

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

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David Van Nuys interviews Elisha Goldstein, PhD

Elisha Goldstein: When people become more aware of their habitual styles of thinking, it's just a habit almost that they've developed over time. They can learn to become aware of that, not judge it as good or bad, but just almost with the sense of curiosity. It's almost, like I said before, as if they're noticing it for the very first time and say "Oh, catastrophizing is happening right now." As soon as they notice that, they've stepped outside of it. It's no longer controlling them.

David Van Nuys: That was the voice of my guest, Dr. Elisha Goldstein. Elisha Goldstein, PhD, is a clinical psychologist in private practice in Los Angeles, California, and a trained teacher of the increasingly popular mindfulness-based stress reduction. He stands at the progressive end of integrating mindfulness into the therapeutic setting. He's personally been integrating concepts and behaviors of mindfulness into his daily life, and has helped his clients supply these concepts in both clinical settings and their daily lives.

Dr. Goldstein has published the article "Sacred Moments: Implications on Well-Being and Stress" in the *Journal of Clinical Psychology*. His study found that integrating mindful principles into daily life for just 5 minutes a day, over 3 weeks, resulted in significant reductions in stress and significant increases in life satisfaction, positive relations with others, and environmental mastery, all key players in creating a life worth living.

He also has given workshops, radio interviews, and lectures in multiple settings on the therapeutic benefits of mindfulness, including Kaiser Permanente, UCLA's Neuropsychiatric Institute, and the Mindfulness and Psychotherapy Conference at UCLA in 2007. Now, here's the interview.

Dr. Elisha Goldstein, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

Elisha Goldstein: Thank you, David.

David Van Nuys: I think that you've been a listener to this show, if I recall correctly.

Elisha Goldstein: Yeah. That's right. There was a time where I was travelling internationally for a while. I was trying to collect a lot of psycho-educational material and just really interesting material in the area of psychology to listen to and continue to brush up with. Your podcast was the top of the list. I was

really happy to find it and get to listen to it. A lot of interesting people that come on the show that I was able to listen to then and also during a number of commutes.

David Van Nuys: Well that's great. I noticed you put that in the past, so I hope you will be mindful to continue to be a listener. I know your life has probably gotten a lot busier now that you're a professional.

Elisha Goldstein: Yeah, it has. I see people individually. I run groups. I'm producing a couple different CDs that are particularly, or I have already produced, that are particularly focused on mindfulness for stress, anxiety, and depression. I also co-authored with my wife on mindfulness for addiction and relapse prevention, as well as creating material, writing and co-authoring workbooks based on mindfulness and stress reduction, and also multimedia guides that are set within a Web world called the Live World right now. I have been pretty busy, but always want to come back. I do want to come back and listen to more Shrink Rap, because there is a lot of really interesting content on your show.

David Van Nuys: Yeah, great. While we're giving me a plug here, don't forget that there might be selected episodes that you would want to suggest to your patients, clients, as good psycho-educational material. Not the least of which will be this interview.

Elisha Goldstein: Good point, good point, David.

David Van Nuys: Before we get into all of that, of course our topic is going to be mindfulness and mindfulness-based stress reduction, which you've been doing so much work in recently, I'd like to get into your background just a little bit. I have the impression that you had a rather interesting business career before becoming a psychologist.

Elisha Goldstein: Yeah. I was in the world of sales, and sales management for a few different companies, and was pretty successful in it, rising up in the ranks and becoming a manager of sales teams. There just came a point where I was really working with people. What I was doing more with them was finding out what they were doing in their daily lives to see if they were being effective there, because the business world also plays off of the personal world. With that and in time, I came to understand that I was starting to feel a little empty myself with what I was doing there and seemed like there could be more for me than that.

I took a retreat for about 30 days, and went out and really reflected. At a point on that retreat, I came and touch with My background is a Jewish background. I came in touch with a cabalistic thought, the kind of thought that has to do with really realizing the interconnection of things. In that connection with other people, and discussion, and some meditation with that, I came to a point where there was about a week straight where I had this really rare experience of continued present moment awareness. With

that came feelings of calm, and peace, and a sense of connectedness, a sense of compassion for others and myself, and a real sense of focus.

