

VMI Voices Podcast: Fit Mind, Fertile Ground

0:00 Sherri Tombarge: Welcome to the *VMI Voices* and today's discussion "Fit Mind, Fertile Ground." I'm Sherri Tombarge, VMI's Office of Communications and Marketing. Mindfulness may be the antidote to our frenetic, tech-overcharged world or a way of understanding yourself that offers enhanced insights into the people around you. Is it an essential job skill or the key to managing on-the-job and home-time stress? Is it a treatment for psoriasis, a preventative for heart disease or a coping mechanism for chronic pain? Mindfulness, which is a kind of present-moment awareness that is said to do all this and more, has been trending across a range of disciplines for several years - articles and prominent publications document its use in the workplace, in medicine, and in the military.

0:47 Sherri: Dr. Matt Jarman and Dr. Holly Richardson, who are with me today, are bringing that trend home to VMI in a big way. Together, they are leading meditation sessions for VMI faculty and staff. Matt is making mindfulness a focal point in the Modern Warriorship class he is developing, and Holly is teaching its benefits in the physical education department's classes on health and wellness. Dr. Holly Richardson is a professor of physical education who specializes in exercise physiology. She is pursuing a teacher certification in mind-body stress reduction from the Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts Medical school. Dr. Matt Jarman is a psychology professor who teaches about leadership and related topics, such as mental fitness. His primary area of research is on the social effects of meditation in domains such as problem-solving, leadership, and entrepreneurship.

1:39 Sherri: Matt, let's talk, let's start by talking about quote quelling what meditation teachers call "the monkey mind" through meditation.

1:48 Matt Jarman: One of the first realizations you have when meditating is your mind's kind of a crazy place, and people don't always realize that going in. In fact, that's one of things that can get in the way of people meditating is, they try to do it and they think that they can't because their mind is so crazy, as if it were being caused by the meditation or that a quiet mind were necessary in order to meditate. But the point is, all our minds are, you know, if untrained, tend to be pretty crazy and we just go most of our day without realizing it or just accepting it and so the first task in meditation is to notice and accept that, and then you start to, to work with it and you start to become familiar with what your mind does from moment to moment and then learning and practicing skills through meditation that help to take a little bit of control and quiet the mind down a little bit.

2:45 Holly Richardson: And, and one of the things that we do in our sessions is we just sit quietly for a couple minutes so, our body is still or trying to be still and we use those interruptions we use that frantic mind as, just a reminder to come back to our breathing, come back to our, our body. So people come in after a morning of Monday,

Monday manic business and, 40 minutes later, they're more relaxed, I think, more, more focused.

3:35 Sherri: So they look at that busy mind, it, it feels almost like you can't do it but what you're saying is that's your starting point, is that, is that kind of how it works?

3:42 Matt: Yeah, yeah exactly. Trying to get the mind to be kind of more workable and, you're better able to use your mind, direct it toward whatever you're trying to do if, if, if it is a little bit more quiet and controlled and so it's kind of working towards that.

4:02 Holly: I think the beauty of mindfulness and, and meditation is everyone has the capacity to do it and it doesn't take any skill. It takes just focusing on your breathing and coming back to your breathing, wouldn't you say?

4:21 Matt: Yeah, and one, one of the key things to remember also is that you can't meditate wrong or poorly. As long as you have the intention of returning your attention to some, you know, object of awareness, oftentimes it's the breath, right. So if you're trying to rest your attention on your breath, as long as you have the intention to keep on bringing it back there, even if you go the whole, you know, 10-15 minutes in a daydream the whole time, that doesn't mean that you didn't meditate or that you can't meditate. It just means your mind was a little crazy and that there still, you're still going to probably see benefit from that session. You gave your mind a chance to kind of wander a bit and, over time, you know, you'll get, you become more what, you'll catch those distractions more quickly and be able to allow your mind return to your breath and so there is no such thing as a bad meditation.

