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# SELF-CARE FOR BODY AND SOUL

A CERTIFICATE WORKSHOP

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AN INTRODUCTION AND EXPERIENCE TO EVIDENCE-BASED MIND-BODY MEDICINE  
METHODS FOR STRESS REDUCTION AND INCREASED RESILIENCY

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## A CERTIFICATE WORKSHOP ON SELF-CARE FOR BODY AND SOUL

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### INTEGRATIVE WAYS OF CULTIVATING SELF-AWARENESS FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT

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An introduction and experience in evidence-based mind-body medicine methods to elicit the relaxation response for remembered wellness and increased resiliency.

- Body-Breath Exercises for Stress Management
- 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

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## DEFINITIONS

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### WHAT IS HEALTH?

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"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."

Definition given by St. Pope John Paul II to the attendees of the International Conference given by the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers for the members of the International Federations of Catholic Health Care Workers on February 11, 2000 World Day of the Sick, Year of the Jubilee, Vatican City

#### WHO Definition

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

Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York, 19-22 June, 1946; signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of 61 States (Official Records of the World Health Organization, no. 2, p. 100) and entered into force on 7 April 1948.) The Definition has not been amended since 1948

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### SELF-CARE

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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. It is an essential component of the management of chronic illness. Such is the role of a health care provider to support patient enablement. "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/>)

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### MIND/BODY MEDICINE

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"Mind-body medicine focuses on the interactions among the brain, mind, body, and behavior, and on the powerful ways in which emotional, mental, social spiritual and behavioral factors can directly affect health. It regards as fundamental an approach that respect and enhances each person's capacity for self-knowledge and self-care, and it emphasizes techniques that are grounded in this approach" National Center of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM).

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## WHAT IS STRESS?

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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. Dr. Karen Shields, Jan 2020

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## THE RELAXATION RESPONSE

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"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, 1971). These techniques can be used to combat stress in a wide array of stress-initiated or stress-exacerbated illnesses.

There are numerous writings on different methods of creating a physical, mental and emotional relaxation response. Scientists and clinicians have studied through observations and testing the physiological changes and have cataloged its subsequent health benefits related to the method of 'centering' one's attention on a focusing element in either a meditative or mindful way.

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## RESILIENCY

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

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## NEUROPLASTICITY

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We have a brain that can change itself. Neuroplasticity is the term used by scientists and clinicians to describe the brain's miraculous ability to rewire itself and create new connections that bypass areas that may be injured or damaged by disease. It's the brain's ability to re-wire itself when challenged in a positive way.

Neuroplasticity is the 'muscle building process' part of the brain. Repetition of thought or action over and over again increases its staying power where over time, it becomes automatic; a part of us.

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

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## WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

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"Spirituality is an external integrative multidimensional expression of one's interior landscape, orientation and disposition of the 'heart' in relation to God, self, others, and all of creation." Dr. Karen Shields, Jan 2020

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## MEDITATION

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Meditation has many definitions depending upon its context.

Centering Meditation it is either a brain exercise or an act of prayer. As an act of prayer, it is also a brain exercise. Its method would depend upon the particular religion and its different traditions.

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.

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## MINDFULNESS

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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). In any 'meditative method' it employs the concepts used in Mindfulness training as a way of dealing with intrusive thoughts that will come along.

It is an excellent tool to increase 'awareness', which can lead to more of an awareness of God's creative ongoing action in our life.

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## NOTE ON SAVORING

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Since we have a propensity for negativity due to an embedded evolutionary survival mechanism, we will store a negative event immediately in our long-term memory, while positive experiences most often are only in kept short-term memory. In order to help move positive experiences into our long-term memory, we need to spend a certain amount of time to allow them to sink in – in other words, hold them onto ourselves for 10-20 seconds in the form of savoring the images, feelings and thoughts.

## INTRODUCTION TO MIND-BODY TECHNIQUES

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Mind-Body techniques are a group of behavioral therapeutic exercises with approaches that may differ widely in their philosophical bases or in their methodologies and techniques. Nevertheless, their primary objective is the achievement of non-directed relaxation, to elicit the relaxation response to enhance the body's remembered wellness, rather than the direct achievement of a specific therapeutic goal thus reducing the physiological and psychological effects of stress.

