



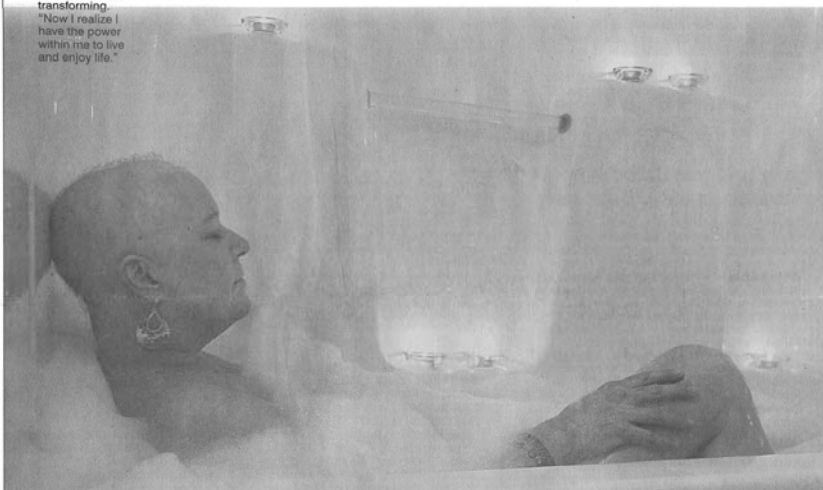
Penn Stress Management



RON TAVIER / Staff Photographer
Michael Baime, who heads the Penn program, practices what he teaches at home in Media.

Michelle Gossett, a cancer patient, puts to use the lessons she has learned and has found them transforming.

"Now I realize I have the power within me to live and enjoy life."



MIND OVER CANCER

A Penn program uses meditation to help patients cope with the disease and renew their lives.

By Gloria Hochman
FOR THE INQUIRER

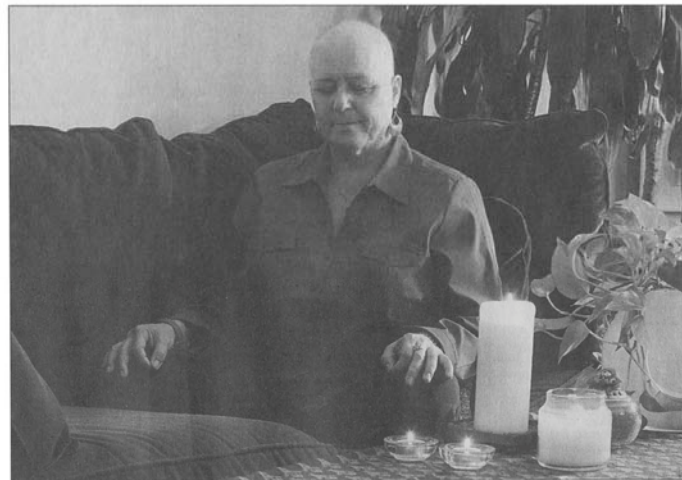
Michelle Gossett has ovarian cancer that has metastasized to her liver, colon, bladder and uterus. She had just had a punishing chemotherapy treatment that will make her feel intensely ill in a day or so. But on this night she is participating in a session on mindful meditation, one in a series of eight led by Michael Baime, a physician who has just been named director of mind-body medicine at the Abramson Cancer Center of the University

of Pennsylvania.

Gossett says these sessions have been "life changing," and that she no longer "catastrophizes" about her future. "My whole focus used to be on cancer so that I became my cancer," she says. "Now I realize I have the power within me to live and enjoy life."

She is one of 11 cancer patients who, once a week, have sat in a circle in a second floor room of the university's Ralston House. Some like Gossett are in the midst of treatment; others have completed it recently or

Sec. **MEDITATION** on C2



Michelle Gossett said she 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."

Meditation finding its place in medicine

MEDITATION from C1
as long as five years ago.

Their two-hour gathering on this recent Sunday night begins with the sweet sound of the tingshas, a set of two Tibetan bronze cymbals that Baime strikes, signaling that it is time for his patients to close their eyes and open their minds to meditation.

His goal is to teach them how to concentrate on the here and now, on this moment, dismissing the past which cannot be changed and snuffing out thoughts of the future which is uncertain.

He does 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 directs that they "let them be," but urges that they refocus on their breath.

