

Certificate in Meditation Teaching and Holistic Human Development.

Module Four Tools for Healing

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- Journaling- gratitude journaling and worry time
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ACTIVITY

Please continue to practice the muscle relaxation exercise and Zen Meditation every day. The personal experience you gain through this practice will be immeasurable to you when it comes to instructing other people about managing stress and teaching Meditation.

Journaling - Gratitude Journal

For many people a victim mentality and many years of focusing on the negative, make positive thinking a skill that requires learning. The Gratitude Journal assists the mind to recognise and centre on the positive aspects of our lives that are real and in the here and now.

Some popular methods of developing positive thinking skills require a 'fake it till you make it' approach where the person visualises themselves already having the ideal situation when their reality is far from it. For example, a person who is having financial difficulty might picture themselves as already wealthy despite the fact, in reality, they are struggling to find the rent money.

These methods do have their advantages because they serve to train the mind to accept this pretended reality is a possibility. It helps to introduce emotions and thoughts that open the person up to the possibility of experiencing this situation in real life where they previously have been unable to even comprehend what the desired situation would feel like and this does promote feelings of optimism.

However, for many people, especially those with little knowledge or experience of the power of positive thought, this method can feel silly and unrealistic. This type of creative visualisation is better used as a back up to Gratitude Journaling to assist in opening the mind to new possibilities rather than for the development of positive mind sets.

Gratitude Journaling focuses on what is already good in a person's life right now. The system requires a note book and pen and for the person to make entries into the journal at least once a day. The entry is simply a list of all the things, in the person's life, which they are grateful for.

For some people, who are heavily entrenched in negative thought processes, this can be quite difficult. In some cases, it is necessary to start off small and get bigger as the habit of focusing on the positive develops. On the first attempt we might ask a client to simply make 4 or 5 entries each day. Each entry should begin with *I am grateful for....* this may be followed with my good health, or that I have a great job, or the love of my dog; anything the person considers a good thing in their lives.

We can also suggest the person just keeps making entries until they run out of things to list and it is acceptable to list the same things every day. For example, if the person is grateful for their relationship with a particular person they might list that every day. As time passes, recognising positives in their own life will become easier and the list will begin to grow.

Often gratitude lists start out reflecting very internalised feelings and personal situations but over time the lists expand to encompass the outer world.

Through using this method every day, a person who struggled to find anything to feel good about in their lives will often start feeling grateful for living in a free country or the birds in the trees outside their window. This development is an indication that the habit of focusing on positives, instead of negatives, is forming.

The second part of using gratitude journaling to develop positive mind sets is to reflect on the entries made in the journal. Throughout the day we ask people to check their emotional barometer. This simply requires them to consider what emotions they are feeling in that moment. If they recognise negative feelings (e.g. anger, sadness, loneliness, etc.) their emotional barometer is telling them they are functioning from a negative mind set.

This method for switching across to a positive mindset simply requires them to take a moment to start reflecting on the things they are grateful for. If convenient they may be able to spend some time flicking through past entries in their gratitude journal, as a reminder of all the good in their lives. Or they may just take a quiet minute to make a mental list of the things they feel are good in their lives right there and then.

This method of developing positive thinking skills can be a struggle for some while others get the hang of it and see enormous benefits very quickly.

Focusing on the positive is not about ignoring problems that are real and need fixing. However, if worry fixed anything no one would ever need to come up with a solution to any problem ever again. We could all just sit and worry until the problems magically vanished! There is a difference between recognising and working toward resolving a problem and worrying about problems.

Worry is negative, unproductive and unhealthy. Developing a positive mindset requires us to learn to spend **the majority of our time** focusing on the positive. Because the reality of negative situations, problems and issues that need to be overcome is a very real one, our lives would soon fall into chaos if we simply refused to think about our problems at all.

We are not trying to create a sugar-coated world of denial here, we are working on developing optimism and reducing worry and stress.

When we have a positive mindset for the majority of the time (when we are optimistic) our minds are clearer, and we are better able to function more 'in the now'. Therefore, we are better equipped to deal with problem solving in a proactive rather than a reactive manner.

