



MINDFULNESS FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES

OFFERING MINDFULNESS WITH HEARR,
IN SCOTTSVILLE, VA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

It is an ongoing battle for communities, states, and countries to meet the health-related needs of their residents. Access and wealth are just two of the factors that go into determining health outcomes [1]. In many states, including Virginia, the trend shows that rural communities are seeing worse health outcomes than their urban neighbor. Alongside government initiatives, local groups and nonprofits are having to step up to address issues of community health. One of those groups is a small organization called Health Equity and Access in Rural Regions, HEARR, that works out of Scottsville, VA into the surrounding area, about 10 miles in each direction. Since Scottsville lies at the bottom of Albemarle County, HEARR works in the counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Nelson, and Buckingham.

HEARR works to address gaps in health access and equity through education and advocacy. Among the many health issues that are present in the region, there are gaps in mental health resources and access.

Mindfulness could be one tool for the region to combat the mental health issues. The benefits of mindfulness can be substantial, especially when done habitually. Some of the benefits include stress reduction, community connection, and overall wellbeing.

Mindfulness is a practice of being present. Presence allows people to be in tune with their thought patterns, feelings, and needs. Those introspective skills can have positive effects, not only for mental health, but for prosocial behaviors. Encouraging and offering mindfulness in public spaces compounds the mental health benefits by adding the benefits of nature and benefits of being exposed to the community at large.

PROJECT GOALS

The goal of this project is to offer recommendations for pathways to offer free mindfulness meditations for the community to engage with and for HEARR to implement if they choose.

METHODS

The recommendations were made through literature reviews, peer-reviewed research, surveys, interviews, and mindfulness books, videos, and podcasts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To meet the goals of this project, there are three main recommendations. The first recommendation is a place-based mindfulness booklet, containing mindfulness meditations designed for four public spaces around Scottsville for all ages. The second recommendation is to place mindfulness message boards in public spaces, allowing any park visitor the opportunity to engage with a short mindfulness meditation. The last is a recommendation for mindfulness to be used in collaborative settings, such as HEARR steering meetings and public engagement events.

CONCLUSIONS

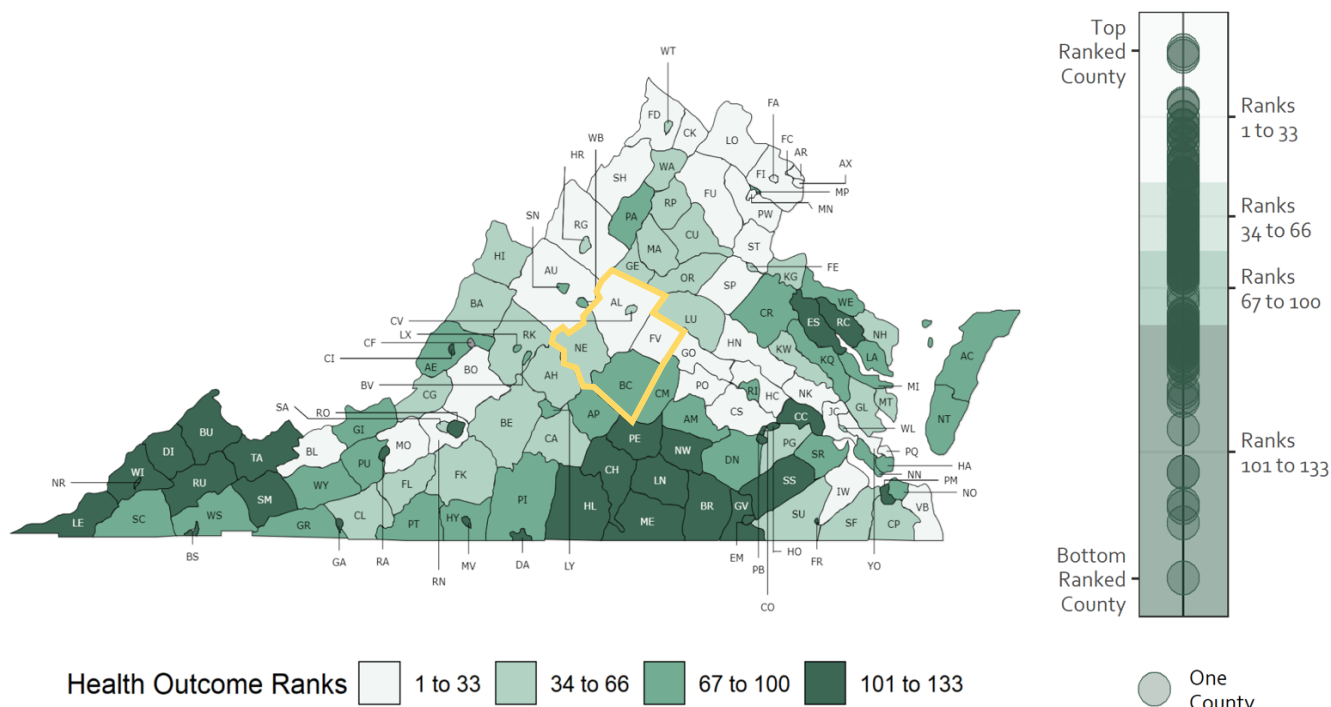
The mindfulness recommendations offered are meant to be one part of the solution to address the lack of proper health access and equity in the community that HEARR serves. Mindfulness is a rich resource because it is not a Band-Aid for deeper issues. Mindfulness meditations allow participants to grow skills and tools that can empower them. Knowledge is power, especially when it comes to knowledge of the self.

Future efforts could be made to employ these recommendations for the community through surveys, interviews, and partnerships.

INTRODUCTION

HEARR, Health Equity and Access in Rural Regions, began organizing, in 2017, in response to the lower health outcome data in rural counties (Figure 1). A small group including the then-mayor of Scottsville, VA, Nancy Gill, got together to discuss the health disparities and inequities over coffee.

Since those discussions, they have grown into a very active and engaged organization in the community. The main challenges to health access and equity that they face are transportation, food security, children’s issues, and aging and isolation. These issues are not going away, but HEARR utilizes their community partners to help address them through outreach, education, events, and advocacy. The group operates within an approximate ten-mile radius around Scottsville, VA. Their reach expands into parts of Albemarle, Nelson, Buckingham, and Fluvanna County (see the highlighted counties in Figure 1).



The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically impacted numerous aspects of everyone's lives. By altering how we work, learn, connect, and engage, the pandemic has increased overall levels of stress and anxiety. The financial stresses, isolation, health anxiety, and loss of community have been just a few of the strains on overall mental health wellness [2]. "Before COVID-19, 47 million United States adults reported a mental illness in the past year, 11 million reported a serious mental illness, 17 million reported major depressive disorder and access to mental healthcare was limited" [3], now those issues are just heightened and more widespread.

One way that these mental health issues and access disparities might be combatted is using low-cost mindfulness meditations. Mindfulness is by no means a cure all, however, it can be a useful low-cost tool and resource. Mindfulness meditations work effectively with "different populations across the lifespan and range of ability" [4]. While mindfulness is not a replacement for psychiatry and therapy, it "has the potential to complement treatment and is a low-cost beneficial method of providing support with anxiety for all." [4] By providing some site-specific mindfulness meditations and education material, the hope is that the exposure will motivate individuals to continue incorporating mindfulness into their lives.

