

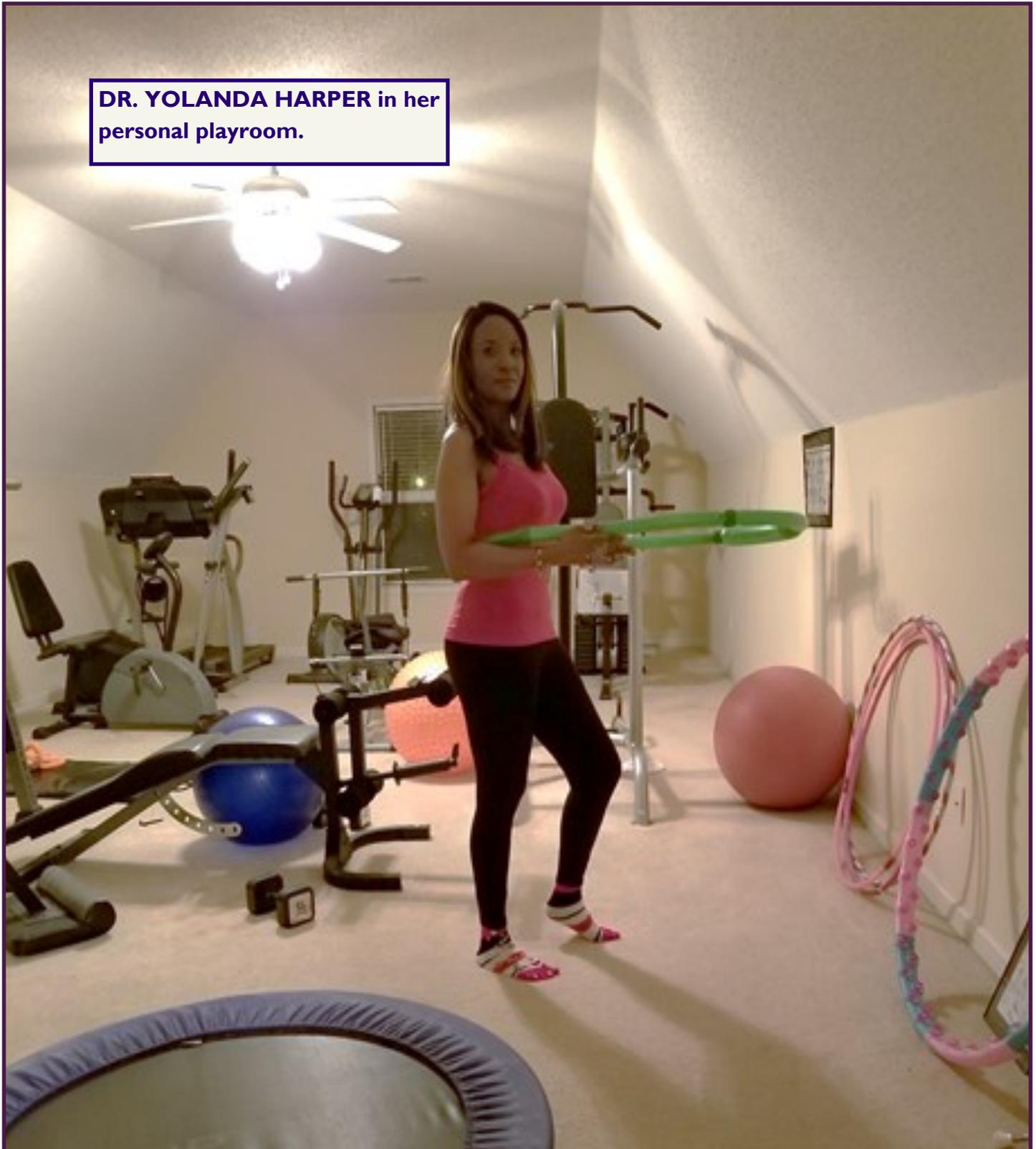
# HEALTH PROMOTION QUARTERLY

*A publication from the College of Health, Human Services, and Science*



APRIL—JUNE 2018

**DR. YOLANDA HARPER** in her personal playroom.



## Mindfulness – Living in the Moment

By Dr. Christine McMahon and Sandra Rebeor



Ahh, it's Spring! Smell the fresh air! Hear the birds sing! Stop and smell the roses! Doing these things helps a person be mindful. What does it mean to be mindful? Being mindful means to live in the present moment, to enjoy what is happening now and to not worry about what happened yesterday or everything that needs to be done tomorrow (Psychology Today, 2017).