After that time, I took more time out for myself to start to sit, or lie, or walk, and that sort of stillness. Then I came back to the business world after that. That was about the time of 1999, 2000 where we ... I was living in San Francisco at the time. I was riding the whole dot-com wave, and there was the crash that we all know, and are very familiar with. I had built up a bunch of material wealth for myself. At that time, I lost about 75% of it.

David Van Nuys: Ouch.

Elisha Goldstein: Yeah. It was a big ouch. It really caused me to reflect on what was most important in my life, and it really came to that what was most important in my life really wasn't the next dollar that was coming in, but really engaging in life in a more present moment where I'm really connecting with people. It really had me reflect on that experience I had at that retreat. Combined with that, one thing I just want to mention to the listeners and to yourself, to know a little bit of my background, my dad's ... I've always had a little bit of, I guess, a spiritual feeling for me and the way I view things. My dad was a rabbi and my mom is really rooted in her faith as well.

My dad used to go to people on their death beds, and they used to talk to him while they were in the midst of almost passing. They used to say to him, "If I just had to do it over again, I would do something different. I would be more present with people. I'd be more connected." He used to relate that back to me as a kid. That started coming up for me a little bit on the importance of that. Even for myself to this day, what I do sometimes is I look back. I just do this thing that I called present nostalgia, which is putting myself many years from now, and to imagine myself on my own death bed and looking back onto where I am today, and asking myself from that place, What do I wish I would do differently right now? What will I like to have a look back from that time and saying, "Yeah, that's what I would've like to have done"?

It was that period where I realized there was something more for me. There were something other than I was doing. I really wanted to get back in the field of, or get into the field of psychology more, to be able to deal with people and help them live the lives they want to live, help them become more present to their thoughts, feelings, and emotions, to become more whole and have those feelings that I experienced.

David Van Nuys: Well, that's a really fascinating background, and I can see how your growing up in the family that you did, and the things that you're father related to you laid the ground work for the work that you're doing now. I'm curious about that 30-day retreat. Was that actually a mindfulness meditation retreat?

Elisha Goldstein: No. It wasn't of mindfulness, meaning, rooted almost—where mindfulness comes from is its many thousand year old tradition rooted in Buddhism, more, and particularly, the kind of mindfulness that's practiced when people talk about mindfulness in this world is more of a Vipassana mindfulness, the ability to be open to whatever is arising in the present moment, nonjudgmentally. This was more focused. It was a Jewish retreat, but there are meditation experiences within that retreat that weren't directly rooted in what people would call mindfulness right now, but I would certainly say that the elements of mindfulness were woven throughout that entire retreat.

David Van Nuys: Okay. Now, you ended up doing your doctoral work at the Transpersonal Psychology Institute in Menlo Park I believe it is, or is it Palo Alto?

Elisha Goldstein: It's Palo Alto now. It used to be Menlo Park.

David Van Nuys: Okay. That's why I get confused. How did you end up getting your PhD there?

Elisha Goldstein: I'm glad you asked that question, because I feel like I've related the story a lot because people often say "Institute of Transpersonal, what's that?" type of thing. I really wanted to go back into the world of psychology because of this element in me that felt like there was something greater than myself out there, people really ... I think it's a huge majority of this country that feel like there's something greater than themselves out there, or something more than just the material world that's just there, even though that's really important. I really wanted a field of psychology that honored that and realized that that's an important part in people's development or sense of well-being for many people out there.

I wanted something, I guess, not particularly rooted in any tradition. So I'd have the freedom to integrate the field of spirituality into the field of psychology in whatever way I felt that was okay for me. The Institute of Transpersonal Psychology really allows that happen. They are very rooted in all the traditional elements of psychology, and they also bring in a spiritual element, which is really often mindfulness in a way, even though people try and ... People don't want to necessarily connect mindfulness with spirituality, because there's a lot of connotations with that. Really the ability to be present to one's self in any particular moment brings us out of all the external things that we find so important, which are so important, but also brings us internally to ourselves.