Even after the pandemic is over, this experience has reminded us that "change is the only constant." [4] There will always be new forces changing our lives and creating conflict within us. Mindfulness "can help us to sit with our fears and our circumstances and to observe that like our thoughts, this period in our lives too shall pass." [4]

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW



HEALTH
OUTCOMES

DEMOGRAPHICS

BENEFITS OF
MINDFULNESS

HEALTH OUTCOMES

In the 2020 Virginia Report, developed in the County Health Ranking & Roadmaps program through the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, Albemarle was in the highest health outcome ranking quadrant, while the surrounding counties of Nelson and Buckingham dropped in health outcome ranking to the second and third quadrants (Figure 1) [1]. The higher-ranking correlates to lower health outcomes (Figure 2). The health outcomes are influenced by four categories—health behavior, clinical care, social & economic factors, and physical environment (Figure 3) [1].

Health Outcome Rankings

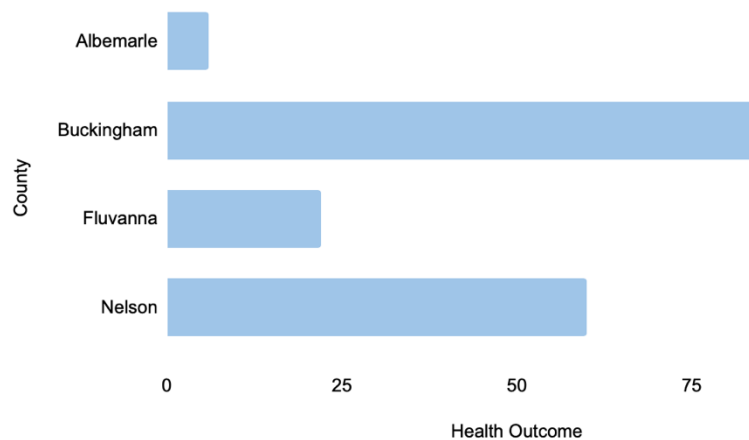


Figure 2. Health Outcome Rankings in VA Counties [1]

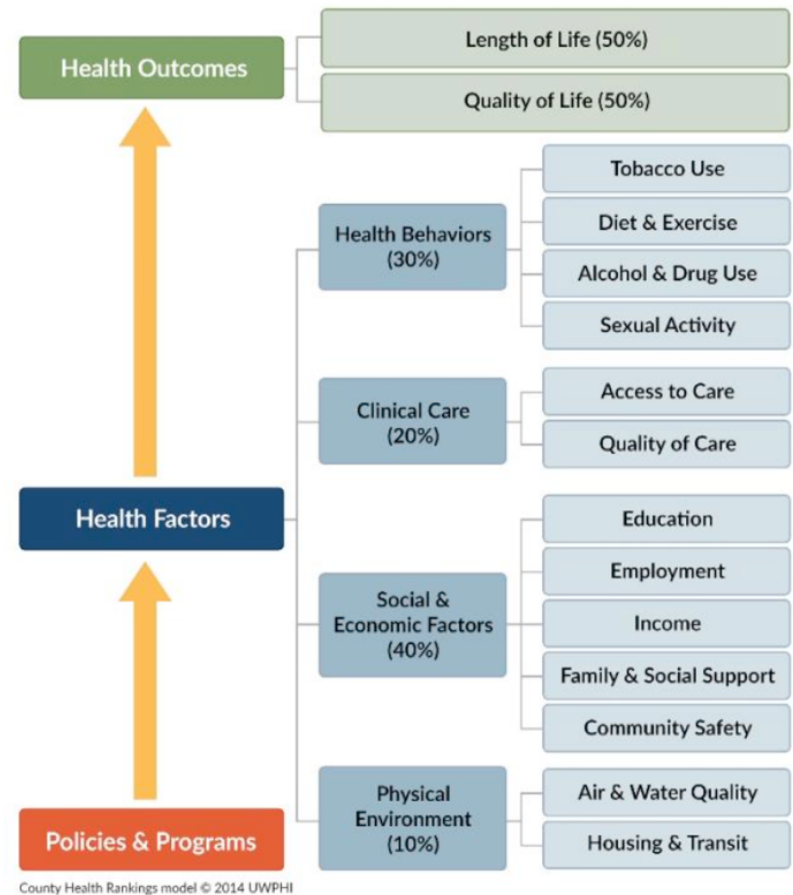


Figure 3. Health Outcome Factors [1]

Access to Care is one of two factors that make up Clinical Care, 20% of the health outcome ranking (Figure 3). According to the CDC, the access to mental health resources like psychiatrists, licensed social workers, and psychologists decrease significantly from Albemarle to Buckingham, Fluvanna, and Nelson (Figure 4) [5].

By initiating programs that target specific health outcome factors, overall health outcomes for the community can be raised. Since 30% of health outcomes are linked to health behaviors, increasing access to mental health resources could aid rural communities' quality and length of life.

Number of Psychiatrists, Licensed Social Workers and Psychologists per 10,000 Children Aged 0-17, 2015

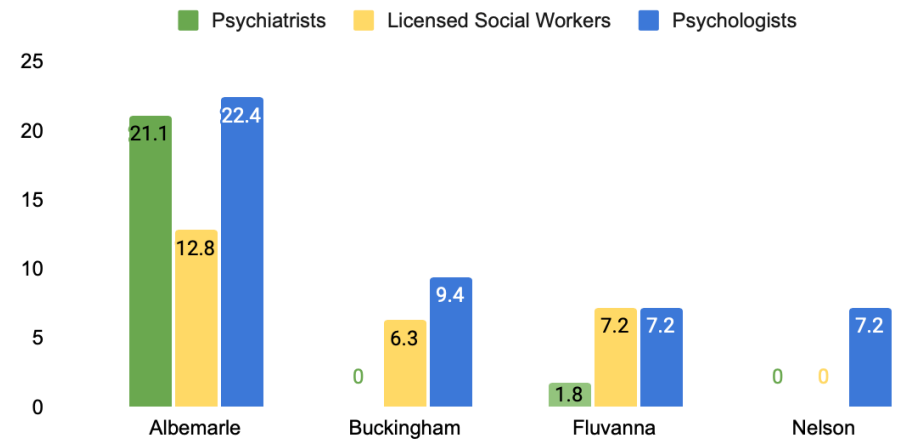


Figure 4. Number of Psychiatrists, Licensed Social Workers, and Psychologists per 10,000 Children Aged 0-17 in VA Counties, 2015 [5]

Population per Square Mile, 2010

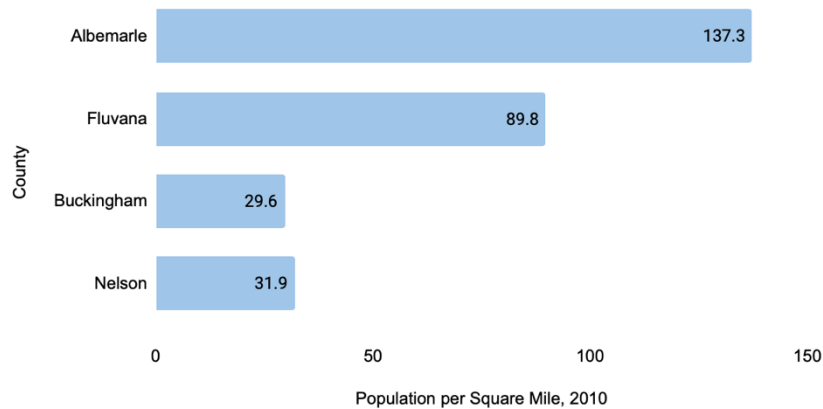


Figure 5. Population per Square Mile, 2010, in VA Counties [6]

DEMOGRAPHICS

As it pertains to this project, the four main demographic statistics of interest are the percentage of households with a computer, percentage of persons 65 and over, percentage of persons without health insurance, and median income. These demographics, taken from the Census, inform the scope and form of the project [6].

PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH A COMPUTER

Because there is a range of 7 to 19% of households that do not have computer in these counties, the mindfulness meditations should be accessible without needing a computer or internet access (Figure 6).

PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS 65 AND OVER

Older populations are less comfortable with technology and navigating new platforms. Having the meditations be usable without necessity for technological navigation helps increase the access for the populations over 65 (Figure 7).

Households with a Computer, Percentage

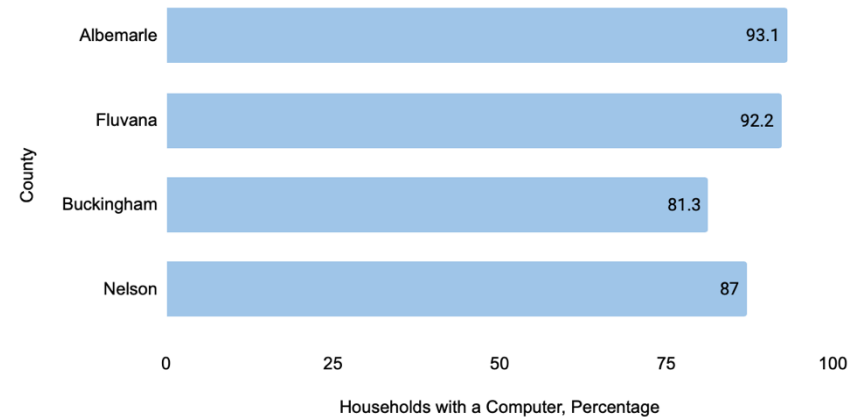


Figure 6. Households with a Computer, % [6]

Persons 65 and Over, Percent

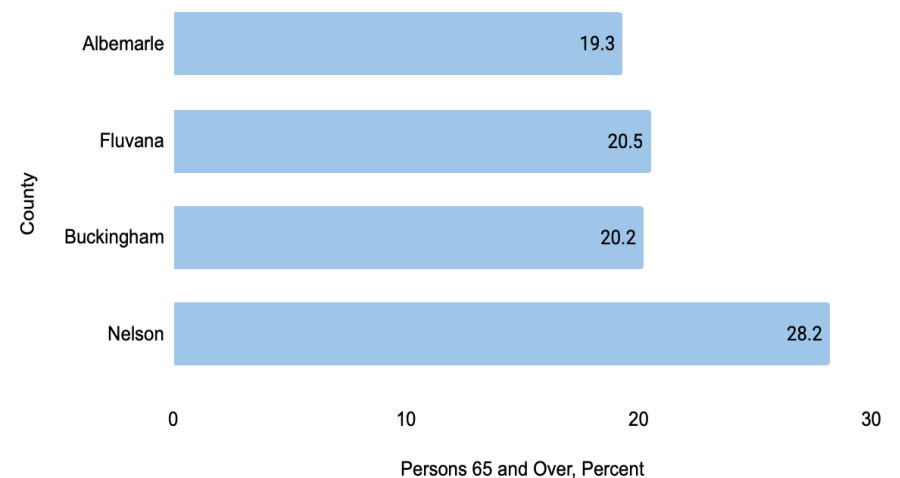


Figure 7. Persons 65 and Over, % [6]

Persons without Health Insurance, Under Age 65, Percentage

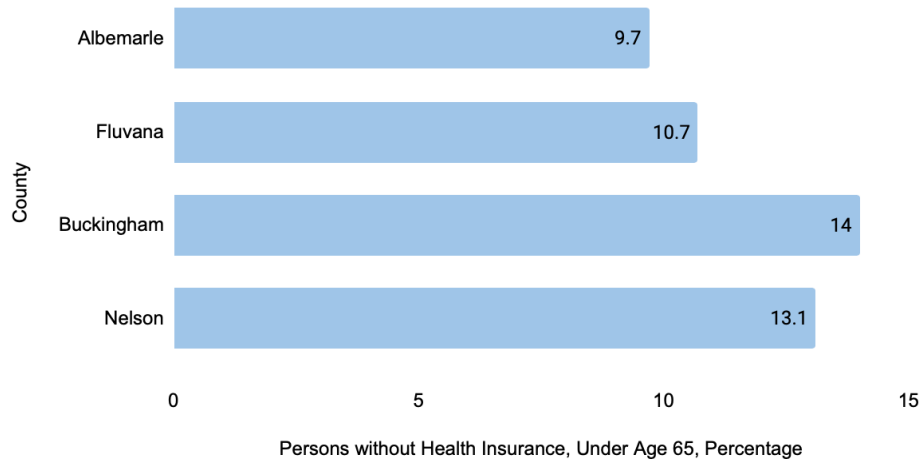


Figure 8. Persons without Health Insurance, Under 65, % [6]

MEDIUM HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Lower incomes lead to a decreased ability to afford high-cost mental health resources like therapy, medication, rehab, psychiatry. While Albemarle, Fluvanna and Nelson are slightly above the national average of \$62,843, Buckingham county is significantly lower at \$49,025 (Figure 9).

PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS WITHOUT HEALTH INSURANCE, UNDER 65

Mental health resources, like therapy and medications, can be expensive. Without health insurance, those fees can stop individuals from accessing those needed resources. In Buckingham, 14% of people under 65 don't have health insurance (Image 8). While mindfulness is not always a cure, or replacement for required medications, it can be a useful strategy.

Median Household Income (2015-2019) in 2019 Dollars

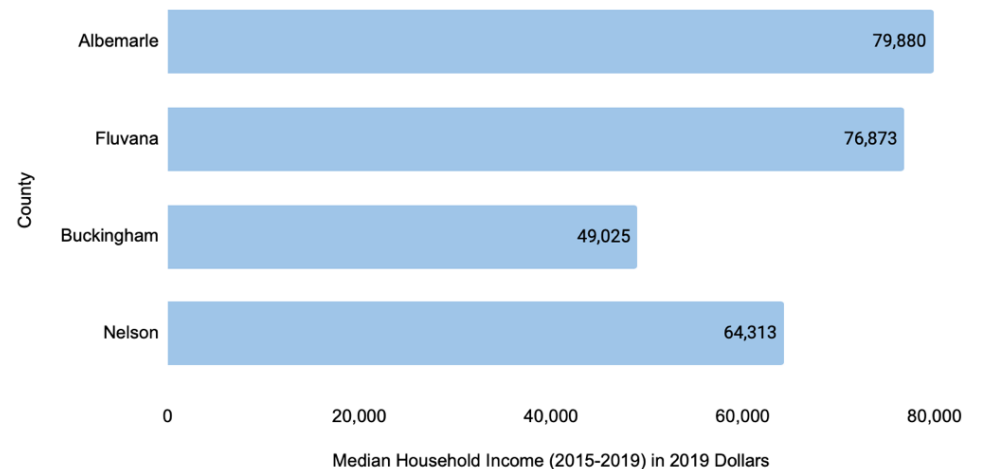


Figure 9. Median Household Income (2015-2019), in 2019 Dollars [6]

BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is “an open and non-judgmental awareness of one’s present-moment experience” [7]. There are many benefits of mindfulness, both physically and mentally. These benefits include emotional processing, stress reduction, prosocial behaviors, and positive outlooks. Mindfulness asks us to really sit with our thoughts, feelings, and body (without judgement), so that we learn to share our time, energy, and attention more intentionally.

