



British Columbia Post Secondary
Counsellors' Association

Executive Bulletin June 2016

Reporting on:

**2016 PSCA Conference & AGM
Vancouver, BC**

**Body, Mind, and Soul: Well-Being on
Campus**

May 2 – 4, 2016



Sadly, another PSCA conference has come to an end but don't despair, our supreme commander, leader, captain, chieftain, head honcho and skipper otherwise known as **Cliff** (how did he want to be referred to again?) and his team are already busy planning our next one up in TRU territory. A huge call out to our beautiful friends and colleagues at Douglas College for a fabulous program and wonderful times this year. A difficult act to follow for sure! We also had the opportunity to honor **Heather Hyde**, an outstanding member of our association who is retiring after decades of dedication and devotion to student well-being. We will miss you Heather!!! As is tradition, below you will find reports on each of the workshops we enjoyed this year as well as minutes from our AGM and Ron's reflections on the food, accommodations and entertainment. I leave you with yet another verse (penned by our friends at Douglas) of our timeless chart topping hit '**Ode to PSCA**'...

Sixteen saw us convene at Vancouver's Robson Street.
 A 'Show and Tell' on Being Well, a Mindful retreat.
 Counsellors and students strive, to make our campus whole.
 Postulate and integrate... Body, Mind and Soul.

Chorus: P.S.C.Aaaaaaaay
 P.S.C.A.aaaaaaaaaaaaaa
 The Counsellors of BC

Submitted by Derrick Doige, PSCA Vice-President

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BC PSCA Annual General Meeting

Monday, May 2nd, 2016

Vancouver, BC

Executive Present:

President: Cliff Robinson
Vice President: June Saracuse
Membership Director: Derrick Doige
Treasurer: Sarah Bell
Secretary: John Scheunhage (absent)
Past President: Chris Balmer

1.0 Welcome

- 2016 PSCA AGM called to order at 4:00 PM by Cliff Robinson
- Noted that more than 25 % of the membership were present therefore quorum was reached
- Moved by Tami O’Meara to begin meeting and seconded by Chris Balmer. Motion passed.

2.0 Approval of the Agenda

- Review of agenda with request to add item 6.4: New Budget
- Moved to approve the agenda by Tami O’Meara and seconded by June Saracuse

3.0 Approval of the AGM Minutes of May 4, 2015

- As John, the former PSCA Secretary was unavailable, we were unable to obtain a copy of the May 4, 2015 minutes
- Approval of both sets of minutes will occur at our 2017 AGM

4.0 Business Arising from the Minutes of AGM 2015

- Minutes from the AGM 2015 were unavailable and will be reviewed at the next AGM

5.0 Reports

5.1 President

- Cliff Robinson provided his “sophomore” president’s report
- Discussed achievements over the past year

- Discussed need to create a Policy Committee to ensure our policies and standards are up-to-date and comply with the New Societies Act
- Appreciated the contributions of the out-going board and all PSCA members

5.2 Vice President

- As an outgoing member of the board, June Saracuse reflected on her growth from being a part of the PSCA board for many years
- Discussed VIU Regional conference and the opportunity for PSCA to offer many high quality training opportunities through our regional conferences

5.3 Treasurer

- Sarah Bell presented the General Statement of Income and Expenses for April 1, 2015 – March 31, 2016
- Members noted that there was no expense for the work done on the website by David Bell Brown. Sarah explained that this expense was incurred for a different fiscal year.
- Sarah presented the Statement of Assets as of March 31, 2016 as well as a review of the expenses from last year's conference

5.4 Membership Director

- Derrick Doige reported that PSCA now has 72 members. This is down slightly from last year, but Derrick believes more membership fees are on their way.
- Problems with the website have affected members' ability to pay/join; however, this problem has been rectified
- Discussion held re: needing to simplify the membership process through institutional membership

5.5 Conference Committee

- Steve Norris reported on behalf of the conference committee
- Despite initial low numbers, over 50 participants have now registered
- They were disappointed in the low numbers of people who registered for the one day conference but pleased with full conference registration
- Food costs, in particular the 18% built in gratuity, were very high this year forcing the conference committee to reduce the number of meals offered from previous conferences. With some last minute tweaks, the committee was eventually able to reduce the food costs by \$2000.
- Final budget ran \$1000 over; however, this will be mitigated slightly by some last minute registration
- Steve encouraged other institutions to host the conference in future years. He stated that the planning brought the Douglas counselling team

closer together.

