SELF-CARE FOR BODY & SOUL

INTEGRATIVE WAYS OF CULTIVATING
SELF-AWARENESS FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT

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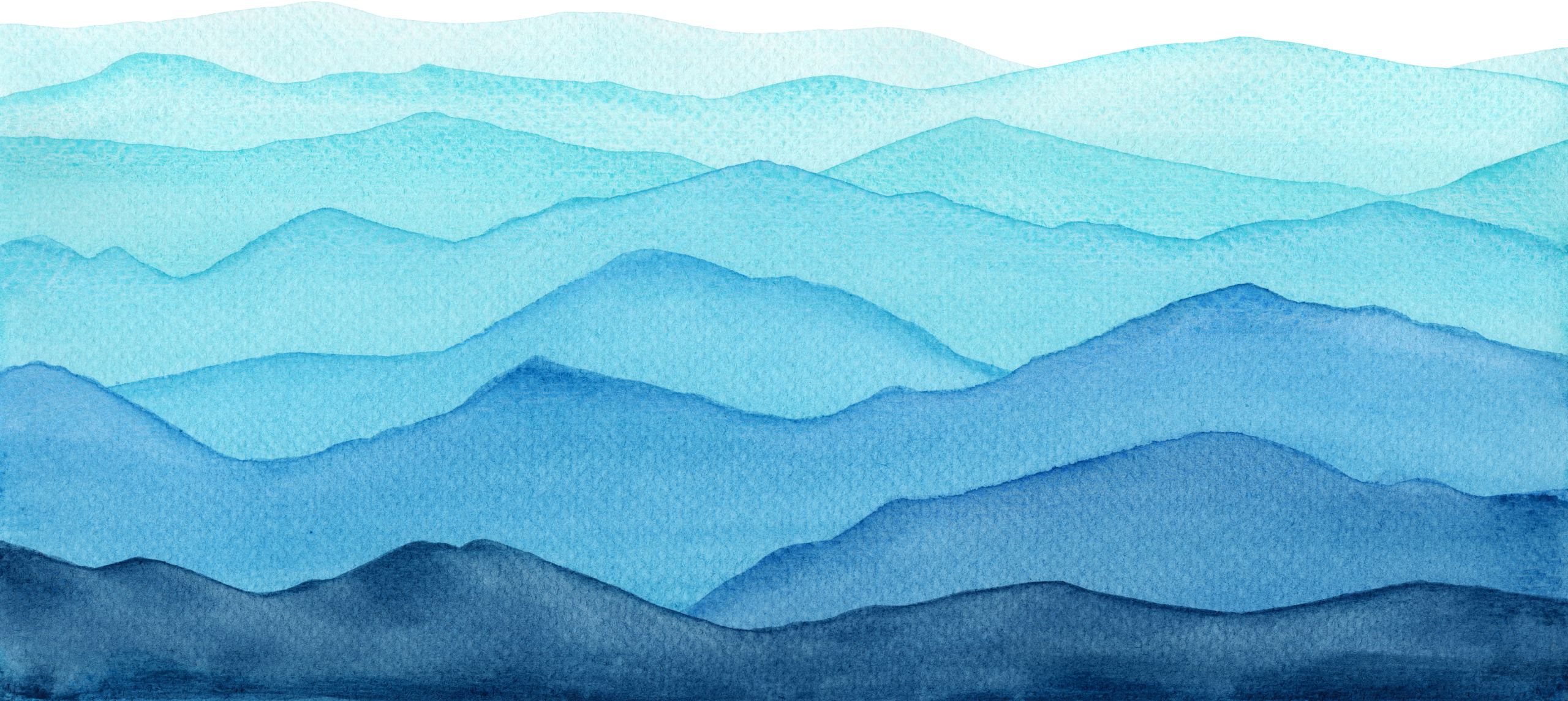
SELF-CARE FOR BODY & SOUL

- ❑ Body-Breath Exercises
  - Stress Management and Resiliency
- ❑ A 2 Step Centering Meditation Method
  - Body-Brain Health
  - Body-Soul Health (Faith Factor)
- ❑ Two Integrative Methods for Mind-Soul Care
  - ❑ The Examen
    - Self-Awareness in Gratitude
    - For Self-Leadership
    - As a Prayer in Finding God in all Things
  - ❑ Mind-Body Awareness & Cognitive Reappraisal
    - Stress Signals
    - Cognitive Reappraisal Exercise
    - Awareness & Cognitive Reappraisal Log

DEFINITIONS



WHAT IS HEALTH?

"Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

“Health is a dynamic tension towards physical, mental, social, and spiritual harmony, and not only the absence of illness, which gives the person the ability to fulfill the mission which has been entrusted to them, according to the state of life in which they find themselves."

SELF-CARE

- Self-care is a chosen behavior that is under one's control that is deliberate and self-initiated to support and promotes good health and general well-being.

- "Self-care is a proactive, holistic, and personalized approach to the promotion of health and well-being through a variety of strategies, in both personal and professional settings..."
(https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5907186/)

MIND/BODY MEDICINE

- Focuses on the **interactions among the brain, mind, body, and behavior**
- Looks at the emotional, mental, social spiritual and behavioral factors directly affecting health.
- Its fundamental approach is to respect and enhances each person's capacity for **self-knowledge** and self-care
- It emphasizes techniques that are grounded in this approach" National Center of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM).

WHAT IS STRESS?

- Stress is an experience in which our body adjusts physically, cognitively, and emotionally to it; and depending upon what was the stimuli, its intensity and duration; and our response - it will have a positive or negative impact on our nervous system.

RESILIENCY & THE RELAXATION RESPONSE

- **Resiliency** in the clinical sense is our capacity to recover from stress – mental or physical – our ability to cope or adapt.

- "The **Relaxation Response** is a state, elicited by mind-body techniques, characterized by decreased oxygen consumption, decreased heart rate, and decreased respiratory rate which offsets the effect of stress." (Herbert Benson)

NEUROPLASTICITY

- Our brains are continuously being shaped by our experiences.
- With every repetition of a thought or emotion (be it positive or negative), we reinforce a neural pathway.
- Small incremental changes, repeated frequently leads to changes in how our brains work.
- We actually become what we think and do.

MEDITATION

- Multiple definitions depending upon its context.

- Centering Meditation is a *brain exercise* or an *act of prayer*.

- Both have the same physical health benefits, while adding ‘a faith factor’ (Herbert Benson, MD) has proved to have an increased biopsychosocial benefit as without.