As students advance, he may ask that they focus on a sound or smell or a beautiful flower. "Eventually they learn the ability to be in complicated situations while maintaining the simplicity of present moment attention," Baime says.

In ten minutes, when the tingshas sound again, those in the circle open their eyes. Some blot their tears on a tissue and begin to speak softly about what they are thinking.

This is the first formal group of cancer patients led by Baime, a doctor of internal medicine. Since 2002, he has been director of the Penn Program for Stress Management, an arm of the University of Pennsylvania Health System that has taught 5,000 people how to

Where to Turn

These are meditation programs in the area:

■ Penn Program for Stress Management, University of Pennsylvania, 215-615-2774, www.pennhealth.com/stress

■ Jefferson University Hospitals, Jefferson-Myrna Brind Center of Integrative Medicine, 215-955-1376, www.jeffersonhospital.org/cim/article5030.html#eightweek

■ Philadelphia Shambhala Meditation Center, 2030 Sansom St., 215-568-6070, Philadelphia.shambhala.org

■ Clear Light Meditation Group, 610-293-9133, office@clearlightmeditation.org, www.clearlightmeditation.org

■ The Mindfulness Series: Mindfulness and Learning, weekend conference sponsored by Penn Program for Stress Management. Keynote speaker: Jon Kabat-Zinn, Feb. 6-8, 2009, 215-615-2775. <https://mindfulness.tickleleap.com>

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

was, "but I didn't expect to learn to appreciate life. If I never had cancer, it would have never happened. I would still be worrying about things that don't matter, and not seeing what does."

Since the early 1990s, the view of meditation among physicians has meandered from skepticism to appreciation. Along with other alternative therapies, it has found its way into traditional medical schools; it is an elective course for medical students at the University of Pennsylvania. And it is impossible for even the most orthodox of practitioners to ignore the compelling results of studies using neuroscientific measures — functional brain scans and meticulously designed survey tools — which reveal heightened activity in the brain and the increased blood flow that results.

For instance, an ongoing study of 47 health care providers who completed Baime's meditation program reveals that they experienced a 45 percent reduction in anxiety; a 37 percent reduction in depression; a 52 percent reduction in fatigue and a whopping 64 percent reduction in anger. "Imagine what an incredible difference that can make in any workplace!" Baime muses.

The remarkable, yet unpublished, results of eight weeks of meditation training with a class of 23 professional and graduate students demonstrated stunning improvement in short-term memory, the ability to hold many things in memory at one time, and in their resistance to distraction.

"Stress taxes short-term memory," Baime says. "That's why under stress people tend to do things like forget

Psychological intervention in breast cancer

227 women with stage IIA-IIIB breast cancer

Post-surgery awaiting adjuvant therapy

Randomized and stratified

No-intervention control (assessment only)