Mindfulness can provide many health benefits including reducing stress and anxiety levels. Since stress is often due to things that happened before or people worrying about what may happen, mindfulness has been effective in lowering stress levels. It has also been beneficial in reducing pain in cancer patients, decreasing symptoms of depression, irritable bowel syndrome, and insomnia. Studies have also shown that mindfulness can help with learning and memory, perception, and regulating emotions (Greenberg, 2017).

### Areas of Mindfulness

There are many areas of mindfulness including eating, breathing, exercising, listening, controlling emotions, and controlling finances.

**Mindful Eating.** Mindful eating is more about being aware of what a person is eating. It also includes planning ahead, preparing meals, and consuming appropriate amounts of food. It can be easy to sit down and eat an entire carton of ice cream if a person is not thinking about his or her actions. Mindful eating means being aware of the why, what, where, when, and how much (The Center for Mindful Eating, 2017).

**Mindful Breathing.** Mindful breathing is an essential skill that can be learned to cope with stress, anxiety, and other negative emotions. It can also be used to calm a person after an emotional situation and to increase concentration and focus.

Try this mindful breathing exercise during stressful situations:

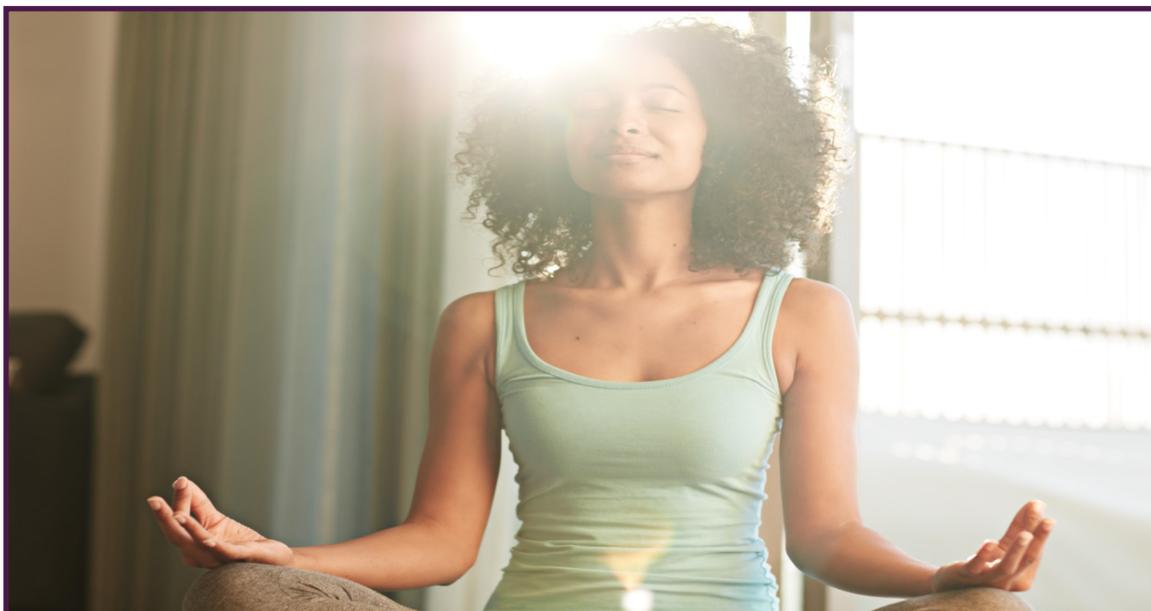
1. Take an exaggerated breath by deeply inhaling through your nostrils (3 seconds),
2. Hold your breath (2 seconds),
3. Exhale through pursed lips like you are blowing out a candle (4 seconds).

