

Well-being is a Skill: Lessons for the Current Pandemic

UWRA Presentation - November 18, 2020

Dr. Richard Davidson

Center for Healthy Minds, University of Wisconsin-Madison

In this presentation, Dr. Davidson discusses two foundations of modern science that serve as a foundation for viewing well-being as a learned skill: neural plasticity (how the brain changes in response to experience) and epigenetics (the science of how one's genes are regulated). He also presents a framework that includes four pillars of well-being, each of which exhibits plasticity and that can be nurtured through simple mental exercise.

Dr. Davidson mentioned several resources during the session.

The Healthy Minds Program App

Developed at the UW-Madison Healthy Minds Innovation Center, the app includes mindfulness practices, lessons, and an assessment tool to measure changes in well-being. It is available for free download at: <https://hminnovations.org/meditation-app>

TED Talk by Dr. Davidson

This presentation focuses on how mindfulness changes the emotional life of our brains. It can be found at:

https://www.ted.com/talks/richard_j_davidson_how_mindfulness_changes_the_emotional_life_of_our_brains_jan_2019?language=en

Research on Cultivating Well-Being through Mental Exercise

Research in this area is extensive and on-going through the Center for Healthy Minds at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. A description of the research program, published papers, and tools for researchers can be accessed through the Science tab at the top of the Center's website at: <https://centerhealthyminds.org>

Kindness Curriculum

Studies have shown that during the COVID-19 pandemic, both children and parents are experiencing more mental health symptoms and more stress than they had before. How do we support the well-being of children during challenging times? Six ways parents and caregivers can help children be more resilient throughout the pandemic can be found at:

[Kindness Curriculum Study with Pre-Kindergarten Students - Center for Healthy Minds \(centerhealthyminds.org\)](https://centerhealthyminds.org)