them – activated states – that are integrated as traits.

**You become more compassionate
by integrating experiences of compassion.**

**You become more grateful
by integrating experiences of gratitude.**

**You become more mindful
by integrating experiences of mindfulness.**

**Without experience,
there is no learning,
no change in the brain.**

**We're good at activation
but bad at integration.**

**This is the fundamental weakness in
most patient, education, human
resources training, psychotherapy,
coaching, and mindfulness training.**



It's Not Easy:
What Gets in the Way?

Three Major Problems that influence our implicit decision making

Problem #1:

An Overly “Nervous System”





Research

Photo Credit: Jeff Miller / UW-Madison University Communications







Reactions

Thoughts?

Feelings?

Science of the Negativity Bias



- John Cacioppo - Brain More Sensitive to Negative Information (Brain lights up more with negative information than positive)
- Want a Good Relationship? John Gottman - 5 Positive Interactions to 1 Negative Interaction
- Want a Good Life? Barbara Frederickson – 3:1 to feel happy.

Ito, T. A., Larsen, J. T., Smith, N. K., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1998). Negative information weighs more heavily on the brain: The negativity bias in evaluative categorizations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75, 887-900

Problem #2

Continuous Fractured Attention



One of the Simplest Ways to Calm the Frenetic Mind and Regain Focus: The Mindful Check-In



Problem #3

Lack of Positive Social Cues, Connection and Support

ALONE,
TOGETHER



Reality of Interdependence with Environment

“A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feeling as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.”

- Albert Einstein, 1950

What do we need
to influence implicit decision
making toward mindful living?

Enriched Environments!

Brain Enriched Environments

The stimulation of the brain by its physical and social surroundings. Brains in richer, more stimulating environments have higher rates of neurogenesis and connections leading to increased brain activity.



The Science of Play for Learning and Integration

What is Play?

It's Natural







Defining Play

“Play: a flexible state of mind in which you are presently engaged in some freely chosen and potentially purposeless (or purposeful) activity that you find interesting, enjoyable, and satisfying.”

~ Uncovering Happiness

Play Enriches Environments, Learning & Memory (aka “Integration”)



Three Conditions

Playmates and Toys

Playmates, No Toys

No playmates, No Toys



Results

Group 1 had a significantly thicker cerebral cortex - Cognitive processing, attention and awareness. (Key determinant of change – novelty).

When thicker is sometimes better - They could also navigate a maze better (higher behavioral performance).

Group 3 showed decreased cortical thickness.

Mouse from Group 1



Play Helps Maintain Brain Cells BDNF “Brain Fertilizer”



Gordon NS, Burke S, Akil H, Watson SJ, and Panksepp J. 2003. Socially-induced brain ‘fertilization’: play promotes brain derived neurotrophic factor transcription in the amygdala and dorsolateral frontal cortex in juvenile rats. *Neuroscience Letters* 341(1): 17-20.

“The opposite of play is not work, it’s depression.”

~ Brian Sutton-Smith



How do we enrich our physical and virtual environments to naturally inspire us toward Sustainable Happiness?

3 Environments!

- Physical
- Virtual
- Social

Practical Exercise: Take Stock of Your Environment

- Look around where you spend most of your time (home, work, outside).
- Simple Question: Does the environment *inspire* mindful living? (Relaxed, awake, focused, aware, self-compassionate, joyful, grateful, compassionate, balanced)?

Next:
“Curate Your Environment”
(ala Marie Kondo)

Environment includes, but not limited to:

- Clothes
- Books
- Art, Pictures, posters of inspiration (i.e., promise cards)
- Physical items (Meditation Cushions, clothing, inspirational pictures, screensavers, coffee mugs (I'm keeping the economy going here)).

One simple question:

Does it Spark Inspiration for Mindful Living (Relaxed, awake, focused, aware, self-compassionate, joyful, grateful, compassionate, balanced)?

Next: Take Stock of Your Virtual Environment

Virtual environment includes, but not limited to:

- Home screen
- All applications
- Make space for functional apps (email, text, navigation, social)

One simple guiding question:

Does it Spark Inspiration for Mindful Living (Relaxed, awake, focused, aware, self-compassionate, joyful, grateful, compassionate, balanced)?

Practical Exercise: Curate Your Homescreen

Look at your home screen, ask yourself:

Does this inspire Mindful Living?

- Put apps on the home screen that only inspire Mindful Living and leave as few shortcuts as possible for functional apps (texting, email).
- Invest in apps that inspire you – change them around
 - Play apps, meditation apps, yoga apps, happiness apps.
 - Finally, put the phone down as much as possible 😊.

