How 3 American Cities Are Embracing Mindfulness

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What happens in our local jurisdictions often has the greatest impact on our daily lives. Parking tickets, potholes, and playgrounds are some of the expected responsibilities of our cities. Less expected, perhaps, is a focus on mental health. Here’s a look at how some municipalities are getting mindful.

Uplifting Leaders

A nonprofit in Jackson Hole, WY, is strengthening resilience, one leader at a time. With the guidance of neuroscientist Amishi Jha, Becoming Jackson Whole delivers Mindfulness-Based Attention Training (MBAT) to local leaders in health care, education, law enforcement, and more. Many leaders are also learning how to deliver the training themselves. Starting in late 2021, MBAT will be open to anyone in the city. BJW founder Sara Flitner says, “It will always be affordable or free.” Results of a study led by Jha showed the participants improved on measures like mind-wandering, attentional performance, mood, anxiety, and work enjoyment.

Find Your Path

Since May 2021, pedestrians in Dayton, OH, can enjoy four “Mindfulness Walks” throughout municipal nature areas. Signage along the pathways encourages people to pause and engage in exercises such as “connecting to your five senses, practicing mindful breathing, and listing the things that bring you gratitude,” according to MetroParks director of outdoor connections Amy Dingle.

Mindfully Speaking

Inspired by Jewish teachings against derogatory speech, and seeking to heal contemporary divisions, the Minneapolis Jewish Federation and local partners invited all citizens to join the Clean Speech Minnesota challenge. April 2021 became “one month of mindful speech for the betterment of humankind.” The organizers shared daily video lessons through Facebook, such as exploring seven questions we can ask ourselves to help cultivate kind, honest, and mindful speech.