MMTCP Disability Affinity Group

Meeting Minutes

June 10, 2025

**MISSION STATEMENT**

MMTCP Disability Affinity Group Mission Statement:

*As a community of certified mindfulness meditation teachers, we embrace our diverse visible and invisible disabilities as part of our identity, choosing to use challenges to gain insight and to grow self-trust and compassion, enabling heartfelt connections with ourselves, each other, and the communities we serve.*

Thank you to all the MMTCP alumni who joined the conversation today! We had a small group of 6 today and a vibrant discussion. Folks joined us from many places including Louisiana, Colorado, Germany, Switzerland, and California. The different disabilities included chronic migraines, limb difference, Lyme Disease, memory impairment, and chronic illnesses/conditions, such as MS, mental health challenges and chronic fatigue syndrome.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

We are now communicating exclusively on the MMTCP Alumni Association (AA) platform. If you haven’t joined AA yet, please email Paru Desai (the MMTCP Alumni Co-Director) at parudesai@mmtcpalumni.org if you need assistance or a reduction in the annual dues.

**OPENING MEDITATION**

Thank you Diana for the guided meditation to start our time together. You asked us “where is there a sense of consciousness in our bodies?” Is this consciousness with a loved one, a part of the body, or situation place? Can we check-in and bring that consciousness back into the body. The question that got to the heart of this meditation is “how do I know I have hands with my eyes closed?” Our bodies are an expression of aliveness in the body and even pain can remind us that we are alive. “Isn’t it remarkable how the body can heal wounds, and circulate blood without our attention?”

As always, thank you Diana!

**INTRODUCTIONS**

We briefly shared comments and updates on our lives with the group:

* When difficult times come, *being held by the universe* is a helpful concept especially when there are seemingly no others to care for or hold me in my pain.
* Referring to the meditation earlier, it is fascinating to contemplate that part of the universe can be located in my body, my hand etc.
* We mentioned that we often see ourselves through the lens of our difference. If that difference is from birth, we have never known a different lens. We later wondered if we did not have a difference/disability, how would that change our perception. Would we still feel like we are not enough or we don’t belong? Is this perception simply the human condition and our disability amplifies the human condition.
* The desire to be seen and understood stands out. The critic/ruminating part needs to learn to let go and see the critic as an old pattern of judgment and resistance.
* Taking a new course which discusses various topics such as the vagus nerve, somatic therapy, the inner child, and trauma. Realization that learning about these different topics can bring pressure to do more, to be better which can lead to depression. It is important to make the course your own and use what works for you versus feeling pressured to get it right and do it all.

**DISCUSSION AND THEME**

The theme we chose to spend time on was: How do you stay in this world and function when there is so much turmoil, dysfunction stress and challenge? How do we arrive at a balance and land at “this is enough/I am enough.” Some of the answers and suggestions included:

* It is imperative to create a sense of belonging. We discussed various ways that we can accomplish this sense of belonging and ironically the challenges we might experience as a result of our disability can lead to connection with others who have similar challenges.
* The teachings from Kristin Neff & Chris Germer: kindness toward self, mindfulness and the concept of common humanity.
* When do we use the tools we have? Do we practice them enough so that when we need them they are readily available?
* Acceptance for what is - the beginning to a more healthy and balanced way of life.
* “Modeling” for others the idea that it is okay to have healthy boundaries, say no to certain activities, work fewer hours etc. in order to function at *our 100%.* Someone likened the definition of cancer which is uncontrolled growth to our constant need to perform and do more. This unfettered growth is not healthy.
* There was a suggestion that you don’t actually function very well in this world; we fake it. We take on a healthy imposter attitude. This was both a very humorous and very honest discussion.
* Often we are experiencing fear and anxiety so it is important to 1st calm down so that we are not viewing the situation and our choices through the lens of fear which often shuts us down and paralyzes us.
* We are careful with stress and what we say yes to.
* Recognizing that our differences foster belonging can shift our perspective. Disabilities are often perceived as limitations, leading to feelings of isolation. However, by acknowledging our negativity bias, we can choose to belong to those who see and understand us.
* As Martha Beck proclaims, “come up with a socially acceptable cover story about how you want to live your life.” Again, this was along the lines of faking it and we had a good time with it.
* How can we create a shift from what’s *doable* to what’s *delightful* without feeling selfish? This will allow us to tip toward a saner way of life.
* A legitimate question: who drew the laws and regulations that say we need to achieve, succeed, spend, work harder and do more? The answer of course is the ableism of the world.

**RESOURCES**

None to share this time.

**WRAP UP**

Gayle offered a thoughtful reflection. There may be some degree of illusion to these rules. Who enforces them? Must we internalize them? Jack Kornfield frequently recounts the story of walking with his teacher, Ajahn Chah, who pointed to a boulder in a field and asked, "Is that heavy?" Jack replied, "Yes, of course." Ajahn Chah smiled and said, "not if you don't pick it up." Which stories and constructs do we feel obligated to accept and live up to? Which ones can we identify as illusions and let go of? The sentiment "I belong because I am human" resonates with this group. We foster a sense of belonging for which we are all grateful.

**NEXT MEETING**

Whether you join us in person or not, we include you in our good wishes. We hope to see you for our next meeting on **July 8 at 2:30 PM Eastern time**!

Respectfully submitted by,

Valerie Saiz, Notetaker and Co-facilitator

Diana Klein, Co-facilitator and

Gayle Wright, Co-facilitator