5.6 Approval of the Reports

- Cliff moved to accept all reports as presented
- Seconded by Tami O'Meara. Motion passed

6.0 New Business

6.1 Policy Committee

- Cliff reported that the current PSCA constitution was written in 1987 and is out of date
- Cliff reported that the New Societies Act of 2015 will be replacing the Societies Act of 1977 on November 28th, 2016. Societies have two years from the date to be in compliance with the act.
- Cliff and Derrick would like to create a Policy Committee that will meet over the next year to update our standards and ensure the PSCA constitution is in compliance with the New Societies Act
- Cliff, Derrick and Tami to form the new Policy Committee (of Awesomeness)

6.2 Disaster Response Committee

- Amy and Chris discussed the need to develop a Disaster Response Network where institutions will share their counsellors and resources in the event of a significant event on a neighboring campus
- This idea was initiated by Ray deVries at a previous PSCA conference and Amy and Chris would like to see if there is still interest within the PSCA group
- Chris stated that he sees this as a part of an institution's overall Mental Health Strategy and Emergency response, yet often counselling teams are not a part of these plans. He reaffirmed the need for a psychosocial response to be a part of an institution's emergency response.
- Discussed the need to have an articulated agreement between the administration of neighboring institutions
- Most members felt a Disaster Response Committee would be worthwhile
- June suggested that the committee develop a list of recommendations/skills to provide information to disaster response teams on how counsellors can fit within an emergency response
- Chris and Amy to lead committee. Ideally they will have representation from all 4 regions. Members to connect with Chris and Amy if interested as well as join in the discussion on the PSCA website.

6.3 Recruitment Committee

- June suggested that the role of membership recruitment should not lie solely with the Membership Director
- June offered to partner with the Membership Director to lead a recruitment committee that would relook at how we market our membership. Specifically June suggested that we look at how to target millennials.
- June welcomed both student and regular PSCA members to join the committee and requested that we refer “tech savvy millennials” to her if they are interested in participating

6.4 New Budget for 2016/2017

- Sarah presented the proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year April 1, 2016 – March 31st, 2017
- Conference budget for 2017 has been increased from \$13 000 to \$16 000 to accommodate rising costs of hosting a conference
- Teleconference fees are higher this year because we are paying both this and last year’s fees
- Some discussion re: revising membership fees; however, group decided to leave the fees as is for now
- Move to accept the 2016/2017 budget as presented – June Suracuse
- Seconded – Linda Duarte. Motion Passed.

6.5 Website Update

- Chris met with David Bell Brown (website specialist) and reported that David is in the process of migrating the website from one server to another. This should improve future functioning of the website.
- Membership Director’s role will be much easier once the website is running effectively

6.6 Host for the 2017 and 2018 Conference

- TRU – “resigned and eager” to host the 2017 PSCA Conference
- Capilano University – to host the 2018 PSCA Conference

6.7 Nominations and Elections

- Tami explained and led the nomination process for the PSCA Executive and Board
- 2016- 2017 Executive:

President:	Cliff Robinson
Vice President:	Derrick Doige
Treasurer:	Sarah Bell
Membership Director:	Erin Smith
Secretary:	Tracey Sutton
Past President:	Chris Balmer

2016 MAL:

Langara:	Tim Charters
Kwantlen:	Laurie Detwiler
Capilano:	Karen Peardon
BCIT:	Judy Bushnell
UNBC:	Maria Walsh
Emily Carr:	Amy Kheong
UFV:	Tia Noble
UBCO:	Tracey Sutton
Douglas College:	Erin Smith
Selkirk:	Tami O'Meara
VIU:	Gemma Armstrong
VCC:	Ron Kee
UVIC:	June Saracuse
SFU:	Lisa Sookochoff
Quest:	?
UBCV:	?

- Motion to approve executive and MLA's listed above – Steve Norris
- Seconded – June Saracuse. Motion passed.

7.0 Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn 2016 AGM at 17:31 by Cliff Robinson
- Seconded by Tami O'Meara. Motion passed.

