

Mindfulness strategies to increase peace and calm in the New Year

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Focus of the webinar

- ❖ Talk about the concept of mindfulness and the hype behind it
- ❖ The impact of mindfulness on our brain and body
- ❖ Strategies to increase peace and calm in the New Year...and beyond

“Check-in”:

- ❖-- Do you often multi-task?
- ❖-- How many times during the day you are in the auto-pilot mode (doing things without realizing you are doing them)?
- ❖-- How many times do you actually sit down to enjoy a meal?
- ❖-- How much “self-care” do you indulge in? vs. taking care of others-
parents, partner, children, friends, pets, work etc.

Mindfulness

According to John Kabat- Zinn, Mindfulness is:

-- awareness

-- that arises through paying attention, on purpose,

--in the present moment,

--non –judgmentally.

Mindfulness

- ❖ Practice to keep yourself centered, grounded.
- ❖ It's a self-care practice

Exercise: Notice where you are, look around you and see and hear the sounds. Notice the computer color, screen, be aware of the chair you are sitting on, the texture etc. Give a hi-five to the person/s sitting next to you if there are any. Place a hand over your heart and feel the rhythm.

MBSR

Mindfulness based stress reduction course (MBSR) was founded in 1979 by Jon Kabat- Zinn at the University of Massachusetts Medical school - an 8 week Mindfulness based course.

Since it's founding in 1979, there are over 720 mindfulness based programs modeled on MSBR in hospitals, clinics and medical centers across the world (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). Thousands of people have since participated and benefited from it.

Mindful check-in (handout)

Benefits of mindfulness

Mindfulness...

- reduces stress,
- Better immune functioning,
- reduces chronic pain,
- lowers blood pressure, and helps people cope with varied mental and/or physical illnesses.
- increases attention, focus and other areas of the brain involved in executive functioning skills- such as planning, organizing etc.
- bumps up the academic performance and grades

Benefits of mindfulness

- A longer life! (Alidina, 2015) “Chromosomes in your cells have a cap on them called telomeres. More telomerase (telomerase protects telomeres) would mean a longer life. Mindfulness increases the amount of telomerase. This helps to effectively reduce or reverse the aging of the cells. So be mindful and look young and vibrant”!
- No more botox 😊

Benefits continued....

- Mindful eating
- Less anxiety
- Reduced anger
- Better relationships

**YOUR MIND IS A POWERFUL
THING. WHEN YOU FILL IT WITH
POSITIVE THOUGHTS, YOUR LIFE
WILL START TO CHANGE.**



➤ How can we get the above benefits?

.....With the help of our brain, since mind and brain are both are interconnected

Mindfulness and brain

❖ *How does mindfulness impact our brain?*



Mindfulness and brain

- ❖ Brain- extended nervous system throughout the body, we have learned more about the brain in the last 15 years.
- ❖ 100 billion neurons in the brain
- ❖ How we think, we feel; how we feel, we behave. All interconnected. Mind, body and brain.

Brain

- ❖ When we act on things again and again, repeat habits, neural pathways get stronger and stronger
- ❖ According to Hebb's axiom(2009), neurons that fire together wire together and dendrites increase in size and efficiency creating that strong pathway.
 - Rumination in depression- thinking the same thought over and over again continues to create that stronger neural pathway
- ❖ Mindfulness creates healthy pathways in the brain leading to more peace and calm

Dr. Siegel's model of the brain

- Dr. Dan Siegel is the professor of clinical psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine and Executive Director of the Mindsight Institute. He has written a number of books and studied and researched extensively on the connection between mindful awareness and the brain.
- Next slide will talk about the “hand model” and the beauty and simplicity of this model.

Mindfulness and brain



“Flipping your lid”



Importance of pre-frontal cortex

- ❖ Continues to develop much later in life- late 20's
- ❖ Most expensive part of your brain
- ❖ Takes care of attention, focus, organizing skills.

