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Awareness is Healing

Applying mindfulness to
health, healing, and cannabis use
for maximum benefit



HawaiianEthos



Awareness is Healing

Applying mindfulness to
health, healing, and cannabis use



HawaiianEthos

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The content presented here is meant to be a resource to the public and does not constitute medical advice or information approved by the FDA. More medical cannabis references available at <https://secure.hawaiianethos.com/condition-report/reference-library>





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Our Mission

Hawaiian Ethos offers medical cannabis choices and educational resources to empower people to find **medicine that works.**

We offer this guide to patients, caregivers, and anyone interested in learning more about using cannabis in a balanced, informed, and effective way.

Mind, Body, Medicine

Hawaiian Ethos' intention is to offer information and medicine that empowers people to find what works best for their health and healing. Here, we explore the intersection of Western science



and psychology, Eastern spiritual practice, and botanical medicine to develop a quality of awareness that is healing.

The last 30 years ushered in an entirely new way of looking at health, healing, and wellbeing. Research in neuroscience and psychology have helped us understand how mind and body are inextricably linked in illness and health. Perhaps even more importantly, we have come to see the central role the mind plays in creating and supporting health, wellbeing, and resilience. Conversely, we have also learned how the mind can play a role in intensifying pain, anxiety, stress, and depression.

With training and practice, you can manage, if not alleviate, many physical, psychosocial, and emotional pains through meditation. Whether mindfulness is a compliment to cannabis dosing, or appropriate cannabis use is complementary to mindfulness practice, is irrelevant. Micro or other appropriately controlled doses of cannabis can be effective solutions when combined with mindfulness practice.



What is Mindfulness?

The value of being aware in the
present moment.



Getting Present

“Whether you struggle with physical or emotional pain, your mind can be your ally or your adversary.”

The Good News

The good news is that many people can learn to make their mind their ally. You can learn and practice activating your mind's and body's capacity to cultivate self-healing, wellbeing, relaxation, and connection. One of the most fascinating areas of research in mind-body medicine is the profound power of awareness. Specifically, what you pay attention to and how you pay attention to it fundamentally impacts your emotional state, level of pain or discomfort, and the quality and quantity of your sense of wellbeing. [1,2,3,4,5,6,7,18]

Mindfulness Meditation

Many spiritual traditions have practices to quiet the mind and help us be present. These varied practices include prayer, chanting, meditation, contemplation, and walking a labyrinth. One such practice is mindfulness meditation, a 2,400 year old practice from the Buddhist tradition. Over the past 40 years, mindfulness meditation has been one of the most studied methods for training your awareness to be healing.

The original purpose of this meditation method was to help liberate individuals from the tyranny of compulsive thinking, judging, stress, and suffering. Beginning in the late 1970's, internationally acclaimed researcher, teacher, and author Jon Kabat Zinn, PhD spearheaded the mindfulness movement in the United States.



Dr. Kabat Zinn began offering eight-week mindfulness classes to patients with chronic illness and pain. Doctors had run out of options to help with these patients' chronic issues. With nothing to lose, and having run out of traditional medical options, these patients were given mindfulness training to help manage their pain and suffering.

Mindfulness vs. Normal Awareness

According to Dr. Kabat Zinn, mindfulness is the **“awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment to moment.”** [8]

This is quite different from normal awareness. Most of the time we are simply not paying enough attention to notice that we are not paying attention. Normally we go around in a kind of trance. As we go through the motions of our day, our minds can be a million miles away planning the next thing we will be doing in pre-living the future, or ruminating on and reliving the past. So much of our life is spent being mindless; not really aware of the moments of our life because we are so often distracted by our thoughts, feelings, sensations, struggles, stress, regrets, and worries.

Typically, the more pain or discomfort you experience, the more time you spend struggling and distracted. Ironically, spending time struggling and in distraction can also cause greater pain and discomfort. This cycle can create feelings of resentment, upset, and victimhood. The antidote, then, is mindful awareness that brings us back to the present moment, where we have agency to address our current situation and over time, to improve our health and life.



Mindfulness Practice

How to train your mind to
support physical, mental, and
emotional health.