Submitted by Tracey Sutton (UBCO)

Treasurer's Report for May 2016 AGM

At the May 2016 AGM, I will be presenting:

1. General Statement of Income & Expenses for 2015/16 (April 1, 2015 to Mar. 31, 2016)
2. Statement of Assets as of March 31, 2016
3. Proposed Budget for 2016/17 (April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017)
4. PSCA Conference 2015 Statement of Income & Expenses – Schedule A

Comments Regarding the General Statement of Income & Expenses for 2015/16

Income: Membership fees decreased in direct proportion to decreased number of members. Please note that as I am in the process of getting our 2015 T5 'Statement of Income' for our dividends. The 2014 amount is used under line 7 of our income statement.

Expenses: 2015 Conference didn't require a grant/subsidy top up. The conference committee did a great job of controlling expenses. Conference Board expenses were lower than expected. We only had expenses for one Regional workshop in 2016, held at Vancouver Island University. Teleconference fees were 0 due to four invoices that weren't paid in the 2015-16 fiscal due to a mix up in the billing address. No interest was charged for late payment. The \$400 for webhosting is the last payment made to our previous webhost.

Comments Regarding the Statement of Assets

Our 5-year stepper GIC came due in 2013. The sum of \$6,196.68 was transferred into our bank account. A decision will need to be made in regards to re-investing a portion of the money that is currently sitting in our account. We experienced a slight decrease in the rate of return for the mutual/mortgage fund investments

Comments Regarding the Proposed Budget

Income: We anticipate that our membership will at least stay steady or increase slightly over the next year. The executive committee has discussed the idea of forming a new membership committee to focus on membership -increasing initiatives.

Expenses: The \$4,000.00 Regional Workshops budget line has remained the same despite only one region using \$1445.31 for a regional workshop in 2015, in the hopes that other regions will take advantage of this subsidy. The \$1,000.00 for the Strategic initiatives account line is for continued website development, as we are working with a new webmaster. The teleconference amount is higher to cover last year's expenses which will be paid from the current fiscal.

Submitted by Sarah Bell (Langara)

Accommodations, Food and Entertainment - PSCA 2016

Douglas College did not disappoint in this areas. That is not to say that conference delegates thought they would. They fed our bodies, minds and souls with great food, a relaxing and comfortable venue and a live band that got our blood flowing and helped to slim our waistlines.

Coffee, tea, wine, beer, snacks, entertainment and food was plentiful .The Conference organizing Committee noted a big part of the budget consumed this area but it was greatly appreciated.

The Listel Hotel was a venue that was very central and allowed delegates to get fresh air when needed and explore the West End. It was a great place to return to after these short diversions.

Muesli, fresh fruit, baked goods, gourmet sandwiches, tasty soups, a buffet dinner and the exotic pizza extravaganza at Forage to end the conference with “Ode to PSCA” sums up that we were well nourished throughout. Just writing makes me remember why I loathe packing lunch many days.

The host with the most, Lawrence Saracuse must not be forgotten when we talk of keeping us well. Lawrence, travels to PSCA with June, and he is so generous in his time to shop, stock, serve and clean up after the revelers in the Hospitality Suite. Crafts beers, red and white wine, other things to quench your thirst and snacks – those you may never buy at home but are great to share with others. Thanks Lawrence for your time and giving the delegates a place to unwind.

Conferences past had many musicians, singers and talents. Today we still have them but they tend to be more introverted than some of our past members perhaps. So the Hospitality Suite is more quiet and a place to connect in a different way. However, with some long-time members of PSCA at Douglas College (you know who you are) they wanted to dance, sing, and so they were very creative and arranged a local band to perform for 2 hours on Tuesday evening. It was a great way to congratulate Heather Hyde for her contribution to our group over three plus decades. Thanks to the Douglas gang for bringing us Terminal Station (great musicians and a wide variety to dance to if you were so inclined).

To the counsellors of Douglas College: “thanks for feeding us in so many ways”. PSCA is not just about learning, it is about sharing, it is about laughter, it is about rejuvenation, and it is about friendship.

Submitted by Ron Kee (VCC)

Laughter Yoga with Dr. Kasim Al-Mashat

(Monday May 2, 11 am to 12:30 pm)

Our first professional development session of the conference was learning about the benefits of laughter yoga. Kasim gave us some conceptual background about how laughter can foster mental, physical and emotional well-being. He then engaged us with experiential exercises involving walking, clapping, moving, and plenty of verbal and social interaction with one another. To finish, he invited us to do an exercise that allowed for embodiment and reflection. This session created some delightful, positive energy and was a great way to start the day and the conference.