Office work

School work

Homework

Completing homework, Turning in homework

Amygdala

- ❖ Mindfulness practice reduces activity in Amygdala, which is central to switching on your stress response, hence your background level of stress is reduced.
- ❖ Fear center of the brain
- ❖ Dan Siegel states simply: fibres from upstairs brain go to the downstairs brain (palm of the hand) and squirt a substance (GABA) to the fear part to calm it down

Sympathetic overdrive/ Stress reaction

- ❖ Part of autonomic nervous system to help your body deal with stress-fight, flight or freeze syndrome during stress
- ❖ - Equivalent to a car's accelerator

- ❖ Parasympathetic nervous system- also called rest and digest.
- ❖ Calming and relaxing
- ❖ Putting on brakes

Exercise:

- Get up and stretch
- Mindfulness stretches (handout)



Mindfulness and academic performance

- Studies indicate that mindfulness increases attention, concentration, mood, well-being, memory etc.
- Neuroplasticity is the ability of the brain to change its structure and functioning.
- MRI studies, SPECT scans and EEG studies confirm the ability of mindfulness practices to change brain structure as well as its functioning. (Burdick, 2013).
- -Are there neural pathways that you would like to reinforce or eliminate? Could be peers, homework, playing on x-box or something else? In what ways do you feel stuck and would like to revisit that?

Exercise:

- Fold a piece of paper, then fold it again and again
- Unfold it and fold it again where it was already folded
- Is refolding faster and easier than in the first place when the paper was new?

So is it easier for the brain to think something new or the same thought? This is like moving information along a well-traveled path of neurons. Is it easier to learn something new or do something you have done before?

(Burdick, 2013)

Source: Buddhadoodles.com



Mindful way through anxiety

- Breathing prompts when anxiety creeps in- worry about the future.
- Reminding yourself to make a connection between what you are doing, thinking and feeling
- Bringing mindful awareness into what you are experiencing in the moment, being aware of your thoughts- whatever they might be- trying to control anxiety or push it away by distraction or drown it with other thoughts are natural. Being aware of these thoughts, noticing these thoughts with kindness and compassion is the first step towards being mindfully aware.

Exercise:

- Make a fist
- Tighten your fist
- Notice what happened?
- Now gently release your fist
- Notice what happened?

“I've had a lot of worries in my life, most of which never happened”-
Mark Twain

Mindful breathing

- ❖-- Gently breath in and out 3 times
- ❖-- Gently breath in and out 5 times

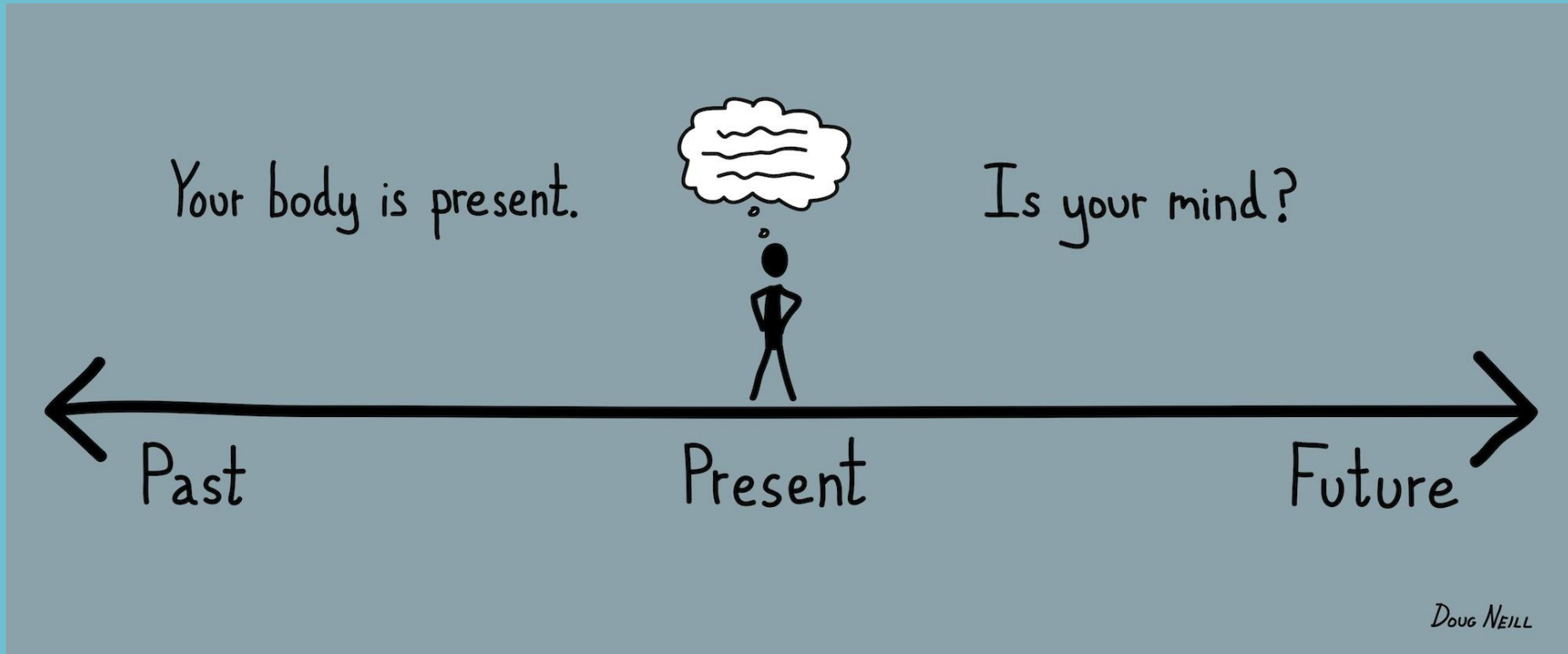
Breath with one hand on your heart and the other on your abdomen. With each breath, feel the abdomen moving up and down. It's like blowing bubbles- empty out all the air from the lungs and fill them up again. Notice with curiosity how your body feels with this exercise. You can find yourself a comfortable spot in your house, car, office or wherever you are at this moment to just briefly allow yourself to be in the moment with your breathing. Feel at one with your breath.