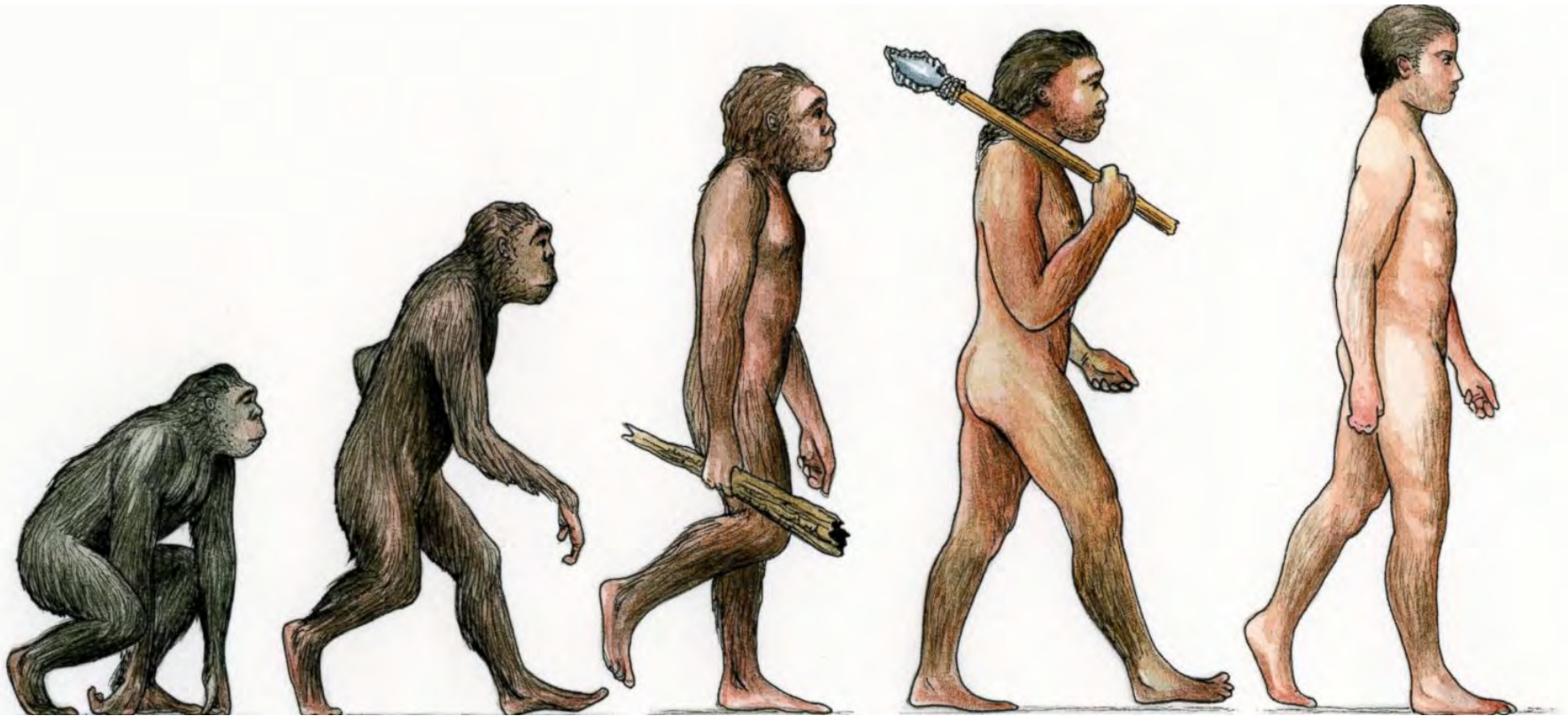


The X Factor for Enduring Change





It's about Survival



The Science of Connection

Low social connection is worse than smoking, obesity and high blood pressure (House et al, 1988)

High social connection is correlated with higher mental well-being and resiliency. (Frederickson/Cole, 2013)

Touch calms the hypothalamus (Coan, 2007)

Connection increases Vagal Tone and Positive Emotions (Frederickson/Kok, 2013)

When we share joy and it's supported, we get an extra well-being boost (Lambert et al, 2013)



Mindful Joy Practice



The Cost of Modernity Disconnected Environments (Impoverished)





How Do We Enrich Our Social
Environments to Make
this All Easier?

Practical Exercise: Take Stock of Social Environment

- Make a list of the people you spend most of your time with.
- Simple Question: Does this person *inspire* mindful living? (Relaxed, awake, focused, aware, self-compassionate, joyful, grateful, compassionate, balanced)?

Next: “Curate Your Social Environment”

- Make more connections with the people who inspire mindful living (aka happiness)
- Look for physical and/or virtual environments that have more of these inspiring people.
- Allow difficult people to be opportunities to strengthen mindfulness, self-compassion and assertiveness.

