

My Rough Notes*

SAA LA Educ/Support Group

April 13, 2014

Howard Wax presenting on the Psychological Immune System

Body – Brain – Mind

- There isn't a psychological immune system. The immune system is in the physical body. Does the brain and mind play a role?
- Our knowledge of the brain is recent. 95% of what we know about the brain has been learned after 2000.
- Is there a mind in addition to the brain and body and does it play a role?
- Studies suggest the mind is helpful in helping people to heal.
- Mindfulness affects the physical brain.
- Controlling the mind/thought is difficult. The mind is a busy place, filled with automatic thoughts and chatter.
- Meditation quiets the chatter.
- Some background:
 - Left / Right Brain helpful to distinguish type of thoughts and their physical brain location. Left= logical, language (words), memory. Right=creative, feeling, mood, emotion.
 - The parasympathetic nervous system is one of the types of the autonomic nervous system. The controlling system when external conditions are calm and normal, ie 'digest and rest'. Controls functions of body organs, blood vessels and smooth muscles. Mostly involuntary, some such as breathing work in concert with the conscious mind. With practice, some people are able to control other of these functions. The other system, the Sympathetic nervous system mediates 'fight or flight'.
- Thinking (left brain) about pain may not be helpful, it's stimulating. It doesn't reduce pain.
- Meditation and pain control. Meditation changes how body works. Heart slows, muscles relax, stress reduces, pain reduces.
 - Meditation reduces reaction to pain. Pain is still sensed, but to lesser degree.
 - Think away chronic pain via technology. Neurofeedback. People are able to control the amount of pain perceiving.
 - Examples of techniques case study found as effective as pain medication:
 - Imagine pain as a flame, and reduce that flame.
 - Focus on part of the body that doesn't hurt.
 - Imagine little people scooping up & carrying away the pain out of your body.
 - Pain is perception. It's not just ignoring it. It's not perceiving it.

- Learn to control pain through behavior.
- Practice is important. 'The internal state becomes a trait'.
 - It takes a long time. Daily.
- Can reduce pain trait by 50%
- We have beliefs about our future. People develop beliefs about the future of their illness. They may not be true. Imagine a different future. Make a different future.
- Side topics:
 - Pain medication can make it difficult to meditate.
 - Meditation reveals how the body feels.
 - Our stories create a map. Our stories of the past influence how we feel in the present and then our future. Rather than retell our stories, stay in the present.
 - Pain you had yesterday, may not accurately define your present state. May not tell the full story including what is not in pain.
 - Staying in the present moment of pain; it's often more tolerable.
 - Your narrative is not you. You are more than the story. Let go of the story if it doesn't serve you.
 - Be around people who have a more positive narrative.
 - Your pain is not you. You are more than the pain.
- Links:
 - <https://www.mindsightinstitute.com/>
 - www.Brillianthealing.org

*These are my rough notes from the presentation, comments made by others in the room and my own thoughts during the meeting. The information has not been verified in any way and I am certainly not endorsing or making any recommendations. I typed these at the request of some of our 'regulars' that were not able to attend the meeting. Any mistakes with terminology or conveying concepts/experiences were my own and I am sure do not do justice to the speaker and other attendees.