Source: Buddhadoodles.com



Being in the moment

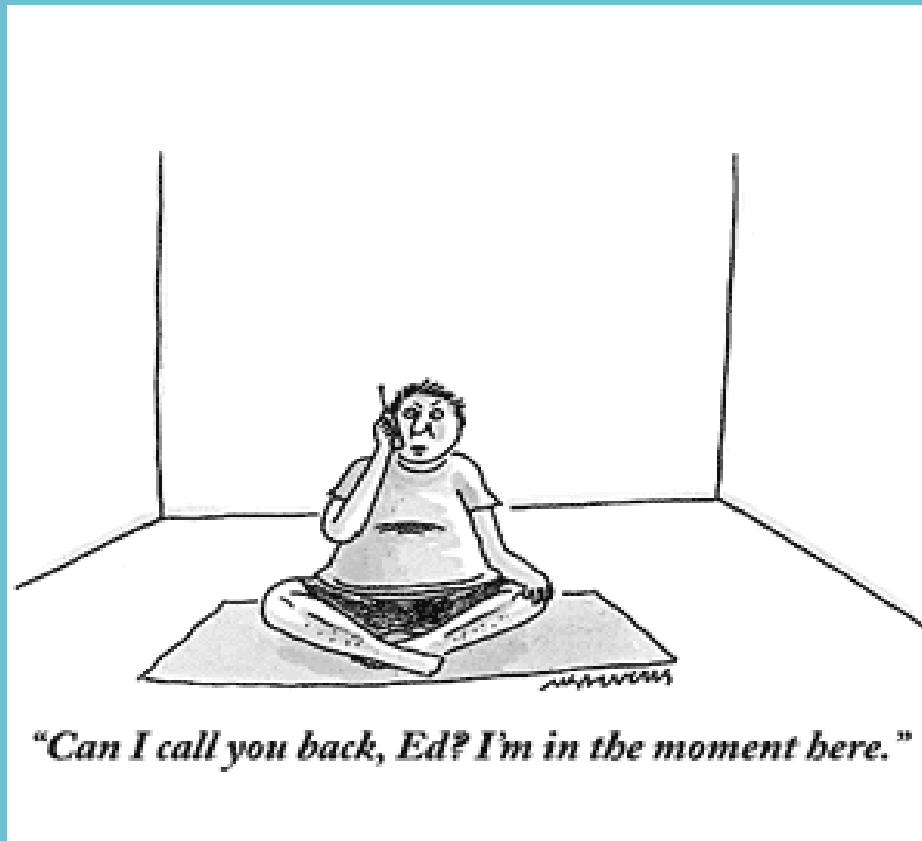
Source: Dough Neill



“To be”

- ❖ Be aware of yourself when you function in your auto-pilot mode
- ❖ Be aware that you are attempting to multi-task 😊
- ❖ Check and tell yourself: Let me be in this moment.

