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Mind-Body Connection

Jon Kabat-Zinn '64 and Michael Baime '77 meld medicine and meditation



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The Alumni Magazine of Haverford College

SPRING 2009



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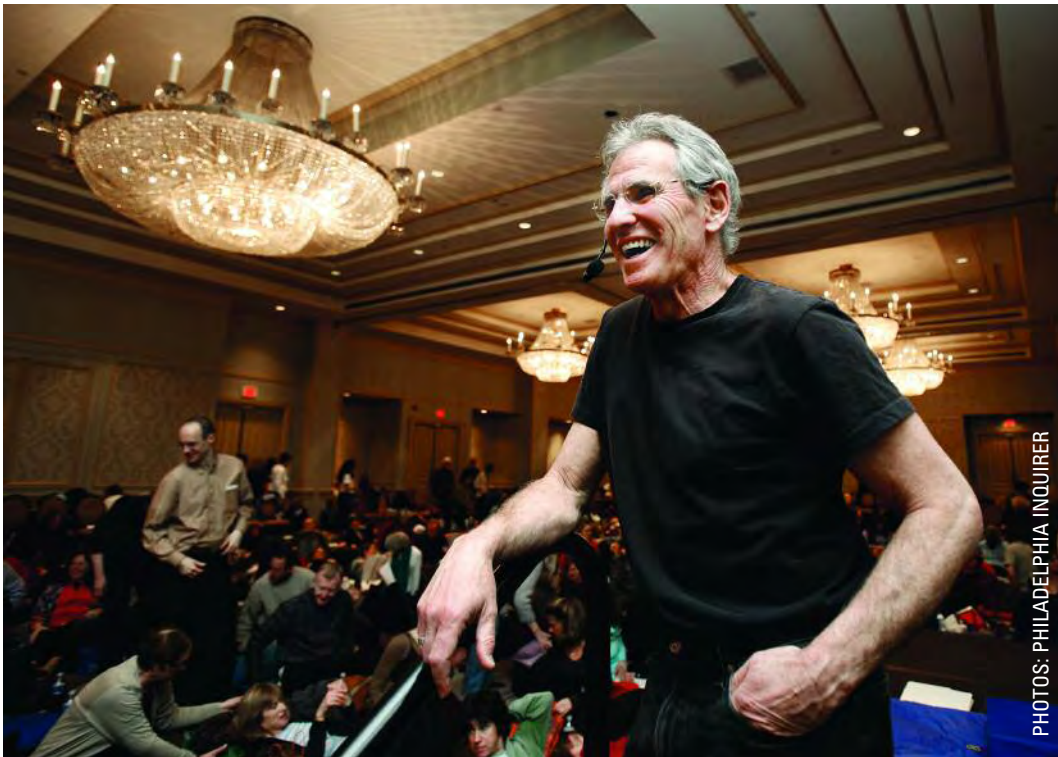
The College gets on the path to sustainability



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Fords at the Frontier of

Jon Kabat-Zinn '64: Bringing Mindfulness to the Masses



PHOTOS: PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

On stage at the Annenberg Center's Zellerbach Theater in Philadelphia, Jon Kabat-Zinn was playing to a rapturous sellout crowd. They were there to absorb, even be transformed by, his prescription of hope for a troubled world, and Kabat-Zinn, with his craggy, handsome face, high cheekbones and graying hair, had them mesmerized.

He recited poetry by Emily Dickinson, quoted from Henry David Thoreau and injected some humorous shtick: "Do you know what I'm talking about? Or "Anyone here have that experience?" The audience members laughed, grew silent or nodded their heads in unison. >

Jon Kabat-Zinn, whose best-selling books on meditation have been printed in 30 languages, speaks to a packed crowd at a conference in Philadelphia.

By Gloria Hochman

Mind-Body Medicine

Michael Baime '77: Melding Medicine and Meditation

On a Sunday night in December, 11 cancer patients sat in a circle on the second floor of the University of Pennsylvania's Ralston House. Their eyes were focused on Michael Baime, the charismatic director of Mind-Body Medicine at the Abramson Cancer Center of the University of Pennsylvania, who was leading the two-hour gathering.

