

JOIN US
as we launch
our new
wellness
series!

Well
STAY AT HOME

with
thewellproject

Every other
Wednesday,
starting April 8
at noon ET

REGISTER HERE: bit.ly/TWPstaywell

Chat Log (Abridged)

- 00:36:16 **Maria Mejia:** hello everyone ♡
- 00:39:57 **Olivia Ford:** Greetings! Welcome, everyone! <3
- 00:48:23 **JoDha:** heelllloooo :)
- 00:48:31 **Olivia Ford:** Hi Jo!
- 00:48:44 **Olivia Ford:** We're just starting right now!
- 00:49:03 **Olivia Ford:** Krista's running through the next few session topics before Mel starts with the meditation <3
- 00:49:38 **JoDha:** awesome! I was worried I was late....just finished dinner. Also, at my friend's place too....she is listening in while working at home
- 00:49:57 **Olivia Ford:** *(In two weeks it'll be Masonia talking about parenting; then two weeks from then Angelena Cortello will show us how to make pampering skin products)*
- 00:50:40 **Olivia Ford:** *(then two weeks after *that* Naina Khanna, ED of our partner/sister/forever-friend org Positive Women's Network - USA will do a get-out-the-vote session; then Maya Feller RD on nutrition in October! lotsa good stuff coming up!)*
- 00:50:59 **JoDha:** parenting and pampering....wow.....the two meetings are sorted
- 00:53:05 **The Well Project:** Hi Mom! <3
- 00:53:37 **Olivia Ford:** Mel Rattue, take it away! *Mel: I've been living with HIV for 20 years and I'm a mindfulness teacher - wanted to share this as something we can do for each other - I've found it helpful*
- 00:54:31 **JoDha:** who is Mom here..... (curiosity killed the cat yet am still curious)

00:54:33 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel: Mindfulness has this "hippie" reputation, or it's religious, but we can all do it - we *do* do it in different ways - as a parent, or cooking - it's a very natural state*

00:55:00 **The Well Project:** Della Heitzman is my mom! (Krista)'

00:55:16 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel: Mindfulness comes into culture, education, life in general, because there has been a lot of research into its effect on the brain. With mindfulness practice, it's been found that, with time, we can change the structure of our brain (neuroplasticity)!*

00:55:57 **The Well Project:** Susan just wrote me and she apologizes that she has a conflict today!

00:56:39 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel: Like with Susan's exercise session and her awesome arms, hers are strong because she does that all the time; I've exercised my ability to focus with mindfulness practice - may be challenging at first but with practice, it can become easier.*

00:57:28 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel: We'll start with a practice and then have questions - mindfulness is focusing in the here and now - stress is here, especially as women living with HIV*

00:57:47 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel: Rather than letting stress take over and be overwhelmed by it, come back to the present moment*

00:59:00 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel: Take HIV diagnosis, we can be overwhelmed with thoughts of the past ("why did this happen, why me") or the future ("what will happen to me, will I be loved"), and coming back to the present moment helps with that stress - and minds wander, it's what they do! We can bring it back.*

00:59:37 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel: When our minds wander, instead of judging them, notice that and recognize it and come back to the present moment*

00:59:55 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel: What if I was kind again? What if I tried a different way?*

01:00:26 **Olivia Ford:** *We'll sit, and Mel will guide us - close eyes if you want, or lower your gaze ... Bell will ring us in and out of the practice*

01:00:38 **JoDha:** Tibetan Music Bowl.....I have the same

01:00:50 **Olivia Ford:** Beautiful bell!

01:00:57 **Olivia Ford:** *Afterwards we'll check in and see what comes up*

01:01:25 *Mel advises us to sit up as best we can - shoulders back, feet beneath knees, palms rested on our lap or somewhere they won't become heavy*

01:02:35 **Olivia Ford:** *Focus attention on feet on the floor - noticing how it feels in toes, heels, points of contact with floor, shoes, etc ...*

01:03:10 **Olivia Ford:** *If your mind wanders, remember, bring it back with kindness ...*

01:03:51 **Olivia Ford:** *Aware of any pressure or texture - no right or wrong, just experiencing your feet as they are, here and now ...*

01:04:50 **Olivia Ford:** *Moving awareness up ankles, through shins and calves, to knees, and thighs, bum on the chair, feeling that support ...*

01:05:18 **Olivia Ford:** *When mind wanders, bring it back to sound of Mel's voice, sensations in your body ...*

01:05:30 **Olivia Ford:** *Attention to belly, how it rises and falls with breath ...*

01:05:59 **Olivia Ford:** *Up through torso and chest ... shoulders ... down through arms ... elbows ... hands on lap ...*

01:06:15 **Olivia Ford:** *Exploring, investigating sensations in your body*

01:07:27 **Olivia Ford:** *Bring attention up through head, resting at top of spine ... resting forehead, jaw, relaxing tension there ... relaxing your tongue ...*

01:08:41 **Olivia Ford:** *Try focusing back on your breath, where you feel it most vividly (nostrils, or chest, or belly ...) as you inhale and exhale - see if you can stay with breath ...*

01:09:18 **Olivia Ford:** *Hear the bell until you can't anymore, then gently open eyes ;-)*

01:09:39 **Olivia Ford:** *Deep breath in, fill lungs, and out deeply*

01:10:58 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel: We may not be able to change COVID or fix structural racism immediately, but we can change ourselves in this moment, our reactions ... Your body is always accessible to you - you can sit, ground, focus on breath*

01:11:23 **Olivia Ford:** *Stress will still be there but we may be able to make different connections*

01:11:47 **MariaMejia:** very relaxing

01:11:54 **The Well Project:** Does anyone want to share how they felt during that?