Submitted by June Saracuse (UVIC)

Campus Wellness Initiatives

(Monday May 2, 1:30 – 3:30 pm)

A. Douglas College - Meredith Graham

Meredith Graham is the David Lamb Coordinator of the student mental health initiative at Douglas College. The focus of these initiatives is on “building ourselves up”, connecting people, and fostering student engagement. They are very interested in discovering how students contribute to wellness on campus. Groups of employees at Douglas College from departments meet to discuss campus wellness. Wellness is not relegated to counselling and athletics but involves a whole campus approach. Meredith presented an engaging video entitled “you can play”. In her Prezi, the facets of the campus initiatives were described as:

a) Student Engagement

The emphasis is on decreasing loneliness in providing support and encouraging students to use campus services. Highlighted were wellness and “get healthy” days.

b) Counselling Services

Counselling services were highlighted including personal counselling and the proactive contributions counsellors make to the campus community. Specialized support for faculty and other programs are featured. Mental health screenings, art therapy, juice and therapy dogs are examples.

c) International Counselor – Angela

Featured are the International Café and cultural connection programs, encouraging engagement in life on campus for international students.

d) Douglas Student Union

Meredith is the David Lamb coordinator. At the end of exam times they have therapy dogs and “chillout” sessions. They feature student health and dental programs, and the ombudsperson as services.

e) Safety, Security and Risk Management

This area features “safer-walk”, Douglas college alerts – cell phone app, Douglas College health and safety committee-there is a student position on this committee.

f) Peer Health Educators (started this year)

These individuals will try to engage students in all areas of wellness. There will be theme days for future wellness topics. These will incorporate health – minded activities. This is a peer to peer focused initiative.

g) The Learning Center

The learning Center focuses on reducing stress and anxiety, providing study skills and accommodations for student exams.

B. University of British Columbia

Patty Hambler and Amanda _____

Patty is the Associate Director of Student Development with responsibility for the Mental Health Strategy. The theme is “live well to learn well”. There initiatives feature wellness outreach and include: The wellness center, wellness peers, peer wellness coaching, and nurse on campus. The focus is on health education and promotion. They provide support for students at the wellness Center to navigate campus resources.

a) The Wellness Center (in the library)

1. Student tips for eating healthy on a budget, sleeping better and managing stress.
2. Buying safe-sex products and having consent discussions
3. Well-being strategies discovering other campus professionals and peer to peer helping

b) Wellness Peers

15 – 30 peers training – 3 to 4 days/2 hour training sessions

Peer programs and network; outreach communication; 6 to 8 hours per week

c) Nurse on Campus

Bringing regular nurses from the clinic into student spaces on campus during the week on five locations. Outreach to students. Two hours each.

d) Peer Wellness Coaching

Funded by the Teaching and Learning Center. Trained volunteers coach on a one to one with peers. They provide coaching for well-being goals, also using a secure email system with online components. Online services including non-synchronous chat support. They integrate wellness into all of the coaching including career, academic and personal support.

e) Thrive at UBC

Includes “stress less for exam success”; mental health symposium; live well – learn well campaign; healthy minds blog; sexual health and safety

C. Vancouver Island University

Gemma Armstrong

Included in their mental health strategy initiatives are:

a) Reducing stigma campaign

b) 90 minute educational session entitled “Supporting Students in Distress”

This features recognize, respond and refer, covering the signs of student distress, supporting and responding through their own experience.

There is another workshop on suicide prevention. Both include an evaluation survey.

D. Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU)

Featured in this presentation were peer support, a promotional video, “pieces of mind conference”, and Sexpo

Also featured were a Peer Support Program providing:

1 to 1 support; referral to resources; mental health awareness and events; peer led workshops; wellness programming

Benefits to students and to volunteers were articulated. Benefits to volunteers included: opportunity to help, rewarding experience, teamwork, networking, leadership, event planning.

There are 24 hours of training offered over sequential dates.