The session began with the sweet sound of the tingshas, two Tibetan bronze cymbals that Baime struck, signaling that it was time for his patients to close their eyes and open their minds to meditation. His goal was to teach them how to concentrate on the here and now, on this moment, dismissing thoughts about the past, which cannot be changed, and about the future, which is uncertain. >

Philadelphia physician Michael Baime with Michelle Gossett, a participant in a meditation group for cancer patients he leads.



Jon Kabat-Zinn '64

Kabat-Zinn, 64, is the country's meditator-in-chief, the molecular biologist who introduced mindful meditation to traditional medicine back in 1979 and who, through the next three decades, ushered it into the medical mainstream. His five books, including *Wherever You Go, There You Are*, have been printed in 30 languages, and have sold nearly 1.5 million copies in the United States.

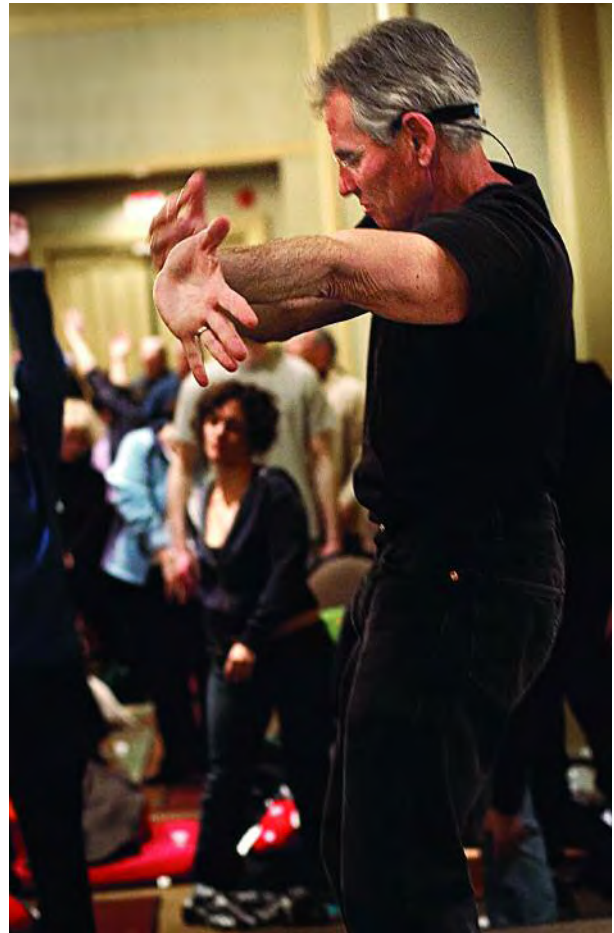
The people in this audience, though, were academic types—teachers, principals and administrators, all attendees at a February weekend conference on mindfulness in education organized by the University of Pennsylvania's Program for Stress Management. Education is only one of myriad disciplines to which Kabat-Zinn has begun to stretch his teachings. In a world that he says is spinning out of control, he considers meditation training essential for anyone seeking clarity and compassion in their lives and relationships.

Mindful meditation, simply, is attending to the present moment. Its practice, rooted in Buddhism, was meant to relieve suffering and cultivate compassion and it is compatible, proponents say, with any or no religion. It begins with the willingness to set aside a half hour or so a day to practice formal meditation—sitting, standing or walking—at first just focusing on your breath. When thoughts of the past or the future intrude, as they inevitably will, subjects are told to return to their breath.

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"The present moment, the only moment we have to feel or to think, is a hidden dimension for most of us. We are so absorbed with planning for the future or blaming people for what is over and done with that we lose the lives we are living. We die a thousand deaths wasting our energy on what was or what will be."

Kabat-Zinn leading relaxation exercises during a conference on mindfulness for educators.



for most of us," said Kabat-Zinn. "We are so absorbed with planning for the future or blaming people for what is over and done with that we lose the lives we are living. We die a thousand deaths wasting our energy on what was or what will be."

The key, he said, is that people who meditate handle emotions differently. They are not so judgmental and they learn how to let go of the past, to put aside how "somebody did them in. Stress comes from the way people react to things, and if you're not cultivating mindfulness, you're cultivating reactivity."

The real meditation practice is in how we live our lives, Kabat-Zinn said. "It isn't sitting in a lotus position and pretending you're a statue in the British Museum. There are a thousand doors to mindfulness. You can cook mindfully, dance mindfully, walk on the beach mindfully, make love mindfully. It's all about being fully present in what you are doing. Formal meditation practice is merely the launching platform."