*In other situations:* Just observe each breath (no need to adjust it). Focus on: rise and fall of your chest or the sensation through your nostrils (The Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley, 2017).

**Mindful Exercise.** Mindful movement is a physical activity that is performed with inward focus. While walking, observe, listen, sense, feel, smell, appreciate, and admire your surroundings. These options named above integrate important elements, such as breath control, imagery, affirmation and meditation to help calm the body and mind to enhance well-being. If possible, try combining walking and exercise within Mother Nature to increase your moment-to-moment awareness, joy, and gratitude. Your emotional state will be grateful also.

**Mindful Emotional Regulation.** Emotional Intelligence (EI) is critical and includes self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Enhanced emotional mindfulness can minimize emotional reactivity, enhance cognitive focus, and enhance social relationships (Davis & Hayes, 2012). Emotional intelligence can affect performance at school or work, physical and mental health, and relationships at work and in your personal life.

Questions to ask: How am I feeling right now? What am I thinking right now? Can I stay in this moment right now? Can I breathe with what is happenings right now? It is crucial to allow your emotions to be present without judging them. Then, let them go!



**Mindful Listening.** Mindful listening entails focusing on the sounds in the environment, or listening to others and giving a person your full attention during a conversation. To practice mindful listening, sit quietly and try to absorb the sounds around you (Greenberg, 2017).

**Mindful Spending.** This area may be the most difficult of all mindfulness practices. Mindful spending is about thinking about your purchases and considering the impact of what you spend. Is it worth spending \$4,000 on new furniture if it is going to take you 8 months to pay it off? The next time you are making a big purchase, do the following:

1. Pause and take a moment to think about this purchase
2. Take 3 deep breaths
3. How will this purchase affect your life?
4. Can you afford it? Can you live without it?
5. Can you make a similar purchase that may be cheaper?
6. Can you split the cost with someone?
7. After considering these options, is this still a smart purchase?
8. Learn from this experience (Mindful Spending, 2017)

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## What? Me, SAD?

By Dr. Michael Weuste

"I don't know, I just lack any motivation like I used to. I hate the Midwest. It's like everyone pulls into their garage in October and doesn't come back out until May. It just feels like relentless gloom every time I go outside", Mary, a new counseling client continued, "We used to hike, canoe, go boating and even fish all winter but not here. It was refreshing to be outside not like this cold where I have to dress myself and the kids in layer after layer each time we want to go out. It's such a hassle. I wasn't even excited much about Christmas. I don't bother to go out and I don't feel the energy to meet friends or stuff. I just stay home in bed and sleep while the kids are at school. I'm calling it my 'hibernation' this year, and I feel bloated from eating all the time. I've gained a lot of weight and my family thinks I am crabby, but I just find myself feeling annoyed." Mary is in her early forties and married with two middle school children. Her husband had suggested she may want to talk about these experiences with her physician. Mary's physician was not really responsive but had suggested a regular exercise routine.

### Diagnosis of SAD

While listening to Mary, one starts to notice the symptoms of seasonal affective disorder (SAD). Seasonal affective disorder is a type of depression that has a recurring seasonal pattern. Defined as a form of depression, SAD is often diagnosed when an individual meets criteria for major depression coinciding with specific seasons for at least two years. This definition and treatment of SAD is noted in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM V) and acknowledged by the National Alliance of Mental Illness. Symptoms may also include the presence of symptoms that are present in major depression, such as feelings of guilt, a loss of interest or pleasure in activities previously enjoyed, ongoing feelings of hopelessness or helplessness, or physical problems such as headaches and stomach aches.