Worry Time

The third aspect of the Gratitude Journal method for developing positive mindsets is to allocate 15 minutes every day to problem solving. The method requires us to sit down with a note book (a separate book from the gratitude journal - as that is dedicated only to positives) and work through our worries.

The problem-solving sessions begins with us making a list of the things we might worry about. For example, we might be having relationship difficulties with a loved one and so we would put this on the list of problems along with any other worries.

During this 15-minute session we go over the things we are worried about and try to come up with ideas to solve them. Problems that are worried over all day sabotage our ability to enjoy the rest of our lives, they can take us over. They don't get solved because we are drowning in them and get stuck in a negative mindset.

However, when our minds are clear, positive and relaxed we are in a far greater position to come up with innovative solutions to some of our problems.

During the day (all times outside *worry time*), as soon as we recognise ourselves worrying about a problem, we simply delegate it to *worry time*. If there is nothing we can do about it right then, we choose to deal with it later, in the appropriate time space. If it is a new worry, we could make a note of it and decide to address it during our next worry time session. Similarly, if we have come up with an idea regarding solving a worry we could make a note of it and decide to address it in its delegated time slot.

Once the worry has been acknowledged, noted (either mentally or on paper) we switch the worry off by consciously revising the things we are grateful for. This revision of gratitude can almost become a personal mantra and in many ways is a form of Meditation. We are blocking out all thought, other than those that involve the things in our lives we are happy about.

Teachers Note:

We can sit and postulate the theory of positive mindsets, hypothesise its benefits and spout psychology all the day long, but people who attend your classes want to be given tools they can utilize immediately and incorporate easily into their lives. They want recognisable results faster than quickly.

Summary of the Gratitude Journaling method for developing positive mindsets

1. Begin to keep a journal and make entries into the journal every day, listing all the things you are grateful for in your life in the now.
2. Develop the habit of connecting with your emotions at intervals throughout the day. When you become aware of negative emotions or when you find yourself entertaining

worrying thoughts, make a note (either mentally or on paper) to address the worry in its appropriate time space (worry time.) Then begin to focus on the things you are grateful for in your life, either from memory or by reading through past entries in your gratitude journal.

While you think about the things you are grateful for, allow yourself to connect with the emotions that these thoughts cause you to experience. Name these emotions (e.g. peace, love, excitement, etc.). Doing this will assist you to identify with, and draw on, positive emotions much more easily.

3. Set 15 minutes to half an hour aside each day to 'worry'. During this time use a note book to list the things that cause you worry and problems that need solving. You may wish to designate one page to each problem and then use that page to work specifically on that problem.

It is important to remember that most problems do not need to be solved immediately and often cannot be anyway. When we allow ourselves to 'sit with a problem', acknowledging that we are working on it and do not need to solve it right away we take the pressure off ourselves and this opens our minds to clearer thoughts and greater problem solving capabilities, so by allowing ourselves time to work on the problem, we will usually find the solution faster. See the section below on Solution Finding for tools to use during worry time.

ACTIVITY

Begin keeping a Gratitude Journal for yourself.

NOTE: *People will have varying times available during their day to fit journaling and worry time into and it is important that each person practices these exercises at a time that does not impose on their normal lives. However, it is best if Gratitude Journaling follows closely behind worry time. This will assist the person to switch from being absorbed in problems to focusing on the positives in their life.*

Teachers Note:

The use of the label 'worry time' may seem to be a negative term and we might consider calling it something more positive like solution finding time. However, we are working with minds that are already used to identifying with certain terms and while our goal is to teach new tools that develop the skills our clients require to live with greater positivity and control over their own bodies, minds and lives as a whole, we will see greater results if we do not try to introduce new language at the same time or appear to be trivialising the power of positive thought by sugar coating our terminology.

When we worry, we worry and the skill we are teaching here is how to take control of worrying and direct it into positive results rather than being overrun with worrying thoughts.

SOLUTION FINDING

How to use worry time

Each problem to be solved is listed, then broken down to its essence through a stepping down process.

