

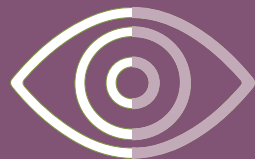


science, skills, scale

4 barriers affect our ability to flourish

INABILITY TO FOCUS

Research suggests that as much as **47%** of the time, we're not paying attention, which degrades our health and happiness.



HUMAN DISCONNECTION

Loneliness is on the rise and technology habits are eroding our relationships, making us more depressed, anxious and likely to develop cardiovascular disease.

SELF-DEFEATING NARRATIVES

Our minds alert us to threats and dangers, but when thoughts are repetitive, they can result in mental health disorders. **300 million** adults experience depression, and suicide rates have increased by 30% worldwide since 1999.



LACK OF PURPOSE

Our 21st-century lifestyle fragments our attention and prioritizes busyness over purpose — fewer people in the U.S. report that they are very happy compared to **15 years** ago.



We seek to understand and address these challenges through **rigorous science and innovative tools** to improve well-being.

new partnership supports emotional well-being for teens

In the United States, teens' emotional health has declined significantly over the past two decades. Adolescents are more likely to develop mental health disorders compared to previous generations,

and reports suggest anxiety rates have increased by 20 percent in youth and suicide hospitalizations have doubled. The teenage years are also vital for identity formation and instilling a sense of purpose — something with far-reaching impact later in life.

Seeking to understand the root causes of mental health challenges facing teens and leveraging decades of neuroscientific research, a team at Healthy Minds Innovations, an external non-profit affiliated with the Center for Healthy Minds, is launching a partnership to measure emotional well-being in teens and develop strategies to promote flourishing in this age group.

Supported by a \$5 million grant from the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative (CZI) Donor Advised Fund, an advised fund of the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, the project will support the healthy development of skills such as connection, awareness, insight and purpose through the development of easy-to-use mobile measures for adolescents.

The work to be supported is based on a framework for well-being that includes four core constituents: awareness, connection, insight and purpose — each of which can be trained and

improved. There is a lack of robust measures on well-being, particularly in adolescents, and the first step toward developing interventions to improve people's well-being is the creation of robust measures.

"We know from years of science that the teenage years are especially important for brain development and healthier mental and physical outcomes later in life," says Richard Davidson, the William James and Vilas Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry at UW-Madison and founder and president of Healthy Minds Innovations, which received the grant. "Our challenge as a research community has been taking what we know from the science and effectively scaling it in this population to really see what works in real-world scenarios."

Davidson says the project will expand researchers' ability to obtain more objective measures to study youth well-being at scale and that the measures, once developed, can be used to understand the effectiveness of mental health interventions in partnering schools and non-profits leading work with youth.



our science

measures

How do we reliably measure components of well-being, including awareness, connection, insight and purpose?



the biology of well-being

How can we leverage our growing knowledge of the mind and body to improve mental and physical health?



nurturing brain development

What kinds of interventions or support can we use to promote well-being during sensitive times of brain development such as pregnancy, infancy and adolescence?



interventions that work

How can we draw from the well of wisdom from ancient traditions to develop programs and interventions backed by modern science?

BRIEF MEDITATION PRACTICES WORK DIFFERENTLY

Center scientists discovered that brief meditation practices work differently in the face of stress, and not all seem to be equally helpful. Across the three groups of meditation practices studied, loving-kindness meditation (wishing oneself and others to be happy and healthy) and breath awareness meditation (a simple awareness of each breath and a core mindfulness practice) appeared to help buffer against stress when compared to a control group that did not meditate, while participants who practiced gratitude seemed more reactive to stress, at least in the short-term.



THE TOLL OF PARENT-CHILD SEPARATION

In a research brief for the Center on Immigration and Child Welfare, Center faculty member Julie Poehlmann-Tynan shares previous research related to children with incarcerated parents and draws parallels to the effects on the well-being of children who are separated from their parents at the border. She says separation from parents is among the most potent stressors that a child can experience and that such separations increase children's risk of developing depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress symptoms and other trauma reactions.

a legacy toward thriving families



Center donor and honorary fellow Carolyn Zahn-Waxler is determined to help disrupt the cycle of depression and poor mental health in families. As a scientist who has dedicated her career to understanding concepts of empathy and concern for others in young children, she has partnered with the Center to support its research in pregnant women, infants and families to understand ways to improve emotional health outcomes for children and families. Having grown up in a home environment with a mother with depression, Carolyn knows firsthand the challenges and effects of mental illness on families and wants her legacy to help mothers and children thrive.

"At this stage in my life, I'm interested in the application of research — what can actually be done to help mothers with depression and their children so they don't get caught in a cycle of sadness and anger. Through the research being done at the Center, our hope is to help these women manage their depression and have more positive interactions with their children through mindfulness practices and research."

To learn more about lead gifts to the Center for Healthy Minds, please contact Lorri Houston at lhouston2@wisc.edu or (608) 263-3672.