



SDS Newsletter

Mindfulness Therapy: A new approach to improving mental health

"Mindfulness is the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to things as they are."

Jon Kabat-Zinn, developer of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

For students, classes, prelims, problem sets and extra-curricular activities can put a strain on our mental health. We've all heard that Gannett offers many different types of services aimed at improving our mental health but how exactly do they help? One way counselors at CAPS, Gannett's Counseling and Psychological Services, have helped students is through the use of mindfulness-based techniques.

Matt Boone, former Assistant Director for Integration and Multidisciplinary Teams at CAPS, told us what mindfulness is all about. Mindfulness borrows ideas from Buddhism and meditation in order to improve mental wellbeing. It is about noticing emotions and

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Requesting Accommodation Letters

Each semester students must give advance notice to instructors of accommodations needed for their courses. Upon request from you, SDS will prepare accommodation letters with your accommodations listed for you to give to instructors. Using the on-line request form is the most efficient method for requesting letters. If you add courses after your letter request is submitted, you will need to submit an additional request.

To ensure that accommodations will be in place throughout the semester, you should meet with your professors within the first two weeks of classes. The following steps outline the process for requesting classroom accommodations.

1. If you are new to Cornell, call 607-254-4545 to schedule an appointment to meet with an SDS counselor.

2. Complete a "Request for Accommodation Letters". You can fill out a form in the SDS office or online at <http://sds.cornell.edu/sdsregistration.php>.
3. Pick up your letters from the SDS office two business days after submitting request form.
4. Meet privately with instructors (or their designated representatives), give them the accommodation letters and discuss the specific arrangements for your classroom accommodations. Instructors should receive letters in the first two weeks of the semester, and at least two weeks' notice of accommodation needs.

Please contact SDS immediately if you have concerns about the accommodation process or the administration of an exam.

Letter from the Director

Student Disability Services (SDS), students, and instructors each have a role in the procedure for the provision of academic accommodations in a course. In order for this process to work well, each has to complete their part of the process responsibly.

New students who are approved for disability services will meet with their SDS counselor, agree to an accommodation plan and be given accommodation letters that list the accommodations approved for the student to give to their instructors. We try to meet with all new students within the first three weeks of the semester.

Currently registered students request accommodation letters at the beginning every semester. This can be done using the on-line web request form or submitting a written request to the SDS office. The letters will be ready for pick-up by the student in two business days. Students are responsible for giving accommodation letters to their course instructors or his/her designee within the first two weeks of the semester.

It is the instructors' responsibility to make arrangements for classroom accommodations. Students present with a broad range of accommodations and making arrangements to accommodate each student can take considerable time and effort on the part of the instructor. Advance notice by the student is a key component to the instructor's ability to accommodate all of his/her students effectively.

Every semester the SDS staff sends several email reminders to students to request accommodation letters with a link to the on-line request form. Students who fail to provide adequate notice face the risk that the instructor will be unable to provide accommodations in the limited timeframe provided by the student.

So, complete and submit your letter request form today! Have a great semester.

Sincerely,
Kappy Fahey

Photo credits:

Jai Khalsa Pages 3 & 5
Christina Hanco Page 4

Important

August 17, 2012

Residence Halls open
SDS Orientation
3:00 - 4:00 pm RPCC 105

August 22, 2012

Classes begin

September 3, 2012

Labor Day Holiday - No
Classes

September 14, 2012

Add Period ends

September 19, 2012

Premiere Assistive
Technologies Webinar
4:00—5:00 pm Stone
Classroom, Mann Library

October 6-9, 2012

Fall Break

October 12, 2012

Drop period ends

November 9, 2012

Workforce Recruitment
interviews

December 1, 2012

Last day of classes

December 2-5, 2012

Study period

December 3, 2012

Entry Point interviews

December 5-14, 2012

Final exam period

December 15, 2012

January Graduation
Recognition

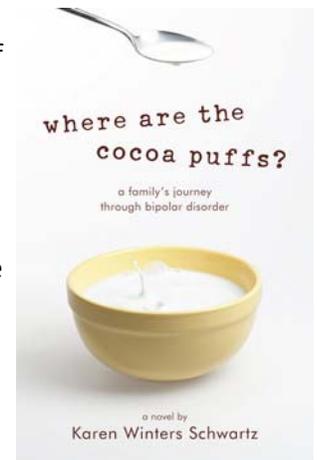
Book Review: *Where are the Cocoa Puffs?: A Family's Journey*