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## BODY-BREATH EXERCISES FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT

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### RELAXED BREATHING

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Abdominal Exercise is for anytime, or if you sense stress building up during the day.

Take 1- 3minutes

- 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.

This is diaphragmatic breathing. It is part of any general relaxation and stress management method. Abdominal (or diaphragmatic) breathing is when we breathe in the diaphragm tightens, flattens and moves down, sucking air into the lungs. As the diaphragm moves down, it pushes the abdominal contents down, which forces the abdominal wall out. It is a way of interrupting the 'Fight or Flight' response and triggering the body's normal relaxation response.

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### MINI-CENTERING MEDITATION

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

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### MINI-VISUALIZATION MEDITATION

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- Anytime or if you sense stress building up during the day
- 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
- 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.



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## BUILDING YOUR QUIETING REFLEX

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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.

- 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.
- While 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).

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## THE PSYCHOBIOLOGICAL FEEDBACK LOOP

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### THOUGHT-FEEL-BODY TEST

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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? Try it.

Can you feel your body automatically tighten up?

Next, 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.  
Or
- When you become aware of tension your body, check your thoughts. Change your thoughts to positive.

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### BODY-FEEL TEST

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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?

If you find yourself 'down', sit up or stand up straight.

And take a few deep breaths to reset yourself.

## BODY AWARENESS – NATURAL BIOFEEDBACK

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Training in body awareness, along with stretching and aerobic exercise, are tools that elicit the relaxation response in gaining a body understanding of yourself. You already have within an innate biofeedback system, called your autonomic nervous system.

Your body gives you physical cues when you are hungry or tired or stressed. You may choose to disregard or listen. Too many times, we ignore these cues. We try to ignore pain, just to cope with it. In the short run, this is not a positive coping strategy, and in the long run, it is detrimental since we 'shut it down' - as if chronically being detached from our body's cues.

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 it the tension to subside.

Muscle tension is natural to all movement and posture. Unnecessary tension wastes energy, leading to fatigue and other symptoms of dis-ease. What we are talking about is accumulated excessive muscle tension that may be related to emotional concerns, poor posture habits, or repetitive work habits.

Notice yourself throughout the day if you are building up tension since it comes in bit by bit. Chronic tension is less noticeable than an acute episode. Ask yourself a few questions to prevent buildup.

## BASIC MUSCLE RELAXATION TECHNIQUE

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Anytime or if you sense stress is building. Select a few muscle groups.

1. Tense a muscle then let go of that tension.
- or
2. Stretch a muscle, then let go of the stretch.

Breathe in on tension or stretch, breathe out on release.

This resets the muscle.

## A FULL-BODY PROGRESSIVE RELAXATION

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This helps relieve muscle tension and increases our awareness of where we tend to hold our tension. It may take several sessions to master.

Sit in a comfortable position or supine on a padded matt.

Contract/tighten each on inhalation, then release it on exhalation.

After release, then concentrate on the area to become aware of the relaxation.

Do the following muscle groups in this order top to bottom.

Each section should be tightened twice in each session.

- Right hand
- Left hand
- Right arm
- Left arm
- Face
- Neck front
- Neck back
- Between Shoulders
- Right Shoulder
- Left Shoulder
- Abdomen
- Buttocks
- Right thigh
- Left thigh
- Right calf
- Left calf
- Right foot
- Left foot

## A 2-STEP MIND-BODY CENTERING MEDITATION

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Two component parts:

1. A focusing element – in the mind for the body - a word, sound, prayer, phrase; for the mind a particular body activity.
2. The adoption of a passive attitude toward intruding thoughts and a return to the focusing element.

## RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTS OF A CENTERING MEDITATION

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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 in Students
- 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\* (increased wellness in self-reporting from patients on caregivers who meditated)

### 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

## TWO CENTERING MEDITATION METHODS

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2 versions of a Centering Meditation Method

- A single point Centering Meditation – Body-Brain Health
- A single point Centering Prayer Meditation– Body-Soul Health

### HELPFUL HINTS

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Sitting with eyes ½ opened is not suggested for beginners; it will be too distracting.

Select a focusing element on what has meaning for you or just your breath.