Intervention: 90 minute group sessions, 1 year

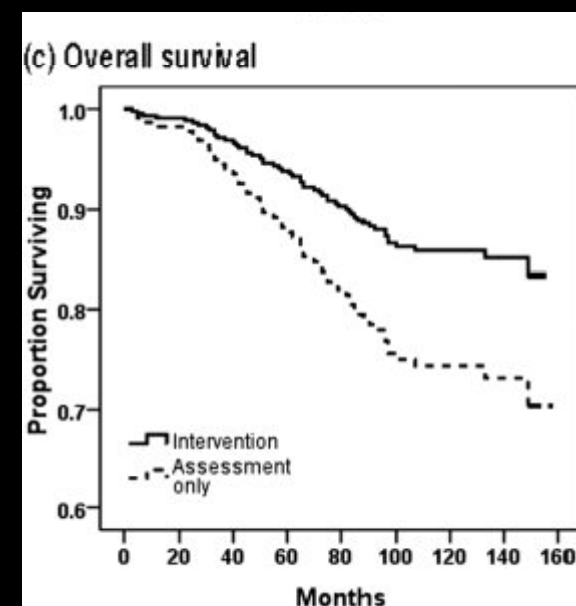
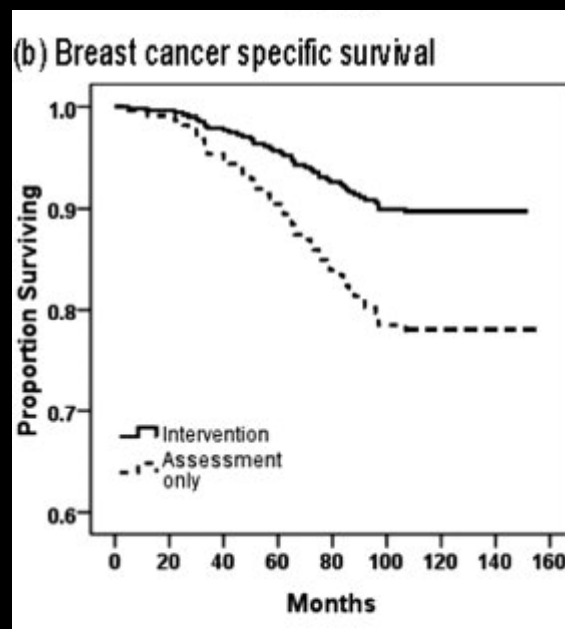
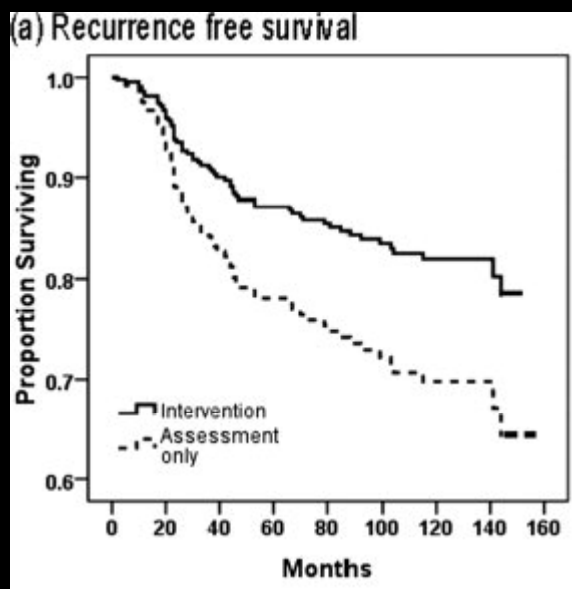
- stress management

- problem solving - finding social support

- coping - assertive communication

- healthy lifestyle

Results



Cox proportional hazards analysis:

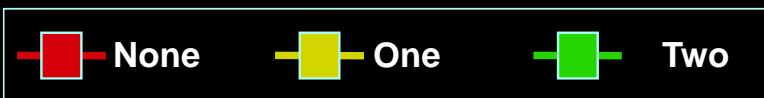
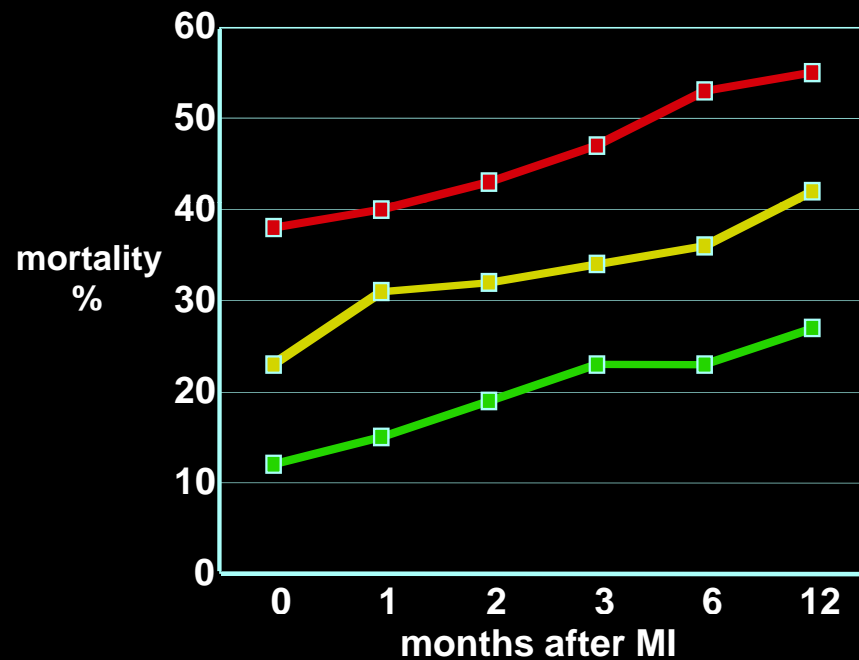
recurrence HR 0.55 (P = .034)

cancer death HR 0.44 (P = 0.016)

