**Georgia Public Library Service Director’s Conference**

**Athens, Georgia May 19, 2016**

**An Introduction to Mindfulness for Leaders**

**What is Mindfulness?**

Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally. Mindfulness involves attention, awareness, concentration, and compassion; coming to know and understand yourself in deeper, experiential ways. Mindfulness meditation is a way to practice being fully present for your life.

*Key aspects of mindfulness*

* *Concentration* – the ability to stay focused on one object, one-pointedness.
* *Awareness* – another way of knowing that is non-cognitive, experiential, and is in the present moment, now; not being caught-up in the future or in the past. The heart of mindfulness involves a gentle, curious attention to whatever arises in mind and body.
* *Attitudes* for cultivating a mindfulness practice – openness, acknowledging what’s present, allowing, letting go/be, investigation (non-cognitively), and compassion.

*How it works:* Mindfulness practice allows you to respond rather to react to stressful situations. Reactions are often automatic, unconscious, and habitual. Responses are conscious choices arising from mindfulness – perception, appraisal, awareness of what’s actually happening in the moment, resulting in not identifying as closely with our thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. This loosens attachment to thoughts, allowing space for creative conscious choices to be made.

*Benefits of Maintaining a Mindfulness Practice – P*aying attention, both through formal and informal mindfulness allows you to:

* See more clearly how things really are – with fewer perceptual filters
* Be less reactive and more responsive – allowing space/time for conscious and creative choices
* Change your relationship to stress, anxiety, anger, fear, sadness, grief, etc.
* Gain insights - identifying skillful and unskillful patterns of behavior, speech, etc.,
* Know yourself more deeply, fully
* Connect with your inner wisdom, intuition, the gestalt of who you are
* Develop a calm energy, peace
* Be more compassionate with self and others
* Realize greater health and happiness

**How Mindfulness Benefits Leaders**

Mindfulness benefits leaders both directly – with vision, communication, decision making; and indirectly – through employee wellness and productivity

*Directly*

*Vision* – seeing things as they really are – gaining awareness of perceptual filters (personal paradigms); paying attention, non-judgmentally; encourages creativity and innovation.

*Communication* – mindfulness emphasizes an assertive communication style, through deep listening, and sharing perspectives.

*Decision Making* – enhancing perception/appraisal of situation or issues, taking broader perspectives, reframing, and accessing wisdom (i.e., valuing “gut” feelings, intuition, the body’s intelligence).

*Indirectly (organizational/employee benefits)*

Employee’s health and well-being are enhanced: health and well-being, healthcare cost savings, retention, less burnout, and increased productivity

**Other Organizations Embracing Mindfulness**

Other organizations have embraced mindfulness practices: Google, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Apple, Intel, Starbucks, and General Mills. Google has developed its own program – “Search Inside Yourself” as have other organizations.

**Scientific Research on Mindfulness**

* Dramatic upturn in research: NIH (National Institutes of Health) research funding - 2010 – 2014 funding went from a few grants to 136 awarded.
* Contemplative Mind in Life reported that peer reviewed research publications from 1998 through 2014 went from a few publications to 773 (the number of peer-reviewed publications as referenced by PubMed through 2014)
* NIH (National Institutes of Health) - Meditation: In Depth - https://nccih.nih.gov/health/meditation/overview.htm
* Scientific research related to work - http://www.mindfulnet.org/page18.htm
* American Mindfulness Research Association: monthly updates of peer reviewed articles – www.goamra.org
* How mindfulness works – Richard Davidson at the University of Wisconsin – fMRI studies - http://centerhealthyminds.org/about/founder-richard-davidson

**Additional Mindfulness References and Resources**

* Rick Hanson’s newsletter and much more – http://www.rickhanson.net/writings/just-one-thing/
* Insight Meditation Society, Barre, MA – www.dharma.org/
* Barre Center for Buddhist Studies www.dharma.org/bcbs/index.html
* Center for Mindfulness, University of Massachusetts, Worcester, MA – http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/stress-reduction/mbsr-8-week/
* Dharma Seed (free/donation requested) dharma talks – www.dharmaseed.org
* Mike Healy – Mindful Living Center offers MBSR training – www.mindfuLiving.org

*How to learn more about mindfulness:* The Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction(MBSR) workshop provides guidelines and practices for bringing mindfulness to stress/suffering that we all experience in life.Developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn at the Center for Mindfulness, University of Massachusetts in 1979, it is one of the most effective and researched stress reduction workshops available today. MBSR is taught and researched at US medical centers, universities, and elsewhere throughout the world. MBSR is offered at the Loran Smith Center on the Athens Regional Medical Center campus in Athens, Georgia.

*Presenter: Mike Healy, Ed.D., is certified to teach Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction by the Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. He has practiced meditation since 1977, Mindfulness meditation since 1985, and was certified to teach mindfulness in 2001. For more information, please contact Mindful Living, LLC, Athens Georgia: www.mindfuliving.org, mfhealy@bellsouth.net or call 706-543-0162*