5:15 Sherri: How do you do it? You keep talking about breathing; how does it work?

5:19 Holly: Well, we gather and, again, the beauty of, of mindfulness and meditation is you can practice in a group or just by yourself any time of the day. Our sessions are 40 minutes but we started with just 10 minute sessions sitting quietly and having a dignified posture - your feet on the ground, hands on your legs, and Matt invites us to close our eyes and just, again, focus on your breathing. Not to alter that breathing in any way but to focus on that breathing. Sometimes people count their breathing just to, again, as a, as a focus and to use those thoughts, those interruptive thoughts as reminders, as a good thing. it's like, "Oh yes," not to engage in those thoughts or run with the story, so to speak, but to come back to the breathing and then, again, try again. So we start again and again focusing on that breathing, wouldn't you say?

6:43 Matt: Yeah. Yes, and, and the, the, it's a very simple process, right, and, and so, it's just, try to rest your attention on the breath; every time you notice a distraction, you notice the distraction, you allow it to pass. The distraction is in the form of some thought about something; if you don't fuel the thoughts that, they will pass on their own. You don't really have to do anything to get them to pass, you just let them die out, and then,

what's left, well, if you're sitting there and nothing going on, then your breath is left, so you return back to your breath and so, every time, you just notice any thought or distraction, let it pass, return to the breath, return to the breath, return to the breath. It's like a, it's, it's analogous to a repetition at the gym, and, even if that thought is supposed to be a helpful thought about "Oh, maybe I'll, I should do this, if I, if I, am I meditating well? Maybe I should sit..." No, those are just thoughts, you let those go, just like any thoughts, you let it pass and return the breath.

7:48 Holly And if we were to carve out the concept of mindfulness within meditation there are a few things that are common within that definition, and one is to be present, just to, to be present and have your, and be attentive, as well as to really be in a nonjudgmental state in that meditation or in that process of being mindful, whether you're sitting for five minutes or 40 minutes or also maybe going into a big meeting or a presentation that you're worried about or nervous about. And we, we talk about that mini-mindfulness - stepping back, breathing two or three times, getting present, being aware of your body, your breathing and going, going forward. So I think it's applicable to everyday work and play and doesn't have to be in a session, so to speak.

9:12 Sherri: That kind of brings up an interesting question because I know you two, you, you two talk about meditation in different contexts. What's it for? I mean, from both of your perspectives, what's it for?

9:19 Holly: Well, I am very excited about the application of mindfulness or mindfulness meditation in the medical field, the health field. And UMass has one of

9:41 Sherri: The University of Massachusetts?

9:43 Holly: Yes, excuse me, the University of Massachusetts in their Center for Mindfulness, mindfulness program, really have looked at populations of patients that have had pain, that have had wounds, that have had skin, skin conditions, certainly stress management, those people that have suffered a heart, heart attack, and are told to somehow relax, start a stress reduction program in their cardiac rehab program so it's, it's really grown. The application has really, I think, started in medicine just 30 years ago but now, because of the tools we have with medical technology, we're really seeing the benefits of what a practice of meditation/mindfulness can really do in terms of health and wellness benefits.

10:53 Sherri: Does it cure all those things you mentioned?

10:56 Holly: I wouldn't say cure. I would say, Matt, jump, jump in, but I would say that it really allows, it can. It has the potential to really lessen the symptoms, lessen the signs of stress, lessen anxiety, to respond to treatments in a timely fashion compared to a control group. So, we are seeing more health states and treatments being open to providing that for their patients.

11:39 Matt: And there, there are different mechanisms through which meditation might have an effect on health. There's research that shows it, you know, has an effect on the genetic level, kind of increases telomere length. It, it does all these things that are perhaps beyond at least me, in terms of my area of research. A basic connection is, by decreasing strength or stress. Stresses, you know, are a big suppressor of the immune system, right, and so to the extent that any of these health processes are rooted in the immune system we want, you know, stronger immune functioning and so meditation will help with that.