They all participate in “Big Wellness Day”

E. Changing the Culture of Substance Use

Tim Dyck -Researcher and Coordinator

The Changing the Culture of Substance Use project is contained within the partners of mental health and addiction CARBC, which is connected to healthy minds-healthy campuses. Tim is both a researcher and educator in this area. The philosophy utilizes a socio—ecological approach to substance use. It is culturally sensitive to the way of exploring the phenomenon of substance use on campus. The aim is to foster a dialogue and discussion to raise the level of awareness and literacy around substance use on BC campuses. There are members from many post-secondary campuses who are involved in creative initiatives within their institution. It is recommended to check out the web presence for CCSU-

<http://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/carbc/projects/active/projects/ccsu.php>

F. Healthy Minds Healthy Campuses

Sarah Joesse – Coordinator

Healthy Minds is both an online resource network and community of practice for professionals working in postsecondary campuses involved with mental health and substance use in their work portfolios in some fashion. The words people speak are powerful. Healthy Minds also takes a socio—ecological approach to all of the elements that promote student well-being on campus. The resources are incredibly useful and plentiful, and have supported the development of many mental health strategies across Canada in postsecondary. This resource connects professionals throughout the postsecondary network providing support, dialogue, knowledge exchange, webinar education, open-space initiatives dot-mocracy, supporting the notion that we all need to be collaborative within the culture and systems in which we work. It is highly recommended to check out their website, and to ensure someone from your institution stays involved with this valued partner in postsecondary counselling.

<https://healthycampuses.ca/>

Submitted by Chris Balmer

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy: From Theory to Practice - Dr. Mark Lau

(Tuesday May 3, 9 am – 5 pm)

To “be” or to “do” was **not** the question during our full day training at the PSCA conference this year, but rather to both “be and do.” In his introduction to Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), Dr. Mark Lau led us through a series of mindfulness exercises to support both our professional and personal growth. By being both therapist and client throughout the day, Dr. Lau helped us negotiate the paradox of being and doing by combining mindfulness practice with theoretical discussion.

So how do we both “do” the skills and teach them to clients while “being” open to our own and our client’s experiences? Dr. Lau encourages us to engage in open, honest and curious dialogue that does not suggest that we know the answer, but instead allows us to model “being” for clients. By engaging in mindfulness exercises and modeling mindfulness he teaches clients to notice their automatic thoughts in a gentle, curious way; to notice what happens to their thoughts when they’re feeling down; to notice their feelings when engaged in negative thoughts; to recognize that their thoughts do not necessarily represent them nor represent truth; and that they can find relief by grounding themselves in distress and being open to “what is.” Mindfulness and CBT converge when clients can respond mindfully to their depressed thoughts and feelings without necessarily reacting to them.

Whether working with the individual or group, the MBCT program is taught through a series of eight sessions. These sessions are summarized below, but a more complete description can be found in the book ***Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression*** by Zindel V. Segal, J. Mark G. Williams, and John D. Teasdale.

Session One: Awareness of automatic pilot

Practice: Raison Exercise

Through mindfully using the senses to experience a raison, clients learn what mindfulness is and how we can change an experience by paying close attention to it. This teaches clients that they can step out of “doing-mode” and enter “beginner’s mind”. They can step out of automatic pilot and focus on experience in the moment even when they are distressed.

Practice: Body Scan

Clients learn to direct, sustain and shift attention through this longer meditation. Clients are encouraged to practice mindfulness when doing routine activities at home.

Session Two: Living in our heads

Practice: Body Scan

This provides an opportunity for clients to continue to explore direct bodily experience while directing their attention to different parts of the body.

Practice: Walking down the street exercise

Clients visualize themselves walking down the street and seeing someone they know. They look forward to connecting with this person and wave and smile at them. This person walks by without acknowledging them. Clients discuss how they interpret this scenario and begin to see how mood and automatic thoughts shift our interpretation and response to this situation.

Practice: Pleasant events calendar

Clients are encouraged to pick one pleasant experience each day and to pay attention to how this experience feels in the body. They are also asked to continue practicing mindfulness in routine activities such as eating.

Session Three: Gathering the scattered mind

Practice: stretch and breathe meditation

Clients are led through a combined stretch and breathe meditation where they are encouraged to use breath and body sensations to return to the here and now. Clients may feel some discomfort but are encouraged to feel this discomfort rather than turn away.

Practice: Unpleasant events calendar

Clients are given an opportunity to notice how we both avoid and create pain by dwelling in the past/future. They are encouraged to disengage from this time travel by being fully present and available to their experience whether it be negative or positive.

Session ends with 3 Minute Breathing space.