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Michael Baime '77

He did it by suggesting, in a velvet voice, that they gather their attention around their breathing. When thoughts and sensations intrude, as they inevitably will, he directed that they “let them be,” and refocus on their breath.

In ten minutes, when the tingshas sounded again, everyone in the circle opened their eyes. Some blotted their tears with a tissue, and began to speak softly about what they had experienced.

Baime, a doctor of internal medicine, is the director of the University of Pennsylvania’s Program for Stress Management, which has taught 5,000 people how to meditate.

Though Baime graduated from Haverford more than a decade after Jon Kabat-Zinn, their paths have converged in the world of mind-body medicine. Yet it was a Haverford connection that sparked their first meeting. It happened when Baime read Kabat-Zinn’s 1991 bestseller, *Full Catastrophe Living*, and was startled to see an acknowledgment to the late Alfred Satterthwaite, the English professor in whose on-campus home Baime had lived during his senior year. He contacted Kabat-Zinn, visited him in Massachusetts, sat in on his classes, and a long relationship

took root. “It was a powerful meeting for me,” recalls Baime. “He was the person who was doing it in the way I thought was most effective and and he became an important person to me. If I need him, he’s there.”

For Baime, Haverford was “a powerful, remarkable place that valued intellectual curiosity, interpersonal honesty and a community spirit, all of which created my most important values for living.” It was there, he said, that he

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In 2002 Baime was diagnosed with a rare condition that has robbed him of the central vision in his right eye. “I began not recognizing faces, and I couldn’t do physical exams. It was devastating. Meditation kept me from losing my mind.”



Kabat-Zinn (left) was the keynote speaker at a conference on mindfulness in education that Baime (right) led. The two became friends after Baime read one of Kabat-Zinn’s books, learned he was a fellow Haverford alum and contacted him.

Jon Kabat-Zinn '64

Kabat-Zinn's interest in meditation may have been hatched during his undergraduate years at Haverford, where he lived in French House opposite the duck pond and majored in chemistry while pursuing as a "sort-of-second major" his interest in German and French literature and Italian opera. His class of '64 was the last to participate in compulsory Fifth Day Meeting and that is where he learned the power of silence. Also influential was philosophy professor Douglas Steere. "[His] legacy was a kind of ethics and ethos that had to do with truthfulness and authenticity," said Kabat-Zinn.

When Kabat-Zinn founded his clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical School 30 years ago, his goal was to catch people falling between the cracks in the health system. After all,

he reasoned, heart disease, diabetes, cancer and other chronic illnesses are often caused or exacerbated by lifestyle factors that can be altered. He believed he knew how to make that happen.

His first group included those with stress-related chronic illnesses whose doctors had exhausted their bags of tricks. He knew if he could restore their well-being, he'd be onto something big.

The results were extraordinary. People with headaches didn't have them anymore. Those with backaches learned to work around their pain. Those with high blood pressure saw the numbers drop. Mindfulness, which swings the body into balance, had led to symptom relief. "Patients told me I had done more for them in eight weeks than their doctors had in eight years," said Kabat-Zinn.

Kabat-Zinn had been meditating ever since he was a student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1965. He remembers seeing a

More than 18,000 patients have participated in stress reduction programs at Kabat-Zinn's clinic in Massachusetts. He also leads sold-out meditation workshops, like this one in Philadelphia, across the country.



sign inviting students to a talk by Roshi Philip Kapleau, author of *The Three Pillars of Zen*. He knew nothing about Zen and was one of only four students who showed up. But he said, "It took the top off my head. It filled a niche in my assessment of what was missing in our culture, an authentic experience of being rather than doing. I realized you could learn how to be in a relationship with your thoughts and emotions. It satisfied something deep in me and I've been in love with it ever since."

Marrying medicine and meditation (despite their shared etymological origin in the Latin word *mederi*, which means "to heal") was not easy. Kabat-Zinn encountered what he calls "medical politics," yet experienced no insurmountable roadblocks. His molecular biology doctorate from MIT helped. "People figured that with that kind of pedigree, I must know something," he conjectured.