Psychologic intervention improves survival for breast cancer patients. Anderson BL, Yang H, Farrar WB, *et. al.* Cancer. 2008; **113**:3450-3458.

emotional support and mortality

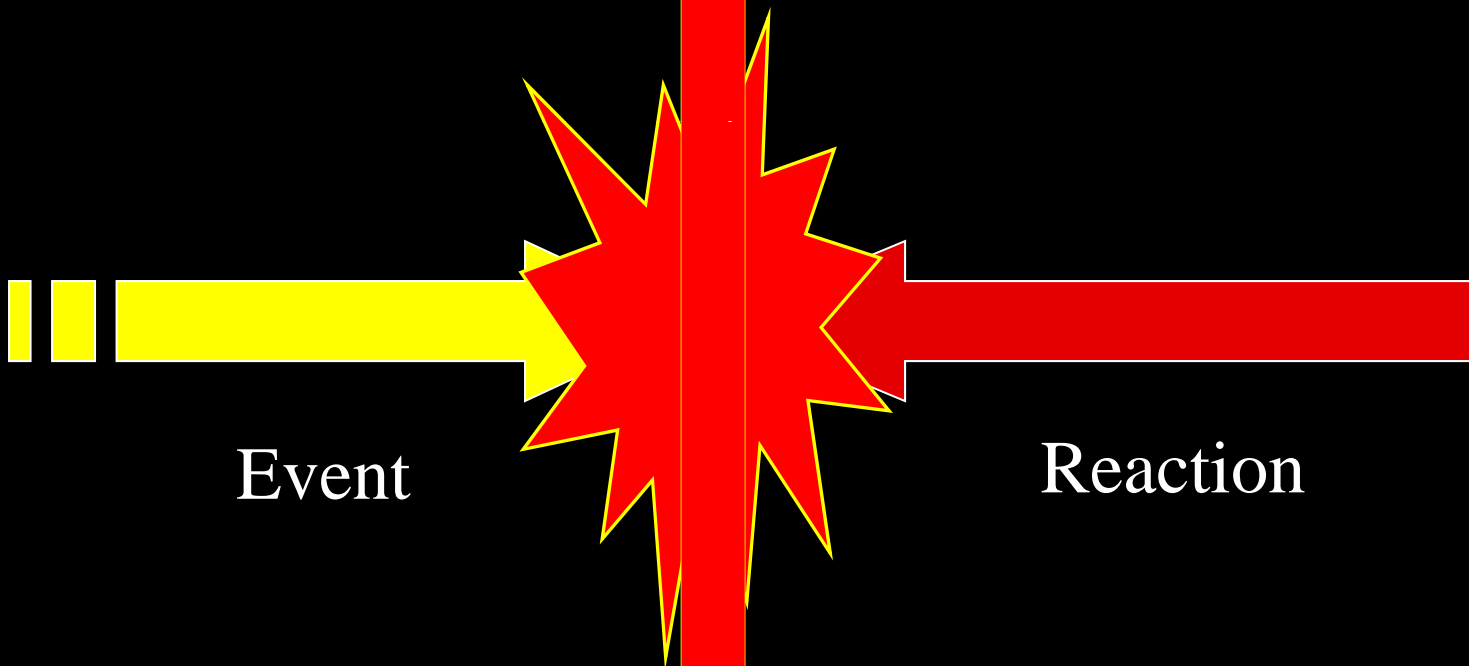
the EPESE cohort

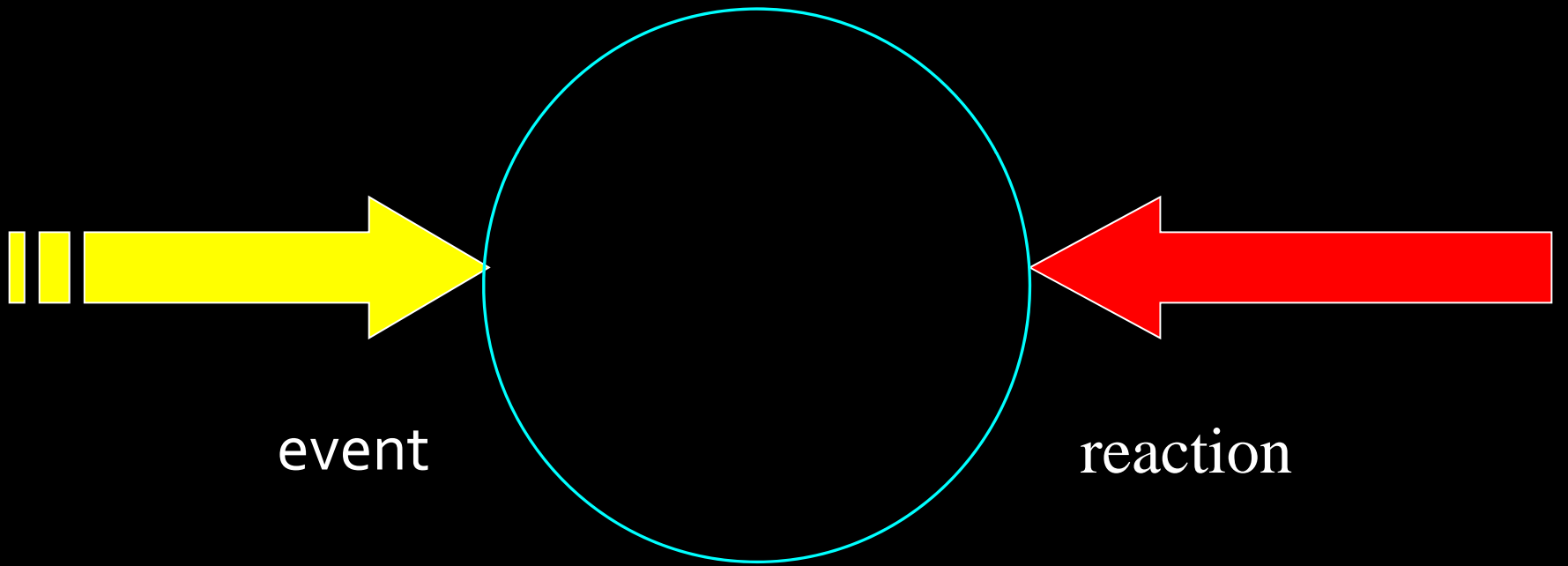


number of sources of social support

Controlling for clinical prognostic variables, patients who reported no emotional support reported had almost three times the risk of death (odds ratio 2.9; 95% CI, 1.2 – 6.9):

stress and its impact



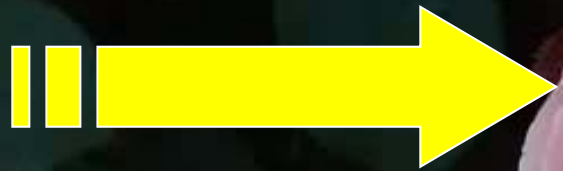


rest in awareness

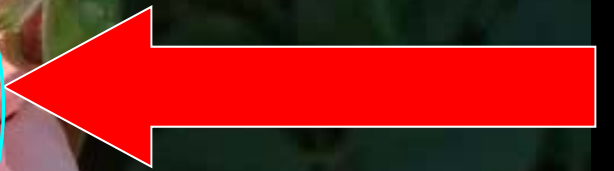
- The part of you that “knows” and “feels”.
- It is there right in the middle of chaos and reactivity.
- It is quiet, balanced, relaxed, and still.
- It is easy to overlook.
- Mindfulness is training in cultivating and sustaining this balance.
It is always available.

**The Only Totally Essential Piece
of Equipment for Your Healing
and Your Family
and Your Life**

**You and
Your Presence**



event



reaction

mindfulness for life

**I came to manage stress,
but I didn't expect to learn to appreciate life.
Mindfulness taught me to stop and notice
what I have right now.
If I never had cancer it would have never happened.
I would still be worrying about things
that don't matter, and not seeing what does.**

***Orthopedic Surgeon
67 years old***



Summary and Conclusions:

The most important person to take care of you:
is you

The best time to take care of yourself:
is now

The best way to take care of your self:
is to do nothing for just a moment
and listen and feel and sense
so that you really know
what you really need
right now.



Penn Stress Management