Source: <http://srjourneyintomindfulness.blogspot.com/>



Mindfulness Bell

- Legendary Vietnamese master Thich Nhat Hahn recommends that families use the mindfulness bell to signal that it's time to take a brief break from whatever they are doing and check their breathing.
- According to Greenland(2010), you can get your child's attention without bellowing above the din of television, radio or other household noise
- You might empower your kids or spouse to ring the mindfulness bell whenever they would like the entire family to pause and reflect.

<http://www.mindfulnessdc.org/bell/index.html>

Quick ways to inculcate peace and calm

- Hug a day
- Hug breathing- Hug and breath with your friend/partner/child
- Take a walk, be present and follow your breath
- Close your eyes and imagine yourself in your favorite place.
-Or try Tucker the turtle breathing 😊

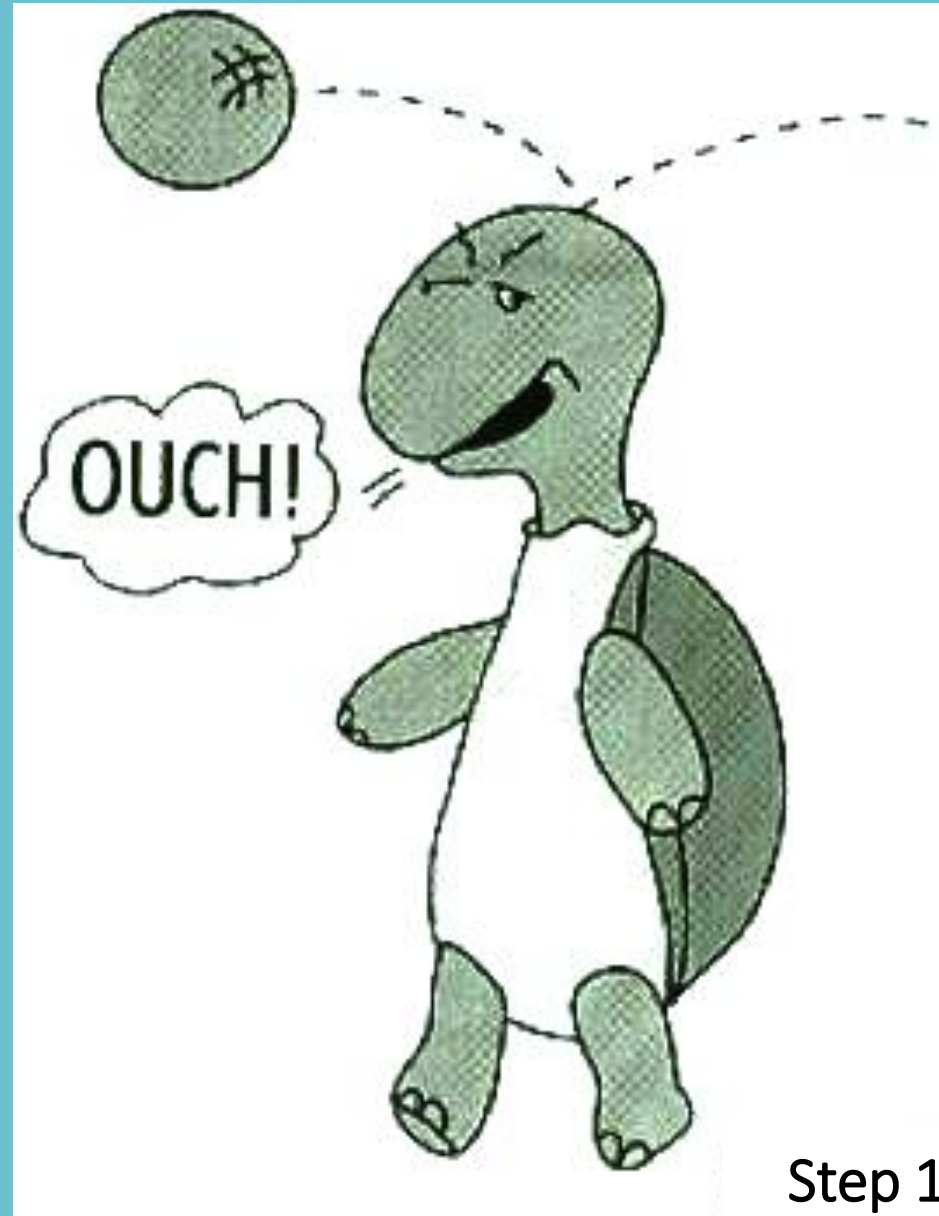
Tucker the turtle breathing

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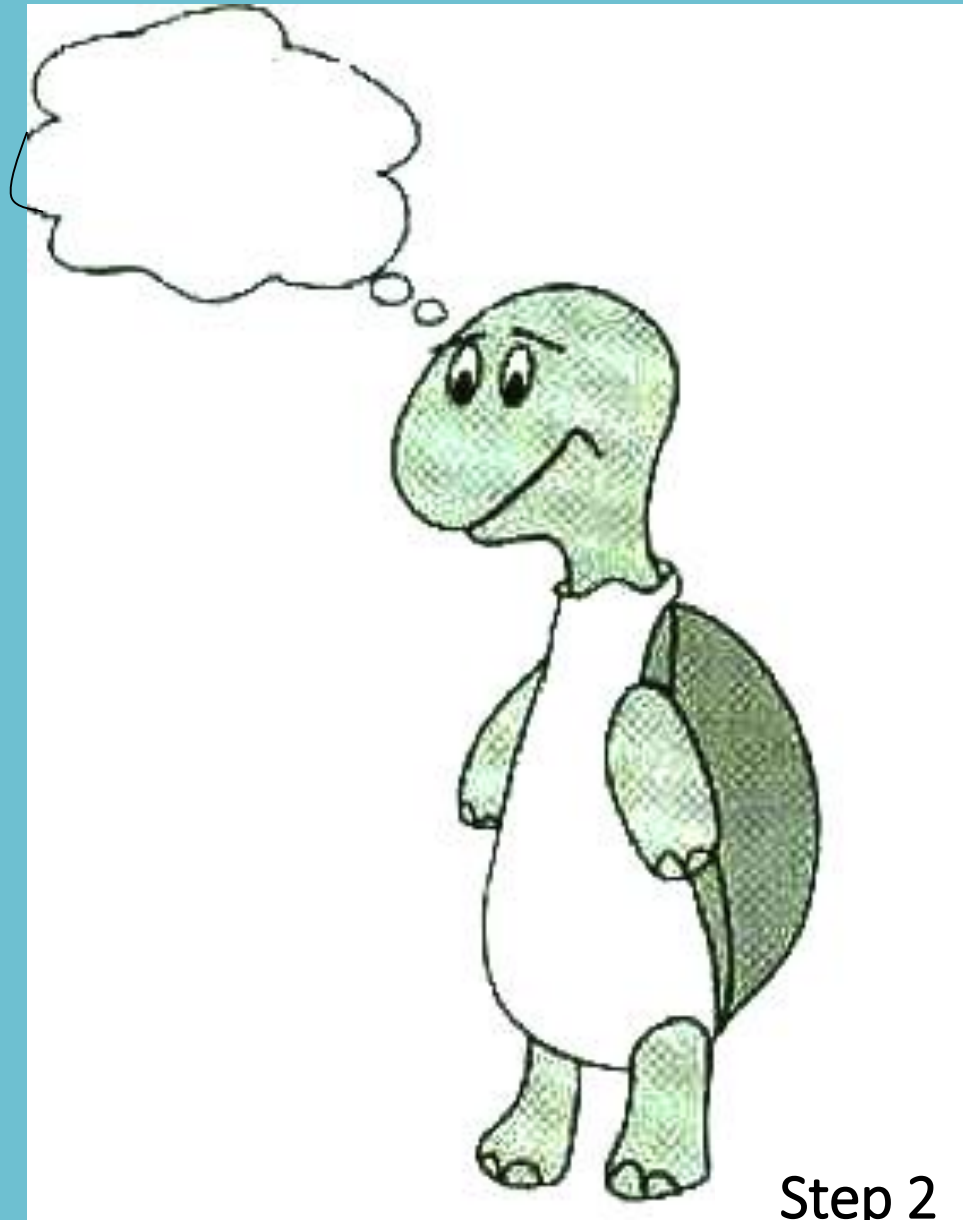
Works great with children, adolescents and adults!