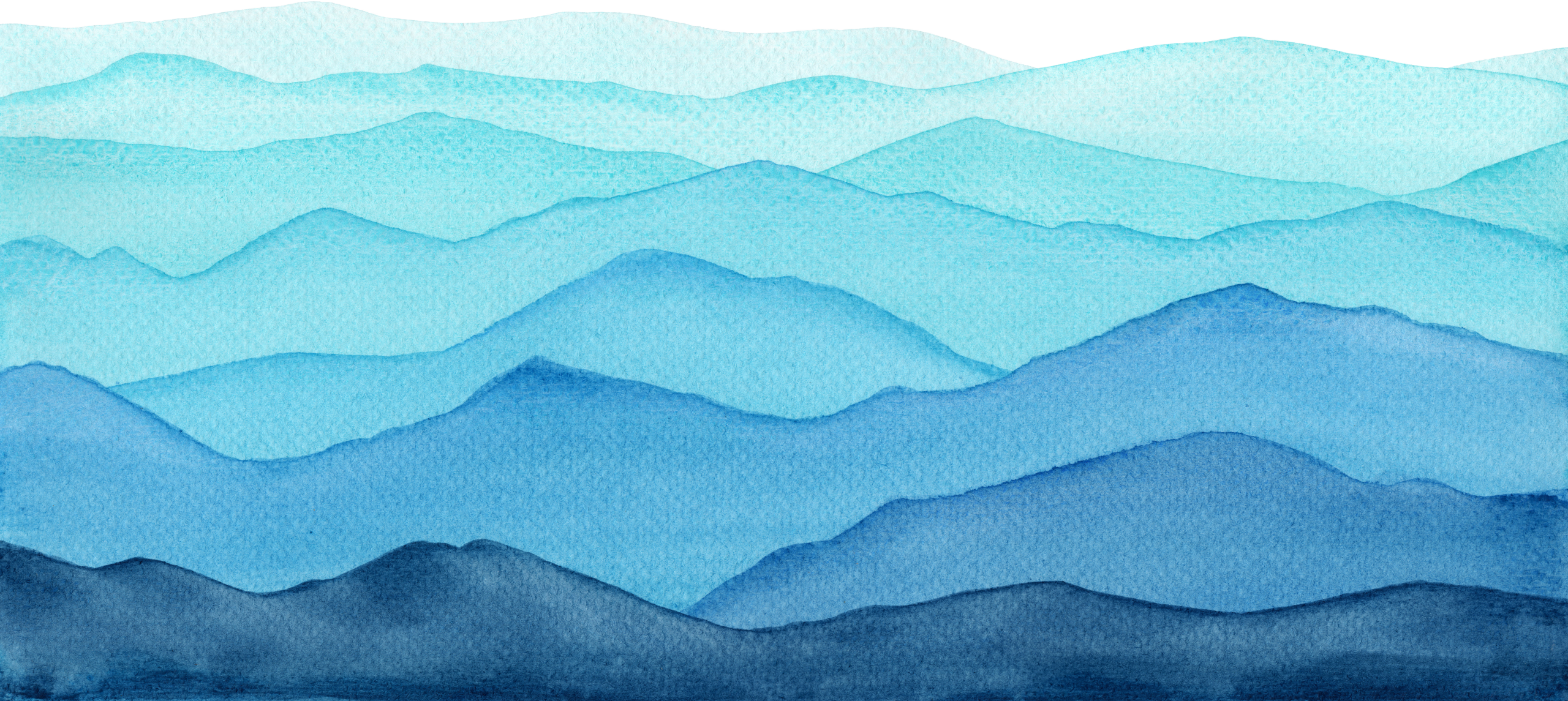
MINDFULNESS

- Mindfulness is a brain exercise since it focuses on one's outer world and inner landscape (thoughts, emotions, and feelings) practiced in a detached non-judgmental way (which helps to stop the internal critic from taking off and chattering away with abusive self-defeating thoughts).

IMPORTANCE OF SAVORING

- Our propensity for negativity - due to an embedded evolutionary survival mechanism
- Negative events are immediately stored in long-term memory
- Positive experiences are kept short-term memory
  - To move positive experiences into our long-term memory, we need hold them onto ourselves for 10-20 seconds

BODY-BREATH EXERCISES



RELAXED BREATHING

Abdominal Breathing Exercise is for anytime, or if you sense stress building up.

- Sit quietly and rest hands on your stomach.
- Breathe in through your nose.
  - Feel your belly lift as you breathe in.
- Exhale through your mouth.

MINIS

Anytime or if you sense stress building up during the day. Take 1- 3minutes.
Assume a relaxed position. Go into the silence
Start off slowly take in several deep breaths through nose, and then out through your mouth then resume normal abdominal relaxed breathing

MINI-CENTERING MEDITATION
Mentally say your favorite word as you breathe out, or
Rest with your hand on your belly to use your breath as a focusing method

MINI-VISUALIZATION MEDITATION
Select a real or imaginary place – a vacation spot
Imagine you are in your special place
Application of the Interior Senses
Use all your senses to see, touch, smell, taste : such as the breeze, the sounds, etc.
Stay in this place while you breathe naturally yet slowly..

BUILDING YOUR QUIETING REFLEX

When you become aware of a stress reaction building up from a particular stressor, a long-standing worry, a new problem, or from a simple annoyance. Take 1- 3minutes.
Assume a relaxed position. Go into the silence.

- Inwardly gaze, to look at it the stressor.
- While looking at it, smile inwardly.
- Inhale an easy slow natural breath.
- Exhaling slowly, sense letting go of any tension in jaw, tongue, facial muscles, shoulders while you are imagining a warm wave flowing from head to toes.

Eventually, this will become a reflex – an automatic habit. Try it each and every time you feel stressed (even if it's a dozen times a day if you have to).

THE PSYCHOBIOLOGICAL FEEDBACK LOOP

THOUGHT-FEEL-BODY TEST

Thoughts and feelings have corresponding reactions in our body.
Did you know that when you think of a negative thought, for example, it produces negative sensations?
Think of a negative. Can you feel your body automatically tighten up?
Change your thoughts to positive, do you feel your body automatically following?

When you find yourself thinking negatively, check where you sense tension in your body.
When you become aware of tension your body, check your thoughts.
Change your thoughts to positive.

BODY-FEEL TEST

Changing your posture will change your attitude. Observe and sense how you feel about these two postures.

- Slump in your chair – how do you feel?
- Stand up straight with shoulder back – how do you feel?

Fix it: If you find yourself ‘down’, sit up or stand up straight, shoulders back.
And take a few deep breaths to reset yourself.

BODY AWARENESS – NATURAL BIOFEEDBACK

How to become more in tune with your own biofeedback monitor is a body self-inquiry paying close attention to those tension spots.

Sit in a comfortable seated position or lie on the floor. Ask yourself these questions.

- What tension do I feel in my head?
- Tightness in my forehead?
- Am I clenching my jaw?
- Tightness in the back of my neck, throat, shoulders?
- Am I hot or cold?
- Am I holding my breath?
- Have I been clenching my fists?
- Do I have knots in my stomach?