Below is an example of a solution finding session for a hypothetical situation:

James has a 12-year-old son, Ryan, who is not doing his homework and therefore, is starting to fall behind at school. James is really concerned about this because he doesn't want his son to fail school and end up in a dead-end job. This is affecting James's relationship with his son, who feels James is always nagging him about his homework. Now James is really worrying about losing the ability to guide his son into his teenage years.

Step 1: Look for the cause of the problem

Step 2: Consider possible solutions (brainstorm)

Step 3: Choose the best solution

Step 4: Plan to implement the program

STEP 1:

This first step can take some very objective thinking and detachment. It is important that the **true cause** of the problem is recognised. In this case we will say that Ryan spends a lot of time playing computer games and talking to friends online. James identifies these things as distracting Ryan from doing his homework.

STEP 2:

In the first instance brainstorming requires the free flow of ideas without judgement or exploration. Ideas should be jotted down on paper and it is fine to include the ridiculous (in fact this is desirable as it helps the mind to clear out obstacles through expression) we don't have to use every idea that pops up.

At the end of the brainstorming session when no more ideas are surfacing we go through the list and cross out those that are not workable, sensible or plausible.

NOTE: When brainstorming with other people, one person should be the note taker and everyone else speaks out their ideas. It is essential that no one is ridiculed or judged for any idea they put forward, even if it seems ludicrous at the time. Everyone must be free to express their ideas without fear. At the end, the group simply looks for the most workable ideas and circles those.

STEP 3:

After the brainstorming session, at least one workable solution should have been noted. In this example we will say it is that James has decided that Ryan is not allowed to turn on the computer until his homework is finished. He has decided to take a strict approach now, in his sons best interest, long term.

STEP 4:

For this example, the planning to put in place the solution seems quite straight forward. We would simply tell Ryan the new plan. Maybe we would need to have a discussion and get an agreement or negotiate some aspects of the solution.

However, in some cases, there may be a series of steps required to reach the solution. If the solution requires a detailed course of action, the person may need to break it down into workable steps and plan to do one thing toward reaching the solution each day rather than becoming daunted by trying to attack the whole thing at once (which can cause procrastination). One step at a time can often seem far more achievable.

Positive Thinking Skills

- Journaling
- Meditation
- Muscle relaxation exercises
- Stress management diary
- Affirmations
- Positive self-image

The development of positive thinking skills requires optimism. This does not mean becoming over idealistic or ignoring reality. However, it is important to put the negative influences of the world outside into perspective.

Journaling

A daily routine where we use a Gratitude Journal in combination with Worry Time and positive reflection on the things we view as good in our lives, trains our minds to isolate

worry and develops the habit of choosing positive thought without neglecting unpleasant issues in our lives, that we do need to eventually eliminate.

Meditation

Incorporating Meditation into our daily lives also teaches our minds to be centred and calm. It trains us to have control over our thinking and enables us to eliminate the chatter of thought that typically leads us into negative thinking.

The more we exercise control over our minds through Meditation, and the more we choose to reflect on the positive aspects of our lives, the faster the habit of thinking positively develops, in much the same way as a bicep muscle will develop and become stronger with regular weight lifting.

When our minds are calm and quiet, as a matter of normality and we are mostly focused on positive (grateful) thoughts, our brains (and our bodies) are in better condition to cope with stressful situations, problems and unexpected challenges when they do arise.

Muscle relaxation exercise

Through practicing muscle relaxation exercises we train our brains to recognise the first symptoms of stress (flight-or-flight response) and also how to release muscle tension upon our command.

This ability allows us to minimise the effects of stress when it does arise and helps us to feel calmer, more in control and better equipped to deal with the situation. Because we are not experiencing a full-blown fight-or-flight response, our thinking remains clearer and we are better able to respond (act rather than re-act.)

Stress management diary

When we begin to recognise the situations in our lives which cause us to respond with a stress reflex (fight-or-flight response) and look at ways we can either eliminate or at least minimise those stress triggers, we develop problem solving skills that build up a habit of confidence. We begin to feel more powerful within our lives and begin to focus more on choice and less on feeling like a victim in our own lives.