In terms of my own interests and where I see meditation and mindfulness being beneficial is really everywhere, you know, health and everywhere else. I think of it in terms of mental fitness. You know, where physical fitness is now kind of a thing that, I think, in our society we accept is an important thing, valuable, you know. If you are in good physical health you, you know, you feel better, you're able to do just about anything better, you know, because otherwise it kind of just gets in the way. Similarly, everything we do, we do with our mind to some extent. I mean, it's always there, right, so if you can increase the fitness of your mind then anything is going to be improved, right? You'll, you'll be more efficient, you'll make better use of your mind, you won't waste as much time, you know, doing this or that, you'll do a better job prioritizing, be more productive.

13:25 Holly: And Matt, you alluded to this but I wanna come back. Science is, neuroscience is really seeing evidence at the molecular level of changes that, of someone having gone through a, a program, a, a long-term, I should say, program. So we do, we're starting to see those and we're starting to see, because of brain scans, that neuroscience is really finding that meditation and mindfulness really provides for, enhances neuroplasticity or starts laying down neurons associated with, maybe, more of an attentional mind frame or less anxiety. So we are seeing definite changes in cells but also the brain.

14:36 Sherri: You just said a big word, neuroplasticity. What, what, what is that?

14:40 Holly: Yeah. So, yeah, and, and I think that that's one of the reasons why mindfulness and meditation has just kind of boomed in the last five, five years where it's, you know, these techniques have been around for thousands of years and we're just now being able to measure those effects. So neuroplasticity is that, your brain's ability to change and to adapt to certain circumstances in a positive way regarding increased neural cells and increased in, in thicknesses of the gray matter where by then really kind of documenting in a physical way what couldn't be documented even ten years ago regarding the cognitive piece of meditation and mindfulness.

15:50 Matt: Yeah, I, I think one of the key ideas is, is that your brain can change when you do things differently. And we have a tendency to do, you know, we have these

habits that we form, and they can even be just basic habits in terms of how we think about things or how we respond to different stressors or situations. And so, by change, intentionally changing how we respond to everyday stressors and then, then over time, you know. Or doing things differently with our mind and so, and our brain changed as a result of that, they're, it's related. The, the ability to, to regulate your attention to, to direct it towards one thing or another uses a part of the brain and so that part of gets stronger when it's used more and so that's what we're doing. And, and again, the, the key here is the connection between meditation and mindfulness. A person can be mindful, they can be aware of the present moment without meditating, but it's gonna be a lot more difficult, it'll take much more effort to keep your mind still if you haven't been kind of, giving your mind a good workout over time, right? And so, so that's why meditation is so important; it makes sense for us. You know, someone can say "Oh, just be present" and you can say "Oh yeah, yeah, that sounds good" but that doesn't mean you can do it for any long period of time and so that's where the meditation comes in, the training.

17:12 Holly: And you brought up the physical training and I, I would agree it's the practice of, the, the acquiring of practice time to, to make some of those changes, or to make all of the changes that we've, we've talked about so that's important over long term. But we also know that just changes in the brain can be seen on, on scans in two seconds from going from a, a frantic you know a, a monkey mind to a more calm purposeful attentive mind, that those changes are rapid.

18:05 Sherri: So it sounds like.... did I get this right? So if you, if you, if you do it for a long time, years, you spend, you do it every day for years or most days or whatever, there's a measurable difference in your brain, but if you also have just begun and you're doing it just right now for the first or second or fifth time there's also a change that can be seen in the brain?

18:28 Holly: Right, ab-absolutely. And, and to see that on a MRI in present time is just, it's, it's staggering! It's like, wow, it's just real based time, I guess, to see those changes within an MRI.

18:49 Sherri: We tend to believe an MRI in a different way than we believe, I guess, all these traditions that have gone on for thousands of years. Because, I guess meditation has been used, how would you describe its historic use? A lot of different...