How to stop the wandering or busyness of your mind. Monkey Mind is a term used to describe the excessive brain activity that can interrupt the elicitation of the relaxation response [RR] during a mediation. Just let your feelings, thoughts, and images drift away from your awareness. Do not entertain them or follow them.

When we have an overloaded, stressed life, we can find it hard to concentrate, learn new things, or fall asleep. Even our muscles clench out of habit. The first thing we must acquire is a passive attitude for our thoughts. Think of your mind as a calm lake with birds flying over. The lake is your mind, and the birds are your thoughts. Our brains are always functioning evening sleep; they do not shut off if so we would be brain dead.

The brain will always be feeding up thoughts, images, and feelings; that is its job. It's on 24/7. But that does not mean we have to pay attention to all of them all of the time.

Remember inwardly smile at those annoying thoughts. Return to your focusing centering element.

## CENTERING MEDITATION METHOD

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### A 2 Step Method (as written in secular meditation practices to elicit the Relaxation Response)

1. The repetition of a word, phrase, sound, thought, image
2. The passive (non-judgmental) return to the repetition when other thoughts intrude.

### The 2 Options for a Centering Element for the Repetition

- A prechosen Word or Image or Sound for the Centering element
  - (select which fits best for you since each uses a different part of the brain)
- Your Breath as the Centering element

### Word Examples of Centering Element to Repeat

- Peace, Joy, Bliss, Love

### 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 for count of 3– then out mouth 5-6 count
- Start your Centering Element to allow for Attention on the selected 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)

COMPARISON CENTERING PRAYER MEDITATION VS. CENTERING  
MEDITATION/MINDFULNESS

	<b>Centering Prayer Meditation</b>	<b>Centering Meditation &amp; Mindfulness</b>
Intention	To be with God as one's Self	To be with one's Self
Attention	On God	On Self
Focus Element	Sacred & Meaningful	Meaningful
Spiritual Exercise	Yes	No
Brain Exercise	Yes	Yes
Mind/Body/Soul	Mind/Body/Soul	Mind/Body
Elicits the Relaxation Response	Yes	Yes
Elicits the Remembered Wellness	Yes	Yes
Health Benefits	Yes	Yes
Evidenced-Based	Thousands of Years of Human Experience in Various Religious Traditions / Current Science	Recent History < 50 years of Human Experience as a Health Intervention / Current Science
Satisfying Social Needs	with Another (God)	-
Transcendental/Mystical Experience	Transcendental and or Mystical Experience	Possibly Transcendental Experience

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## INTRODUCTION - CENTERING PRAYER MEDITATION

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Spend 1.4% of your 24 hours in a day to sit with God to experience an amazing gift of grace: one that is free, natural, and ecologically safe to benefit from its long-term effects to be healthier. Discover the science behind this most profound evidence-based method for prayer life.

### **Into the Silence**

What has been used on for over 2000 years Christians is the most profound yet simple method of being with God that is rooted in our Jewish heritage thousands of years before, and in many other religions just as long. one which Jesus must have prayed when in the desert for 40 days, or when He took respite time during those intense 3 years of ministering calling on Abba. The method has had various titles: the *Jesus Prayer* or *Prayer of the Heart*, while in these contemporary times, we know it as *Centering Prayer* or *Christian Meditation*. I prefer to refer to it as *the prayer of Silent Love* – one of just holding hands with God.

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## A CENTERING PRAYER: THE PRAYER OF SILENT LOVE

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*The Intention is to be with God, the Holy Spirit as the centering Attention*

**A Centering Prayer** is a time of intentional silence (outward and inward) to rest into the experience of just being with God as the beloved of our Creator, the Life, and Giver of grace.

- ‘Centering’ as in moving our Attention towards our breathing or a focusing element which will allow our minds, filled with multiple layers of thoughts, so as to not be scattering off on its own.
- ‘Prayer’ as in an Intentional time spent acknowledging Whose (God) we are in relationship to who we are, always in union, and within a communication that has no need for words or actions.

**A 2 Step Method** (as written in secular meditation practices to elicit the Relaxation Response)

3. The repetition of a word, phrase, sound, thought, image
4. The passive (non-judgmental) return to the repetition when other thoughts intrude.