Session Four: Recognizing aversion

Practice: Longer meditation attending to breath, body, thoughts and sound

Clients are guided through a longer 30 – 40 sitting meditation where they are encouraged to expand their awareness to breath, body, thoughts and sounds. They are encouraged to simply notice how their feelings, thoughts and physical sensations affect the other. Clients then discuss the symptoms of depression and the ways people typically respond to unpleasant feelings e.g. sadness may result in resistance; low mood may result in rumination.

Clients complete the Automatic Thoughts Questionnaire. They learn that they believe these automatic thoughts more or less depending on mood state.

Session ends with three minute breathing space and/or mindful walking.

Session Five: Allowing /Letting Be

Practice: Sitting Meditation/Working with difficulties.

In a group setting, clients are encouraged to bring a difficulty to the meditation (3/10 pain level). Through the meditation they are encouraged to bring awareness to the physical sensations associated with the unpleasant experience, and approach the experience with a gentle, kind awareness. What happens when they allow the sensations to be just to be as they are?

Therapist may share "*The Guest House*" by Rumi

Session Six: Thoughts are not facts

Practice: Three minute breathing space with a focus on thoughts.

Clients are encouraged to be mindful of the emotion fueling the thoughts, but to just watch the thoughts come and go. Clients are encouraged to change the relationship with their thoughts by seeing them as mental events rather than truth.

Clients are also encouraged to write their thoughts down on paper and to see them as separate from themselves. Rather than judging themselves for these thoughts, clients are encouraged to bring kindness and compassion towards them.

Session Seven: How can I best take care of myself?

Practice: Three minute breathing space

In session seven participants address the balance between achievement (doing mode) and concern for well-being (being mode). Clients are encouraged to notice the links between activity and mood by making a detailed list of their daily activities. From there they divide the activities into two columns: 1) activities that nourish you; and 2) activities that deplete you. Clients are then asked to explore these lists to determine how they might do more nourishing activities while dealing more skillfully with the activities that drain them. Using the three minute breathing space, clients can explore ways they might change their relationship with what drains them or ways to spend more time noticing what energizes them.

Clients are then encouraged to identify the symptoms of depression and create an action plan for dealing with low mood. They are asked to view the action plan as an experiment without prejudging how it will make them feel. The action plan always begins with a three minute breathing space to bring mindfulness to their current state. They are then asked to complete activities that are pleasant or give them a feeling of mastery.

Session 8: Maintaining and Extending New Learning

Practice: Session begins with a body scan prior to clients considering how they will make their new mindfulness practice a part of their everyday life.

They review what they have learned over the “8 Week Experiment” and what they would like to continue as they leave group. Community and on-line resources are shared.

The therapist shares the poem *“The Summer Day”* by Mary Oliver.

Throughout the eight sessions the therapist follows the process of inquiry where the counsellor must balance the desire for change while at the same time accepting what is. Dr. Lau describes the process of inquiry as having three layers: 1) noticing sensations, thoughts, and feelings within oneself; 2) dialoging to put the “noticing” in a personal context of understanding. For example, asking, “What happened after you became aware that your mind wandered? Is this pattern familiar?”; and 3) linking to the aim of the program by connecting what they learned in layer 1 and 2 to a wider context of understanding. For example, asking the client “How might this information/ practice, help you stay well?” This layer elicits teaching points from the whole group’s experience.

Throughout this discussion, the therapist is continually balancing the curriculum with what arises. The therapist models mindful presence by avoiding the desire to fix and analyze, but instead trusting the process and what emerges.

To become effective MBCT therapists, Dr. Lau recommends therapists develop daily mindfulness practices, complete the 12 month teacher training program, and engage in ongoing MBCT supervision. He will be hosting a 5 day MBCT Professional Training retreat on Cortes Island this summer. For more information, please contact Dr. Lau at mark.lau@vancouvercbt.ca.