19:00 Matt: Yeah, different traditions. I mean, Buddhism has been used for over 2500 years and Buddhism itself is actually very scientific in nature. Most forms of it doesn't have dogma, it, it's more people who sit for long periods, meditate, strengthen the precision of their mind, and then they study their own minds with their now more precise, more kind of fit minds and, and, you know, they say the, the Buddha said, you know, "Don't just take my word for it, do it. If it works great, if it doesn't, then don't do it." You know, so it was very much an empirical kind of, you know, base whether or not you

continue doing it on your own observations of whether it works. And, and I think that's an important point too. All the science is out there now saying that it has all these great effects, and so, in my mind, that's great, so that's good. So but now, you know, the, the key is for me, I'm less interested in whether or not my brain is, is changing from one moment to the next; I'm more interested in whether or not, you know, it helps me be a little more, you know, calm and clear and productive. And so, you know, I encourage people to, to pay attention to that and, and to recognize that, so if it doesn't, some people notice the benefits right away; others might meditate for a few weeks or a month or two and not notice the difference. And so, for them, the beauty is, "Look, there's all this research shows that stuff is going on, and people have been doing it over 2500 years, not just for the heck of it." And it's like going to the gym, right? You don't leave there after a month and say "I haven't reached all my fitness goals, I'm never gonna go again." You know that it takes, takes a while, right, and so, so, so for those who, who don't notice the benefits just yet, you know, they can have some degree of faith based on the science, and based on other people's experiences, that, that it will happen if, if they just stick it out. Some people, you know, one explanation of that is some people just aren't even aware in the first place; you know, you, they lack the self-awareness so much that they don't notice the positive changes when they happen so they have to give it time for their mind to, to become more aware of those things that they were not used to paying attention to.

21:07 Holly: And, and I think a great practical example of what you just said, Matt, is there are a number of public schools trying to, well, they have in fact implemented mindfulness/meditation program for, for their students and the schools are, they're finding that behavioral problem, problems have decreased, concentration of their students have increased. I had a neighbor, and she told me that her young daughter, who is four years old, at a, a local preschool, they are doing what's called breathing exercises or, you know, so the concept of meditation, of mindfulness, again, just is open to anybody and that's

22:12 Sherri: It's amazing to me that a child is gonna, I don't know, that they're gonna understand what it is they need to do inside their head.

22:20 Holly: Yeah. Great. Great kind of comment, yeah. And so, if, if we were to, if I were to teach the young four years, four-year-olds, you know, we would certainly use their language and use the breath, use metaphors and language that they would be, be aware of, maybe, you know, snowflakes falling, listening to the rain, or, you know, things that are very tangible to, to them. So you're right, they might not be, you know, kind of backtracking, thinking, "Oh, I'm meditating," but we're, I'm so excited about the teachers' willingness and courage, I believe, to, to implement this in the schools for their students. So, so at all levels we would teach and use different pedagogy or different strategies for, for those groups, yeah.

23:31 Matt: And, and again, the meditation practice can be quite nuanced in what it

means and how it's applied, but it also, also can be very simple, right, and so it can be put into those simple words. You know, you can describe thoughts as kind of imagining they're just little bubbles that just pass away or get popped or I've heard the, you know, the description of it as it's like you're, you're watching your thoughts as if they were a train that's going by but when they pass they pass. And, and so I, I think it's not that unreasonable to, to, to ask a young child to, to notice their thoughts pass by, you know, in little bubbles, and then, and then, you know, notice their breath again, and keep on doing that. And that's all, they don't need to understand why they're doing it to get the benefits.

24:22 Sherri: That's interesting, they don't need to understand why.

24:21 Matt: Yeah. We just, are obsessed with the "whys" so we want to know but you don't have to.

24:29 Sherri: Interesting. Well, we've mentioned Buddhism but we've also said it's it's, it's been associated with, with other religions. Why, why, why do we have that sense that, I mean, I think most people do anyway, the sense that meditation has to do with religion? 'Cause, because it doesn't sound like it, not the way you're talking about it.