When new stressful situations present themselves, our minds are better equipped to deal with them. We have created the positive mindset of knowing we are capable of doing something about them.

Affirmations

Affirmations are arguably the most useful tool available to us in developing positive thinking skills. We can see the foundations of Affirmations in many familiar practices from psychology to religion in various forms. Some of these forms include chanting, prayer and hypnosis.

Affirmations are statements made by the conscious mind which are directed at the subconscious mind. In many ways it is how our intelligent mind can communicate with our primitive mind.

As most of the information we've ever absorbed into our subconscious has come to us in words, we are able to modify that information with new words.

Most people use negative affirmations alarmingly often. Habitually when people make mistakes they will reprimand themselves verbally with harsh words, calling themselves 'idiot' for example. Often the harsh words we say out loud to ourselves are the same harsh words spoken to us in the past that have formed our negative or erroneous subconscious beliefs about ourselves.

Why we use Affirmations

Affirmations can be used to reprogram useless, erroneous and unproductive subconscious (or even conscious) belief systems and install new, more positive and useful belief systems. They are self-empowering, self-governed, free and always available to us. Most importantly Affirmations work quickly and effectively.

When we use Affirmations

Affirmations can be (and should be) used at any time you do not need to be thinking of something else. The use of affirmations while you do 'auto pilot' tasks, like washing dishes, not only serves to improve your positive thinking skills by developing positive belief systems, it also helps you avoid slipping into negative brain chatter at times when your intelligence is not fully required.

How we use Affirmations

While there is some benefit in thinking Affirmations, they are most effective when they are spoken aloud. This is because most of the information programmed into our subconscious minds was spoken aloud to us at some stage in the past and unless it was a mighty powerful statement or a very disturbing experience, it was probably spoken to us repetitively.

We can overwrite this information by repeating statements aloud that contradict the old belief system.

Creating posters that are attractive to look at and putting them in places where you will see them often (like toilet walls, above your sink, on your bedroom wall, the sun visor in your car, etc) will also help to install the required belief system into your subconscious mind.

Creating Affirmations

It is essential that Affirmations are positive statements that are rhythmic and easy to say. Our brains remember, and best respond to, melodic sounds and words we like.

Example: Let's say we are having a problem with a loved one and want to create an Affirmation that will provide us with a positive belief about the way we communicate with that person.

Incorrect example: John and I don't argue all the time

This is a negative affirmation. The subconscious mind is primitive and will not absorb words that are nonessential to the sentence. It may only absorb "John I argue all time".

It is also important that we use affirmations which are about ourselves and do not focus on changing the behaviour of other people.

Correct example: I am loving and peaceful – I communicate easily with warmth and joy.

This is a positive affirmation. This affirmation makes a statement about how we view ourselves and our subconscious will adapt its programming to adjust to this new belief. You will begin to believe that you really are loving and peaceful and that you communicate easily with warmth and joy.

As a result, you will begin to behave in ways that radiate this belief system out towards the people you are coming into contact with and they will be more likely to respond to you in a more communicative way.

Teachers Note:

For some people creating their own affirmations is very difficult and they will do better if they are offered a list of 'ready-made' affirmations to select from.

ACTIVITY

Please complete the Affirmations Worksheet and submit it with your course work submission,

Positive Self-image

Developing a positive self-image builds confidence and allows us to feel comfortable with who we are and what we are doing with our lives.

This positive sense of self assists in reducing reactive behaviour and negative thinking patterns stored in our subconscious minds. In developing positive self-esteem, we must first examine the belief patterns we have about ourselves. When we recognise erroneous mental programming, we can then choose to replace these ideas with new, positive beliefs.

As we have mentioned previously, a great deal of 'survival information' is stored in the subconscious mind and much of this information forms our self-image.

Most of the information regarding ourselves on a subconscious level is erroneous and we are often completely unaware of it on a conscious level. The people and situations responsible for installing the erroneous programs are unimportant beyond the initial stage of recognition.