Mindfulness can be accomplished through a variety of strategies, usually beginning by either sitting, lying down, or walking. Then using the breath to bring your attention to the present moment.

STRESS AND ANXIETY

Stress and anxiety are prevalent in our world and have only been exacerbated by COVID. COVID has caused isolation, financial stress, and health anxiety in many people. Mindfulness has been shown to reduce stress and anxiety in people who practice regularly. [8]

Stress is often caused by the fear of something happening in the future or dwelling on something that has happened in the past. Practicing how to live, think, and feel in the present reduces the mental space for stress related to future or past events. Even when it is guaranteed that

something bad will happen in the future, stressing about it rarely helps. It takes up mental space that could be used to mitigate the problem or to enjoy the time before.

For example, being stressed or anxious about getting COVID-19 doesn’t reduce the chances of contracting COVID-19. Abiding by CDC recommendations regarding social distancing, masks, and hand washing reduce the chances of contracting COVID-19. The stress only hinders the immune system and takes away from the present moment, which might bring joy and peace. Mindfulness is a practice of being present and observant of the body, mind, and feelings. So, when stress regarding COVID comes up, someone who has practiced mindfulness will have better tools to identify the feeling of stress, understand why the stress is there, understand that it’s not serving them, and breath their way back into the present. The point is not to avoid stress, but rather to recognize and acknowledge the feeling, and then let it go.

PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Prosocial behavior “fosters cooperation and cohesion among groups” and is defined as “voluntary behavior intended to benefit another” [9]. This behavior is driven by sympathy, empathy, and curiosity. Mindfulness is theorized to promote prosocial behavior in five ways.

1. Sustained mindfulness practice increases the ability to focus, which “may increase the


likelihood that an individual observes the need of others” and are more likely to respond to them.

2. Mindfulness increases “awareness of bodily sensations” [9] which is connected to the part of the brain, the insula, that also processes the emotional awareness of others. [9] Activating the insula through mindfulness may trigger the insula to foster prosocial behavior.
3. Since mindfulness sets out to practice selective attention, people who practice mindfulness regularly are more likely to feel (focus on) positive emotions which kindles more helping behaviors. We are more able to tend to the needs of others when we are not in the crisis of our own needs and emotions.
4. Mindfulness may enhance “cognitive defusion”, which is a technique to observe one’s own thoughts, specifically judgements and assumptions, without taking them as fact [9]. This process may help break down barriers and allow for more prosocial behavior.
5. Through mindful practice, one is meant to become less attached, even to the vision of the self. Without the need to protect the figure of the self, there is more room to be caring and open for others.

In collaborative settings, like urban planning community engagement, a lot of unsuccessful communication takes place. Individuals bring in their assumptions, stress, and lack of attention to the needs of others. In already often heated situations, it is easy to let one’s own emotions cloud active listening.

Mindfulness not only helps individuals be happy because they are more aware of themselves, but it can improve quality of life by strengthening connections to others. By decreasing stress and anxiety and increasing prosocial behavior, mindfulness can help us improve our communication. Understanding one’s own feelings, thought patterns, and needs, allows one to share and communicate those needs in the hopes they can better be met and understood by others. That communication and attention given to us and others, is likely to positively impact processes of collaboration and mental health issues.

PROJECT GOALS AND METHODS



OFFER A SERIES
OF MINDFULNESS
MEDITATIONS AS A
MENTAL HEALTH
RESOURCE FOR
ALL AGES

HIGHLIGHT
AND PROVOKE
USE OF PUBLIC
SPACES

EXPLORE BENEFITS
OF MINDFULNESS AS A
TOOL FOR COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT AND
COLLABORATION
PROCESSES

GOALS AND METHODS

The goals of this project are to offer a series of mindfulness meditations as a mental health resource for all ages, highlight and provoke use of public space, and explore benefits of mindfulness as a tool for community engagement and collaboration. Since children's issues, isolation, and aging are all key health issues that HEARR targets, the mindfulness meditations will be applicable to all age groups. These goals will be explored in the scope and time range of this project.

To meet these goals, three main recommendations will be made. One for a place-based mindfulness booklet, one for mindfulness message boards, and one for mindfulness in processes of collaboration.

OFFER A SERIES OF MINDFULNESS MEDITATIONS AS A FREE MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE FOR ALL AGES

Due to the high cost of mental health resources and the lack of access that is present in these communities, it is vital that these mindfulness resources be free. Mindfulness meditations, and the benefits that follow, should be equitably accessible. To accomplish this goal, a variety of mindfulness meditations will be curated for the use of anyone in the community and will be accessible to anyone in the community. The two forms this will take are the mindfulness booklet and the message board. Mindfulness meditations will be written with public

spaces in mind, as to encourage the use of said public spaces.

MINDFULNESS BOOKLET

The mindfulness meditations will be a printable, two-sided, document that you fold into a booklet. A paper copy was chosen over an online format for a few reasons. Due to the lack of computer access, a printable copy means that someone could be handed the booklet and need nothing else. On top of that, presence is hard to accomplish while looking at a phone or computer; there is value in holding something in your hands or being with it in space.

To narrow the scope, four public spaces in and around Scottsville were chosen. These public spaces were chosen for their proximity to Scottsville and for their differences in character. Van Cleve Nature Area and Totier Creek Park are more expansive, contain more natural spaces and are harder to access. Simpson Park and Dorrier Park have more infrastructure, are smaller, and are easier to access.

The two mindfulness meditations designated for Totier Creek Park are titled, "Sending love to others" and "The sensation of breathing". The two mindfulness meditations designated for Van Cleve Nature Area are titled, "Smiling" and "Connection breath to movement". The two mindfulness meditations designated for Dorrier Park are titled, "Focusing on sounds, smells, and feelings" and "calming the body". The two mindfulness

meditations designated for Simpson Park are titled, “Observing your surroundings” and “Visualizing affirmations”.

By having a variety of mindfulness meditations, the individual engaging with the meditations will have the opportunity to choose a practice based on their need in that moment. For example, the mindfulness meditation called “calming the body” can be utilized if a person is needing to address a feeling such as frustration, stress, or anger.

The mindfulness meditations are written to last about 5 minutes. This time frame was chosen so to not overwhelm participants who have never practiced meditation before and to not feel doable in any busy schedule.

The practices also have variety in their use of movement, body position, and observation focal point to accommodate the comfortability of the individual and the differences in public spaces. In a more crowded public space, like a playground, someone might feel less comfortable closing their eyes or laying down. Whereas, in a more expansive public space, someone might feel more comfortable relaxing into a more meditative state.

The variety also exposes the individual to a variety of mindfulness techniques and tools including, movement, visualizations, body scans, and emotional recognition so that if anyone who wants to expand beyond the guided mindfulness meditations to ones of their own creation, they will have more techniques and tools to pull from.