David Van Nuys: An interesting little side story here is, I was actually asked to consider applying for the opening for president of the Transpersonal Psychology Institute 2 or 3 years ago. I decided not to apply because it was clear to me they were looking for somebody who could walk on water, particularly in relation to fundraising, and I didn't feel I was that person. I certainly was flattered to be invited as a candidate, because I've been aware of their work and known various people there for, over the years.

Let's talk about your work in mindfulness. You mentioned Vipassana and mindfulness, and maybe before we go any further, we should ... You've already hinted at this, but you might have more to say about it. How do you define mindfulness?

Elisha Goldstein: Mindfulness is the ... The best way to really explain it, well, it's the ability to intentionally cultivate a present moment awareness without our filters or lenses of judgment. Oftentimes, we're very quick over the course of our lifetime to develop these habits of our mind to interpret events either internally within ourselves or externally to any event that's happening as good or bad, or right or wrong, or fair or unfair. That has a tremendous effect on how we feel physically, also with our emotions, and how we choose to react or respond to any particular situation.

Mindfulness allows us to become more aware of those things, so we can choose to respond to any situation in the way that's most effective for us. Marsha Linehan, she is up at the University of Washington. She has created an approach in psychology called Dialectical Behavior Therapy. That's mostly used for people with ... Actually, it's used all over the place now, but it was initially with people who had, I don't always love to use the term disorder, but let me just use this because that's the language that's in our field, borderline personality disorder, which is really people who suffer from not being able to have close relationships and are emotionally unstable at times and really suffer from that. She defined mindfulness as really learning to be in control of your own mind, instead of letting your mind be in control of you.

David Van Nuys: I don't know if you're aware of it, but, actually, I interviewed her on my other podcast series, Wise Counsel, where I also interviewed your wife recently. We should make mention of that as well.

Elisha Goldstein: Yeah, please do. That was a great interview, please go check that out.

David Van Nuys: Yeah. Thank you. As I hear you talk ... It's been amazing, there is such an explosion of interest using this term "mindfulness." I also interviewed Steven C. Hayes, who I know you must be familiar with. He has developed, I guess would be more of a behavioral approach that incorporates mindfulness.

Elisha Goldstein: Mindfulness is being incorporated more in the behavioral and cognitive behavioral fields, simply because cognitive and behavioral ... Mindfulness is a behavioral approach in a way. It's actually doing something, acting on something, creating a practice in your daily life to be able to intentionally focus on whatever is arising in the moment. Oftentimes practices may include paying attention to sensations in your body, or paying attention to your breathing, or paying attention to thoughts, or sounds, or any particular thing, and really noticing the impermanence of these things. The importance of that is that oftentimes in our lives, we may get, especially in the field of anxiety or depression, or a variety of things like that, we may feel like the feeling that we're feeling in any particular

moment, or the thought that we're having is distressing and uncomfortable, and it's never going to go away and it's always going to be like this. That's another thought, thoughts that arise, and being able to practice mindfulness allows us to learn that things are actually impermanent. Things tend to come and go. The more we realize that, which can only come with practice, the less distressed we get when they do arise.

The more we can approach them with a sense of curiosity, or what's called sometimes, Beginner's Mind, so that we can really get to know this feeling or this thought. Is it for the very first time? Watch it as it comes and as it goes, and the distress is less in that moment.

David Van Nuys: In a lot of ways, you mentioned Beginner's Mind, and in a lot of ways, this sounds to me like what I know from many years as Zen, as Zen meditation. Is there a difference?