(Source: <https://teachusomething.wordpress.com/tag/tucker-the-turtle/>)





Step 1



Step 2

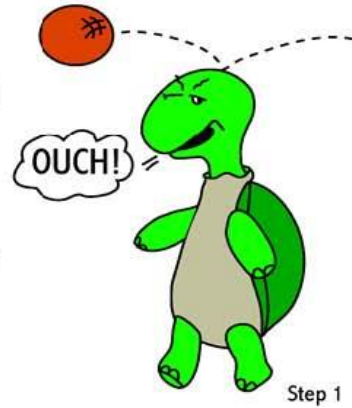


Step 3

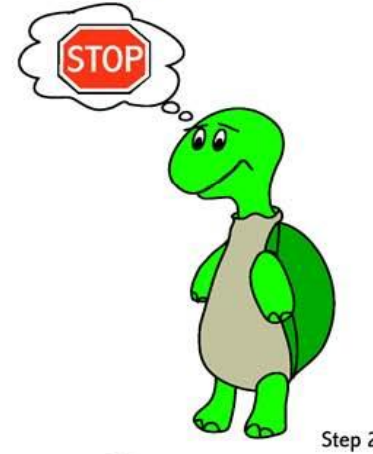


Turtle Technique

**Recognize
that you
feel angry.**



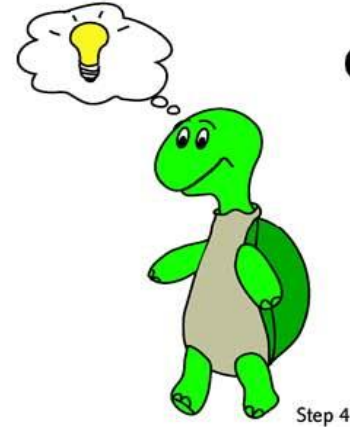
**“Think”
Stop.**



**Go into shell.
Take 3
deep
breathes.
And think
calm,
coping
thoughts.**



**Come out of
shell
when
calm and
thinking
of a
solution.**



What did the turtle do?

- Provided himself space to work with and was mindfully responding vs. mindlessly reacting
- “Between stimulus and response there’s a space. In that space is our power to chose our response. In our response, lies our growth and freedom.”
Victor Frankl
- That space- transferred to the world of mindfulness is the NOW moment. The present.

The NOW moment

- “Response flexibility” or the “Power of pause”
- “He who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead; his eyes are closed”. Albert Einstein
- Sum it up: Pause before you respond!

“About to moment”

Meditation teacher Joseph Goldstein talks about the “About to moment” when you are ready to act in the moment.

Kids reflect on a funny feeling when they are about to do something that is not approved by the caregiver. By noticing the feeling, they can choose to pause in the moment and can choose to act differently. (Greenland, 2010)

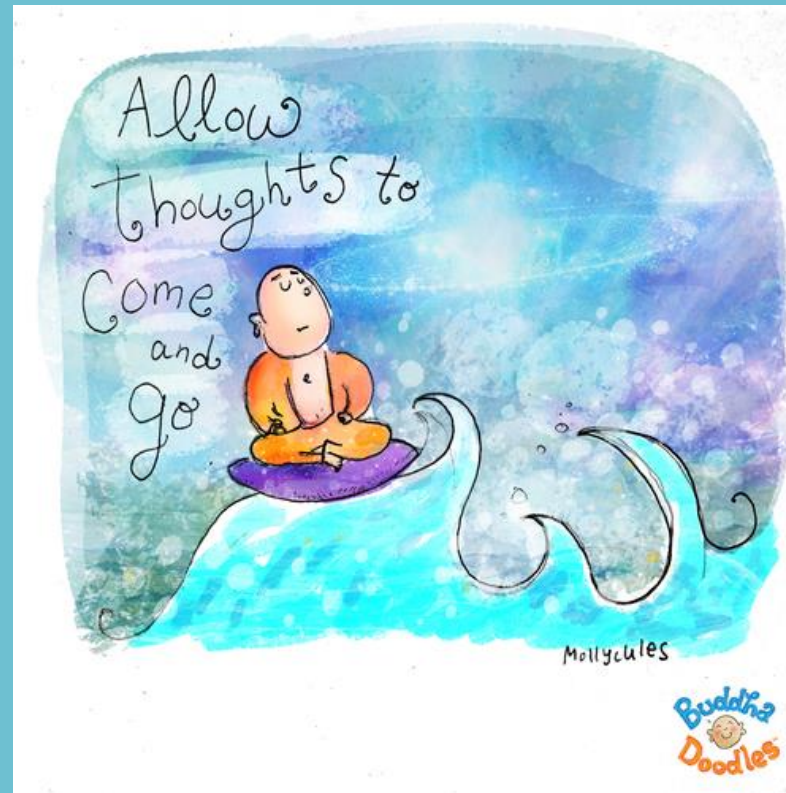
Able to self-regulate yourself. Able to successfully create neural pathways that encourage you to pause, reflect and be in the moment.