To write these mindfulness meditations, guided mindfulness and meditation meditations in books and podcasts were used as precedents. The books used were *The Little Book of Mindfulness* by Dr Patrizia Collard and *Practicing Mindfulness* by Matthew Sockolov. The podcasts used were [21 Day Positive Mindfulness Meditations](#) and [Tune into You Meditation Podcast](#).

MINDFULNESS MESSAGE BOARD

It is also proposed that these chosen public spaces, and any others that are wanted, add mindfulness message boards. The mindfulness message boards will have one short mindfulness message or poem that will rotate at a regular interval. They are meant to be shorter and prompt a quick moment of contemplation.

The mindfulness message board serves a different purpose than the booklet in that the booklet takes initiative. Someone must either print or receive a booklet from HEARR and then bring the booklet with them to the public space or pull up a digital copy and the exercise takes 5 minutes. The mindfulness message board requires much less time and much less energy but has less power to impact and offer benefits. The message boards could engage anyone who enters the space and hopefully guide them to find the booklet or other mindfulness resources.

To recommend these, research into the types of forms this could take in the space, along with cost, and message proposals has been assessed.

HIGHLIGHT AND PROVOKE USE OF PUBLIC SPACES

The mindfulness meditations recommended for the Mindfulness Booklet and for the Mindfulness Message Board will be intended for use outdoors, in nature. This is intended to not only encourage participants already using these spaces to engage with mindfulness but for residents to seek out these public spaces for their access to nature. Natural environments have the power to reduce stress, among other restorative properties, because they “activate our parasympathetic nervous system” [10].

EXPLORE BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS AS A TOOL FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES

To explore how mindfulness might be used in collaborative processes and what effects that might have, a small-scale survey was conducted with the members of HEARR during a steering committee meeting. The survey was given out before and after a five-minute mindfulness meditation at the beginning of the meeting. The survey asked participants about stress and presence, two of the key mindfulness benefits. Both of which, when improved, lead to the prosocial and individual benefits.

To recommend the use of mindfulness in processes of collaboration that HEARR engages in, literature reviews, research, and a small study were utilized.


RECOMMENDATIONS



MINDFULNESS
BOOKLET



MINDFULNESS
MESSAGE
BOARD



MINDFULNESS
FOR
COLLABORATIVE
PROCESSES

MINDFULNESS BOOKLET

The mindfulness booklet is a three-page, double sided document that can be printed and assembled by following easy instructions. The small, folded booklet features two mindfulness practices designated to each of the four chosen public spaces near Scottsville, VA (Figure 10). The four spaces are Simpson Park, Van Cleve Nature Area, Dorrier Park, and Totier Creek Park (Figure 11).

The eight mindfulness meditations are titled as follows:

1. Sending love to others
2. The sensation of breathing
3. Smiling
4. Connecting breath to movement
5. Focusing on sounds, smells, and feelings
6. Calming the body
7. Observing your surroundings
8. Visualizing affirmations

The meditations invite the reader to spend five minutes tuning in to their breath, their bodies, and using visualizing techniques to calm, settle, and listen.

The document can be printed and passed out by HEARR at outreach events and can be available as a pdf on the website for anyone at home to print.

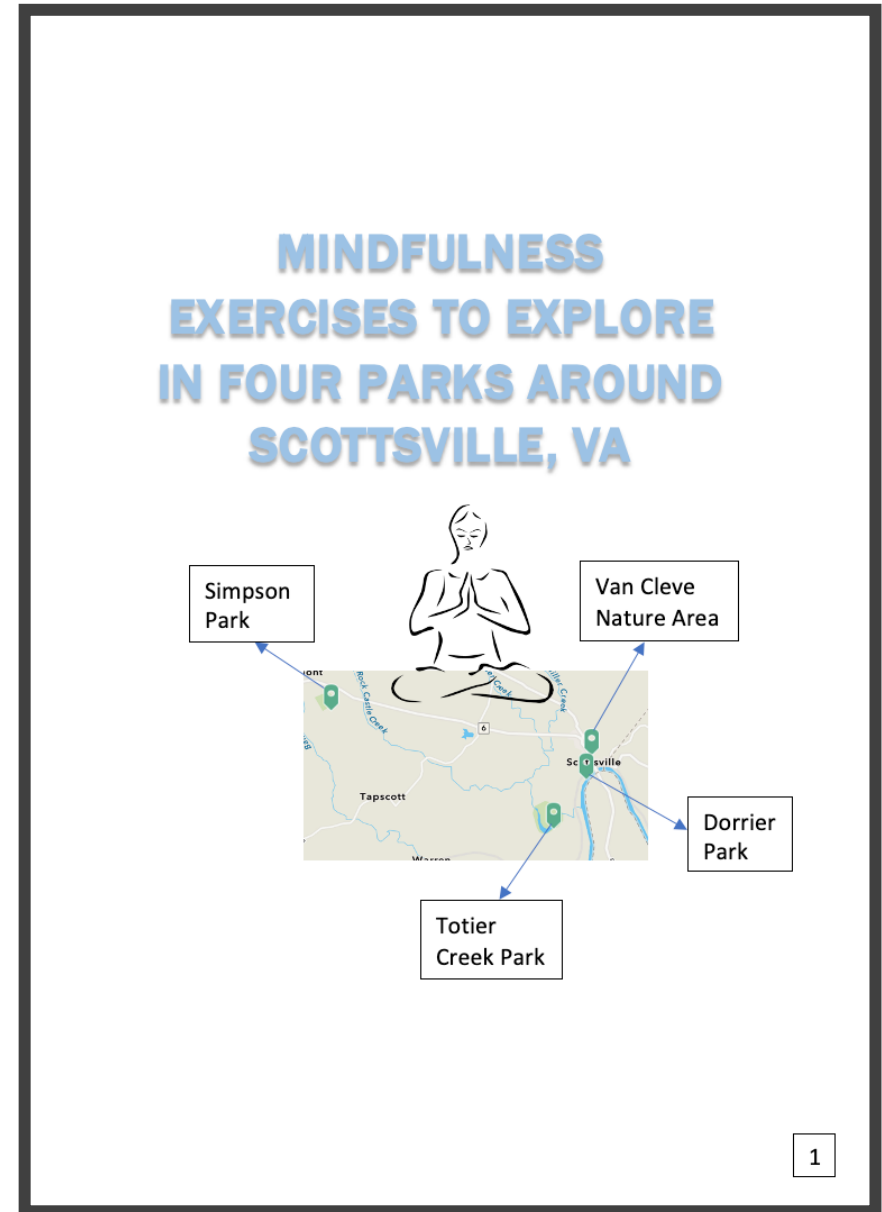
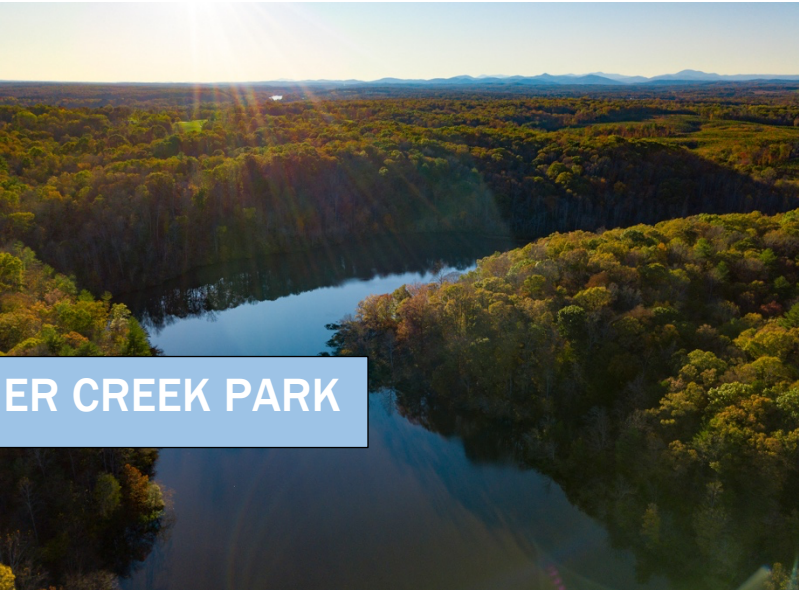