Elisha Goldstein: I think if people go back and listen to the interview you did with Shinzen Young recently on Wise Counsel too, which like I said before, there's so many great interviews on both of these podcasts. There is a difference between Zen and mindfulness. I would definitely refer people back to that because he'll give a lot better explanation than I would anyway. The idea anyway with—they come from similar traditions and similar backgrounds, they just—One came before the other, and they've kind of built on each other. The reason mindfulness is so effective, I think, in the field of psychology right now, or let's even say before psychology, the field of medicine, is because people are really realizing that they can practice this and they see an almost immediate response from it. People in the field of medicine, the reason mindfulness hit the US so strong, or the Western world, is really through the field of medicine. It was ... Currently it's in over 250 hospitals around the country, and many more worldwide, but medicine deals less with theory the way psychology does and fields more of "what works." We don't really care how necessarily all the time, but if it works, great.

And the psychological world, in my mind, really respects that. They really, it really respects the medical world in a lot of ways. It was really Jon Kabat-Zinn who initially came out in the field of chronic pain at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center and said to the doctors there, "Give me your chronic pain patients who the medicine's not really working for. Let me put them through this 8-week program on mindfulness and let's see what happens." He created this 8-week program called mindfulness-based stress reduction and what that program taught people to do by giving them a series of instruction and practices in their daily lives, was, taught them how to relate to their pain differently than they were relating to it before. While there's two things, besides death and taxes, that we can be assured of in this world, which is pain and stress, those are never going to go away, but what we can learn to do is relate to them differently. Practicing mindfulness, what we learn to do is, instead of when a hammer hits our knee going, "Oh my God. This is the worst thing

that's ever happened to me. I can't believe I did this again. This pain's never going to go away. It's so throbbing. It's the worst thing." It only tends to enhance the pain, or our perception of the pain is that it's growing and getting worse.

it probably actually is because we're making our blood go faster and actually irritating the actual pain that's there. Our perception of it is that it's completely terrible and that we're suffering intensely. Mindfulness teaches us to notice the pain, bring our attention to it, instead of trying to avoid or distract ourselves from it and pay attention to the actual sensations of it as they rise and they fall. In doing that, we tend to suffer less from it. In essence, it actually comes and goes quicker than it would have in the other way that we were relating to it, which is the more habitual way.

David Van Nuys: Yes. You know, I would think another reason maybe why mindfulness has come into such currency is because it—I can't think of the right word. I want to use the word detox and that's not the right word, but it kind of takes it out of the religious framework and removes that whole aura and turns it into a very secular thing that says, "This is basically a secular, psychological technique. It doesn't matter what particular set of religious or spiritual beliefs you happen to have. This will help you get rid of pain or deal with stress and so on."

Elisha Goldstein: That's a really great point. You're absolutely right and I think we can really credit as well again, we can really credit Jon Kabat-Zinn with that. He found a way to really convey the essence of mindfulness in a very palatable way to the Western tongue. That's why, when I was saying earlier how I felt like mindfulness for me in a way, has some sort of spiritual elements to that, he's very clear in his writings and the things that he does that he kind of separates it from spirituality or anything like that, simply because I think he wants to retain that sense of secularization with the concept to make sure that it is continued to be accepted in the medical and psychological world that it doesn't get a backlash because there is—for some people, the terms religious or spiritual have, if you grew up in a home that that was really dominating, or something like that, people can have a reaction to that and then be turned off by something that could really help them and really work. Mindfulness clearly does.

David Van Nuys: I know that you have steeped yourself in some of the other research, particularly research by a Dr. Marlatt and Richie Davidson. Maybe you could take us through some of that.

Elisha Goldstein: Sure. There's a lot of research that's been going on right now in the field of medicine and psychology and mindfulness.

David Van Nuys: Let me just echo that because before we had this interview, as we were sort of leading up to it, I had posed a question that led me to go into the online psychological abstract database that I have access to through the university. I was amazed at the number of research studies that are currently being conducted on the topic of mindfulness. It was

overwhelming. I had hoped to narrow it down, to focus in on a particular question and I realized it would take a lot of time to really review all of this literature.