Often called the "winter blues" symptoms can include:

1. Feelings of hopelessness and sadness to the point of thoughts of suicide
2. Hypersomnia or a tendency to oversleep
3. A change in appetite, especially a craving for sweet or starchy foods which can cause weight gain
4. A heavy feeling in the arms or legs and a drop in energy level
5. Decreased physical activity and a sense of fatigue
6. Feelings such as irritability, increased sensitivity to social rejection, avoidance of social situations
7. Difficulty concentrating

As the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) notes risk factors include living away from the equator, a family history of depression or SAD, and a personal experience with depression. Being a young woman also carries a higher risk factor. NIMH also notes that some of the causes may be related to seasonal levels of serotonin, overproduction of melatonin, or lower levels of vitamin D (NIMH, 2016). Seasonal Affective Disorder can go underdiagnosed and the resulting symptoms not recognized by individuals who are affected by this form of depression. Between 4% and 6% of people in the United States suffer from SAD. Another 10% to 20% may experience it in a milder form. SAD is more common in women than in men (Mayo Clinic, 2018).

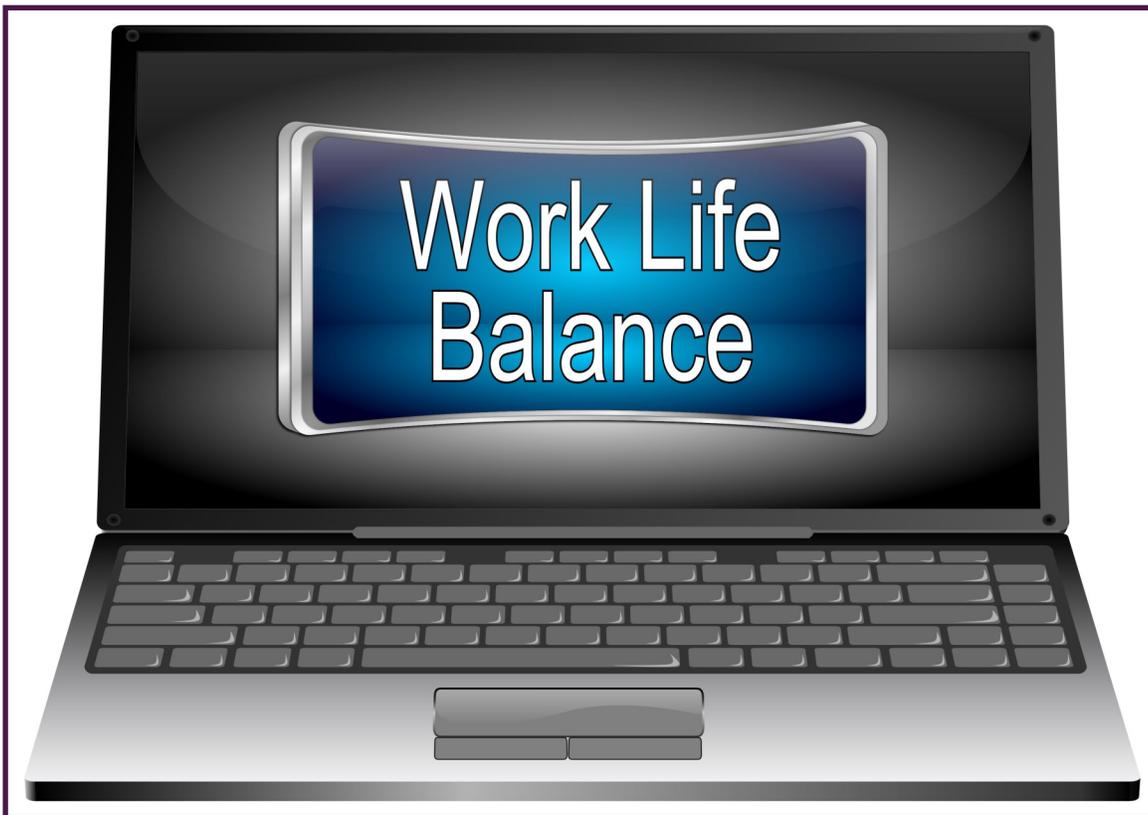
### Treatment of SAD

Often Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) are used, as with other forms of depression, to treat SAD (Melrose, 2015). Light therapy is often used to replace the diminished sunshine, particularly in the morning, of the fall and winter months using daily exposure to bright, artificial light. For some, attending a gym or joining indoor sports teams help in the exposure to light and energy as a means of replacing spring and summer activity (Grohol, 2016). Vitamin D has been found useful and in some cases, psychotherapy with a Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a type of therapy found useful. All diagnoses and approaches should be agreed upon between you and your health caregiver and alternative approaches to care of SAD should be discussed. This discussion may involve a referral to a psychiatrist.