**The 3 Avenues for a Centering Element for the repetition**

- A prechosen Word or Image or Sound for the Centering element that reminds you of Love loving (select which fits best for you since each uses a different part of brain)
- Lectio Divina’s Contemplatio phase – a chosen or listen for what word or phrase God has for you in ‘sitting with’ as the Centering element
- Your Breath as the Centering element

**Word Examples of Centering Element**

- Jesus, Abba, Peace, Shalom, Christos, Ave Maria, Deo Gratia, Love, Joy

**Method for Disposition of the Heart in the Prayer of Silent Love**

Entering into the Silence elicits the Relaxation Response during a prayerful time.

- Silence, Solitude, Stillness for Intention
- Sit comfortable, feet on floor, hands on lap (best for circulation)
- Take 2-3 deep breaths – slowly in through nose for count of 3– then out mouth 5 count
- Start your Centering Element to allow for Attention
- As thoughts intrude, passively return to your repetition Centering Element
- Best for 10-20minutes - daily after rising in the morning (and or early evening)

## THE EXAMEN -AN INTERGRATIVE SELF-AWARENESS ASSESSMENT FOR MIND & SOUL

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Practicing appreciations can generate a sense of balance, especially when life is being influenced by difficulties that generate much stress. It is also helpful to cultivate appreciation in relation to oneself, others, and life in general since these categories are often a source of our stress. Appreciation is a central component of this work in reducing the effects of stress. And more importantly is savoring, spending time in reflecting upon the good.

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WE NEED 5 POSITIVE EXPERIENCES TO OFFSET 1 NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE. NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES GO RIGHT INTO OUR LONG-TERM MEMORY, WHILE POSITIVE ONE REMAIN IN SHORT TERM MEMORY UNLESS WE SAJOR THEM FOR 10-20 SECTIONS.

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Experience alone does not teach us much, it is when we reflect on our experience that we really begin to learn. It has the capacity to transform our lives by helping us become more aware – of the gifts.

“Examen comes from the Latin word that means both an examination and an active weighting or judging something. It’s as old as Socrates’ instruction to “know thy self.” “An unexamined life is not worth living.”

Taking Notice: It’s a practice of regular self-scrutiny. This ancient tradition of reflection is a way of finding our joy, as well to assess our behavior.

Each moment offers a window into your day. The daily examination is rather a question of asking:

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Where was I drawn today - by a friend, an event, a book, the beauty of nature?

How did I respond to these gifts?

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## 5 STEPS OF THE EXAMEN

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

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## THE EXAMEN FOR SELF-AWARENESS IN GRATITUDE

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### Step 1 Preparation

- Slow your mind and calm your body and gently relax. Image being in your favorite place.

### Step 2 Review the Day with Gratitude

- Gratitude is the foundation of our relationships.
- Notice any joys and delights; and focus on the day's gifts.
- Look at the day, look at the work you did, look at the people you interacted with. What did you receive from them? What did you give them? Pay attention to small things and other seemingly small pleasures. It's all in the details.

### Step 3 Review the Day Again Notice Your Feelings

- Notice moments when you were fully alive, times when you felt at peace, joyful, happy, comforted, whole, your best self, and moments when you feel your best self. Allow some of these moments to come to mind. These are times of consolation.
  - Pick a moment that you feel **most grateful for** and stay with it, savor it.
  - Notice how you desire more of those experiences. Take some time to be thankful.
- Now remember anything that you are **less grateful for**. Experiences that caused you to feel drained of energy, frustrated, irritated, angry, sad, alone, isolated, unaccepted, fragmented...less than your best self.
  - Bring these memories, seek the healing you need.

### Step 4 Choose one feature of the day

- Select a feature of the day that stands out as particularly important. It may involve a feeling - positive or negative. It may be a significant encounter with another person, or moment of pleasure or peace. Or it may seem something that's rather insignificant. Look at it.
- Allow it to arise spontaneously.

### Step 5 Look Forward to Tomorrow with Hope

- Look forward to tomorrow with hope.
- Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you survey what is coming up. Are you doubtful, cheerful, apprehensive, full of delightful anticipation?
- What do you think you particularly need for tomorrow, strength, energy, patience, courage? Asked for that gift.