Submitted by Tracey Sutton (UBCO)

Yoga and Mindfulness in Counselling – Samantha Beveridge

(Wednesday May 4, 9 – 10 am)

Just around six years ago a friend noticed I could barely cross my legs and challenged me to attend a yoga class with her. As someone who will try anything once, I enthusiastically accepted the challenge, but secretly was thinking “Ha, me – yoga – I don’t think so”! But, off we went and to my complete and utter surprise, despite the buckets of sweat pouring down my face (it was a hot yoga class), I really enjoyed it. I went back the next day and the day after that and within a couple of weeks, I was a bona fide “yogaholic”. At first, I noticed changes to my physical health. I became more toned and flexible and my skin which had always been chronically dry - drastically improved. Following that, I noticed I felt more calm and capable of handling different challenges that came up. I became more confident, and with that came a big measure of more self-acceptance and compassion. I remember hearing one of my yoga teachers saying something like “I’m not teaching you yoga, I’m teaching you how to love yourself”. Before yoga, I had started exploring some mindfulness practice, but yoga took that to an entirely different level and inspired me to start learning about the work of Peter Levine, Pat Ogden and other somatic based therapies. In a nutshell, not only did being introduced to yoga change my personal life, it also changed my professional life and how I work with clients (students).

My apologies for the rather long personal introduction, but I guess you can now understand why I was so excited to see Samantha (Sammy) Beveridge’s Yoga and Mindfulness in Counselling presentation on our PSCA 2016 itinerary. And Sammy didn’t disappoint! She started her presentation with a brief introduction of yoga and mindfulness and then discussed how transformative yoga had been in her own personal/professional journey. Accordingly, Sammy chose the topic of Yoga and Mindfulness in Counselling for her Master’s thesis study. She interviewed 6 clients about their experience of having counselling with a dual certified therapist (yoga & counselling). Two of the main themes that emerged from her interviews were that yoga informed therapists encouraged clients to be mindful and curious about their body (bottom-up processing) and the therapists appeared to be highly attuned and present for their clients. In the words of one of her participants:

“Yoga in counselling helps to build personal capacity and resilience. When I don’t know what to do and I feel out of control in my life, I can come back to my breath and body and connect in. I can pay attention to or even change aspects of my experience (even when nothing external will shift or change). This has greatly increased my capacity to sit with difficult experiences, emotions and thoughts; to wait to act until I am sure that action is best for me – rather than acting for the sake of acting to release the tension caused by difficulty”.

Speaking from personal experience, pre-yoga in my life, I was much more inclined to try to help clients by looking at their “irrational thoughts” or problem solving. I guess you could call this “a doing way of counselling”. Now, I feel much more comfortable just being present and facilitating self-awareness, curiosity and observation. I think Sammy described it “as holding space for clients” or in other mindful terms a ‘being way’ of counselling. When our clients are able to sit with their emotions in a safe non-judgmental place, their ‘window of tolerance’ expands - building resilience, self-regulation and often self-compassion.

Sammy also noted that many of her participants reported that the “bottom-up” approach of processing often enabled them to access psychological content and facilitate embodied insights and catharsis. How many times in the past have I heard clients say “I know what I think I should do or I know in my head it wasn’t my fault, but I don’t feel that deep in my body”. This body centered approach appears to help clients achieve that ‘felt sense” not only in their thoughts but also in their nervous systems.

While Sammy’s participants didn’t actually practice traditional yoga postures in their counselling sessions, the inclusion of yoga focused more on nonspecific movement and breath awareness, there are a number of well-known trauma experts like Bessel van der kolk who highly endorse Trauma Sensitive Yoga as part of a person’s healing and recovery. Yoga can be a way to help clients slowly rediscover their bodies, sometimes after years of disconnection. I routinely recommend for my clients to attend a regular yoga class of their liking. Not only do they experience the numerous health benefits, but they also seem to benefit more from our time together in the counselling office.

On a side note, Sammy’s mentor/yoga teacher while living in Kamloops was Katrina Ariel <http://www.yogawithkatrina.com/> .

Submitted by Derrick Doige

Mindfulness and Neuroscience Dr. Geoff Soloway

(Wednesday May 4, 10-30 am – 12:30 pm)

Dr. Geoff Soloway has been working in the area of health promotion, mindfulness and wellbeing for 15 years. Dr. Soloway has worked as an Instructor at University of Toronto (UofT) and University of British Columbia (UBC) and as a consultant offering mindfulness-based workshops and programs.

Take Five

Dr. Soloway is offering an approach called “Take Five,” which is a mindfulness tool. It simplified the mindfulness practice down to its essentials with the goal of making it more accessible and

less disruptive to the daily routine. Rather than half-hour or even hour-long meditations, the Take Five approach involves short mindfulness breaks that can be as little as two minutes and don't require the participant to change settings.