**Complementary and Alternative Approaches**

According to the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) when utilizing complementary and alternative medicine one may be advised to consider St. John's Wort, Rhodiola Rosea, saffron, and other herbs (NCCIH, 2017).

Summarizing the research on SAD NCCIH notes often such treatments are over-the-counter dietary supplements categorized as nutrients, herbal and dietary supplements. Other treatments shown useful are Fish-derived omega-3 fatty acids and Dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) which is an androgen produced by the adrenal glands, levels of which tend to decrease during mid-life in men and women. Lower levels of DHEA have been reported in persons with major depression, and use of DHEA has been associated with improved mood. An increase in DHEA sulfate, the primary metabolite of DHEA, has also been associated with improvement in depression and dysthymia, (NCCIH, 2017).



Yoga, meditation arts, exercise, and acupuncture are often suggested from this perspective. Such approaches are beyond the expertise of the author and such a regime should be under the care of those providers in natural therapies who provide foundational, philosophical, applicable, and evidence-based approaches to holistic health.

If you have ever felt similar complaints and emotions during the fall through the start of spring, as Mary has, think about speaking to your physician about SAD and possible treatments. All diagnosis and approaches should be agreed upon between you and your health caregiver and alternative approaches to care of SAD should be discussed. ♦

## Registered Nurses: the development of positive coping strategies

By Dr. Robert Smiles

Stress and the need for caregivers to develop positive coping strategies are an ever present factor within the U.S. health care delivery system. Medical errors due to the inability of caregivers to deal with stress and changes in health care policies and procedures account for a vast degree of physical and psychological harm to both patients and caregivers. Studies conducted by Chard (2006) suggest that increased medical errors are often associated with registered nurses who have a difficult time coping with abrupt changes in procedural protocols. These changes can be seen when an industry is often updating both governmental and organizational policies, procedures, and expectations; therefore, nurses need to develop the ability to adapt and change. It is clear that caregivers, specifically nursing staff, need to develop positive coping strategies for improved positive health care outcomes for their patients and also as a means to preserve their own physical and mental health. The implementation of positive coping strategies also improves their relationships with co-workers, friends, and family.



It has been highlighted in multiple studies that mentorship is a primary method for the development of positive coping strategies. Over the course of their careers, registered nurses who develop positive coping strategies also develop friendships with co-workers and ultimately become mentored by senior nursing staff and administrators. Emulating positive behaviors can often be a positive first step when dealing with stress and stressful events that are associated with procedural and policy changes. Additionally, the ability to confide in others, specifically co-workers often aids in the development of positive coping strategies among caregivers and nursing staff. Confiding is also associated with trust or the ability to develop partnerships with individuals who have or are experiencing similar stressful events. Throughout their careers, nurses often encounter obstacles that may impede their ability to cope with stress in a positive manner. The ability to confide in others without feeling judged also provides nurses a platform to be imperfect. Nurses and caregivers who develop friendships and ultimately become mentored by senior staff develop the ability to weed out actions and behaviors that are not associated with positive coping mechanisms. Additionally, social support provides nursing staff an accessible forum to

share their unique experiences, collaborate with colleagues regarding positive behaviors, and implement positive behaviors that will ultimately empower nurses to expedite positive reactions over the course of their careers.

An equally important concept in the development of positive coping strategies centers on organizational culture. Organizations should foster and support their nursing staff regarding the development of positive coping strategies. Organizational culture is often referred to as the means to develop roots within an organization, meaning individuals develop an acceptance for the set norms, morals, and ethical codes of a given health care organization. However, one aspect of organizational culture that is often ignored or misunderstood is the need for management to be accessible. Healthcare organizations need to be transparent in terms of what they offer their nursing staff, what might be accessible regarding management support and social support groups that are sponsored by the healthcare organization. This transparency can be seen when senior nursing staff are involved regarding mentoring and educating new nurses in the areas of time management, procedural management, and ultimately stress management. An organizational culture that is committed to the physical and mental health of their nursing staff promotes feelings of acceptance and worthiness among their staff. Additionally, the accessibility of nurses to proven methods of stress management through mentorships and social support group's aids in the positive health care outcomes of both nurses and their patients.