In today's world, where multitasking is a must, where technology, with its tantalizing smorgasbord of instant messaging, insistent e-mails, and vibrating cell phones, intrudes into each moment, Kabat-Zinn is not sure how people survive without something to ground them. Without meditation, he said, he couldn't have gotten through eight years of watching his father, a brilliant biomedical scientist, lose his mind to Alzheimer's disease or tend to his mother, an accomplished artist, who had a stroke from the stress. "There is not a single aspect of my life where I'm not calling on meditation to keep me balanced," he said.

More than 18,000 patients have participated in stress reduction programs at his medical clinic, often with startling, clinically proven results.

Two studies of patients with psoriasis, a painful skin condition, revealed that those getting audio-taped meditation instructions while receiving ultraviolet treatments saw their skin clear up four times as fast as those who did not participate. In another study, in which influenza vaccine was given to volunteers, those who meditated had more antibodies than those in the control group.

But the focus of the two-day conference in Philadelphia, where Kabat-Zinn was the keynote speaker and also led a day-long meditation session for several hundred educators, was applying meditation to learning. Kabat-Zinn believes that there are dimensions of our being that schools ignore. We are taught analysis, but we are never schooled in awareness. Learning, after all, has to do with perception, those eureka moments that can ignite passion.



Baime calls Kabat-Zinn, who has been a mentor, "an important person" in his life. "If I need him, he's there."

If mindfulness were more a part of education, more young people would benefit, Kabat-Zinn believes. Parents are the first and most powerful teachers. They can be mindful by nurturing their children and themselves, by seeing things, as the young do, as if for the first time.

A good teacher will take mindfulness to class. "Imagine the potential for teaching young children if they can inhabit the 'being' part of their lives, ask deep questions and maybe love learning," Kabat-Zinn said. "That's how kids become emotionally intelligent. They learn that life is the curriculum."

More than 200 medical centers in the world, 100 in this country, have integrated mindfulness in their curriculums. School districts from Oakland, California, to New York City are inviting it into the classroom.

"We need to wake up a little more and liberate ourselves from our self-destructive habits—greed, hatred, racism and selfishness—what the Buddhists call ignorance, ignoring what is fundamental," Kabat-Zinn mused. "If we learn that when we are young, it can enhance joy and relationships throughout life. There is no reason to starve for well-being." 🐿

Michael Baime '77

encountered a set of assumptions about moral and intellectual life that opened him to possibilities he never could have imagined. Although it was not compulsory, he attended Quaker Meeting, which, he said, had a “contemplative, meditative quality” to which he became connected.

“I don’t know how people live without something, some form of discipline, to help them feel whole and balanced.”



Baime speaks to cancer patient Michelle Gossett, who says her meditation sessions with him have been “life changing.”

Today, Baime is convinced that everyone — not just cancer patients — can benefit from mindfulness meditation. He has worked with police officers, heart patients, teachers, public school students, hospital employees, accountants and adults with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. In February, he led the national conference for educators in Philadelphia, at which Jon Kabat-Zinn was keynote speaker.

But meditation is exquisitely suited to those fighting cancer, Baime says. “They are willing

to take a chance on living fully now because they realize how precious life is. They want to experience the beauty of their lives because of the severity of their treatments and the agonizing mystery about what lies ahead for them.

“It doesn’t just give them a couple of helping techniques,” he continues. “It gives them a fresh start and adds a different dimension to their lives.”

Baime, who meditates daily, may be his own best example. In 2002, he was diagnosed with a rare condition—central serous retinopathy—that has robbed him of the central vision in his right eye. He was only moderately concerned as long as his left eye functioned normally. But three years ago, he developed the same condition in his left eye. “I began not recognizing faces, and I couldn’t do physical exams because I couldn’t see what was happening in my patients’ eyes or throats or ears,” he said. “It was devastating. Meditation kept me from losing my mind.”

Baime was lucky. He entered a clinical trial to have his eye injected with a drug often used with patients who have macular degeneration. It seemed to work. His vision, which had deteriorated so much that he could not read a newspaper, was back to 20/30. But the improvement lasted only four months.

“It was heartbreaking,” Baime said. “A lot of my identity was in the role of being an internal medicine doctor, and I knew I’d have to give up my practice.”