Elisha Goldstein: There's a tremendous amount. I think the reason people obviously— obviously in the medical and psychological field, the reason people are doing a lot of research on it is because they're finding out that it works. They're not just finding out that it works because of other research. They're actually doing it for themselves and getting involved in a program or seeing a therapist or someone like that who has that background. They're noticing a change in themselves, so they get really excited about it and want to do research on it as well. You mentioned Dr. Richie Davidson. He created-. He's out of the University of Wisconsin and he created-. Sorry. He has a long history with meditation and for him, he did a study that was more focused on brain research and meditation. What he found was, initially he went into a biotech company and did EEG ratings, which basically are readings on the electrical activity of the brain, on employees there. What he found was, there was a natural subpoint for people in the company where there was more activity on the right side, which is a brain very, to be very basic about the explanation, a brain that's more associated with uncomfortable emotions, than the left side of the brain, the part that's more associated with more comfortable or positive emotions.

At the end of doing 8 weeks of mindfulness in an MBSR class, they found that more activity started to shift to the left side, than the right side, which meant to him that doing these meditation practices allowed for more comfortable emotions to arise for a person. In essence, being better for their health and well-being. Were you going to say something?

David Van Nuys: Actually, I'll direct you to talk a little bit about Dr. Marlatt's research as well.

Elisha Goldstein: Okay, Dr. Marlatt, that's newer research. Newer research in the area of mindfulness and addiction, which is really interesting. Alan Marlatt is also at the University of Washington with Marsha Linehan. He has been doing—Actually, he's one of the leaders in the field of researching addictive behavior and he's been doing research in the area of mindfulness. Not mindfulness, sorry, meditation and addiction for the past 30 years, but he's really known for his focus on, in the area of integrating cognitive behavioral therapy with addiction. More recently, in the past couple of years, he's been creating a program called Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention. What that is, it's really an adaptation from Jon Kabat-Zinn's mindfulness-based stress reduction but focusing more on integrating cognitive behavioral therapy principles into mindfulness-based stress reduction focused specifically for helping people reduce their addictive behavior. After a two-year NIDA, which is the drug administration research study, he's done really—He reports really promising results for helping people reduce their addictive behavior and

reduce the suffering they experience from those triggers, urges, and cravings.

Both my wife and I—she's an Addiction Medicine Specialist, and I've worked with a number of people with addiction—created a CD that's out right now that focuses on giving people psycho-education around what mindfulness is, how it works with triggers, cravings, and urges and then gives a few progressive guided meditation practices to follow, that help them work through what's called urge surfing, which is this idea that an urge is an impulse that comes up mostly in the body, or as a thought, and the person becomes able to notice this, watch it in a nonjudgmental way and watch it as it comes and goes, effectively feeling more self-confident and more self-efficacious about being able to work with their urges and cravings with addictive behavior. Alan Marlatt endorsed that CD and plans on using it in a 5-year study to follow.

David Van Nuys: Wow, that's really great. I've been using one of your CDs, Mindfulness Solutions, and find it to be very well done, very solid piece of work, something you can really feel good about and that I'm happy to recommend to my listeners. I'll be putting a link to your website, so you don't need to worry about that. That'll be in the show notes so people will find it there, and I'll also mention it in my post commentary. This is so contemporary what you're saying. Just last night, on NBC National News, they had a segment about a—I think it was a hospital where they were experimenting with food addiction, basically, and trying to bring a mindfulness approach to people in relation to food, so that they would be really mindful about what they were choosing to eat and when they were eating and so on. It was very much in its early stages, so they didn't have any conclusions yet, but they said it was something that they were investigating.

Elisha Goldstein: You know, it's Jean Kristeller that's leading that research. She's also done a lot of work with Alan Marlatt as well, because food addiction is also an addictive behavior. Eating disorders are also a form of addictive behavior as well. As well as sometimes obviously related to anxiety. She's been leading this research on mindful eating and what effects that has on weight loss, as well as eating disorders, and I think there is promising results that are coming out from that as well. So, I just wanted to mention that because there was that connection. One other piece of research that I would mention that I think is really interesting, besides the research that I conducted as well, which was Sara Lazar is an instructor at the Harvard Medical School and she did research with people who routinely had a mindfulness meditation practice and she found that those who did practice meditation, it had a serious impact on their brain.