One simple question:

Does this person Spark Inspiration for Mindful Living (Relaxed, awake, focused, aware, self-compassionate, joyful, grateful, compassionate, balanced)?

A Course in Mindful Living: A 6-Month Study in Mindful and Happy Contagion

Community-Focused Enriched Environment

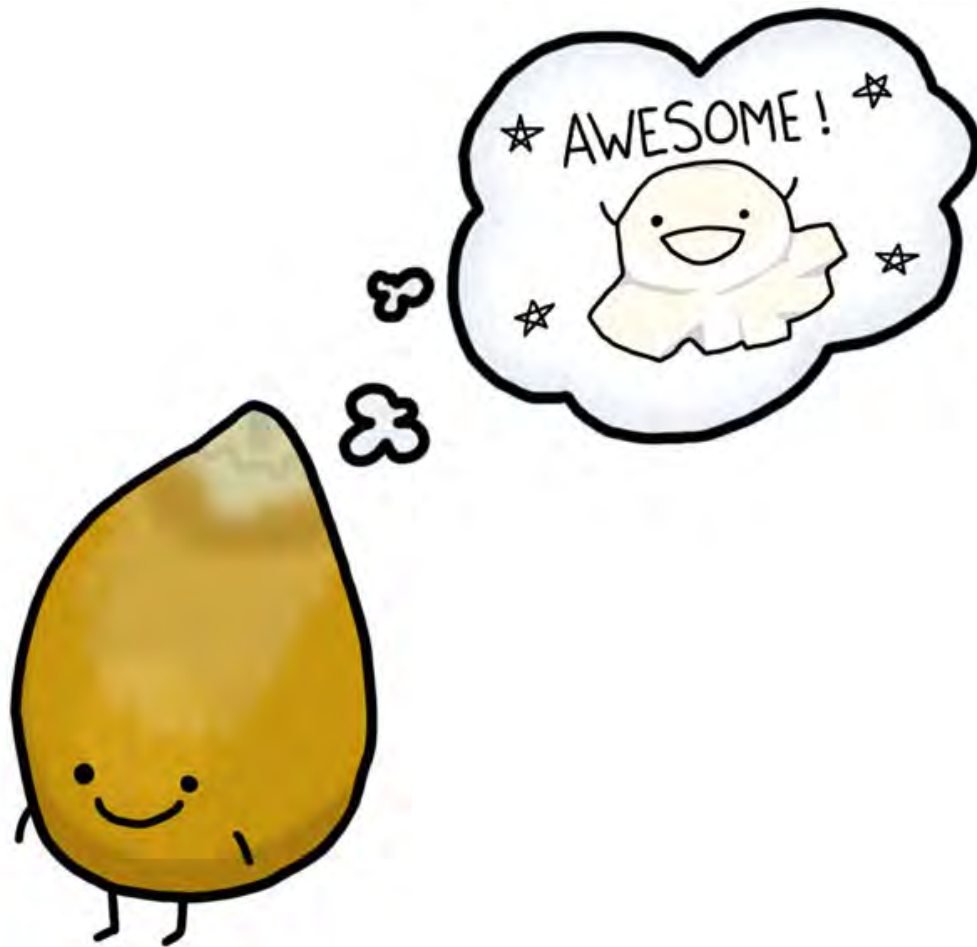
- Large Online Engaged Community
- Small Mentorship Groups with Trained Teachers
- 1 to 1 Online Mentorship & Peer-Based Sponsors
- Regionally-based Peer Run Encouragement Pods
- Live Drop-in meditations throughout the day
- Global Offline Retreats

A 6-month curriculum that builds positive social cues and the strengths of relaxation, stability, mindfulness, self-compassion, positive emotion, compassion and balance – all within relationship and community.

5 Steps to Create Sustainable Happiness

- **Relax the nervous system** – Take time outs to do mindful check-ins to soften the body and regularly relax the nervous system.
- **Build Positive Social Cues** – regular engagement with people who are engaging or wanting to engage mindfulness in their lives – take a relationship inventory, seek out online and/or offline community, go on retreat. Engage!
- **Find Mindful Mentorship** – Regular interaction with an instructor or sponsor to refine or help overcome obstacles online or offline.
- **Change Your Physical Environment** – Putting physical objects in the environment that cue you toward mindful living (quotes, objects, cushions, books, music, etc...).
- **Forgive and Invite** – Every time you fall off the path, forgive yourself for the time gone by, and invite yourself to begin again. Repeat this step indefinitely.

Pop into the Present!



Imagine the Ripple Effects



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Waitlist for October, 2018 open now!

Suggested Resources

See www.acourseinmindfulliving.com/, www.MindfulLivingla.org and www.elishagoldstein.com for other books.

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