



# science, skills, sharing

## shared well-being

Sharing the science of the Center for Healthy Minds comes in many forms — getting the word out about research findings or creating new evidence-based tools to improve well-being in people of all ages and backgrounds.



Over the past year, the Center has reached more than **3 million** people directly through event, website, social media and email channels.

Healthy Minds Innovations, the external nonprofit affiliated with the Center, has put a new tool into the hands of **1,450 people** with its Healthy Minds @Work Program in select workplaces.



In some studies, Center researchers use a “Train the Trainer” approach, where more experienced experts in a certain skill (like mindfulness meditation) train less experienced experts, **increasing** the less experienced people’s skills, thus allowing them to reach more people in the long-run.

More than **5 billion** people around the globe have access to mobile devices, highlighting the potential to expand well-being interventions in research and understand what works, for whom, and why.



Sources: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018). Understanding the Training of the Trainers Model. [cdc.gov/healthyschools/professional\\_development/documents/17\\_279600\\_TrainersModel-FactSheet\\_v3\\_508Final.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/professional_development/documents/17_279600_TrainersModel-FactSheet_v3_508Final.pdf); Pew Research Center. (2019). Smartphone Ownership Is Growing Rapidly Around the World, But Not Always Equally. [pewresearch.org/global/2019/02/05/smartphone-ownership-is-growing-rapidly-around-the-world-but-not-always-equally/](https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2019/02/05/smartphone-ownership-is-growing-rapidly-around-the-world-but-not-always-equally/).



# faith in action

## BRINGING SCIENCE AND FAITH LEADERS TOGETHER

It is easy to see monumental differences between faith and science. The faithful are powered by belief. Scientists demand evidence.

Dekila Chungyalpa sees similarities. Namely, she sees a planet both share and want to protect.

What if the two groups combined forces to protect the earth? Faith leaders had already begun the work in their own corner of the world over the past few decades. But what could be accomplished together if scientists — from the fields of environment, health, psychology — were to join them? In 2019, The Loka Initiative, an interdisciplinary program housed within the Center for Healthy Minds, became a reality.

“I think there is something that can be gained from all traditions,” Chungyalpa, the Initiative’s Director, says. “However, there are few avenues that allow for traditional knowledge and wisdom to flow into the scientific secular world. And, yet it is clear that both sets of strengths — scientific and ethical — are needed for us to solve the environmental and climate crisis.”

Gaining wisdom and studying ancient traditions is something familiar to the Center for Healthy Minds, where researchers and scholars search for what constitutes well-being.

“The reality is we underestimate the complex, interdependent set of factors that shape our emotional and physical health,” says Richard Davidson, founder and director of the Center. “Although we’ve studied many ‘environmental’ factors such as childhood

experiences, relationships, access to nutrition and health care, we’re in the infancy of truly grasping how our literal physical environment — access to natural spaces, quality air, clean water — can influence our well-being, and in reverse how our own mental states affect how we treat the environment.”

Earlier this summer, people came from as far as Zambia, Indonesia, Italy and Israel to Holy Wisdom Monastery in Middleton for “Faith in Action for a Flourishing Planet.” The two-day symposium examined global progress in environmental and climate change strategies while investigating the potential for faith-led environmental action by building understanding, motivating change, and creating practical goals.

Many faiths and traditions were represented at the symposium — Buddhist, including Zen and Tibetan, Christian, including Catholic, Baptist, Evangelical, Episcopal and Lutheran, Hindu, Islam, Judaism, Sikh and Sukyo Mahikari. Indigenous leaders attended, representing the Anishinaabe; Diné (Navajo); Ho-Chunk; Mandan; Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation; Mayan; Menominee; and Tsétsêhéstâhese (Cheyenne).

The symposium was the first step of many to come for the Loka Initiative. An online non-credit course is being developed that will integrate faith perspectives and traditional knowledge with the latest scientific findings to examine today’s most pressing environmental concerns and livable solutions that can be adopted individually, in faith communities and globally.