This is because most of the programming was done when we were very young by people who were also operating from erroneous programs, instilled in them from their own childhoods and so on and so on.

Choosing to place blame for 'who did what' to us in the past only creates bitterness and more negative issues to deal with. The goal is to recognise the negative programming, see it as useless, choose new positive mindsets and move forward.

Teachers Note:

For some of your clients, moving past blaming others for what they perceive as 'what was done to them' in the past will be difficult; particularly as feeling victimised is, in itself, a subconscious mindset developed through a sense of feeling powerless. Many people have learned to look to others to be 'saved' and by blaming others for our current situation (being a victim) we relieve ourselves of responsibility for our own situations.

The end result of this type of mindset is disempowering and restricts us from being able to take control of our own lives.

Overcoming a victim mentality allows us to become self-empowered to make choices and take control of our own lives. In this situation your client may need to do some exploration into their feelings with a view of forgiveness.

ACTIVITY

Please complete the Self-image quiz. This task is meant to be completed quickly without thinking about it. Do not read through it first. Just answer the questions as fast as possible.

Tools for Developing Positive Self-Image

Subconscious self-image presents itself in behaviour that is often self-destructive and contrary to the conscious choices we would intelligently make for ourselves. Many conventional counselling styles attempt to isolate these negative self-image programs in order to replace them with more positive (and more accurate) beliefs.

This process is difficult and time consuming as they are hidden in the unexplored and infinite abyss of the subconscious mind. These methods are also more likely to require a rehashing of past traumas that can lead to becoming entrenched in a victim mentality.

Participating in a quick self-image quiz provides us with an often-surprising piece of insight into some of our own subconscious beliefs about ourselves and is intended as a basis for choosing new, more positive mindsets rather than as a means to explore the existing negative beliefs.

Many schools of psychology recognise low self-esteem (or negative self-image) as the root cause of unhappiness in most people. By improving our self-image, we gain a tool that will assist us to change many aspects of our lives and not only think more positively about ourselves but about our lives in general and the world we live in.

A fast and effective method for the development of positive self-image is for a person to make a list of things they wish were true about themselves; in many ways a wish-list of aspirations for their own character.

In one column, on a piece of paper, we write all the things we wish were true about ourselves. For example:

- I wish I was more relaxed.
- I wish I could communicate more effectively.
- I wish I was more loveable.

Then, in a column beside the wish list, add a corresponding affirmation, for example:

Desired personality: I wish I was more loveable

Affirmation: I am loving and loveable. My life overflows with love.

The following tools are useful in assisting us to decide on new self-image beliefs:

1. Self-image quiz - reveals some of our erroneous belief patterns.
2. Brainstorming - as a group and independently.
3. Stress management diary - looking at repetitive stress triggers.

4. Worry time - Looking at problems that may be associated with self-image, e.g. loneliness = I wish I had more friends = Affirmation: I am sociable and friendly, my life is full of wonderful people who I love to be with and who love spending time with me.

This method of choosing new beliefs about our self-image and installing them into our subconscious minds, through the self-hypnotic use of Affirmations, rather than spending too much time exploring existing negative patterns, is comparable to creating new programs on our computers and using them to overwrite old useless programs. We don't always have to know what the old programs are or how they came to be there in order to fix them.

Media Block

The average person has a fair amount of normal stress to cope with in their everyday lives, balancing home life (including chores,) relationships (family, loved ones, partners, friendships, colleagues, etc.) health, finances, work, social and community commitments and a range of personal issues.

In our modern world we are also bombarded with a barrage of stressors from the outside world that in reality, do not need to directly affect our own lives. This is mostly through the media.

We hear endless bad news, read gossip and watch TV where fictional people pretend to have seemingly disastrous interactions with other make-believe people!

Entertainment is a great thing, but we need to seriously consider if the time we spend being passively entertained is doing us good or bad

Do we watch soaps through habit, read upsetting news stories that don't directly affect us but influence our way of perceiving the world?