Innovation and the development of positive coping strategies involves a culmination of personal lived experiences both positive and negative. Additionally, the assessment of knowledge gleaned from past and present mentors and their in-put regarding applied best practices that produce positive results may vary from individual to individual. It is important to note that specific concepts regarding stress management and the development of positive coping strategies may or may not work for all individuals; in other words, a specific concept may not be applicable for all caregivers and nurses. With that said, the idea or need for innovation becomes apparent as an individual moves forward within their own career paths. Both abrupt and long-term change processes surrounding patient care policies and procedures are known to cause a great deal of stress for nurses and hinder their ability to cope in a positive manner. Therefore, nurses often need to be innovative and develop the ability to adjust their unique coping strategies to fit their individual needs. The ability to become innovative in the development of positive coping strategies is an acquired trait that is honed and perfected over time; additionally, the health care delivery system is an ever changing market place and the influx of amended federal, state, and local policies and procedures often induces variant degrees of stress upon the nursing staff. Therefore, developing the ability to be innovative will provide nurses the flexibility needed regarding future development and application of positive coping strategies.

The development of positive coping strategies is a complex venture and can also be an arduous process for many who work in the health care delivery system; however, applying very specific techniques toward the goal of positive coping strategies, nurses can reap the benefits of reduced stress and a far more fulfilling career. The development of positive coping strategies may take several years to complete, the process often involves multiple factors such as the ability to trust and confide; however, nurses are often reluctant to trust and confide based on fear of being judged by their fellow co-workers and administrators. Once this hurdle is overcome, individuals can share common concerns, problems, and advice regarding what may or may not work for them. Mentoring and long-term friendships can be established to further aid in both networking and refinement of positive coping strategies; in other words, the more experienced nursing staff can share their best practices and insights into how refinements can be made to fit individual needs. Lastly, healthcare organizations can and should help to develop a culture of stress management for their nursing staff. Ultimately, this culture can be created through social support groups, continued education seminars and improved communications regarding best practices. ♦

## Asparagus? Don't mind if I do!

By Dr. Roxanne Beharie

I like asparagus. I mean, I like to snap off the ends, cook the edible parts, and then eat them. I like asparagus. I even like the white variety (otherwise known as white gold or the royal vegetable) when I am feeling celebratory, but I did not know that there is a purple variety of asparagus. Turns out the purple asparagus has a sweeter, milder flavor which is closer to the white variety than the green variety. Swoon! Plus, the purple variety has 4 percent of the recommended daily value for iron and 20 percent of the daily value for vitamin C per serving, 4 grams of protein per five spear serving, and 4 grams of total carbohydrates compared to the green variety which only has half the recommended daily value for iron, protein, and sugar, that the purple variety offers and only 15 percent of the daily value for vitamin C per serving. I will definitely be on the hunt for the purple variety during my next trip to the grocer.

Asparagus is also low in calories and is very low in sodium. It is a good source of vitamin B6, calcium, magnesium, and zinc, and is a very good source of dietary fiber. In fact, asparagus has even lent its name to the amino acid asparagine because the asparagus plant is relatively rich in this compound.

Like I said, I like asparagus, but I did not know that asparagus was popular, like having annual festivals in its honor, popular. There is even a music festival dedicated to asparagus. Don't believe me? Check these out: [the Annual British Asparagus Festival](#), [the San Joaquin Asparagus Festival](#), and [the AsparaFest Music Festival](#). This adoration should not be surprising given the many nutritional benefits of asparagus as well as its versatility when it comes to cooking styles. For example, you can steam it, bake it, stir-fry it, boil it, roast it, or sauté it. If you prefer raw vegetables, you can thinly slice it or shave it with a vegetable peeler for a great addition or base to a salad.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** If you decide to grow your own asparagus, do not eat the **red fruit/berry**; it is **poisonous** to humans. Only eat the young shoots.