24:46 Holly: That night, we're very careful, careful and aware of, of when we started the sessions to really, to really introduce this in a secular way and a, a non-religious way because it is a practice, it is a tech, technique. Certainly, having at its foundation in religion, contemplative religions, and, again, we're aware of that but we present it as it is, technique grounded yes, but we don't attribute any religious significance to that in our sessions.

25:50 Matt: And, and, I would say if, if you think about different religious groups for example, in the audience, if they're going to services of some sort, they often will go in a car, right? Many people of different religions drive cars nowadays; some of us might not all the time. The point is, there's nothing religious about a car, right? That doesn't imbue it with any religious significance, it's just a mode of travel to get you from one place to another. I would say that meditation is, it can be thought of as a vehicle that, that gets you from where you are to where you want to be, it just so happens that these religions have noticed that, you know, directing your mind toward something such as, you know, the breath or some, some, you know, phrase helps calm it. But, but, unless you see some religious significance in your breath, which is, you know, I, I don't see it, then, then it's not inherently, it doesn't have to be a religious practice unless you're adding some sort of religious element. Some religions do add layers on that, that, where you do bring in kind of, you know, different dogmatic elements or, and which is fine, that serves a different purpose. But, but just, you know, resting your attention on the breath and, and kind of strengthening your mind, there's nothing religious about that.

27:10 Holly: And I guess it depends on your goal, also. The, the goal of, once you start a practice, or before you begin a practice, or to sit down in our sessions, it's like, what are your personal goals? And so, if it is to decrease, decrease the stress in your life or to have a, a stillness, an awareness, to be more nonjudgmental, more compassionate, then yeah, it is a vehicle, it is a tool, it is a technique. If you want enlightenment you probably don't want to meditate with me (laughter), just because my goals are, are, are different than that. But, but there are people and, and groups, that use that vehicle for that.

28:10 Matt: Yeah, there are many different types of meditations or the same types are used for different outcomes. And ultimately, the question is, what is the, the goal, the purpose of a given meditation practice and, and given practitioner? Depending on those goals, you know, changes things.

28:25 Sherri: Yeah. I know we, we're here at a military school and the class, Matt, that you're developing is called Modern Warriorship, and you say mindfulness has to do with that. What does mindfulness have to do with the military? I'm, I guess it may be more than one thing.

28:39 Matt: There, there's been in recent years research on how it can benefit, in particular, military groups. Again, as I said before, it helps with everything, right? And, and so, you know, mental fitness is particularly relevant when you're in, you know, high stress high-pressure situations, when you need to make quick decisions, when you need to, so both, kind of, going in, in terms of optimal functioning during those sorts of situations and then, also, you know, we see a lot of PTSD nowadays. And so, instead of just addressing that after-the-fact, you know, by equipping people with those sorts of tools with how to, how to deal with their mind, how to deal with stress and, and all these different experiences they have in a more kind of productive manner then, then we might be able to avoid PT, some PTSD and, in other situations, simply have a tool that can help respond to it.

29:37 Holly: I want to go back to that high stress environment and, again, there've been a couple of groups, one at Georgetown University and the University of Miami. They've taken a look at veterans and with and without mindfulness stress reduction program and they found, the University of Minnesota found that veterans that were engaged in mindfulness practice had less symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, less anxiety. And, in addition, they worked, they took a look at another set of researchers. Dr. Elizabeth Stanley took a look at pre-deployment and, again, it was not a high stress environment but it was an environment where people needed to be trained in a given time and to.... what they found was, again, those people that practiced, had personal practice meditation as well as sessions, were able to have a more attentive attentiveness on some of their tasks and performances as opposed to those pre-deployment soldiers that did not engage in practice. So I think real life activities and real life scenarios, I think we're, we're going to see more and more of the application of

meditation, pre-deployment, post-deployment, post-traumatic stress, and lessening the, the symptoms and anxiety of those individuals.