Managing our Minds


Hundreds of thousands of individuals have participated in mindfulness training and found that it really works! People have reported decreased pain, depression, and anxiety while life satisfaction, happiness, and wellbeing increased. [1,2,3,4] Mindfulness training helped reduce stressful symptoms and individuals reported feeling more hopeful, positive, and optimistic. [5,6,7,11,12] Participants felt empowered by having an effective skill they could use anywhere, anytime.

Training in mindfulness teaches us to be present to what happens, as it happens. That may not sound appealing if you're in a lot of pain, but becoming present with your experience will empower you to respond to it more effectively. When we truly pay attention, we are less likely to be overwhelmed or swept away by our reactions. Mindfulness is learning to attend to your experience and be present with what is, without the constant narration, judgment, criticism, or fear that often colors our perceptions.

■■■■■■■■■■
Bringing conscious
awareness to your
pain can actually help
you manage it better.
■■■■■■■■■■

Mindful awareness is always available. You do not need to do anything to make it present. Rather, you learn to shift your attention while you are going through your day, returning again and again to this present moment.

There are many ways to practice mindfulness. Here, we focus on meditation practices used to evoke the relaxation response and combat the stress response, including: sitting, standing, walking, and laying down meditation. Training in these practices allows you to choose the right practice for the




right time. To get the most benefit, practice mindfulness regularly. As the old saying goes, ‘practice makes perfect,’ and mindfulness truly is a practice. Below are two examples of mindfulness meditation practice.



Mindful Sitting

Sitting Meditation with Mindfulness of Breath

1. Find a quiet place where you can spend some time without interruption.
2. Silence your cell phone.
3. Sit in an upright position with your feet flat on the floor, and with your spine in an uplifted, dignified or noble posture. Upright, but not stiff or forced.
4. Relax your belly.
5. Practice with your eyes open or closed. If you choose to have them open, lower your gaze so that you are looking on the floor 3 to 5 feet in front of you, with a downcast and soft (unfocused) gaze.
6. Take 1 to 3 slightly deeper breaths to settle yourself.
7. Return to your normal breath. There is no need to change or control your breath—simply allow your breath to find its natural rhythm.
8. Find a place to feel the breath:
 - A. At the rise and fall of your abdomen and chest, or



B. On the rims of your nostrils. Notice your breath is slightly cooler and drier on the inhale, and slightly warmer and more humid on the exhale.

9. Tune your awareness to the sensation of breathing. Feel the moment-by-moment changing sensations of the full in-breath, then the full out-breath.
10. Let go of the need to do, fix, or problem solve.
11. When you notice your attention has wandered off the breath and into a thought, daydream, or memory, simply note that it has wandered and gently return your attention to your breath.
12. Start with 5 or 10 minute sitting meditation sessions, and extend your sessions up to 20 to 25 minutes over time.
13. Practice at least one session daily.

When dealing with a distressing symptom like pain or anxiety, consider taking a break and using this tool to help find relief. You can also incorporate sitting meditation and mindfulness of breath during or after a medical cannabis session using a microdose, or other appropriate dose.



Mindful Walking

Basic Steps for Mindful Walking Practice

1. Stand in a comfortable upright position.
2. Keep your arms by your side or clasped comfortably



behind your back.

3. Take a few moments to bring your awareness to your breath, sensing the rise and fall, breath by breath.
4. Expand your awareness to include your body standing; feel your feet on the ground, your weight supported by your hips and legs, and the sensations of your breath entering and exiting your body.
5. Relax and release any unnecessary tension in the body.
6. Start walking slowly as if you are walking under water.
7. Using your breath as an anchor, bring your awareness to the motion of lifting one foot while supporting your weight on the other leg, moving your foot forward and placing it, then rolling on your foot and shifting your weight as your other foot begins its journey forward.
8. Feel each leg moving and each foot alternately lifting, moving, placing, rolling...lifting, moving, placing, rolling.
9. Take your time. Walk slowly. The goal is not to get somewhere, it is to arrive fully in each step.
10. Each time your mind wanders, simply notice that it has, then gently return your attention to the flow of the sensations of walking.
11. Once you can sustain mindfulness of your walking and breathing, you can further expand your awareness to include sights, smells, sounds, and textures. You can also practice feeling grateful for each sensation you experience as you walk.