Where you have tension, visualize the area and take several Relaxed Abdominal Breaths.
Wait for the tension to subside

MIND-BODY MEDITATION

A 2-Step Mind-Body Centering Meditation

A focusing element – in the mind for the body - a word, sound, prayer, phrase; for the mind a particular body activity.

The adoption of a passive attitude toward intruding thoughts and a return to the focusing element.

RESEARCH RESULTS ON THE EFFECTS OF CENTERING MEDITATIONS

Neuroplasticity and the Elicitation of the Relaxation Response

Physiological Changes

- Evokes an overall quieted in the brain tested under Functional Brain Mapping
- Cortical Thickness – MRI Brain showed an increase in size in certain regions
- Decreases the hyperarousal reactivity of the Sympathetic Nervous System
- Increased immune response
- Promoted increased healing time
- Increased Focus and Attention
- Reduced high blood pressure

Treatment for

- Anxiety, pain, hypertension, rumination, worry, other stress related conditions
- Complementary care not an alternative

Ongoing Research

- Increases Resiliency
- Reduces Allostatic loading
- Improves self-regulation
- Stress Buffering Effects
- Counters oxidative stress - Slows rate of cellular aging
- Telomeres (end of chromosomes)
- Positive impact on others

Self - Reported Effects

- Sense of calm and well-being that extends beyond time spent
- Increased capacity to handle difficult situation and emotions
- Better memory and attentional capacity
- Increased quality of life

2 STEP CENTERING MEDITATION

- The repetition of a word, phrase, sound, thought, image

- The passive (non-judgmental) return to the repetition when other thoughts intrude.

Entering into the Silence to elicits the Relaxation Response
Silence, Solitude, Stillness for Intention to Relax
Sit comfortable, feet on floor, hands on lap (best for circulation)
Take 2-3 deep breaths – slowly in through nose out mouth
Start your you Attention on Centering element
As thoughts intrude, passively return to you repetition Centering element

Best for 10-20minutes - daily after rising in the morning (and or early evening)

THE EXAMEN

An Integrative Self-Awareness Assessment for Mind & Soul

- Self-Awareness in Gratitude
- For Self-Leadership
- As a Prayer in Finding God in all Things

5 STEPS OF THE EXAMEN

1. Review (Awareness)
2. Reflect (Insight)
3. Respond (Reappraise)
4. Gratitude (Disposition)
5. Commitment (Hope)

5 STEPS OF THE EXAMEN

1. **Review** (Awareness): Recall your recent encounters. Who and what touched you?

2. **Reflect** (Insight): Select one that stands out. How did you respond? What choices did you make? (What were your sensations, emotions, feelings, thoughts, and intentions at that time?)

3. **Respond** (Reappraise): When were you more of your true self? When not? How do you want to be? Were my actions consistent with who I am or who I want to become? What insights did you discover about yourself?

4. **Gratitude** (Disposition): What are you most thankful for from your recent experiences?

5. **Commitment** (Hope): What do you desire for tomorrow?

MIND-BODY AWARENESS

An Integrative Method for Cognitive Reappraisal

- Stress Signals Self-Awareness
- Cognitive Reappraisal Exercise
- Awareness Log

COMMON STRESS WARNING SIGNALS

1. Physical
2. Emotional
3. Cognitive
4. Behavioral
5. Relational & Spiritual

COGNITIVE REAPPRAISAL EXERCISE

Approaches

- Problem-Solving
- Acceptance

Coping Key:

- Negative, Irrational Thoughts (thought that don't served you) = Thought Distortions in need of Cognitive Reappraisal and Restructuring
- Negative, Rational Thoughts that represent what's under your influence = Approach is Problem-Solving
- Negative, Rational Thoughts that represent what you cannot influence = Approach is Acceptance, then look to find or create positive meaning

AWARENESS & COGNITIVE REAPPRAISAL LOG

Stressor/Stressful Event: _____

Physical Signs (Sensations)	Behaviors	Emotions/Feelings (with their Underlying Beliefs are reflected in Thoughts)	Automatic Thoughts (Notice these thoughts typically focus on what you don't want, the thoughts are maladaptive if they do not serve you well)	Cognitive Distortions (are a product of core beliefs that are negative)	Adaptive Desirable Positive Emotions & Feelings	Adaptive Desired Positive Thoughts – Beliefs (Intentionally focus on what you deeply want, what you desire when in RR)

Stress Responses:
The first 5 columns correspond to Stress Warning Signals and Stress Activating Responses.
Notice how Negative Emotions and Feelings are linked to Cognitive Distortions that have deep unique Conditioned Maladaptive Beliefs.

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