Brain research is always important because people love it because it's something they can see. Now we can see what happens in the brain. If we can see it, we really believe it and she found that people who did a regular mindfulness, or meditation practice, she found they had a thicker cortex, which is the area involved in reasoning and decision-making. She

also found that they had a thicker insula. What an insula is, is a part of the brain that's really responsible for, we might call it a central switchboard for the brain. It helps regulate our thoughts and our emotions. The insula is supposed to deteriorate after the age of 20 a little bit every year. She found that it's thicker among those who have a regular meditation practice.

David Van Nuys: Wow. Fascinating. You just made passing reference to the fact that you had done some research. I believe your doctoral dissertation research was in this area. Maybe you can give us a brief description of that.

Elisha Goldstein: That was a really interesting study for me to do. I did a study with 73 people across the country and I gave them a very brief practice to do. I gave them a very brief intervention where I had them do a mindful check-in, which was basically tuning into how their body was feeling, any physical sensations in their body, being able to notice, then turn their attention to noticing their breath coming in and out of their body. They had a present moment focus, and noticing whether their mind was busy, or calm. They were really becoming grounded in the stillness of the present moment, then after a few minutes of that, turning their attention slightly to an object that they considered to be deeply meaningful, or precious, or what some would call sacred and then starting to pay attention to that object in a way that was slightly slower than they might normally do. Also, noticing anything with that object that was associated with thoughts, feelings, or anything physical, sensations. That object could be something actually physical, or it could have been a thought, or it could have been a cloud in the sky. It could have been anything that they felt was deeply meaningful, precious, or sacred in their lives.

What I found was, through assessments, there was a significant reduction over a period of three weeks where they practiced this for at least 5 minutes a day, for 5 days a week, in stress reduction as well as an increase in a variety of areas of well-being. That was really, although as a mindfulness teacher and therapist who integrates that into my own practice, I suggest doing more than 5 minutes a day, but sometimes in our culture right now, people will be resistant to doing work for more than really 5 minutes or so. This provides an introduction and the results are significant and it was published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychology*.

David Van Nuys: Hey, congratulations. I know that you're using mindfulness in your own clinical work, maybe you can tell us about how you're using it and what sorts of conditions you're finding that it's good for?

Elisha Goldstein: Okay. I'm finding that mindfulness is good for a lot of different conditions, particularly in the area of psychology. That's why we see so much research in the area of mindfulness and stress reduction, or mindfulness and depression, or mindfulness and addictive behavior, or food addictions, or regulating emotions. Not to say it's a panacea of any kind, but what it is, is, it's something that can be used to create more awareness of whatever is happening. It can really be applied to any other

approach. It doesn't need to stand by itself. Some things that I find helpful in a practice working with clients is to help them, oftentimes they come in and their minds are so busy, or their emotions can be really erratic. Sometimes I help them learn how to become more present and I often do that through a couple of different ways, one is through a breathing practice, helping them notice how to notice their breath coming in and out of their body for a certain period of time and noticing when their mind is really, really taking their attention away in some way and just being able to wrap it up in a term like thinking, or wandering, or busy mind and gently bring it back to a point of focus.

The point of focus can also be a series of sensations that are arising in the body. With things like depression, or anxiety, oftentimes, people have certain styles of thinking that have been worked out in the area of cognitive behavioral therapy, but also in psycho-dynamic approaches, like catastrophizing for anxiety. Catastrophizing is this idea that we're always expecting disaster, something terrible is going to happen from some little event that happens, we really blow it up and magnify it. This tends to amplify our anxiety. When people become more aware of their habitual styles of thinking, it's just a habit almost that they've developed over time. They can learn to become aware of that, not judge it as good or bad, but just almost with a sense of curiosity, almost like I said before as if they're noticing it for the very first time and say, "Oh, catastrophizing is happening right now." As soon as they notice that, they've stepped outside of it. It's no longer controlling them. They can now choose in that moment what they want to do. Do they want to continue to catastrophize? Maybe they want to switch their attention on to something that they were trying to do in that moment.