01:11:54 **MariaMejia:** Thank you

01:12:20 **MariaMejia:** I am angry

01:12:36 **The Well Project:** Mel, can you explain how you started to practice mindfulness and how it was introduced to you?

01:12:38 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel: I used to be very angry and bitter, but I didn't know it until I had this opportunity to increase my awareness*

01:13:11 **Olivia Ford:** *Once you have this awareness, there *is* a shift*

01:13:48 **Olivia Ford:** *We may still be who we are, but we are more aware of our reactions, how they serve us (or not)*

01:14:37 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel: the practice helps us to be kind to ourselves*

01:15:45 **Olivia Ford:** Krista asks how Mel got into mindfulness?

01:16:45 **The Well Project:** That's great, Mom! I need to still my mind more often too!

01:16:52 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel: I was a hippie! Did all these different meditations and woowoo stuff etc that involved going up on the mountain etc - but her first mindfulness course she said "This is me here right now, this is my shit!" Not just removing myself from it*

01:17:41 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel found that when she was traveling she was fully present, in the moment, open, nonjudgmental - it was a mindfulness practice BUT she wasn't calling it that/aware of that at the time*

01:17:56 **Olivia Ford:** *Realized after first course that there are lots of ways in our lives we engage in mindfulness*

01:18:43 **JoDha:** Did Mel learn/practise mindfulness from a teacher or a book? or self help through internet?

01:19:18 **Olivia Ford:** *Krista: especially important in this day and age with phones and things we go to when our minds start to wander or we get bored - to cultivate these kinds of practices*

01:20:18 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel: we get wonderful things when our minds wander! But it's when they wander to catastrophe or ruminating on the same experiences over and over - mind wandering that causes stress, doesn't necessarily serve us*

01:20:46 **Olivia Ford:** *That's when we can come back to the present moment*

01:22:11 **Olivia Ford:** *Jo's question re learning mindfulness - book, internet, teacher? Mel learned through a teacher in person - but there are online courses, apps, etc, I don't knock them!*

01:22:17 **Olivia Ford:** Different things work for different people

01:22:31 **Olivia Ford:** There are lots of books now - if that works for you, find one

01:22:38 **Brenda Chambers:** I've done headspace

01:23:31 **Olivia Ford:** *What was significant to Mel about doing a course was she shared living with HIV and was supported - interaction! Someone reflecting back through their own experience - really healing, may not get through a book or an app*

01:23:40 **Olivia Ford:** Courses are cheaper and cheaper now!

01:25:00 **Olivia Ford:** Hi Porchia!!!

01:25:17 **The Well Project:** Hi Porchia!

01:25:26 **Olivia Ford:** There's Sesame Street Headspace videos for kids!

01:25:42 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel: It's amazing to teach kids mindfulness and how their brains work and affect how they react!*

01:26:12 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel: If folks are up for it, let's end on a gratitude practice <3 <3 <3*

01:26:30 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel: let's stand and do a "shaggy dog" and wiggle a bit - wake up to body!*

01:27:01 **The Well Project:** y'all with your cameras off better be shaking! :)

01:27:11 **Olivia Ford:** That shake was so good!

01:27:16 **JoDha:** :D

01:27:22 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel: Let's sit again like before*

01:27:43 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel: Mindfulness helps up deal with stress but also to be grateful for what we do have*

01:28:17 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel paraphrases Jon Kabat-Zinn (renowned mindfulness teacher): If you're breathing, there's more right with you than wrong with you*

01:28:58 **Olivia Ford:** [bell] *Mel: Focus again on breath ... Allow mind to wander a little ... Imagine someone or something you are grateful for, that has been kind to you ...*

01:29:02 **Olivia Ford:** *Noticing how it feels ...*

01:29:25 **Olivia Ford:** *Any sense of ease or softening as you bring this person or place to mind?*

01:30:42 **Olivia Ford:** *See if you can focus your mind on how you're feeling right now, that sense of appreciation ... move your mouth into a smile ... breathing in that goodness, exhale "thank you" to that person or place*

01:31:30 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel: and say thank you to yourself for the opportunity to engage with this practice and being here, as you are, complete and whole <3*

01:32:20 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel: Like touching a pond, watch the gratitude ripple out to our whole community here and beyond <3*

01:33:02 **JoDha:** :D Porchia

01:33:15 **Brenda Chambers:** thank you so much Mel

01:33:33 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel: Thank you for being here! Even in the chaos and the COVID, we can always find something to be grateful for - focus on the good can strengthen those pathways and ability to access that feeling <3*

01:34:16 **JoDha:** "We can always find something to be grateful for". Powerful. Thank you <3

01:34:20 **MariaMejia:** Thank you

01:34:25 **Olivia Ford:** Thanks so much to Mel and to everyone here!

01:34:33 **MariaMejia:** it was awesome as always ♥

01:34:37 **Olivia Ford:** Feeling very grateful for all of you <3

01:34:42 **Brenda Chambers:** much love to all of you

01:35:12 **Olivia Ford:** *Krista: This is a good reminder to stop and take time like this - going through this reminded me of the importance*

01:35:31 **Olivia Ford:** *Mel: Me too, Krista! Be kind to yourself - I am a practitioner and I sometimes don't practice -*

01:35:53

Olivia Ford: *Mel: Even holding gratitude for just a breath can be wonderful*

01:36:11

MariaMejia: peace be upon us  