Exercise

- 3 minute breathing space (handout)



Source: Buddhadoodles.com



How did you feel?

Brain hygiene

- Exercise – voluntary, aerobic. Dr. Dan Siegel points out that you have to *choose* to do exercise. It was found out that rats that have chosen to run vs. sticking out rats on a wheel and making them run had no increase in neuroplasticity. However, rats that had chosen to run had a massive increase in Neuroplasticity.
- Good Sleep- helps consolidate our learning.
- Nutrition- Eat well and keep yourself hydrated.

Smile

❖ Practice saying this to yourself- “Breathing in, I calm my body, breathing out, I smile” (Thich Nhat Hahn). Even if you don’t feel like smiling, just the thought of it might bring in a half smile, which has been shown by other researchers (Marsha Linehan) that it improves mood. (Goldstein, 2012)

Figure out your priorities

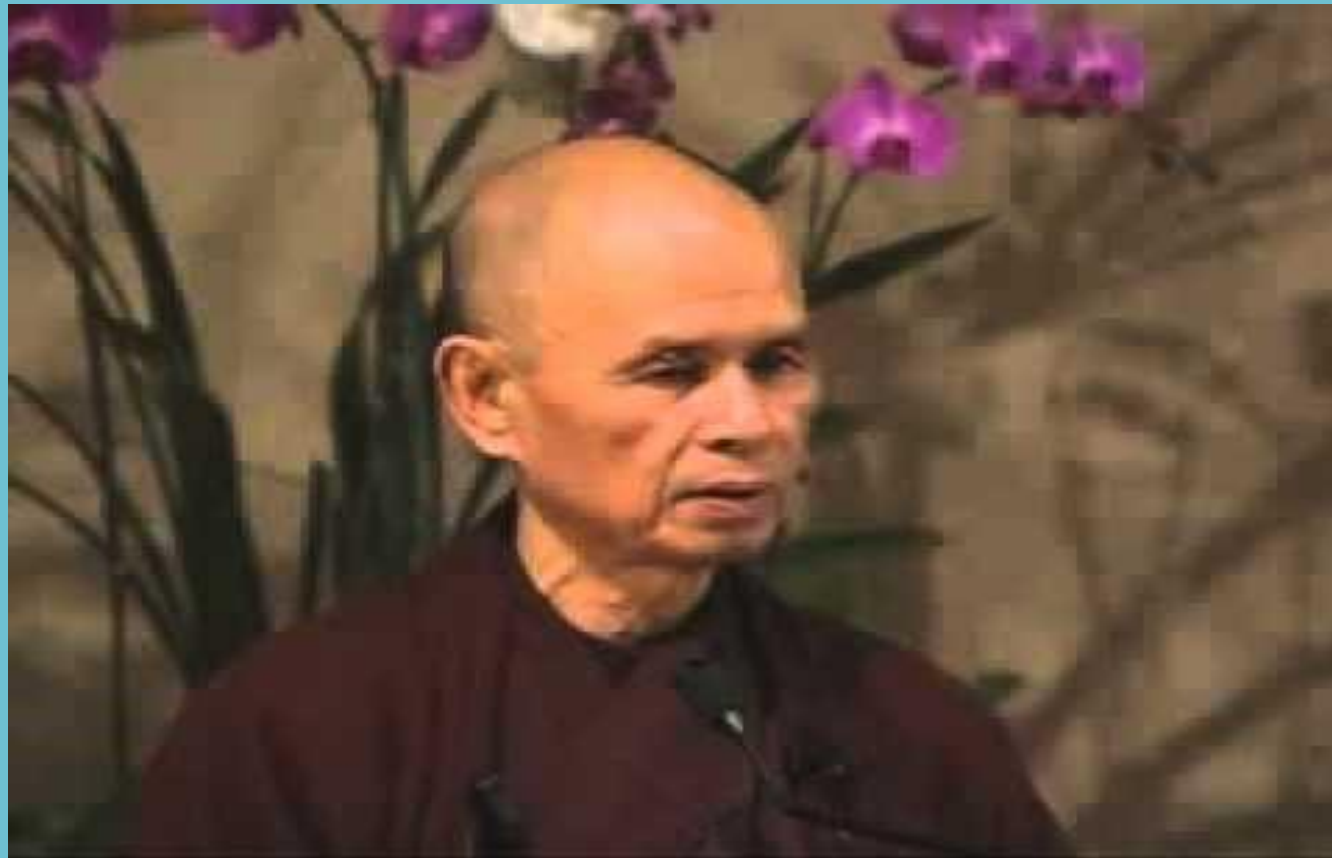
Jar exercise

Paying attention to the things that you value in life is fundamental to your happiness!