Formal and Informal Practice

Within meditation disciplines there are two types of practice—formal practice and informal practice. Formal practice is when you intentionally set aside time from the rush of doing and busyness to practice mindfulness. Daily formal practice supports the development of the ability to be more deeply present and mindful.

Informal practice is the process of returning to presence of mindfulness. For example, when you happen to engage in mindfulness of breath while sitting at a traffic light or washing the dishes. Informal practice is when you shift your attention from being absorbed in thoughts to sensing how and where you are in the present moment—the movement of your breath, the posture of your body, the sounds, sights, and smells around you. It is noticing what is occurring without the running commentary, slowing down to more fully attend to the moment.

You can incorporate informal practice into your routine by returning to mindfulness throughout your day as you go about your business, without having to set aside extra time. Informal practice can also be helpful when you are using cannabis, especially THC rich medicine. Returning to mindfulness while medicated can support you in getting the most out of your medicine if it is working well for you, as well as mitigating negative effects such as over-intoxication by helping you be present in the moment.

How Mindfulness Helps

Practicing mindfulness meditation helps you develop two crucial abilities. The first ability is to keep your attention on a chosen object of concentration. In the practices described in this booklet, your attention would be focused on the breath and/or body sensations of walking. This ability



deepens with practice and can increase your ability to concentrate and focus in any situation.

The second ability is to *return* to the object of focus. In practice, this requires that you eventually notice when your attention has wandered from the breath so you can bring your attention back to breathing. It is natural for your mind to wander off the breath many many times. What is crucial is that you are developing the ability to notice when you have drifted away, and then intentionally return to your object of focus.

The ability to notice when you have wandered off into daydreams, thoughts, and memories during meditation will also help you be aware even when you are not actively practicing mindfulness. This can be especially helpful when you find yourself lost in a storm of anger, frustration, pain,



or fear. As you continue to practice, you can become aware of how emotions and thoughts can hijack awareness. Once you've noticed that, you can choose to return your attention to the present moment.

This is very helpful since everyone experiences challenges in life. Many people who have physical illness and pain suffer from anxiety, depression, and frustration as a result of their illness. Rather than spending what could be hours a day lost in regrets, ruminations and/or fears, you may be able to more readily recognize when you are in that state, then shift your attention back to the present moment through mindful awareness.



Managing Pain

Making your mind an ally
in managing your perception
and response to pain.



What is Pain?

When we think of pain, physical pain is often what first comes to mind. The Hawai'i Department of Health lists “severe pain” as a qualifying symptom for medical cannabis use, but there is no further explanation of what pain is, or what makes it ‘severe.’ The reality is that pain comes in many forms—physical, mental, social, and emotional. These types of pains are often interrelated, one exacerbating or even causing another. We recognize that all forms of experienced pain are real, and that mindfulness may help with all types of pain.

Changing Your Body and Brain

Anything that helps us relax and be more present will support our health and happiness. Mindful awareness has a profound and measurable effect on body and mind. Regular practice of mindfulness has been shown in many studies to evoke the relaxation response, which in turn lowers blood pressure, lowers stress levels, decreases respiration rate, and lowers heart rate. [9,10,11]

Mindfulness helps foster a more open attitude toward life and all that goes with it. Research has found that practicing mindfulness meditation for as little as eight weeks results in significantly decreased pain, bodily tension, depression, anxiety, and worry. [4,6,7,22] Additionally, participants in mindfulness studies report improved sleep, reduced need for some medications, and increased feelings of satisfaction and contentment. [18,19,20] These results reinforce one another. For example, if you reduce physical tension and stress you will also lower pain level. When your pain level is less, you are more able to engage with your life rather than be limited by, and focused on, pain and discomfort.



We also have evidence that eight weeks of daily mindfulness meditation changes your brain, and helps it better manage pain and discomfort. Mindfulness meditation increases the thickness of a part of the brain that normally decreases with age, and helps regions of the brain work more cooperatively and effectively. [15,16,17] Studies have shown that individuals who use mindfulness meditation to cope with pain actually activate a specific region of the brain that modulates pain perception. This changes the way your mind perceives pain so that it is more bearable. [3,4,17]

Finally, studies have shown that mindfulness practice lowers inflammation markers and stress reactivity in the body. [25] These markers are raised in most people with chronic or acute illness or pain. Reducing inflammation and the effects of stress creates an optimal physiological state that supports your health, healing, and recovery. Rather than covering up symptoms, you are fostering a state of awareness that improves your health and immune function.

