MMTCP Disability Affinity Group

Meeting Minutes

August 12, 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 the 5 MMTCP alumni who joined the conversation today! This small group allowed us to tackle a very difficult and challenging subject. Folks joined us from many places including Louisiana, Colorado, and Texas. The different disabilities included limb difference, and chronic illnesses/conditions, such as MS, Lupus and chronic fatigue syndrome.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

It might seem like a long way off but the holidays are just around the corner so we want to let you know that we will be taking December and January off just like last year.

**OPENING MEDITATION**

Thank you Diana for the guided meditation to start our time together. We practiced some coherent breathing, reminding us to stay in the present moment and to be with whatever is.

As always, thank you Diana!

**INTRODUCTIONS**

Many of us are helping family members with recent surgeries, moving into new homes, and learning how to live after significant losses.

**DISCUSSION AND THEME**

The group had a very honest and rich discussion about grief.

* Building on the work of Frank Ostaseski, and his book The Five Invitations, we discussed working with the “third arrow.” This was of course a clever way of emphasizing our tendency to cause more suffering with the 2nd arrow. The 1st arrow causes the physical pain and the 2nd arrow is what our mind does with that pain, often accentuating the worst-case scenario or trying to resist the pain. The challenge is to remember to 1st to bring compassion to the pain versus trying to make it go away.
* We also considered the situation in which a child stubs their toe. The immediate response should be to offer comfort rather than to dismiss their pain or focus on sharing a lesson from the incident. Providing comfort is the most important for the child. In the same way, it is important to approach our own pain with compassion before considering other responses.
* Sometimes we have a “fix-it” mind and are asking grief to dissipate or just go away. This led to questions about grief like does it ever go away? Does it just change? Do we learn to bury it or keep it hidden due to societal conditioning/devaluing?
* Losing someone close is a challenging experience. Comments from others may sometimes result in confusion or added distress. For instance, if an individual loses a sibling and condolences are directed only toward the parent, the person's own grief may not be acknowledged, which can complicate their emotional response.
* There are so many kinds of grief and causes for grief. For example, grief for what I didn’t have, what I no longer have, what I had still hoped for, what I could have accomplished, in addition to the loss of someone dear to us.
* We had an interesting thread throughout the discussion around a small piece of jewelry. This ring was missing its jewel and had no monetary value but for some reason our colleague kept it. We might quickly dismiss it as not important, commenting to ourselves “it’s just a ring” when in fact if we take the time to grieve this missing jewel/this seemingly insignificant piece of jewelry, it can help us grieve something larger and more painful. Grieving the loss of this ring, which was missing its jewel, may have enabled her to start processing the absence of the person she could not previously address due to the intensity of the associated pain. The ring provided an opening.
* It is important to trust emergence.
* Someone shared a very powerful description of releasing the grief somatically. We resonated with descriptions like crying out loud, punching the air, punching something, dancing etc. All ways to release some of the pain and anger associated with the loss.
* We discussed the importance of ritual: slowing down and acknowledging.
* Practicing the teaching that we have a connection to everything has been helpful in coping with loss.
* Byron Katie discusses doing “the work” which helped free her from her suffering and attachment.
* Whatever arises in our lives will allow us in the moment to explore the grief. In other words, whenever and whatever loss rises to the surface can help us process grief from the past. That is why it is important to allow time to grieve even the small things, like a ring.
* Do we armor ourselves against feelings? Does this serve us? Perhaps we have gotten in the habit of burying our feelings. We might do this in the workplace but we might also bury our feelings to protect others or avoid an argument or discomfort. People gave examples of ways that they created space for their feelings and used words to let others know that feelings belong and need to be expressed and processed.
* So often in our society, when we express the emotion, we are blamed for being emotional. But in the end, expressing emotion is being human and being healthy.
* When we acknowledge our grief/suffering, we can learn that perhaps there are unsustainable coping patterns that need to change. These patterns can only be recognized if we are able to allow the grief to emerge and to witness it.
* If stuck in painful emotion, sometimes coming into presence while doing something simple like making coffee or taking a walk can create a shift and some space so that we can come back and process the emotion from a different perspective.

**RESOURCES**

* The Wild Edge of Sorrow by Francis Weller
* A Thousand Names for Joy and A Mind at Home with Itself by Byron Katie and Stephen Mitchell
* The Myth of Normal by Gabor Mate
* The Five Invitations Frank Ostaseski

**WRAP UP**

**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 **September 9 at 2:30 PM Eastern time**!

Respectfully submitted by,

Valerie Saiz, Notetaker and Co-facilitator

Diana Klein, Co-facilitator and

Gayle Wright, Co-facilitator