31:43 Sherri: So your Modern Warriorship class, I guess, will include, through the preparatory meditation, laying the groundwork, is that like Holly was?

31:50 Matt: Right, yes. The, the point is, one of the focuses of the course is kind of preparing people mentally and physically to help themselves and others and, you know, when, if you're talking about, you know, courage that might be needed in a situation, you know, acting in the face of fear. Well, you know, fear is, is something in your mind and is driven by your thoughts, and so by learning and practicing, you know, different techniques for, for, for dealing with that, then, then you'll be better able to act in, in a way that you want to act in situations that, that do require courage, for example.

32:29 Holly: And I just wanna bring up just a couple of techniques that maybe the audience could, could do and that, that I engage my students with, and that is just, you know, a simple breathing exercise where I ask the students to breathe, you know, breathe in to a count of four, hold that breath, and then breathe out to a count of four. Again, just so that they can become aware of their breathing and being focused on, on the inhalation as well as exhalation. And another fun one that I think anybody can do is a mindful eating technique where I gave my students a, a piece of chocolate, and, or you, it's typically done with raisins but they wanted chocolate, so. And so, so, you know, we spent probably, I don't know, maybe seven minutes eating, looking at this, studying at this piece of chocolate, you know, feeling it, you know, melt in, in their mouths, and the taste. So, again, it's just a, a fun technique to use. But, you're finding, now, mindfulness within that population, mindfulness eating, mindfulness in many populations.

34:08 Sherri: What, what does it help you to be mindful when you eat like that? What does that do for you?

34:11 Holly: Well, it's a practice. So, so, it's, it's slowing down, you know. It's slow, so think about, think about the, cadets, it's so applicable here. Think about the cadet in the mess hall, and the noise, the, I was gonna say rat race, which, the, the, I guess the stress of maybe getting your food and sitting down. So it, it's a, a technique that just helps someone slow down, become still, and focus on that, that food, whatever it is. Kind of paralleling, I guess, a Japanese tea ceremony where that, the, the tea is something to be be...., you know, beholden, and that you, there's a, a tradition, there's a, a stillness to that ceremony. Well, that's not gonna happen in the mess hall but it, it, it can still that mind and have that individual focus on better, healthier eating practices.

35:38 Matt: And, and, and, I, I totally agree with that, and, and I think it's important and I think this also gets at one of the other general points with meditation is that we do so much on autopilot that that can also get in the way of just basic enjoyment. So, so, you

know, savoring a positive experience is, is, you know, is, you know, it's pleasant; it feels good, you know. There, there's a, it's an important experience for, for general psychological well-being and, and just eating something, that was so much on autopilot nowadays. You know, by interrupting our, our typical habits and, and, you know, changing how, eating more slowly and really paying attention, you can, you know, it, it teaches us how to savor, you know, a moment like that just as you can savor any moment, you know, eating or not. But so, so it, you know, meditation in many domains can help you define kind of simple enjoyment or contentment that you don't typically find and this is a great example of that. By interrupting our typical way of kind of rushing through it, and mindlessly.

36:47 Holly: And, what's so fascinating is, through a meditative practice, people become less self-centered and can become more compassionate and that, that is certainly kind of a, a strain or a technique of, of meditation, compassionate, loving kindness meditation which is very popular and, again, that's, it's not only for you, the individual but it, it does have application for being other-oriented, and maybe, Matt, you could say something about business, I guess, or meditation and business.