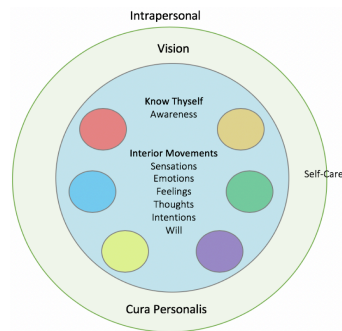
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FOR SLIDES – THE 5 STEPS OF THE EXAMEN

- **Review** (Awareness): Recall your recent encounters. Who and what touched you?
- **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?)
- **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?
- **Gratitude** (Disposition): What are you most thankful for from your recent experiences?
- **Commitment** (Hope): What do you desire for tomorrow?

## THE EXAMEN FOR SELF-LEADERSHIP

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- 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?
  - Were your actions consistent with: “who I am and who I want to become?”
  - What insights did you discover about yourself?
  
- 4 Gratitude (Disposition):
  - a. What are you most thankful for from your recent experiences?
  
- 5 Commitment (Hope):
  - a. What do you desire for tomorrow?

Add for faith-based: Where I have found God moving in my life? How have I responded to that love?

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## THE EXAMEN – A DAILY PRAYER OF FINDING GOD IN ALL THINGS

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### IN 'FINDING GOD IN ALL THINGS'

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The Examen comes from the Latin word that means both an examination and an active weighting or judging something. It's as old as Socrates' instruction to "know thyself" and his teachings about "an unexamined life is not worth living."

The Examen is a window of time for prayer, where we reflect upon how we encountered others in God in the everyday. It is a simple daily prayer, with God, who offers us gifts of transforming grace. Also called the Prayer of Consciousness or the prayer of Reflection in which we take a journey into the recent past, to savor the present, and to look with hope towards the future.

The Examen is a prayer of graced awareness in reflecting upon encountering God's presence and action in our everyday: to see the day as it was through the eyes of Christ; to discern the Holy Spirit's leading direction for us; and to respond to the Father's loving invitation for renewal and rejoicing.

### TAKING NOTICE

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It's a practice of regular self-scrutiny. Ignatius took this ancient tradition of prayer of reflection and made a way to experience God, as well as to assess our behavior.

The Examen is not a liturgical prayer, devotional prayer, intercession, or prayer with scripture. It's not contemplation or centering prayer, which is emptying our mind of images, words, or ideas. The Examen is the kind of prayer that lives in our hearts to God who does not stand apart from our lives.

Each moment offers a window into where God has been in your day. The daily examination is rather a question of asking:

.....  
 How was I drawn to God today - by a friend, an event, a book, the beauty of nature?

How did I respond to God's loving action in my life this day?  
 .....

.....  
 "WORK AS IF SUCCESS DEPENDS ON YOUR OWN EFFORT BUT TRUST AS IF ALL DEPENDED ON GOD." ST. IGNATIUS  
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## EXAMEN AS A PRAYER

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The Daily Examen is a prayerful experience of God. Experience alone does not teach us much, it is when we reflect on our experience that we really begin to learn. The Examen can help us see God's hand in our daily-lived experience. It's a simple prayer that has the capacity to transform our lives by helping us become more aware – of the gifts.

### Step 1 Preparation

- Slow your mind and calm your body and gently relax into God's presence. Imagine God welcoming you.

### Step 2 Review the Day with Gratitude

- Ask God to show you the day through God's eyes. Gratitude is the foundation of our relationship with God.
- Notice any joys and delights, and focus on the day's gifts.
- Look at the day, look at the work you did, look at the people you interacted with. What did you receive from them? What did you give them? Pay attention to small things and other seemingly small pleasures. God is in the details.

### Step 3 Review the Day Again Notice Your Feelings

- Notice moments when you were fully alive, times when you felt at peace, joyful, happy, comforted, whole, your best self, and moments when you feel close to God. Allow some of these moments to come to mind. These are times of consolation.
  - Pick a moment that you feel **most grateful for** and stay with it, savor it.
  - Notice how God is drawing you to more of those experiences. Take some time to give thanks to God.
- Now remember anything that you are **less grateful for**. Experiences that caused you to feel drained of energy, frustrated, irritated, angry, sad, alone, isolated, unaccepted, fragmented...less than your best self.
  - Bring these memories before God; ask God to bring you the healing you need.