Figure 10. Front Page of Mindfulness Booklet

MINDFULNESS FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES



TOTIER CREEK PARK



DORRIER PARK



SIMPSON PARK



VAN CLEVE NATURE AREA

Figure 11. Photos of Public Spaces Chosen for Project around Scottsville, VA

MINDFULNESS MEDITATIONS

TOTIER CREEK PARK

SENDING LOVE TO OTHERS

Find a comfortable position, whether that be seated, standing, or lying down.

Take two breaths with your eyes softly closed to settle into the present. Think of one person you love; imagine them in your mind's eye. Take three breaths here. With each one, imagine sending love to that person.

Next, imagine someone you have passed in your day today, a stranger. Take three breaths, sending love to that person with each breath.

Now, turn inwards and take three breaths sending love to yourself. With each inhale, expanding the chest and stomach, filling up with love. With each exhale, releasing any tension being held in the body.

Bring gentle movements back into your body. Then, when you are ready, reenter your day.

THE SENSATION OF BREATHING

Find a comfortable position, whether that be seated, standing, or lying down.

Take one deep breath to settle yourself into the present moment. Taking any small stretches or movements before coming to stillness.

Softly close your eyes, bring your lips together, and place one hand on your chest and one on your stomach. Begin taking slow, deep breaths, focusing on the sensation of your body rising and falling. Stay here for five breaths.

Keeping your body as it is, turn your focus to the sensation of air coming in and out of your nose. Stay here for five breaths.

Gently open your eyes, take any movements your body needs, and continue your day.

VAN CLEVE NATURE AREA

SMILING

Find a comfortable position, whether that be seated, standing, or lying down.

Begin by taking three deep, slow breaths, in through the nose and out through the mouth.

Return to breathing naturally. Tune in to how you are feeling right now, avoiding making judgements on or attachments to those feelings.

Softly close your eyes if they aren't already. On your next inhale, bring a soft smile to your face. Take five breaths, holding the smile. Focusing on how the smile feels; how the corners of your mouth feel; how your eyes feel.

After these breaths, release the smile and tune in once again to how you are feeling right now. Still avoiding judgements and attachments. Just noticing the emotions and sensations that arise as you rest and breathe.

When you are ready, bring gentle movement into your fingers, hands, and maybe do some stretches that you think will feel good. Then reenter your day.

CONNECTING BREATH TO MOVEMENT

Begin in mountain pose- standing tall, feet hip width apart, shoulders back, hips tucked, palms face forward, top of the head reaching for the sky. Close your eyes and take a deep breath in through the nose and out through the mouth to settle into this moment. This place where all you must do is be. Letting go of whatever your day has already brought, stepping into the now.

Start by deepening your breaths, with our lips softly closed, inhaling, and exhaling through the nose. Begin slowly creating circles with the shoulders, lifting the shoulders on the inhale, and rolling them down the back on the exhale. Matching the movement to breath. Once you have done this for a minute, switch directions, bringing the shoulders up on the inhale and the rolling them to the front on the exhale. Making sure to keep the movement slow and go with our breathing. If the mind wanders, acknowledge the thought, and then come back to the breath and the movement.

Once you are ready, bring small movements back into your body, and reenter your day.

DORRIER PARK

FOCUSING ON SOUNDS, SMELLS, AND FEELINGS

Find a comfortable position, either sitting or standing.

Take one deep breath to settle yourself here, in this moment. Letting go of what has happened in your day so far and what is coming in your day next.

Start by focusing on what you can see. Acknowledging without judgment. Take three breaths here.

Then begin to focus on what you can hear. Listen to each sound. Take three breaths here.

Then begin to focus on what you can smell. Take three breaths here.

Then begin to focus on what you can feel. What can you touch without reach? What does the ground feel like beneath you? Take three breaths here.

When you are ready, take one deep breath to close your practice, and continue your day.

CALMING THE BODY

Find a comfortable seat and place your hands down, possibly the ground beside you or on your lap.

Bring your attention to your breath, lengthening the inhales and exhales. Making any small adjustments you need to feel comfortable.

Begin scanning your body. With each inhale, bringing attention to a new spot in your body. With each exhale, releasing any tension. Start at your head and make your way down to your toes.

Turn your attention to the parts of your body that are touching the ground or supporting you. Spend a few breaths here.

When you are ready, take one final deep, slow breath. And reenter your day.

FOR SIMPSON PARK

OBSERVING YOUR SURROUNDINGS

Find a comfortable position, either sitting or standing.

Take one deep breath to settle yourself here, in this moment. Letting go of what has happened in your day so far and what is coming in your day next.

Take a moment to look around and observe your surroundings. Bring in curiosity as your eyes wander; try to look as if you have not seen those things before. Bring your attention to their details, to their movement, to their color. Try to not bring any judgments or attachments.

Spend ten slow breaths here, really focusing on each image before shifting your gaze.

When you are ready, close your eyes for the final deep breath. Then reopen your eyes and continue with your day.

VISUALIZING AFFIRMATIONS

Find a comfortable position, either sitting, standing, or lying down.

Softly close your eyes and take two easy breaths in rest.

As you breath naturally, spend a moment finding an affirmation you need to hear today. Maybe you need to be reminded that you are kind, or smart, or beautiful or creative.

Begin visualizing someone important in your life, someone you trust. And visualize them telling you this affirmation. Feel the message fill you up with each inhale.

Next find someone else you trust and love in your life. Visualize them telling you the same affirmation. Letting the message continue to sink in.

Now, say the affirmation to yourself. Beginning with the words, "I am..." And then take three slow breaths here. If doubts arise, view them as clouds moving across the sky. Acknowledging them as you let them move out of sight.

When you are ready, open your eyes, give your body one big stretch, and reenter your day, knowing you are enough.

MINDFULNESS MESSAGE BOARD

Mindfulness message boards are being recommended for future implementation. The suggestion is for small message boxes to be placed in public spaces around Scottsville. The boards should have a way to easily replace the document so that the mindfulness meditation can be switched at regular intervals and be waterproof. The mindfulness messages will have a HEARR logo and information on how to access the mindfulness booklet. If there are in-person mindfulness classes held for the community, this could also be a space to highlight that.

COST ANALYSIS

The cost of implementing these message boards vary in cost depending on materials. For reference, an 18"W x 18"H Single Door Mini Outdoor Message Center with Natural Cork Tack Surface costs \$222.40 with Allen Display (Figure). This style would allow the easy replacement of mindfulness practices, messages, or even poems. This example is ideal; however, a cheaper version could be assembled.