Maybe they've become more aware. They've turned their attention to their body and they notice their heart racing. They notice that their respiration is really shallow and rapid and they can, in essence learn to again control their mind instead of their mind controlling them, so they can make a choice of what they want to do in that moment. There's a whole variety of different kinds of thinking that that goes along with. People exaggerate negative details. They tend to mind read. They think they know what the other people are thinking and they take it personally, even though, what it might be is the person might be thinking this, or they might be thinking something else. We're not going to be able to do something like that, to be able to treat it as a guess. "Oh, they might be thinking I'm wearing, that I look terrible today, or they might be not looking at me while they're passing down the hall because they're really busy." They won't be able to do that unless they notice that they're doing this thing, which could be a thought that's going on in their mind, like mind reading, a certain habit of the mind.

There's a lot of these things. I discussed these things on the CD that I sent to you, which was particularly for stress, anxiety, and depression, and also there's other ones that go along with addictive behavior. That's one way I deal with it. The other way, more generally, is just helping

people become more aware of how their thoughts, their emotions, their physical sensations and their behavior really work together to put them in whatever state they end up being in.

David Van Nuys: Are there any psychological conditions where mindfulness is counterindicated, in other words, it wouldn't be good for a person?

Elisha Goldstein: There's debate about that. I'm glad you brought that up. There's certain psychotic situations that someone who has a deep sense of, or is really, I guess, has a difficulty taking care of themselves because they have some sort of psychotic condition like schizophrenia. I'm not sure it works really well with someone who has an antisocial personality, which is a personality that is really focused on the self and destructive towards other people. However, mindfulness is being used tremendously right now in the prison systems with a lot of great results. There might be a lot of people with antisocial behavior in the prison systems as well. There's debate about it. There are people I read about who do work. I actually did a workshop in a place I used to work with people who had a lot of psychotic conditions on mindfulness and integrating mindfulness into their daily lives; however, the way I approached it wasn't in this, "Let's do a 30 minute meditation, or 45 minute meditation." It was more like, "Let's do a more informal practice," which is something that is just a moment-by-moment type of practice and I'll just give a little example of that so that people get an idea on what's the difference between a formal and an informal practice.

A formal practice in mindfulness is really a time that is intentionally set aside to sit, stand, or lie down and intentionally pay present moment awareness to any particular thing in that moment for a period of time, 15 minutes, 30 minutes, something like that. An informal practice is a practice that we can really weave into our daily lives. For example, when we're in the shower in the morning, are we thinking about what we need to be doing during that work day, so we're not really in the shower experiencing the shower, or we're really already at work, even though we're at home. An informal practice would be noticing when we're future thinking, we're thinking about the future, what we need to get done that day, or worrying, or whatever is happening in the mind that moment, and gently bringing our attention back to noticing the feel of the water on our skin. Where is it hitting our skin? Is it hot, or is it cold, or warm. The smell of the soap, the sound of the water, or whatever other sounds are there. What am I seeing around me, really becoming present to all the various sensations that are happening in that moment.

That could be for 15 seconds, 30 seconds, a minute, two minutes. It's more of a spontaneous practice. You can do that while washing the dishes, walking the dog, listening to music. All that could be woven into our daily life. People with psychotic behaviors, that's the way I approach them, is really doing something more informal with them. It seemed to have some of effect. I didn't do any kind of study with it, or anything like that, so who's to say really. What I would say is that it's up for debate right

now. I know in mindfulness-based stress reduction, in the groups, they say if someone is psychotic in any way, or suffers from that, this is not a group for them.

David Van Nuys: Okay. You're a busy young professional, whose career is expanding, exploding, do you have a formal mindfulness meditation practice yourself?