It's a five step process designed to help people flip from thinking to sensing mode which is how to get into the present moment and be mindful.

The five core steps are:

Step 1: Notice the cue (for example, an object)

Step 2: Notice something new

Step 3: Notice the body

Step 4: Notice the breath

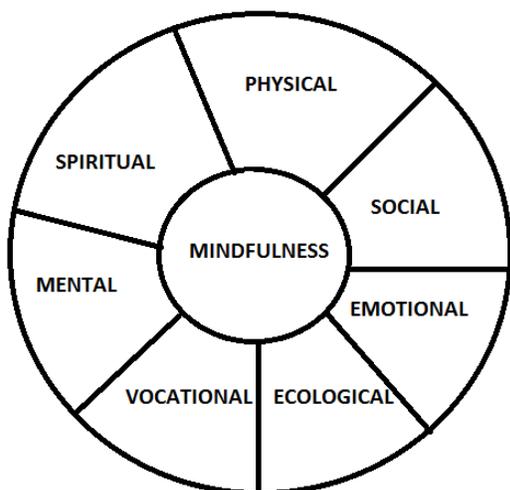
Step 5: Notice now

Holistic Wellness

Dr. Soloway taught a mindfulness-based wellness Education course at OISE/U of T for teachers-in-training based on the mind/body/spirit framework. He learned from teaching the course that when teachers are being reflective in activities, being more present, and skillfully adaptive in the moment they learned more. Dr. Soloway also found the teachers to be more socially and emotionally competent as a result of being reflective and mindful.

Bringing Together Art and Science of Mindfulness

Contemplative neuroscience incorporates western perspective (looking from outside in) and Eastern perspective (looking from inside out) in the arts and humanities, the physical and natural sciences, and the social sciences. Two leading organizations are Mind and Life Institute and Centre for Healthy Minds. On the topic of neuroplasticity, Dr. Soloway gave the example of walking in a path in the forest. When we start something new, it may be difficult; however, the more we practice, the easier it gets and the bigger the pathway. Our brain is changing based on our experiences. It has been found that plasticity is present throughout life, and not just during early development. Dr. Soloway included the 2 paradigms of [Thinking – Sensing] and [Doing – Being] and went over the Default Mode Network and Task Positive Network (present moment).



Studies have shown that various parts of the brain are activated based on a person's activity/emotions. Dr. Soloway highlighted the anterior insula and amygdala and gave the example of amygdala hijack. This occurs when amygdala is activated during a stressful situation, the person experiences emotions, and sees threats. As some emotional information goes directly to the amygdala

without engaging the neocortex, it can cause a strong emotional response that precedes more rational thought.

According to researchers, our minds wander 50% of the time and “a wandering mind is an unhappy mind.” We can optimize executive functions through mindfulness, such as walking meditation (notice something red and use it as a reminder to draw back to present moment) and spotlight of attention, where we intently aim and sustain by focusing on the breath, and keeping attention to the breath. When the mind wanders, redirect it and bring the focus back to breathing.

*Interpersonal mindfulness exercise: what is the area of the wheel you would like to work on and to bring mindfulness into that area (using the holistic wheel)?

No/Self

The concept of No/Self and mindlessness were presented in working with depressed clients where mindfulness practices help clients to widen the scope of self and lessen the focus on self. The idea is that if the clients are able to have an “Experiential self” (in the moment, no self) and not caught in the thoughts of self (with less self-talk), clients will learn to maintain and focus their attention, accepting their experience in an open-minded and curious rather than a judgmental way. They will also learn to return to the present when their minds wander and ruminating thoughts take over.

Dr. Soloway introduced the 30 day mindfulness challenge and showed a video of a Canadian University participating in campus initiative. The Challenge platform is available anytime, anywhere and on any device, helping to make mindfulness relevant and engaging for all. The time commitment is just 5 to 10 minutes a day. Key impact: health and wellbeing; conflict resolution, performance, communication.

Each participant enrolled in the Challenge can invite a buddy at no additional cost. Having a buddy join them will improve engagement and completion in the program. Dr. Soloway would like to invite all campuses to participate in the challenge. The cost is depending on the campus and can be further discussed with his team. For more information, Dr. Soloway can be reached at 778 688 1028 or Geoff@mindwellcanada.com

Submitted by Johnny Liu (Emily Carr)