Author Karen Winters Schwartz's 2010 novel, *Where are the Cocoa Puffs: A Family's Journey through Bipolar Disorder*, tells the story of Amanda Benson, an eighteen year old girl brimming with what her parents presume is the common teenage angst and rebellion prevalent in young adults. However, as her parents soon realize, Amanda's attitudes and behavior are a result of something much deeper—the onset of bipolar disorder. As the story unfolds, the reader learns how this mental illness touches not only the life of Amanda, but her immediate and extended family and friends.

Schwartz's novel, although fictional in nature, draws on many real issues that affect individuals with this mental illness. In October 2011, Schwartz visited Cornell and spoke about her writing. She described that at the foundation of her novel was the desire to convey the multifaceted effect of the illness on the person with the disability and related individuals. Schwartz's technique of conveying the point of view through an array of characters suggests how illnesses affect them and how they should be supported by a network of concerned individuals. An interesting perspective that is revealed using this technique is that of the father, Dr. Jerry Benson. As a psychiatrist, Dr. Benson has had much experience diagnosing and helping people with mental illnesses. Yet when his own daughter develops bipolar disorder he finds himself unable to cope and function in the same way he expects of his clients.

Another important issue that Schwartz's novel addresses is the stigma that surrounds mental illnesses. Schwartz describes the way in which the stigma about mental illnesses conjures up feelings of fear and judgment from

extended family members and friends. Defined as the negative and shameful social connotations surrounding a characteristic or issue, stigma creates a barrier between the person with the illness and receiving full support. The immense alienation that occurs as a result of stigma causes the person, and often the family, to go through the process alone. Thus, instead of perpetuating stereotypes and stigma, Schwartz stresses the need for empathy. Empathy, as opposed to pity, replaces fear with understanding and increases the support and care shown towards individuals with mental illness. While many struggle with finding the right way interact with or talk about persons with mental illnesses or their family members, Schwartz's novel suggests that what is most important is the persisting love and comfort shown in one's actions. The ability of Amanda's family members and boyfriend to stay by her side despite the rough journey she endures is essential to her regaining control of her illness and her life.



In writing *Where are the Cocoa Puffs?* Schwartz takes on a profound issue but in a manner that is both informative and entertaining. To find out how Amanda, her family, and her friends cope and progress through her bipolar disorder, stop by the Student Disability Services office to check out a copy of the book from the lending library!

Teresa Danso-Danquah '15



Inclement Weather & Emergency Evacuation Forms

If snow and ice will be a significant barrier as you travel around campus, fill out the Voluntary Inclement Weather Form. [http://sds.cornell.edu/Forms/Voluntary Inclement Weather Questionnaire.pdf](http://sds.cornell.edu/Forms/Voluntary%20Inclement%20Weather%20Questionnaire.pdf)

The Emergency Evacuation Plan is a voluntary form is for students who will require assistance in quickly getting out of campus buildings during fire alarms or by an official announcement.

<http://www.cornell.edu/disability/evacuation-planning.cfm>

Crohn's and Colitis Awareness at Cornell

In the Fall of 2011, the Cornell Crohn's and Colitis Foundation Affiliated Forum was founded at Cornell by Mary Mulvanerton (faculty), Nathaniel Treffeisen '12, Alexander Nastos '12, and Alex Gimenez '15. The group was founded to spread awareness about Crohn's, an autoimmune disease of the intestines that affects over half a million Americans, including several Cornell students and many people in the Ithaca area. Since its start last Fall, the group has acquired over 50 members and the majority of the group's members are from the Ithaca community. The organization also serves as the official liaison between Ithaca and the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America (CCFA).