Another experimental treatment—photodynamic therapy—suggested by his doctor as a last resort produced almost miraculous results. Sight in Baime’s left eye was largely restored. Still, he can’t see well enough to return to his practice right now, and he lives in the same kind of uncertainty as many of his patients. His doctor has predicted “‘three good years’ and then he doesn’t know,” said Baime. “So I have this window, a few years to make a difference in the world, to get this (mindfulness meditation) program into government, education, corporations, to make it a routine part of training for professionals.

“I don’t know how people live without something, some form of discipline to help them feel whole and balanced,” he said. “We have made a decision as a culture to sacrifice quality of life for what we do and what we can consume. The time urgency, the unmet demands, the frustration of not being able to fulfill our deeper hopes, the lack of time to feel, to cultivate friendships,

the loss of community all create unbearable tension. It's in our bodies so we can't sleep at night. It's in our hearts so we feel alienated even from ourselves, from our deeper nature. It's not just common, it's endemic."

Baime believes he was born to meditate. He has been doing it, in a way, since he was six. Without understanding what was happening to him, he remembers experiences of a deep, profound peace that would come over him suddenly, inexplicably. He could bring on that feeling by walking at a certain pace or counting slowly or just looking up at a slice of sky. "I spent my whole childhood trying to make that happen," he said. "I didn't think it was anything special. I thought it was what everybody was doing."

As he approached puberty, the ability to recreate those peaceful interludes eluded him. But for his 14th birthday, his parents gave him a gift of meditation instruction. In his 20s, he met Chogyam Trungpa, his lifelong teacher, who changed his life forever. He has been meditating ever since, training in Tibetan Buddhism and authorized as a teacher in 1983.

Michelle Gossett, one of Baime's cancer patients, said the sessions with him have been "life changing." "Not only do I use mindfulness to deal with pain but my definition of happiness has changed. It used to be that the carrot was what motivated me, the prospect of achieving and making more money. I was driving on autopilot and not present in conversations I was having with others. Now it has become so simple. I learned how to meditate for 40 minutes every day and went from being agitated over my diagnosis to having the tools to make me stop, breathe, let things be and be mindful of everything going on around me."

"Life is experienced in moments," Baime said. "When we enter those moments fully, there is beauty and joy and wonder. Mindfulness gives us an anchor in our most turbulent times. The walls come down and we become aware that the life we have is worth celebrating." 🐾

Gloria Hochman has won 27 awards for her magazine articles on medical and social issues. She is author of three books, including A Brilliant Madness: Living with Manic-Depressive Illness, which she co-authored with actor Patty Duke.

Savoring Silence: The New Fourth Day Meeting

In the Phillips Wing of Magill Library, March sunshine pours through towering Gothic windows lighting up the book-lined room where two dozen students, faculty and staff sit in silence with eyes closed. Eventually, breaking the quiet, a young woman speaks from her heart about the lessons in equanimity she has been learning from her elderly grandfather. Finally, signaling the close of the session, Director of Quaker Affairs Helene Pollock cues up the sweet strains of the hymn "Simple Gifts" performed by cellist Yo Yo Ma and singer Alison Krauss.

This is the new Fourth Day Meeting. Launched in February, the 30-minute long Wednesday morning sessions are a reinvention of Haverford's long tradition of Fifth Day Meeting, which was compulsory for students until 1966.

In the intervening years, Fifth Day Meeting has shifted times and venues—moving from Haverford Meeting House to the Common Room in Founders Hall.

"We thought it was time to rethink Fifth Day Meeting," says Pollock, who wanted to find a way to make this venerable Quaker tradition, in which a group sits together in silence with no pre-determined program, more vital to the Campus community. After checking class schedules and consulting with faculty, Pollock decided a



Wednesday time slot would afford more students and faculty the chance to attend the sessions, which she sees as building on a Haverford vision of community that emphasizes deep listening and a radical openness to anyone who feels moved to speak. Also new is the music that ends the Meeting. "It's not what Quakers usually do," says Pollock, who invited Catholic priest Fr. Ed Windhaus to select the music for another March session. His pick: Gregorian Chant.

To Pollock, the musical interludes, which will be chosen by a different person each week, can help to highlight the diversity of religions and spiritual approaches that can be compatible with Meeting. "We all do something different," she says. "Some of us pray. Some of us meditate. People craft their own approach. We all can use the silence in our own way." — *Eils Lotozo*