Research Suggests Smartphones can Act as Mentors in Mindfulness

by Kathy Jones on January 02, 2014 at 9:51 PM

Smartphones, which are often considered as distractions can act as mentors in mindfulness, an Indian-origin researcher has claimed.

Jasprit Singh, a professor of electrical engineering and computer science at University of Michigan, put before students from engineering, art, music, health fields and a variety of other backgrounds designed mobile apps to help users set and meet

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wellness milestones.

The definition of "wellness" was broad, encompassing creativity and learning in addition to physical and mental health.

"In our culture today, we often don't have scarcity of food or gadgets or knowledge. The scarcity has shifted to mindfulness," Singh said. "We may know we should do something, but we are not always able to do it. The goal of this course was to bring harmony between what we know and what do."

Humans forget. Under stress, we can fail to take the steps we intend to, Singh said. But smartphones don't operate that way.

The apps the students developed in this first class focused on delivering messages to users at a set time or place. An app called Balance, targeted to senior citizens, offers easy and routine access to short exercise videos that could improve coordination and prevent falls.

WeeAddition guides women through pregnancy. Joggle is a collaborative art, poetry and music app that could encourage creativity.

And College Granny aimed to help students balance studying and socializing, and develop healthy habits in both parts of their lives. The user can set the app to remind him or her at appropriate times to go to sleep, take a study break or quit after just one game of beer pong, for example. The reminders are more than words on a screen.

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