People with Crohn's must maintain a very structured diet in order to prevent outbreaks. Unlike something such as Celiac Disease, in which people must avoid eating gluten (although gluten is comprised of several different ingredients), Crohn's outbreaks can be triggered by a wide array of ingredients in foods, and these ingredients are unique to each individual. For example, Alex Gimenez '15 experiences Crohn's outbreaks after consuming spinach and yogurt. In addition to inflammation of the intestines, some effects of Crohn's include abdominal pain, ulcers, and skin issues that are characterized by uncomfortable rashes. Because it is essential to manage a proper diet with Crohn's, the Cornell Crohn's and Colitis Foundation Affiliated Forum is creating linkages with dieticians from Cornell Dining, Ithaca College Dining, Gannett Health Services, and Cayuga Medical Center.

With this platform, the Cornell Crohn's and Colitis Foundation Affiliated Forum hopes to spread awareness about Crohn's Disease to the Cornell community and the Finger Lakes region by holding a Speaker Series to provide information and updates on research and treatment developments for Crohn's. The Forum's most recent speaker was Professor Eric Young Denkers, whose research may have uncovered a key cause of Crohn's and could lead to improved prevention and care of an array of auto-immune diseases. Previously, the Forum had Myra Berkowitz, a nutritionist from Gannett Health Services, speak about the role that diet and nutrition can play in treating and living with Crohn's. In addition, the Forum hopes to contact Mike McCready, the bassist of the band *Pearl Jam* who has Crohn's, to plan a benefit concert for the CCFA.

The Forum is looking to expand in the Cornell Community and certainly welcomes any Cornell student who has Crohn's or Colitis, or anyone who is interested in learning more about these diseases. If you are interested in joining, please contact Mary Mulvanerton (faculty), Nathaniel Treffeisen '12, or Alex Gimenez '15. The group meets on monthly basis in Space Sciences 105, and greatly anticipates its expansion in the Cornell community.

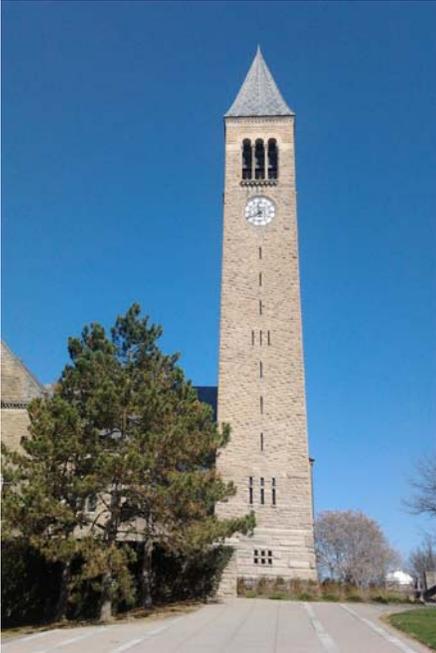
Craig Ladd '14

SDS Lending Library

Thanks to the generous gift of Rhonda Carniol '79 given in memory of her parents Diane & David Carniol, SDS operates a lending library open to all members of the Cornell community. The library contains books on a wide variety of topics, including learning disabilities, autism and Asperger's syndrome, ADD/ADHD, physical disabilities and mental health issues. All of the materials have been chosen to disseminate a broad understanding of the role disability plays in the college experience and in our culture.

The SDS lending library is located at 420 CCC in the SDS office and is available for browsing during regular SDS hours. A list of the library contents is available at <http://sds.cornell.edu/library.html>.





Workforce Recruitment Interviews

The Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) connects employers with college students and recent graduates with disabilities. The WRP gives students the opportunity to market their abilities to a wide variety of potential employers across the United States. It is co-sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment *Policy* (ODEP) and the U.S. Department of Defense, with the participation of many other federal agencies.

A WRP recruiter will conduct interviews on Friday, November 9, 2012 at the SDS office. The recruiter will gather information about your interests, work background, future goals, and your resume; this information will be entered into the WRP database, from which employers select candidates for internships. Selected students will be contacted by early December with job offers. Even if you are unsure if you are interested in a position, this is an excellent opportunity to practice interviewing. NOTE: If you have previously participated in WRP you must go through the on-line application and interview process again. Prior to the interview you must Register and complete the application on the WRP database at : <https://wrp.gov/StudentRegisterInstructionPre.do>

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welcoming them instead of fighting them. An example that pertains to many students is the way they approach stress. Often, students keep telling themselves to stop stressing out, but that doesn't usually alleviate the stress. From a mindfulness perspective, students who are feeling stressed can learn to simply observe the thoughts and feelings associated with stress without getting caught up in them.