LOCATIONS

The initial application of these could be placed at the same four parks suggested in the previous mindfulness recommendation, Simpson Park, Dorrier Park, Van Cleve Nature Area, and Totier Creek Park. However, these

could also be expanded to any public space, like the local library.



Figure 12. Single Door Mini Outdoor Message Center from Allen Display

RECOMMENDED POSTINGS

If the box had cork board, the posting can change at any interval chosen by HEARR; however, the suggestion is to change the message every month. The messages could be either short meditative meditations or mindfulness poems. Some examples of postings are listed below.

SHORT MEDITATIVE MEDITATIONS

- Take five breaths. In each breath, think of someone or something you love.
- Lay one hand on your stomach, one on your chest. As you breathe here for three deep breaths, focus on the rising and falling of your hands.
- Take one breath here, as you exhale, let out a loud sigh, in that moment, letting go of whatever feelings or thoughts are not serving you.

MINDFULNESS POEMS

Awakening

Why wait for your awakening?

Do you value your reasons for staying small
more than the light shining through the open door?

Forgive yourself,
Forgive yourself.

Now is the only time you have to be whole.

Now.

Now is the sole moment that exists to live in the light of
your true nature

Perfection is not a prerequisite for anything but pain.

Perfection is not a prerequisite for anything but pain.

Please, oh please, don't continue to believe
in your stories of deficiency and failure.

This is the day of your awakening.

Danna Faulds

Enough

Enough. These few words are enough.
If not these words, this breath.
If not this breath, this sitting here.
This opening to the life
We have refused again and again
Until now.
Until now.

David Whyte

Peace is This Moment Without Judgment

Do you think peace requires an end to war?
Or tigers eating only vegetables?
Does peace require an absence from
your boss, your spouse, yourself? ...
Do you think peace will come some other place than
here?
Some other time than Now?
In some other heart than yours?
Peace is this moment without judgment.
That is all. This moment in the Heart-space
where everything that is, is welcome.
Peace is this moment without thinking
that it should be some other way,
that you should feel some other thing,
that your life should unfold according to your plans.
Peace is this moment without judgment,
this moment in the heart-space where
everything that is, is welcome.

Dorothy Hunt

The Guest House

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.
A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.
Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.
The dark thought, the shame, the malice.
meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.
Be grateful for whatever comes.
because each has been sent
as a guide

Rumi

Breath of Life

I breathe in All That Is
Awareness expanding
to take everything in,
as if my heart beats
the world into being.
From the unnamed vastness beneath the
mind, I breathe my way to wholeness and healing.
Inhalation. Exhalation.
Each Breath a “yes,”
a letting go, a journey, and a coming home.

Danna Faulds

Walk slowly

It only takes a reminder to breathe, a moment to be still, and just like that, something in me settles, softens, makes space for imperfection. The harsh voice of judgment drops to a whisper and I remember again that life isn't a relay race; that we will all cross the finish line; that waking up to life is what we were born for. As many times as I forget, catch myself charging forward without even knowing where I'm going, that many times I can make the choice to stop, to breathe, and be, and walk slowly into the mystery.

Danna Faulds

Meditation as an Act of Love

Don't meditate to fix yourself, to heal yourself, to improve yourself, to redeem yourself; rather, do it as an act of love, of deep warm friendship to yourself. In this way there is no longer any need for the subtle aggression of self-improvement, for the endless guilt of not doing enough. It offers the possibility of an end to the ceaseless round of trying so hard that wraps so many people's lives in a knot. Instead, there is now meditation as an act of love. How endlessly delightful and encouraging.

Bob Sharps

MINDFULNESS FOR COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES

The prosocial benefit of mindfulness lends itself well to community engagement and collaborative processes in general. One reason that collaboration can be unsuccessful is from weak social skills including not “listening to and valuing the other person's opinion” [11]. Including mindfulness practice into the beginning of collaboration processes has the possibility of improving the outcomes of collaborative processes that HEARR participates in, both internally and externally.

The survey to test this hypothesis was conducted at the beginning of a HEARR steering committee. An anonymous survey was conducted before and after a short five-minute mindfulness meditation. There were six participants who took the pre survey. One member joined mid mindfulness practice; therefore, seven participants took the post survey. (See Appendix A) Mindfulness in collaborative processes can function very similarly to one executed in the HEARR steering committee meeting.

This small, statistically insignificant, study found that stress was decreased, and presence was increased after the meditation (Figures 13 & 14). 100% of the participants stated that the mindfulness meditation decreased their stress levels (Figure 13). 85.71% of the participants stated that their feeling of presence increased after the mindfulness meditation (Figure 14). This a small study size, but the overwhelming experience was one that

validated the research; mindfulness decreases stress and increases presence.

Mindfulness Impact on Stress

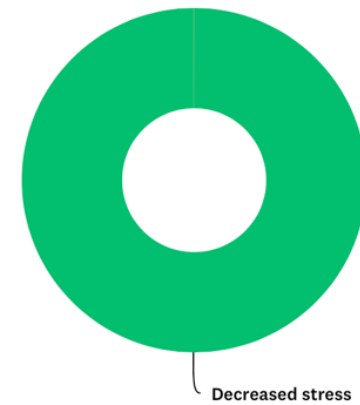


Figure 13. Survey Question on the Effect of the Mindfulness Meditation on Stress

Mindfulness Impact on Presence

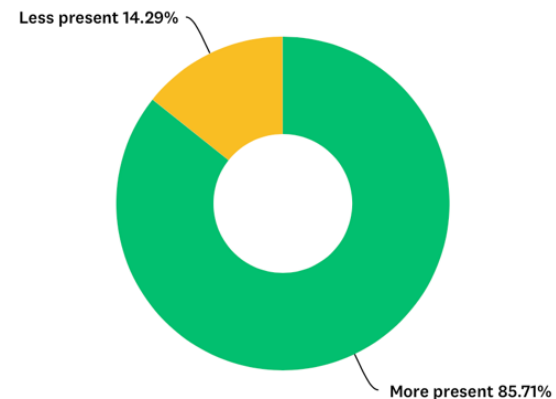


Figure 14. Survey Question on the Effect of the Mindfulness Meditation on Presence

Do You Think Mindfulness Would Increase the Success of Collaborative

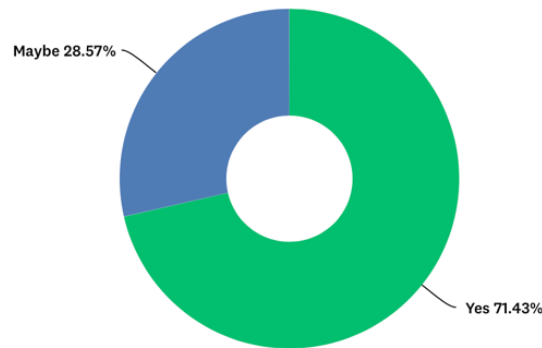


Figure 15. Survey Question on Mindfulness in Collaboration

The last question asked how the participant felt about mindfulness being added to either their steering committee meetings or community engagement events, both collaborative processes. 71.43% of the respondents said yes, they thought it would make the events more successful, 28.57% said maybe (Figure 15).