37:48 Matt: Sure. Yeah, and well, so, in general, when we're talking about dealing with others, it's, it's easier to be, you know, to, to care for others if, you know, if your mind isn't all over the place, right? Because if your mind's all over the place we tend to kind of focus more on ourselves and, 'cause, you know, that's all that we can handle. But if, if, you know, you have a certain kind of groundedness through this sort of practice then, then it's easier to, to both kind of process and think through, kind of, the best way to, you know, to relate to others, to help others in the business context, to lead others. You can also be more attuned to the emotions and other experiences of other people and what, what they need, and, and it's just much easier to, to have empathy, to show compassion when, when you have a, a kind of somewhat stable kind of mental experience to, to start with. So that's why you're seeing it a lot in, in, in business, you know. Not only does it help you with your stress, and, it also helps how you relate to others, how you lead others, how you help, help them to, to get the most out of their own work, even, even if they themselves aren't meditating. So, and that's one of things that I think is most interesting is, to the extent that meditation changes how you interact with others then, then it can have this kind of ripple effect even with people who themselves aren't meditating.

39:14 Sherri: That's interesting 'cause it sounds, you know, when you describe what you are doing it sounds like you are concentrating on yourself, you know, but what's happening in the end is that it can make it easier to, to, to empathize.

39:25 Holly: Yeah, and less reactive, you know, just, less, again, and in a nonjudgmental way but, again, it goes back to practice. It goes back to, you know, starting somewhere and then, you know, maintaining it, and, you know, finding those or experiencing those, those times where you're less self- and more kind of other-oriented.

39:55 Matt: And it's very much the idea that, you know, you, you help yourself to help others. You know, it's kind of like in the airplane, you know what they say - in the event of, you know, if oxygen is issued, you would put the mask on yourself and then the child, right, because you're not much help to them otherwise, right? And so, you know, they, one idea in meditation is, if you, if you don't have a disciplined mind and even attempt to help others, don't always, it's probably not going to go as well as you might hope because, because your mind's so crazy, that, that, you know, sometimes you don't make the best automatic judgments or decisions when your mind's kind of a more crazy place.

40:32 Sherri: So, so often when you have conversations like these where, where you pick a topic and get people who know about it to talk about it, they're selling something, they've just written a book or something. And I think what I'm getting from this whole conversation, one last question - you don't have to have the book, do you? I mean, out there in the media there's recordings, there's what, there's videos, there's books....

40:52 Matt: Yeah.

40:54 Holly: Yeah, I mean, one, if, if anybody is interested in, in meditation or mindfulness, YouTube has great, you know, 10 minute, 15 minute meditations to music to, to sound. I mean, that's a great place to start if you're interested. Yeah, so, yeah. There's, it's, it's like running or swimming, you don't need a lot of extra equipment.

41:27 Matt: And I would say one of the biggest dangers is, is that we feel like we need to read all this stuff and do all these other things to prepare first, before we start meditating, and, and, that's not the case. All those things are great but, I mean, you know, just from listening to this you know how to meditate; you just find a chair, sit, set a timer, 10 minutes, 15 minutes, rest your attention on the breath. Let go of distracting thoughts, return to the breath. Just repeat that. And so, that's all you need, right? So you can, you can start now and then, sure, you can read up on it, you know, the more you read the better, but it's not necessary and it definitely isn't something thing to do before starting to meditate.

42:04 Holly: Yeah, I mean, there are phone apps out there, for, yeah, meditation, and music and.... clocks. So yeah, it's, it's out there but you don't need much.

42:21 Matt: And in fact, you know, you also have to be cautious as well, you know. One of the things that, one of the points of meditation is that if we're trying to strengthen the mind, we're trying to make it a little difficult on, you know. We're not paying attention to our breath because we think it's really exciting, it's a boring thing, right? So if you can pay attention to that then that's gonna, you know, strengthen your mind. So, you also don't want to get too many crutches or apps that, that make things more pleasant and, because then you're not giving your mind the same workout that you're looking for, so.

Also, you know, be wary of getting to into all the different, you know, gadgets and, and apps that are gonna help you meditate; you don't need anyone to help you meditate, you just, you just do it.

43:02 Sherri: (Laughs) That's a great place to stop. Just do it, just do it. Okay. Well, Holly and Matt thank you so much! This has been a lot of fun and very.

43:14 Holly: Thank you, Sherri. Thank you.

43:15 Matt: Thank you.