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## What Health Means to Me...

**Dr. Yolanda Harper**  
Associate Professor &  
Lead Faculty—College of  
Health, Human Services,  
and Science

[Play video](#)



**Dr. Marjorie Estivill**  
Faculty Support and Development Associate II—  
College of Health, Human  
Services, and Science

[Play video](#)

## Continued from page 3 — Mindfulness – Living in the Moment

### Practices for being more mindful

Mindfulness takes practice. It trains the brain to be more focused and efficient. Practicing mindfulness allows you to work on becoming your best self and decrease stress (Tartakovsky, 2012).

Ways to practice mindfulness:

1. Practice during routine activities
2. Practice first thing in the morning
3. Allow your mind to wander but practice bringing it back to the present moment
4. Practice short sessions
5. Practice while you wait
6. Meditate

### Take-Aways for Increasing Your Mindfulness

Mindfulness entails creating a focus on the here and now. It is about enjoying the present moment instead of looking toward the next event. Mindfulness can be practiced in many areas including eating, breathing, exercising, regulating emotions, listening, and spending. To practice mindfulness, start small and try short sessions first thing in the morning. If your mind begins to wander, practice bringing it back to the present moment. Set goals for yourself and evaluate your progress. Consider giving yourself a reward to help you meet your mindfulness goals and finally, be grateful about the present moment! ♦

## Continued from page 8 — Asparagus? Don't mind if I do!

So, on your next outing to the grocer, pick up some asparagus (one or all varieties), and try this quick and easy recipe.

Shaved Raw Asparagus with Parmesan and Lemon Vinaigrette dressing

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 pounds large asparagus
- 1 cup coarsely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese (3 ounces)
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons warm water
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 small garlic clove, minced
- Pinch of sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon sweet paprika

### DIRECTIONS

Using a vegetable peeler, shave the asparagus into long, thin strips and transfer to a large bowl. In a smaller bowl, whisk together the olive oil, lemon, garlic, sugar, and paprika. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Drizzle vinaigrette over the asparagus and toss gently to combine. Sprinkle with the grated Parmigiano-Reggiano. Chill and serve. Yum!

Enjoy! :) ♦

**April**

- Alcohol Awareness Month
- National Donate Life Month
- National Minority Health Month
- 2-8 National Public Health Week – Healthiest Nation 2030: Changing Our Future Together
- 7 World Health Day
- 23-27 Every Kid Healthy™ Week

**May**

- Healthy Vision Month
- Mental Health Month
- National Physical Fitness and Sports Month
- 2-8 Children's Mental Health Awareness Week
- 9 Walk and Bike to School Day
- 18 HIV Vaccine Awareness Day
- 31 World No Tobacco Day

**June**

- Men's Health Month
- National Safety Month
- National Migraine and Headache Awareness Month
- 3 National Cancer Survivors Day ®
- 11-17 Men's Health Week
- 27 National HIV Testing Day

**Next Quarter Conferences**

2018 Healthy Aging Summit  
July 16-17, 2018 | Washington, DC

International Conference on Emerging  
Infectious Diseases  
August 26-29, 2018 | Atlanta, GA

2018 CityMatCH Leadership and MCH  
Epidemiology Conference  
September 12-14, 2018 | Portland, OR

# Contributors



**Dr. Christine McMahon** is an Assistant Professor in Ashford University's College of Health, Human Services, and Science. She received a Doctorate in Health Education from AT Still University in Kirksville, MO, and a master's degree in Exercise Science as well as a bachelor's degree in Kinesiology and Sports Studies from Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, IL.



**Sandra Rebeor** is a full time Instructor at Ashford's College of Health, Human Services, and Science and primarily teaches courses in the Health and Wellness program. Her educational background includes a Bachelor's in Business Administration from Campbell University and a Master of Science in Health Sciences: Emergency and Disaster Management.