The recommendation, guided by the results of this survey, is for HEARR to open collaborative processes that have the possibility of conflict or discourse with a mindfulness meditation. A five-minute mindfulness meditation before the start of a meeting takes such a short amount of time and yet has the possibility of decreasing much of the stress brought into the room. Stress that can impede participants from being present, listening, and responding with care.

For this purpose, the recommendation is to utilize the “Calming the Body” mindfulness meditation written out in the mindfulness booklet. This practice can be repeated in each collaborative space because each time there will be different and new tensions in the body that needs attention. Instead of each person reading for themselves, the mindfulness practice should be read aloud to the group. Giving lots of space between each directive. This mindfulness meditation can be inserted after the introduction of the meeting and participants.

LIMITATIONS

There have been several limitations on the scope and progress of this project, the most predominant being COVID-19.

Because of COVID, this project is being done remotely. Even with all the help from HEARR, the sites have never been visited and all communication has transpired over the computer. Unfortunately, these mindfulness meditations have been written without site visits. All understanding of the area was from photos from HEARR members and Albemarle County Parks website. Ideally, there would have been in-person mindfulness events held in these spaces, community engagement, and interviews of residents using these spaces.

This project could have been more meaningful if the project had been able to engage with the community and guide mindfulness meditations in-person.

By virtue of this project also being a class, there is a relatively short time span to explore these ideas and apply them to the sites.

Although these limitations have affected this project, there is always room for these ideas and recommendations to be explored more in the future when COVID-19 is less of an impediment and time is not a factor.

CONCLUSIONS

The community that HEARR serves, like many rural regions around the county, is facing gaps in health access and equity. There are not the same health resources being offered in rural communities as there are in urban regions, and that includes mental health resources.

To combat that, many free or low-cost tools and strategies are going to be needed for the community around Scottsville, VA. These mindfulness recommendations are meant to be just one piece of that puzzle.

These mindfulness recommendations are meant to be a resource for the community in two ways. First to help mental health issues through the benefits of mindfulness, and through the benefits of nature and community. Second, mindfulness is recommended as a tool for collaboration and more successful engagement. Mindfulness is a diverse tool and the hope is that HEARR, and the community at large, begins to incorporate mindful thinking and living.

Even though mindfulness is something done inside us, there is power in bringing that into collaborative processes and public spaces because it shows a collective effort to be better for ourselves and for each other.

NEXT STEPS

If the recommendations given here are applied by HEARR, a larger survey should be done to test the benefit of these resources. If they are found to be assets to the community, more free mindfulness meditations, classes, and messages could be offered.

More efforts to include mindfulness into the community could be done by partnering with local yoga and meditation studios.

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Photo of Van Cleve Nature Area:
<http://www.readthehook.com/110149/hidden-gem-scottsville-works-open-nature-area>

Photo of Simpson Park:
Taken by Peggy Scott

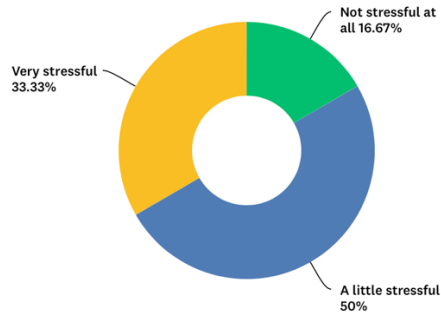
Photo of Cork Board:
https://www.allendisplay.com/18W-x-18H-Single-Door-Mini-Outdoor-Message-Center-with-Natural-Cork-Tack-Surface?gclid=Cj0KCQjwvr6EBhDOARIsAPpqUPGKJwCJ9yE36kf-f6_gHQzuNYzCDAOCBdsekS4FgtDNEFYk_NiMq1AaAmG5EALw_wcB

APENDIX

A: Mindfulness Survey with HEARR Pre-meditation survey:

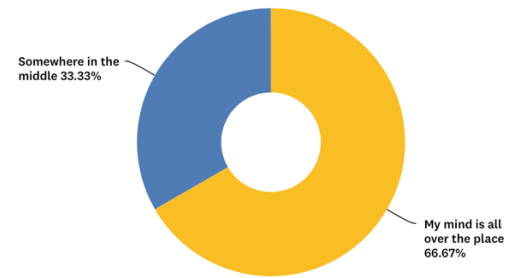
1. How stressful was your day?

- Not stressful at all
- A little stressful
- Very stressful



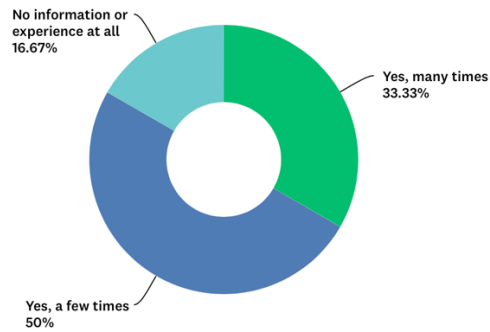
2. How present do you feel? (thinking and being in the here and now)

- I feel very present (calm, thinking and feeling what is around me now)
- My mind is all over the place (maybe what you have to do tomorrow or where you have to be later or thinking of something that happened earlier)
- Somewhere in the middle
- I don't know!



3. Have you been exposed to meditation, yoga or mindful practices before?

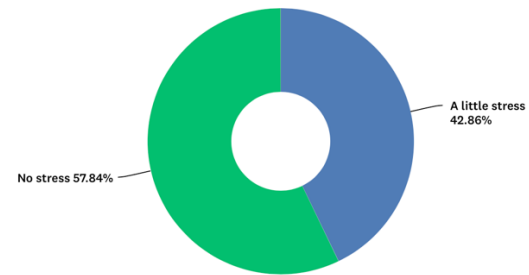
- Yes, many times
- Yes, a few times
- I have heard of them
- No information or experience at all



Post-meditation survey:

1. How stressed do you feel right now?

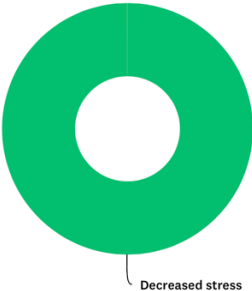
- A lot of stress
- A little stress
- No stress



MINDFULNESS FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES

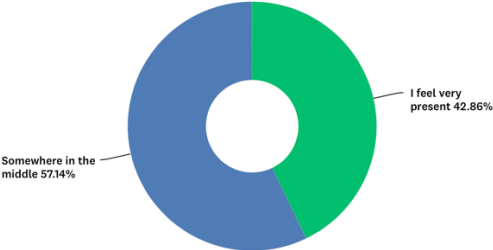
2. Did the mindfulness exercise impact your stress level?

- Decreased stress
- Increased stress
- Neutral



3. How present do you feel now?

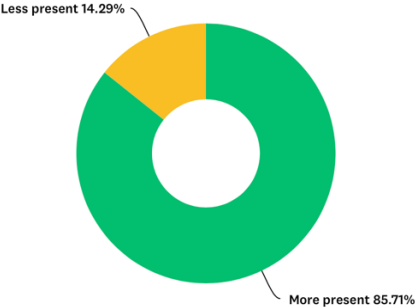
- I feel very present
- My mind is all over the place
- Somewhere in the middle
- I don't know!



MINDFULNESS FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES

4. How did the mindful exercise impact your feeling of presence?

- More present
- Less present
- Neutral



5. Do you think doing some version of this before a HEARR committee meeting or community engagement meeting would increase its success?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