Or, do we choose to spend our time participating in activities that make us feel better and be entertained in ways that improve our level of happiness, educate us and improve our lives in some way.

CHALLENGE!

See if you can spend one-week media free. Try not to read the newspapers or tabloid magazines. Avoid commercial television and when you do read a book or watch a movie, ask yourself if you feel the experience is making you feel better and improving your quality of life or not.

Foundations of Mind Body Medicine

Mind-Body Medicine works on the theory that all forms of disease (*dis-ease*) in the body are caused and can therefore be cured in the mind.

Mind-Body Medicine focuses attention on the role of the Mind-Body connection in illness and in health.

The essential remedial aim is to promote bodily health and healing by the use of the mind and through the Mind-Body relationship.

The clinical science behind how Mind-Body Medicine works is covered in detail in the two IMTTA Postgraduate courses; Autonomic Nervous System Realignment and Brain-Body Medicine. It involves the neurochemicals released into our bodies, when we experience different emotions, and how those neurochemicals effect our cells.

The role of Meditation in the treatment and prevention of disease has been recognised by the Australian Medical Association and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.

In around the 17th century, there was a need for separation between the areas of mind and body within Western cultures. This was to allow medical science the freedom to explore and experiment with the physical body while the church maintained its dominance over the mind.

While this separation has allowed enormous advances in the understanding of the nature and treatment of diseases (in a totally physical sense), at the same time it has caused limitations because it has produced the reliance, of Western medicine, on technology and it has separated the functions of the mind from the body in what is known as 'body-mind dualism'.

Over the last 30 years, researchers have looked to alternative and complementary medicine to explore the connections between mind and body. Researchers have found that most traditional systems of medicine appreciate and incorporate the powerful relationship between the mind and the body into their practice.

Thus, scientists have developed a new discipline, called (1) psychoneuroimmunology, which interlinks psychological, autonomic, immune, and nervous system performance. Current mind/body medicine extends beyond psychoneuroimmunology to include the fields of psychology and physics in a new 'science of consciousness', which recognises energy as the underlying pattern of the universe.

This is comparable to many Eastern philosophies, such as (2) Ayurveda and Tibetan medicine that see human beings as part of an interconnected, universal energy field.

Healing, using Mind-Body medicine, usually begins by promoting physical and mental relaxation and developing better ways of coping with stress, depression and anxiety. A variety of methods may be used, including biofeedback, body psychotherapy, hypnotherapy, and Meditation.

Mind-Body medicine works on the acknowledgment that a direct relationship exists between the mind and the body and that the body's innate healing potential is initiated by the mind. As a therapy, it has emerged as an integral part of comprehensive health care and given rise to the legitimization of wide-spread research, and the incorporation of Mind-body programs in major medical institutions.

The application of Mind-Body Medicine is an intricate and complex science however the general application of healing methods that focus on developing and maintaining a healthy mind will have a direct positive effect on the physical health.

Techniques used to develop positive thinking skills and Meditations that are specifically designed to promote healing attitudes, offer good general therapeutic treatment that can be an effective self- managed method of eliminating disease from the body, encouraging cell regeneration, developing the immune system and basically maintaining good physical health.

Meditation as a Healing Tool

The application of meditation as a healing tool for both psychological and physiological conditions is infinite.

Medical research has proven that Meditation lowers the heart rate and reduces blood pressure. The connection between mental calm and physical wellness has been established through clinical research into Mind-Body Medicine, and most traditional forms of medicine, including Ayurveda, use some form or derivative of Meditation as part of their healing method.

That which ancient cultures have long known, is now generally accepted throughout the Western World; **meditation when practiced on a regular basis not only promotes happiness through developing a calmer mind but improves physical health, prevents disease and can cure illness.**

While using any form of Meditation will assist in healing the body and maintaining optimal health, specific Meditations can also be used to address precise areas of the body where intensive healing is required.

This may include visualising healthy organs or directing attention to the particular part of the body that requires healing. We may also include the chanting of positive Affirmations

into a meditation or use a visualisation where the person imagines an outside force like a bright, healing light shining on their body.