Managing Stress

Mindfulness helps us manage strong feelings and stress. We don't get as worked up or stressed out when we can identify the flow of thoughts and recognize whether they are bringing us into, or taking us out of, the present moment. Even when things are not calm, mindfulness helps us respond to situations with less panic, more clarity, and more wisdom. At its best, mindfulness can be an oasis of calm and presence in the center of our busy and stressful lives.

Mindful awareness shifts focus from judging, reacting, and fighting against pain to being able to calmly allow sensations, thoughts, and feelings to be received by your awareness. [21] The more we resist or fear pain, the more intensely we experience sensations of discomfort. [24] For instance,



say you notice the beginning of a headache. Immediately your mind jumps into action with worried thoughts such as, “Oh boy, how bad is this one going to be?” or “I don’t have time for a headache today, I have too much to do!”

Those thoughts, while perfectly natural, intensify the feeling of suffering from the pain. Mindful awareness helps you distinguish your physical pain from your thoughts and reactions to it. When you can simply be aware of you experience without judging it and without struggling to make it different, you will have less pain and less stress. [20,17]

Balance and Resilience

Daily practice of mindfulness helps you become more aware of your body’s sensations, needs, and limitations. This increased ability to listen to the body—to hear the messages that say “I’m not comfortable, I need a 5 minute break” or “I need to get up and move” help you take better care of yourself before discomfort becomes more intense. Noticing the early cues about needing to stretch, rest, eat, etc. allow

you to better manage your energy, rather than working beyond your resources and triggering a flare of pain and/or stress.



Regular mindfulness practice increases resilience. [26,27] Resilience is the ability to meet tough or painful life challenges (illness, trauma, tragedy, stress, or adversity) and then recover, adapt, and bounce back with strength. By increasing resilience, you gain powerful tools that help you navigate the challenges of



life with ease and calm. This can help you to not just survive, but to thrive. Individuals who are more resilient report less pain, stress, and feelings of overwhelm. Additionally, resilience helps you meet life's challenges and trials with more inner resources so that you truly bounce back more rapidly after a painful incident.

One common struggle many people speak about is feeling like they are defined by their illness, diagnosis, pain, or limitations. Mindfulness practice offers an antidote for that. It helps you come to know through direct experience that you are much more than a label, diagnosis, or symptom. It helps you see and accept your whole self in moments of pain, but also in moments of calm, ease, connection, and joy. With continued mindfulness practice, you may spend less time distracted or overwhelmed by pain or illness, and more time being present in all the moments of your life—not just the painful ones.



Cannabis and Mindfulness

Getting the most out of both.



Mindful Medicating

We encourage a mindful, intentional, and integrated approach to using cannabis as medicine. Since cannabis affects everyone differently, mindful awareness before, during, and after medicating can help you find the right medicine at the right dose. Being clear about why you are medicating beforehand, noting how much you are using, and paying attention to the effects of your medicine once you've consumed it will help you find the relief you seek while also supporting optimal functioning in your social, family, and work life.

In general, it's a good idea to start low, go slow, and stay low. Understanding why you are medicating is key to achieving your desired effects. Your reason for medicating is your own—it could be managing back pain, stimulating appetite, unwinding at the end of the day, or enjoying the company of friends. Whatever it is, it's valuable to have a clear understanding so that you can get the most out of cannabis and avoid mindless medicating. Being mindful around medicating will allow you to better detect subtle differences between strains, doses, delivery methods, and even times of day so you can tailor your use to meet your specific need.

It may also be helpful to take notes during your sessions so you can be fully present to your experience without having to remember everything. Use the Talk Medicine app and/or the notes section in the back of this booklet to capture valuable insights about how your medicine works or doesn't work for you. When you return to the dispensary, having these notes along with the expertise of dispensary staff can be helpful in finding what might work best for you.



Mindful Medicating Guidelines

1. Before dosing, pause and take a few mindful breaths. Consider what your intention for medicating is and what you hope to get out of this session.
2. Check in with your symptoms, mood, energy level, and bodily tension and/or start a session in the Talk Medicine app.
3. Take note of what you are using and how much.
4. Take your dose.
5. Check in periodically with or without the Talk Medicine app. Take a few mindful breaths and notice how the medicine is affecting your experience. Jot down notes if appropriate.