Elisha Goldstein: Yeah, I do have a formal practice. I'll tell you, it's difficult to integrate formal practice into your daily life, especially in a busy life.

David Van Nuys: Right, so what time of day do you find works best for you?

Elisha Goldstein: I do different times of day. I don't have a particular time. Sometimes I'll have a client that cancels on me, or I'll have an hour there and I'll spend 30 minutes, or sometimes just 15 minutes, or sometimes longer actually sitting and doing a practice. What I will say, from people who are busy professionals is, especially people who have lots of kids, or something like that—I think there was a story recently of a woman who used to have a meditation practice and since then has had a few kids and looked on the cover of a magazine and there was some woman on the cover with her legs crossed, with her hands in the position that people would think if they're meditating, even if you don't have to have them that way, with your two fingers touching on the side of your knees, and there she was in peace on her wooden floor in her clean room. That was the picture and this woman said, "There's no way. If I was in the middle of my room right now, with my hands like that, it would be more like I'd be laying in the middle of the living room with my eyes closed, catching a nap with clothes all over me and my kids running all around."

For her, a formal practice wasn't all that realistic. What she found really helpful to her was to really integrate a lot more informal practices into her daily life. When her kids came down for breakfast, she noticed when she was thinking about the work that she had to do that day. She gently brought her attention back and looked into her kid's eyes, really listening to what they were saying in that moment, and intentionally asking them questions that she wanted to find out about them that day, and being able to notice her emotions as they rose and fall and different things like that. She really integrated a much more informal practice. If a person is listening to this and they feel like, "Well, I don't know how I could ever have time to have a 30 to 45 minute practice, or whatever, on a daily basis." I would say a few different things to that. One is that, it's very difficult, I would say to integrate a mindfulness practice into your daily life without some sort of guidance. I know for me, it would be very difficult to have even gotten into this at all, without having been guided by somebody, or at least a CD.

Something to really get me into the idea of what to do, really. The second thing is, it's difficult to do something like this without a community. A colleague of mine, Bob Stahl, who's a long-time meditator, he actually

used to live in a Buddhist monastery, and he's been doing mindfulness-based stress reduction. He's a teacher of that. He was, I think Jon Kabat-Zinn's, one of his first students, he's been doing it for a really long time. He and I have coauthored a multimedia guide that brings someone through creating a mindfulness or meditation practice. It probably has about 4 CD's worth of guided meditation and there's instructions in there and then it guides people to connect to a community of other people who are doing this same exact program so they can connect around what's difficult for them, or what's helpful for them. They can also interact with Bob or I during the time that they're doing that program. So if they find themselves busy and they can't, they don't have time to actually go to a group of people who are doing this themselves. They can kind of do this on their own time, their own watch, while still being part of a community.

A community is what really keeps this going. Without a community, I think people have found this in the area of addiction, without that community, it's really difficult to make changes, and community is really incredibly important for that. That's why we built that guiding community.

David Van Nuys: That's a great point. As we wind down, is there any last point you'd like to leave our listeners with?

Elisha Goldstein: That's a good question. I think if I was to leave this with anything, our listeners with anything, it's really that this is simply an approach that's been really helpful for a lot of people, not just in dealing with—I know that today we've talked a lot about how it can be really helpful for people struggling. One thing that I would mention is, it's not just for people struggling. It's for anybody who really wants to become more present to themselves and their lives and wants to enact in this world with more intention, so that many years from now, looking back to where you are today from your own deathbed, you might say, "you know what? I was really there. I didn't miss out. I was there. I knew what I was doing. I was intentional about what I was doing." This is just something that could be an adjunct to life to help someone sit more into the present state of where they are in their lives and become more aware of all the comfortable things that are happening in their lives, as well as the uncomfortable things, and help them sustain more a sense of peace, calm, compassion in their daily lives. I'd just like to leave you with that.

David Van Nuys: Wonderful. Dr. Elisha Goldstein, thanks so much for both being a listener and for being my guest today on Shrink Wrap Radio.

Elisha Goldstein: Thank you David. Thank you so much.