



# MONTHLY NEWS

AUGUST 2011

Anxious? Stressed? There's an App for that!

By Annie Coburn-Kane, LCSW-R

For most of us, finding a moment to relax and take care of our health can be a challenge. We intend to get more exercise, eat better and get more sleep, yet responsibilities, distractions, and bad habits can get in our way. Believe it or not, technology and iPod applications give us new opportunities to enhance our mental health and well being. A touch of the finger reveals all kinds of applications (Apps) that can help us fall asleep, keep track of exercise, count our calories and nutrients, and guide our meditation.

Even if you do not have an iPod device, a computer and a few dollars on your credit card can give you access to applications by logging on to the Apple website. Some of the applications are even free! Additionally, you can access books and meditations to support therapeutic goals that at one time, were only available by mail order or a trip to your local book store.

There are many Apps available to support meditation. Knowing which meditation to download can be confusing. A quick review of the National Institute of Health's abstracts reveals promising research about the benefits of meditation, and in particular, Mindfulness Meditation. Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is proven to be helpful in decreasing distress and anxiety, improving mood and energy, managing pain, and even reducing binge eating.

To be technical, MBSR usually includes an eight week course using meditation, gentle yoga, and body scanning exercises to increase mindfulness. Practiced in that way, MBSR is shown to be very effective. While listening to an App on your iPhone or iPod isn't likely to provide the same results as the participants in controlled studies, Mindfulness Meditation is likely to be beneficial as an adjunct to therapy.

A search in the Healthcare and Fitness category of the App Store reveals many resources to assist meditation, and one that is particularly designed to support Mindfulness is "Mindfulness Meditation" by Mental Workout, Inc. This App provides meditations from 5 minutes to 40, which provides you the opportunity to start small and build up to longer meditation. You will find an absence of music in the background, as it is proven to be a more effective approach. This App provides a guide to be sure you are utilizing the meditation correctly and even has a feature where you can send a five minute meditation to someone you care about.

At iTunes, you can access, "A Mindfulness of Breath Meditation", by Lisa Dale Miller. This free meditation provides almost 24 minutes of guided meditation designed to help beginners relax and develop the practice of Mindfulness.

Children may find meditation hard to follow and short attention spans are likely to cause loss of interest during silences. You might try relaxing stories available on iTunes by Lori Lite. These stories encourage meditative thought and deep breathing through stories that appeal to children. The Indigo Dreams meditative stories can be previewed so you can choose single meditations or select the entire album. There are several versions of the Indigo Dreams series. "The Boy and the Bear" version is particularly good for soothing anxious children.

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Anger Management  
Anxiety  
Assertiveness  
Behavior Problems  
Blended Family Issues  
Career Changes  
Childhood Separation Anxiety  
Chronic/Catastrophic Illness  
Chronic Pain  
Communication Problems  
Depression  
Eating Disorders  
Grief & Loss  
Health Related Habits  
Low Self-Esteem  
OCD/Obsessive Compulsive Disorders  
Organization and Time Management  
Marital/Relationship Issues  
Panic Disorders  
Personality Disorders  
Phobias  
PTSD/Posttraumatic Stress Disorders  
Retirement Stressors  
Self-injurious Behaviors  
Sleeping Disorders  
Stress  
Transitions (divorce, job loss, empty nest)  
Trauma  
Women's Issues