THC can interfere with memory and concentration. By engaging mindfulness while using THC, you can become more aware of THC's impact and influence on your cognition and feelings. Being mindful is the opposite of being spaced out or entranced. Mindfulness can increase clarity and functioning in daily life and while using cannabis.

Mindfulness can also help you manage your experience if you have over-medicated. If you become uncomfortably intoxicated, practicing mindfulness meditation to bring your awareness to your body and breath can help ground your experience in the present moment and help you relax, release fear, and remember the sensation will pass.



Microdosing and Mindfulness

Microdosing is an effective way of using cannabis where you use a micro or very low dose of medicine so that you are able to enjoy the maximum benefit with the minimum amount of medicine. Many people microdose because it allows them to find relief without the potential side effects of high doses that include increased anxiety, uncomfortable intoxication, or difficulty with memory or concentration.

The subtle effects of microdosing pair exceptionally well with practicing mindfulness. Since microdosing helps you have symptom relief without losing mental clarity, it naturally supports mindfulness practice. Both mindfulness and microdosed cannabis help you quiet the mental noise and distractions, so you can attend more fully to the present moment. This internal quieting can leave more mental space or bandwidth to remember to practice informal mindfulness throughout your day.

Mindfulness can enhance microdosing, since paying better attention to your experience will sensitize you to the effects of your medicine. Additionally, by paying attention to how you respond to your medicine, you can learn how to make small adjustments, refining your dose to more precisely match your needs. Together, microdosing and mindfulness offer a great introduction to safe and intentional dosing with cannabis to promote health, wellbeing, and an awareness that is healing.

Synergistic Effects of Microdosing and Cannabis

While mindfulness can be applied to and enhance almost anything, some people also choose to enhance their mindfulness with cannabis. It may be helpful to use a microdose of cannabis, or other appropriate cannabis dose, to help you



prepare for a mindfulness meditation session. Just as one's cannabis experience can be influenced by 'set and setting,' one's mindfulness practice can respond the same way.

If you choose to add cannabis to your mindfulness practice, it is important to consider why you are doing so, and if it is supportive of your reasons for meditating. Many traditional meditation teachers and practices that are aimed toward spiritual goals do not recommend using any substances while meditating. However, if your goals for meditation are to manage pain and stress, increase calm, reduce anxiety, etc., adding cannabis to your meditation practice may be appropriate.

Cannabis use and mindfulness practice have similar effects. Some of the reported benefits of medical cannabis include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Decreased muscular tension
- Decreased pain sensations (at low doses)
- Improved ability to relax, let go of stress and distractions, and focus on the present moment
- Enhanced sensory perception (heightened awareness of and ability to consciously choose which sensations to focus on)
- Improved mood
- Increased sense of contentment, tranquility, and wellbeing

These benefits are almost identical to some of the benefits derived from mindfulness meditation. By combining the two you can address pain and stress even more effectively than with cannabis alone. Furthermore, mindfulness can help potentiate some of the positive effects of cannabis, meaning that you need less medicine to get the same benefit.



For example, with mindfulness practice, you can become more attuned to how you hold tension in your body and be better able to release it and more fully relax. By being more mindful of how your body and mind feel in this moment, you become more skillful at noticing the more subtle effects of cannabis and therefore can respond by dosing appropriately.


Additionally, if you have tried meditating before and became frustrated and gave up, cannabis may provide help. Since cannabis helps you both relax and have heightened awareness of and ability to concentrate on sensations, it can make it easier to engage in the practice of mindfulness.

Assessing Your Relationship with Cannabis

A risk of cannabis use is cannabis dependency. Moderation is key when it comes to using cannabis as medicine. A recent study found that daily consumption of high doses of cannabis can lead to mental health issues. [28] Being mindful of how much you use, how often you use, and your response will help minimize or avoid dependency as well as the risk of overdosing and unpleasant experiences. Interestingly, mindfulness has also been successfully used to treat cannabis dependency. [13]

If you are concerned about your cannabis use, ask yourself these questions:

- Have you found that once you start using cannabis in a given day, you are not able to stop using it?
- Have you failed to do what was normally expected of you due to using cannabis?
- Do you look for a reason or make excuses so that you can dose?
- Do you devote a significant amount of time to thinking about your next dose?