### Step 4 Choose one feature of the day and pray from it

- Asked the Holy Spirit to direct you to something during the day that God thinks is particularly important. It may involve a feeling - positive or negative. It may be a significant encounter with another person, or moment of pleasure or peace. Or it may seem something that's rather insignificant. Look at it.
- Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart. Whether it be intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude

### Step 5 Look Forward to Tomorrow with Hope

- Look forward to tomorrow. Ask God to give you grace for tomorrow's challenges.
- Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you survey what is coming up. Are you doubtful, cheerful, apprehensive, full of delightful anticipation?
- What do you think you particularly need for tomorrow, strength, energy, patience, courage? Asked for that gift.

The more you practice the Examen way of prayer, the easier and clearer it will become shedding light on the path that God has dreamt for you.

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## MIND-BODY AWARENESS & COGNITIVE REAPPRAISAL

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As previously listed, the Examen is a time for reflection and awareness that includes cognitive reappraisal where we look to evaluate our actions, thoughts, intentions and feelings. We can also reflect back on the day in noticing those signals of stress and what adaptive coping responses we automatically or deliberately chose.

1. Become aware of your common stress warning signals.
2. Become more aware of your immediate response to stressors that maybe reflected in negative thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.
  - Reframe your responses towards positive adaptive thoughts, beliefs, feelings and behaviors; and consider the way of wisdom if it is a problem solving or acceptance situation.

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, Courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.*

## COMMON STRESS WARNING SIGNALS

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### Physical Symptoms

Headaches	Back pain
Indigestion	Sleep difficulties
Stomachaches	Restlessness
Sweaty palms	Dizziness
Tight neck, shoulders	Tiredness
Racing heart	Ringings in ears

### Emotional Symptoms

Crying	Edginess - ready to explode
Nervousness, anxiety	Feeling powerless to change things
Boredom - no meaning to things	Anger or Loneliness
Easily upset	Unhappiness for no reason
Overwhelming sense of pressure	

### Cognitive Symptoms (Automatic Thoughts)

Trouble thinking clearly	Inability to make decision
Forgetfulness	Thoughts of running away
Lack of creativity	Constant worry
Memory loss	Loss of sense of humor

### Behavioral Symptoms

Excess smoking	Grinding of teeth at night
Bossiness	Overuse of Alcohol
Compulsive gum chewing	Compulsive Eating
Attitude critical of others	Inability to get things done

### Relational or Spiritual Symptoms

Isolating oneself	Impatience
Feeling a loss	Questioning the meaning of life or suffering
Loss of what gave comfort, and strength before	
Feeling hopeless or despair hope	

## COGNITIVE REAPPRAISAL EXERCISE

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Stress is a signal that change is needed, and our body lets us know it before we are fully aware.

Jot down a stressful event and then list some of your Stress Responses: Physical Signs (Sensations), Behaviors, Emotions/Feelings, and Automatic Thoughts you had as a result.

Under the Automatic Thoughts/ Conditioned Beliefs section notice if your thoughts focused on what you don't want or did not serve you well, (thoughts are maladaptive if they do not serve you well).

### TWO APPROACHES

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- **Problem-solving** is used with stressors you can positively influence to mitigate or eliminate.
  - For example, if you are not getting enough sleep, you alter the situation with strategies that can help you improve your sleep habits.
  - If your diet is unhealthy, you can take steps to improve it.
- **Acceptance** is used with stressors with which you have little or no influence.
  - For example, being extra tall in stature. Nothing you do will change. First is to accept and then find a positive meaning in it.
  - “Milking the situation for meaning,” leads to acceptance. To do this, you would ask yourself:
    - *How has this experience changed me in a positive way?*
    - *What have I learned? (THE EXAMEN)*
    - *Are there others who have been able to make positive meaning from this?*

Sometimes, painful situations that are out of our control leave us feeling like we “could have done something” or “should have said something.” It is important to understand that acceptance is not about “giving up” or “giving in.” Rather, it is about finding a better adaptive response to a situation.

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.

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

Document Containing Links on the Research