Validation

- Letting yourself know that you are in the here and now, paying attention to yourself, your needs, your values and that you are doing a good job of it.
- Self-validation is crucial in moments of self-doubt
- Keep your cup full, honor yourself, put yourself first, stop the crazy mind chatter in your head , your being here itself is such a miraculous thing- that your real job is to honor that. There are no such things as failures, your losses are there to wake you up and move you towards your goal.

4 mins of Mindfulness from Thich Nhat Hahn



Thich Naht Hahn's 4 step formula for happiness in relationships

In an interview with Oprah, the legendary monk, as Oprah calls him shared a 4 step formula for peace and happiness:

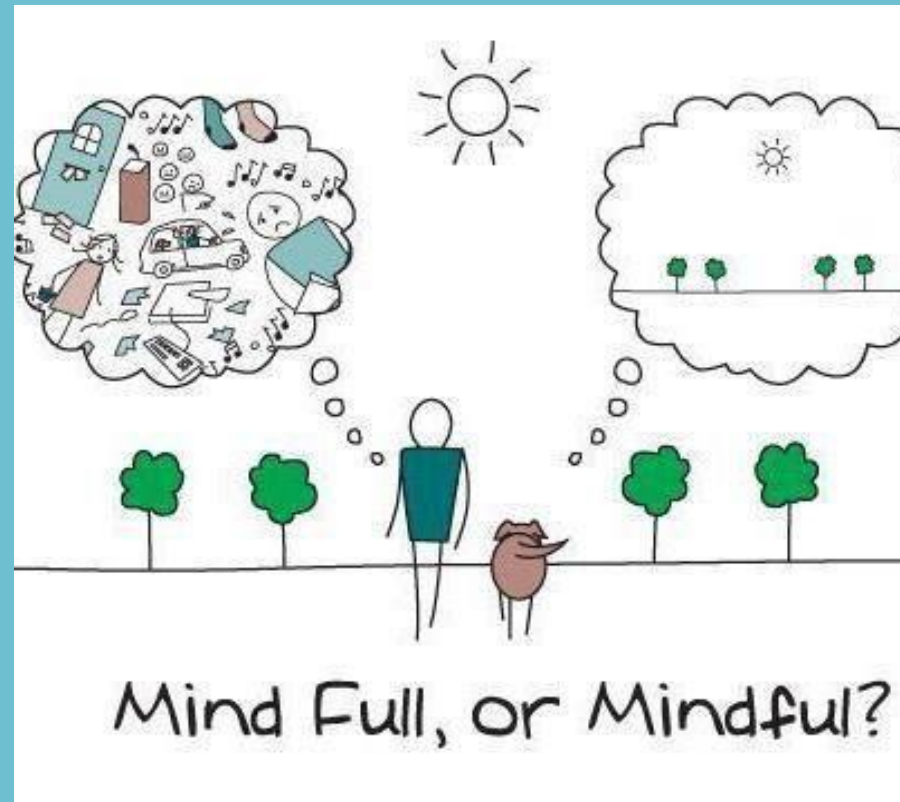
- Darling, I'm here: Acknowledge your presence to your beloved
- Darling, I know you are there and I'm so happy (because you are truly there, to be recognized as existing)
- Darling, I know you suffer, that's why I am here for you
- When you have been hurt by your loved one- Darling, I suffer, I am trying my best to practice, please help me.

To sum up....

Mindfulness strategies, breathing, staying in the present brings about calmness, peace, compassion, empathy and a host of other physical and mental benefits. It increases your attention, focus, considerably reduces stress and your reactivity to situations and contexts. It helps you to fully live and enjoy each day and each moment!

Be in the moment

(Source: <https://www.uhs.umich.edu/mindfulness>)



Phrases

May I be safe and protected from inner and outer harm

May I be truly happy and deeply peaceful

May I live my life with ease

May I have kindness, love and compassion for myself

May I love myself completely, just the way I am

May I be free

(Goldstein, 2012)



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