

NIH has spent \$100M on mindfulness meditation

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Published December 16, 2014

Washington Free Beacon

“The advantage of this is that it actually doesn’t cost anything,” said Karen May, a vice president at Google, explaining how her company offers “mindfulness” classes to its employees.

Mindfulness is a New Age kind of meditation that focuses on the present moment “non-judgmentally,” tracing its origins to Buddhism. The growing phenomenon was the subject of a *60 Minutes* segment on Sunday, for which May and other fans of the practice were interviewed.

“We’re just asking you to sit and know that you’re sitting,” explained Jon Kabat-Zinn, the founder of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and author of the book *Wherever You Go, There You Are*. “When you’re in the shower next time check and see if you’re in the shower,” he advised viewers.

The segment featured Rep. Tim Ryan (D., Ohio), a so-called “rock star among mindfulness evangelists” who earmarked nearly \$1 million to teach mindfulness to preschool students in his district. The \$982,000 project provided deep breathing exercises, and “Peace Corners” for kids in Youngstown, Ohio.

Ryan said he practices mindfulness on the House Budget Committee and hosts weekly meditation sessions for members and staff. No Republicans attend.

The congressman “really believes it can change America for the better,” as does the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Contrary to May’s assertion, mindfulness has cost taxpayers a fortune. The *Washington Free Beacon* analyzed 81 active studies on mindfulness that have cost taxpayers more than \$100 million. Included in the total were all studies in which mindfulness is used as a central component in the research.

Ryan’s hometown is not the only place where schools are trying out mindfulness at the taxpayer’s expense.

A “school-based mindfulness and yoga intervention to prevent substance use among disadvantaged, urban youth” is costing \$749,751 in Baltimore. Innovation Research and Training, Inc., a social sciences firm in Durham, N.C., is conducting two similar studies for elementary students and high schoolers, costing \$457,921, and \$199,449, respectively.

IRT’s “Master Mind” course involves “mindful breathing, mindful movements, and mindful journeys.”

Mindfulness is proposed as the solution for a wide range of diseases and conditions for nearly every demographic.

A \$42,676 study is using mindfulness to help women drink less during PMS, and another \$1,399,153 grant attempts to use the technique to combat “menstrually related mood disorders.”

A \$729,352 project is testing the technique as a coping skill to reduce stress for gay men. Obese people can also mindfully meditate to a healthy weight, according to the hypothesis of several NIH grants.

Mindfulness-based stress management is being integrated into a workplace weight loss program in one \$359,177 study. A “family-based mindful eating intervention” is targeted at teens.

The \$412,216 study argues mindfulness is a “unique and novel scientific approach.”

Yale University is conducting its own family-based mindfulness intervention to prevent obesity, at a cost of \$428,873. Another study is promoting healthy dietary and exercise habits in adolescents for \$432,541.

A \$5,668,102 project targets “automatic eating patterns,” while another is testing mindful eating and “mindful walking exercise,” which Anderson Cooper demonstrated during *60 Minutes* by walking as slowly as he could. That project has cost taxpayers \$12,916,105 since 2004.

Yoga and mindfulness is being used for young adults with irritable bowel syndrome

(\$690,101), youth with bipolar disorder (\$358,489), HIV positive youth (\$963,315), and teen moms (\$649,093).

Even prisoners are getting into mindfulness. A \$905,984 study is creating a “culturally tailored, [mindfulness meditation] MM-based relapse prevention intervention for incarcerated substance users.”

Studies are also questioning whether mindful breathing therapy can reduce problem drinking among college students (\$332,232) and risky sexual behavior (\$421,705).

A mind-body intervention is being used on pregnant women to reduce their “perceived stress” (\$638,682), to “increase meaningful coping” among schizophrenics (\$214,830), and impact cocaine addiction (\$744,768).

Mindfulness advocates such as Kabat-Zinn believe that technology is causing too many distractions, and he makes everyone turn over their cell phones before attending his retreats. Ironically, the NIH is working on several projects that will deliver mindfulness training through mobile technology.

Three projects developing mindfulness apps to quit smoking have cost \$683,474, and a breathing meditation program to reduce blood pressure via smart phones has cost \$1,370,503.

Mindfulness is also seen as the solution for major depressive disorder (\$137,160), treatment-resistant depression (\$3,512,460), residual depressive symptoms (\$557,481), social anxiety disorder (\$2,419,692), anxiety (\$486,099), and generalized anxiety disorder (\$812,162).

Mindful meditation is being tested to treat migraines (\$1,434,134), as a cure for the common cold (\$2,192,599), and a number of diseases, including cardiovascular disease (\$5,983,580), sickle cell disease (\$32,758), Type 1 Diabetes (\$2,343,122), Type 2 Diabetes (\$706,244), and high blood pressure (\$734,857).

Parenting with mindfulness encourages “nonjudgmental acceptance of self and child,” costing \$3,137,880. Family caregivers are the subject of another study trying to make them capitalize on “gratitude, mindfulness, positive reappraisal, personal strengths, and acts of kindness,” for \$1,002,347.

One study compares using mindfulness to stress-reduction techniques for mice (\$414,907). Mindfulness can also be blended with the Chinese martial art Tai Chi, which is being used for training children with ADHD (\$262,216).

Meditating to limit chronic pain is the subject of numerous active studies totaling \$7,908,516. Six studies examining neural functions, brain mechanisms, and psychological factors during mindfulness total \$5,105,949. Another \$1,629,592 is going to projects testing meditation to reduce asthma.

There are dozens more, indicating that the feds are spending at least \$100,183,860 on research related to mindfulness.

While the NIH is exploring the possibilities of mindfulness for any and every ailment, Kabat-Zinn says mindfulness is not for everyone.

“It’s not a big should,” he said. “It’s not like, ‘Oh now one more thing that I have to put in my mind, now I have to be mindful.’”

“It’s not a doing at all,” Kabat-Zinn added. “In fact, it’s a being. And being doesn’t take any time.”

UPDATE 2:32 p.m.: *Due to an editorial arithmetic error, an earlier version of this story incorrectly reported that the total amount of NIH spending on ‘Mindfulness’ research was \$92.9 million. The actual number is \$100.2 million. We regret the error.*

<http://freebeacon.com/issues/nih-has-spent-92-9-million-on-mindfulness-meditation/>