**Read the full article at [go.wisc.edu/loka-initiative-article](https://go.wisc.edu/loka-initiative-article).**

## mobile program expands possibilities

Researchers at the Center for Healthy Minds study well-being in the lab, yet there’s also an interest in understanding what might be helpful outside the lab. Collaboration with the Center’s affiliated nonprofit Healthy Minds Innovations is opening the door to new research, made possible by its Healthy Minds @Work Program. Delivered primarily on smartphones, it focuses on evidence-based components of well-being such as awareness, connection, insight and purpose. Sasha Sommerfeldt is a graduate student in psychology who is leading a new study at the Center that makes use of the program.



### What are you studying?

We’re following up on a previous study we conducted suggesting that when people’s perceptions of their stress match their physiological stress (heart rate, breathing patterns), they have higher levels of well-being and lower rates of symptoms related to depression and anxiety. Our hypothesis is that training people to be more aware and accepting of their stress responses can help to sync their perceptions and their physiology, and thereby improve their emotional well-being.

### Why is a tool like the Healthy Minds @Work Program appealing for your research?

It’s helpful to have an intervention readily available that can be modified to match the aims of our study. We’re focusing on the “awareness” module of the program because we suspect that self-awareness will benefit mind-body coherence, which is how well people’s physical and mental states of stress match.

### What potential does this program have in overcoming common psychology research barriers?

Increasing sample sizes is a big challenge, and technology like this allows us to conduct studies with more people. Using programs like this can also be beneficial because they include assessments that can be used as people are going about their daily lives rather than contrived experiences in the lab.

### What excites you the most about doing research with the program and similar tools?

The ease of use for participants and how it enables us to disseminate the research more — the program does not just include mindfulness practices, but also includes learning modules on neuroscience and the research so people can get the benefit of learning the science and experiencing the well-being practices.



## STRESS AND WELL-BEING

Some people cope with signs of stress in their lives by ignoring it or not realizing they are stressed.

What if the key to well-being during stressful periods in our lives is syncing our physical and mental experiences of stress?

For the first time, a study from researchers at the Center for Healthy Minds published in *Psychological Science* suggests that people whose reported stress levels aligned more with their heart rate — called “stress-heart rate coherence”— also had higher levels of psychological well-being and lower levels of inflammation.



## NEW INSIGHT ON KIDS' SHARING BEHAVIORS

Researchers found that pre-school-aged children shared more uniformly with all groups, including kids they didn't like. When given the chance to share stickers, older children gave fewer stickers to kids they didn't like, yet they gave more than half of their stickers to a sick child — even more stickers than they gave to kids that they liked. Future research could aim to uncover the underlying reasons why children make the choices they do in terms of sharing with different groups of people, and how to promote caring and prosocial behavior through classroom-based interventions throughout a child's development.



## CENTER EXPERTS FEATURE WORK AT NATIONAL EVENTS

Center Scientist Dan Grupe traveled widely to share his current work studying mindfulness-based interventions in law enforcement officers. His travels brought him to the National Institute of Justice, the U.S. Department of Justice and the Chicago Police Department among others.

# The World We Make Gathering

November 2019, Madison, WI

Featuring Jon Kabat-Zinn

We invite you to join us this November to celebrate our progress and share exciting new possibilities to create a kinder, wiser, more compassionate world, together. Jon Kabat-Zinn, founder of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Program and national bestselling author, will be our featured speaker.

*“There's never been a better time for the Center for Healthy Minds to be doing what it's doing and to actually create the world that we want, now in this moment. The slogan is ‘Change Your Mind, Change the World.’ You change, the entire universe changes. This is the moment to actually recognize what you can call our true nature — the deepest elements of our humanity... it is one of goodness; it is one of altruism; it is one of caring; it is one of non-harming. We need to elevate that to the fundamental principle moving forward and then support it in every way we can through transforming society to benefit the health of the entire world.” — Jon Kabat-Zinn*

Donors giving \$1,000 or more annually will receive two complimentary registrations to this celebration. Learn more at [centerhealthyminds.org/twwm-2019](http://centerhealthyminds.org/twwm-2019)

If you have any questions, please contact Lorri Houston, the Center's Director of Donor Engagement, at [LHouston2@wisc.edu](mailto:LHouston2@wisc.edu) or 608-267-3672.

