



multiple roads to well-being

Research participants should reflect the diverse makeup of society. A new initiative called "All of Us" from the U.S. National Institutes of Health aims to build a nationwide community of **1 million** or more participants from all walks of life, including groups that have been historically underrepresented in research.



Medications can be crucial in the treatment of certain mental health disorders. But they're only part of the equation. One analysis suggests that antidepressants are effective in treating depression in only **1 in 5 people**, making the need for a range of treatments that much more important.



Research suggests that people from minority racial and ethnic groups experience more barriers to receiving mental health care. Some **48%** of white adults received mental health services in a recent analysis, compared to only **31%** of people who are Black or Latino and **22%** of people who are Asian.



One of the most important research questions scientists at the Center for Healthy Minds have is:

What improves well-being, for whom, and why?



Sources: U.S. National Library of Medicine (2017). *Depression: How Effective are Antidepressants?*; American Psychiatric Association (2017). *Mental Health Disparities: Diverse Populations*; National Institutes of Health (2018). *NIH-Funded Genome Centers to Accelerate Precision Medicine Discoveries*.



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NEW PROGRAM FOCUSES ON WELL-BEING OF EDUCATORS IN MEXICO

well-being in the classroom

More than 2,500 preschool principals and educators in Mexico are participating in a pilot study to improve their emotional well-being through social emotional learning skills, or trainings centered on healthy and positive relationships to one's emotions and others.

Led by the Mexico-based non-profit AtentaMente in collaboration with Center for Healthy Minds experts, the pilot seeks to understand ways to improve school cultures as well as educators' well-being with hopes of ultimately improving emotional and achievement outcomes for students.

In the United States, nearly one third of teachers will leave the profession in the first three years due to stress. Increasingly, research suggests that teacher quality serves as the strongest predictor of student success and achievement, which makes keeping good teachers in the profession all the more important.

"In many ways, what educators in Mexico face is similar to the United States — teachers have a lot of burnout and stress from balancing all the needs of the kids, teachers, parents and educational authorities," says Leandro Chernicoff, academic director of AtentaMente and doctorate student at the Center and UW-Madison. "There might be some nuances in some communities more affected by violence and corruption, but our goal is basically the same in addressing these challenges in a way that is relevant to a specific culture and country. Based on our feedback, we feel the curriculum we're offering is relevant to Latino communities in Mexico and the U.S."

The initial training, supported by the educational group Fundación Banorte, expands AtentaMente's larger goals of implementing social emotional learning curricula and programs in educational settings. The curriculum is informed by the latest childhood development and neuroscience research. New Center faculty member Sarah Short focuses on brain development in early childhood and is collaborating with Chernicoff and others to measure whether the program is affecting educators' levels of stress, burnout, flourishing, attention, emotion regulation and self-awareness.

Beyond the pilot, the team hopes to understand how the training can scale and whether it may have a ripple effect to benefit more than 300,000 children in Mexico in contact with educators in the pilot, many of whom come from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

The idea is to investigate the popular notion that embodied behaviors in adults can produce significant benefits for kids. AtentaMente's slogan, "Cambio yo, cambia todo," which translates to "If I change, everything changes," underscores the importance of change starting within.

"With younger kids, much of the learning and messages you're actually transmitting to them is from your own well-being as an adult and your own embodiment of calmness," Chernicoff says. "Most interactions aren't about what you're saying but what you're embodying."

center welcomes new faculty

The Center is pleased to welcome new faculty members Sarah Short and Simon Goldberg.

Sarah Short

The Dorothy Jones King Distinguished Chair in Educational Psychology, Sarah explores how early interventions can alter brain circuits that are disrupted by adversity, including the impact of poverty on the developing brain.



Inspired by a longstanding interest in the promotion of well-being and the prevention of neurodevelopmental disorders and psychiatric illness, Sarah's early research examined prenatal influences on brain and behavioral development. This work included investigations of the bidirectional relationships between peripheral and central biological systems. Now, moving toward her ultimate goal of conducting

research that informs the design and efficacy of early interventions, Sarah's most recent research projects have included an investigation of neural plasticity associated with cognitive training in young children and the development of a Parent-Child Mindfulness Based Training program.

Simon Goldberg

Simon, an assistant professor in the Department of Counseling Psychology, uses tools drawn from psychotherapy research to better understand the therapeutic processes and outcomes of mindfulness and meditation-based interventions.

He has collaborated on several randomized trials of contemplative interventions with Center staff and has conducted systematic reviews and meta-analyses of mindfulness-based interventions.



Simon is also interested in therapist characteristics that relate to patient outcomes in psychotherapy, including interpersonal skills and empathy. Simon has trained clinically in the Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital system and also conducts research on military veteran mental health.

EXPECTANT MOTHERS' MENTAL HEALTH MAY SHAPE INFANTS' BRAINS

New findings from Center researchers featured in the journal *JAMA Pediatrics* suggest a relationship between a woman's mental health symptoms and white matter development in the brain of her child at one month after birth. The team found babies who had mothers with higher levels of anxiety and depression symptoms showed poorer white matter microstructure when their brains were scanned in an MRI while napping, perhaps reflecting less developed white matter in their brains.



INFLAMMATION BIOMARKER MAY PREDICT DRUGS' EFFECTIVENESS

What if a simple blood test could help doctors understand what medication might work best for patients at the start of their treatment? That's an idea gaining traction and the focus of new scientific findings from Center faculty member Charles Raison, who was part of a team that discovered a relationship between the levels of an immune system protein and people's response to a drug for the treatment of bipolar depression.



SCIENCE, RELIGION, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

His Holiness the 17th Karmapa visited the Center recently to discuss how religious leaders could more effectively work with scientists, academics and global experts on addressing environmental and social issues. "Without science, people lack the knowledge on how to solve environmental or social problems," says the Karmapa. "But if you can add religious support to scientific expertise, you are able to generate greater courage and commitment among people to address these issues. For this reason, science and religion must find ways to work together."

a warm welcome for barbara head

"I'm inspired by our vision to bring new insights and tools to improve the well-being of communities near and far."

—Barbara Head



We're thrilled to welcome Barbara "Barb" Head, the new Chief Philanthropy Officer at the Center for Healthy Minds and Healthy Minds Innovations. At the root of her work is the desire to connect donors with initiatives about which they are deeply passionate. Barb's lifelong interest in learning and research has led her to work in diverse settings, ranging from higher education to the arts and health care, including her most recent position at the University of Kansas Health System. Barb is most excited about the possibility of taking the insights from the Center's science and bringing them into the world where they can change lives for the better.

Barb made the move from Kansas to our Madison, Wisconsin, office to join the team. She's the proud mom of 25-year-old triplets and enjoys reading, running and yoga. You can contact Barb anytime at Barbara.Head@hminnovations.org — she'd love to hear from you.