**Dr. Micheal Weuste** has been a practicing social worker for 37 years and the last 25 years in psychotherapy practice. He is the chair of the Health and Human Services program and the new Human Services Leadership program at Ashford. Micheal resides in San Diego and is currently studying for a certificate in expressive therapies.



**Dr. Robert Smiles** is a full-time faculty member for Ashford University. Dr. Smiles earned a bachelor's degree in Zoology from the University of Maryland, a master's degree in Health Care Administration from Bellevue University, and a Ph.D in Health Care Administration from Capella University. Dr. Smiles proceeded to work as a marketing-admissions director and social worker for a long-term care organization in Tennessee.



**Dr. Marjorie Estivill** is a cultural anthropologist from Indiana University focused on the anthropology of teaching and learning. She is starting her second decade with Ashford University, working in faculty development through the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. Previous experiences include serving as an assistant professor at Zayed University in Abu Dhabi, UAE.



**Dr. Yolanda Harper** is an Associate Professor of Applied Behavioral Sciences (ABS). Yolanda joined Ashford in 2013 and teaches in ABS, Health & Human Services, Psychology, and the Honors College. Some of her areas of interest include communication in online courses, holistic health & wellness, assessment, program evaluation, inclusive excellence, psychology of music, and positive psychology.



**Dr. Roxanne Beharie** is an Assistant Professor with Ashford University. Dr. Beharie earned her doctorate in Public Health from Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland. Dr. Beharie also earned a BS in Exercise Science from the University of Pittsburgh and an MPA in Health Services Management from Mercy College.

### Mindfulness – Living in the Moment

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### What? Me, SAD?

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### Registered Nurses: the development of positive coping strategies

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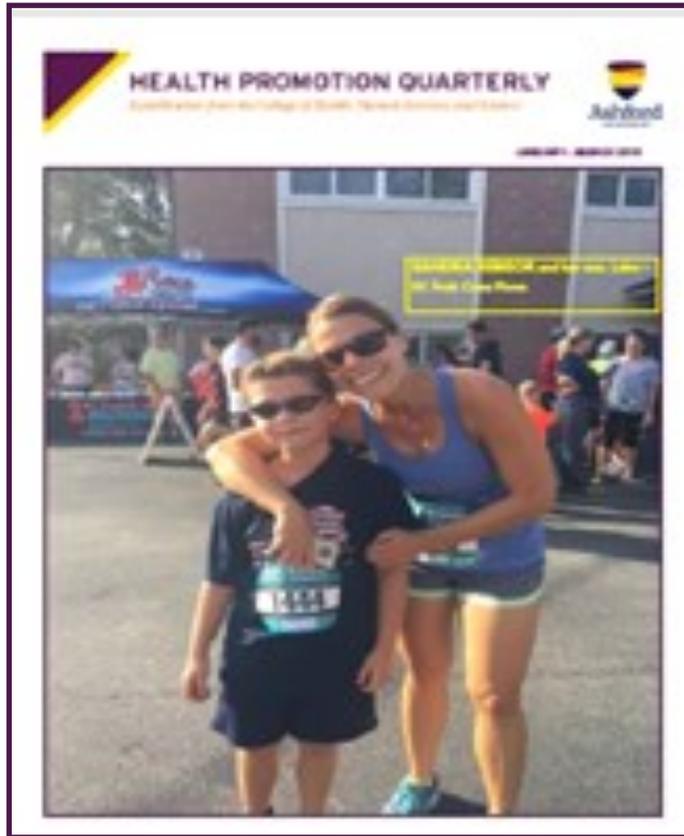
## Special Thanks

A very special thank you goes out to our copy editor for this edition, Heather Auger, Instructor of English, Division of General Education.

*“But the real secret to lifelong good health is actually the opposite: Let your body take care of you.”*

*-Deepak Chopra*

To view the January 2018 edition of the Health Promotion Quarterly newsletter, press the Ctrl key and click on the picture below:



Here's to your health!

If you would like to be a part of future editions of the Health Promotion Quarterly newsletter, including being featured on the cover, please email Dr. Roxanne Beharie, Editor-in-Chief, at [healthpromotionquarterly@ashford.edu](mailto:healthpromotionquarterly@ashford.edu).