- 
- Are you dosing because you want to escape what you're feeling, or to become more connected with your life?
 - Are you using cannabis to become numb, or to feel?
 - Are you hiding how much, or how often, you are using?

If you answer yes to any of these questions, you may want to consider taking a 'cannabis holiday.' Stopping all use of cannabis for 2 to 3 days will reset your cannabinoid receptors and give you time to assess your relationship with the medicine. If you can do this, you will return to medicating with clearer intention and a lower tolerance, both of which will make your medicine work better for you. If you are unable to take a break despite wanting to, we recommend you seek assistance from a healthcare professional. Dispensary staff can provide you with resources confidentially.



Alternatively, some people may have guilt, fear, or shame around using cannabis as medicine even if they use it appropriately. Mindfulness can also help you realize it is okay to use cannabis, if it really helps and improves your life.

A worthwhile question to ask about your cannabis use and mindfulness practice is: is this helping me connect and engage more with life, or is this causing me to withdraw from it? Being able to ask and answer this question will support you in finding balance and honestly assessing whether or not your choices are benefiting you. It can also be applied to anything you engage in, be it other practices, medications, relationships, thoughts, or behaviors.



Helpful Tips & Reminders

Where to begin and what to remember along the way.



Mindfulness Tips

1. Aim to incorporate at least one period of mindfulness practice per day. As with dosing cannabis, start low. Five to ten minutes is sufficient to start with. Build up to a 20 to 25 minute practice period over time.
2. Try both sitting and walking mindfulness practices.
3. Find a quiet area to practice where you will not be disturbed during your session.
4. Take a mindful breath or two frequently throughout the day to give yourself a moment of presence. Doing so cultivates an awareness that is healing.
5. Before dosing with cannabis, take a few mindful breaths and tune into your body. If you are in pain, sense regions that are painful and assess your level of pain. Feel your body as a whole to notice areas that are not in pain or are not particularly tense as well.
6. Check in with how you feel after the medicine has begun to work. Notice how it affects your pain, energy, clarity, and mood.
7. Make some notes to help you remember your responses to specific medications and doses. Use the Talk Medicine app to keep track of your session.
8. As you continue to practice mindfulness, you may find that you can feel relief without even needing to take medicine sometimes. You may even find you can alleviate some symptoms by simply becoming mindful.



9. You may have different medication needs on different days. Mindfulness helps you tune into those mental and physical fluctuations and skillfully choose how to respond. Remember that your body does its best for you each and every day. Use the tools available to you to support it and give it the best chance you can to have a good day.
10. Moderation is key. Mindfulness, in addition to offering symptom relief, helps you use cannabis in a responsible and intentional manner. If you notice you have difficulties with controlling your cannabis use, then it is time to consult a healthcare professional.
11. We advise moderation in your meditation practice. Practicing for 20-25 minutes per day is fine. However, we do not advise you to engage in intensive meditation practice for several hours a day without working with a qualified teacher.



Our Kuleana

Hawaiian Ethos is honored to serve the people of Hawai'i Island. We believe it is our kuleana to provide good medicine in a good way.

Cultivation and Dispensary Initiatives



Sungrown

The sun provides our plants with broad spectrum light while decreasing our electricity use



Recycled Water

Closed loop water system with precision irrigation, multi-stage filtration, and minimal waste



Non-Toxic Inputs

Environmentally responsible growing medium, nutrients, and pest control for clean cannabis



Pure Extracts

Solvent-free extraction means no contaminants, plus more cannabinoids and terpenes in products



Variety

Different strains and delivery methods with distinct cannabinoid and terpene profiles



Feedback and Education

Website, mobile app, and dispensary programs provide opportunities to learn as well as provide feedback



Mahalo Nui Loa

Thank you for taking the time to read through this booklet. We hope that you found some useful information that will support your health and wellbeing.

While we believe it is our responsibility to provide the best information we can, we also understand that patients have very valuable information based on experience to share with us. We look forward to building a relationship with you so that we may learn and grow together.

For more information about our programs and initiatives, or to schedule a time to just talk story, please call (808) 731-7646 or visit our website: www.hawaiianethos.com.

Aloha,
The Hawaiian Ethos Team





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