Boone said that a mindfulness-based therapy benefited him during his college years when he developed a chronic pain condition in his hands. He used it to manage the effect that pain had on his attitude and instead of becoming entangled in it he learned to accept it. The point wasn't to get rid of the irritability and anxiety that he felt but to be aware of it. Boone said, "A common misconception is that mindfulness is about relaxation. Mindfulness goes after noticing and observing; relaxation is a by-product. The point is to be able to make better decisions in the face of emotions."

Employing mindfulness techniques in counseling is not unique to CAPS; it has become prevalent throughout the field of psychology. There are a lot of different therapies that utilize mindfulness techniques and they can be used for a range of conditions. For example, Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy targets depression, while Dialectical Behavioral Therapy is used for borderline personality disorders and eating disorders. A third example is Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, which has been applied to a wide range of problems, including depression, anxiety, smoking cessation, substance abuse and epilepsy management. There are many more therapies that utilize mindfulness techniques and these have been shown to be helpful for a variety of cases. Mindfulness is an important factor in all of these therapies.

CAPS has many classes on acceptance and commitment as well as body mindfulness to help students. For more information about CAPS and the services they offer contact Gannett at (607)255-5155 or visit their website www.gannett.cornell.edu.

Ashima Muttreja '12

Premiere Assistive Technologies Webinar

4:00 pm, Wed. September 19 in Stone Classroom, Mann Library

Join us for an hour-long webinar that will cover the uses of the Premier Technologies Literacy Suite installed in select computer labs across campus. The webinar will focus on new features, PDF Equalizer, Write Now, and Talking Word Processor, but will give a brief overview of all of the available tools. There will be an opportunity for hands-on learning. To learn more, visit www.readingmadeeasy.com.

Schedule "A" Hiring Practices for Federal Agencies

The Federal Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has put forth a new initiative that opens doors for people with disabilities in the workplace. The changes support the President's "New Freedom Initiative" introduced in 2010, which encourages executive departments and agencies to improve their efforts to employ workers with disabilities through increased recruitment, hiring, and retention.

The goal of the new standards set by OPM is to expand the number of employees with disabilities being appointed to positions in federal agencies. Currently there are over four-hundred different federal agencies; jobs at federal agencies make up a large percentage of the 2 million workers employed by the Federal Government. As the Nation's largest employer, the President and OPM believe that the Federal Government must become a model for the employment of individuals with disabilities.

The new hiring practices will require that every agency shall designate a senior-level agency official to be accountable for enhancing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. This official is also responsible for creating an agency-specific strategy which the OPM will help to implement. Overall the goals for the agency will be to increase their employment of people with disabilities, and develop mandatory training programs for both human resources personnel and hiring managers on the employment of individuals with disabilities.

Thomas Golden, the Associate Director at the Employment and Disability Institute at Cornell, sees promise in the OPM ruling, but has concerns about its scope. He cites the fact that only a handful of people with disabilities will be helped by these new rules and it is still unclear how often the new regulations will be utilized in appointments.

In order for this new regulation to be operated to its fullest advantage, it is imperative that agencies understand the benefits of new appointment initiatives. OPM lists several benefits of utilizing the new appointment rules, including that the revised appointment structure shortens the time it would take to appoint a qualified applicant. OPM also stresses that loosening the protocols surrounding appointments will encourage employers to explore the untapped labor pool of eligible disabled candidates.

Overall, this new initiative hopes to tear down some barriers people with disabilities face in the workplace. By allowing for easier standards for appointment, and making a conscious effort to hire people with disabilities, the federal government is exhibiting their commitment to equal opportunity. Initiatives such as this allow for capable employees with disabilities to take advantage of a wider variety of employment opportunities.

For more information: <http://www.opm.gov/disability/>

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