We can also use visualisations where we picture ourselves in optimal health...walking joyously along a beach, for example. We focus on the feeling of being healthy and feeling strong and this assists the brain to get into the habit of *being* well and will promote the release of healthy bodily functions and immune improvement.

Likewise, meditation can be used to address clinical conditions of the mind like depression, behavioural disorders, addiction, anger issues and many others

Meditation as a Healing Therapy

No healing can happen, no matter how intensive the medical treatment, how extensive the surgery or how powerful the healing modality while a person is in the Fight-or-Flight response.

When people learn how to disengage the Fight-or-Flight Response and return to the natural state of homeostasis (the balanced state, relaxed, with the Rest and Repair Response active) their hormones and neurochemicals return to a healthy balance, allowing cells to repair and regenerate.

Most people are in the Fight-or-Flight Response, to some degree, almost all the time. Stress has come to be considered a normal part of our modern lifestyles, but it is an insidious, silent killer and manifests as both physical and psychological illness and dis-ease.

Most therapeutic programs address one or other of the physical, emotional, mental or spiritual aspects of healing. Holistic healing seeks to discover the underlying root cause of the disease, rather than treating the symptoms and then empowers people, with education, to develop the understanding and tools they need to take control of their entire wellbeing

Fear, childhood trauma, post-traumatic stress, depression, anger, anxiety, unresolved grief, shame and even the common day to day stress and pressure of our modern lives, lead to imbalances in neurochemicals and hormones which create unhealthy environments for our cells and this leads to disease. In the same way a plant will become toxic, wither and die in soil with a chemical imbalance, so the human cells depend on a healthy chemical environment to maintain perfect health.

Meditation is an easy to practice, self-empowering, scientifically proven method of activating the Relaxed Response. No matter what other modality is used to treat dis-ease, if the person is in Fight-or-Flight the chemical imbalance in their bodies, create an unhealthy (even toxic) environment for their cells to live in. Until the cells environment is brought into healthy balance, the cells cannot thrive, and any healing is superficial and short lived.

Many people find the idea, that the way they think can have any effect on their physical health, hard to fathom. However, when the science behind the mind-body connection (Psychoneuroimmunology -PNI) is clearly explained and demonstrated, it can be a life changing (and often life-saving) experience.

When we learn how to control our thinking and how to take charge of the unconscious belief systems we may have inherited, we are empowered to move outside of fear and develop the habit of being in the relaxation response where, science has proven, the chemical changes which occur in one's body can reverse illness and significantly contribute to maintaining a healthy body and a healthy mind. Meditation is the simplest, fastest and most effective way of achieving this.

Combining Meditation Therapy with other holistic and complementary healing modalities is the most effective and time efficient way of bringing about whole-person healing.

Thanks to decades of scientific research, we now know why Meditation can literally change our lives and can absolutely repair damage and disease. Once thought to be purely a spiritual practice, Meditation is, in fact, a powerful and essential healing modality. When we understand how regular Meditation practice serves to restore and regenerate the body and mind as well as the spirit, it also becomes obvious that Meditation must be considered the primary healing modality.

When we are under stress (and please bear in mind that our modern lifestyles are filled with stressors every day and few people are completely free of stress) our brain and body produce certain chemicals that are intended to help us deal with the stressors.

These chemicals are always present and essential for us to survive, but when we perceive a threat, the production of those chemicals is altered. This is why we hear that people suffering from anxiety and depression have a chemical imbalance.

Our amazing bodies react to a perceived threat by catapulting us into the Fight-or-Flight Reaction. Remember, the area of our brain that manages the Fight-or-Flight Response is part of our autonomic nervous system, so we don't have to think before this reaction is initiated. It all happens before we get a chance to intelligently evaluate the situation. The threat we are reacting to doesn't necessarily have to be life-threatening or even real. It is a **perceived threat** and the things we perceive as threatening are different for all of us, based on our subconscious belief systems.

The Fight-or-Flight Response is designed to provide us with an instantaneous burst of extra power so that we can outrun a sabre-toothed tiger or fight off rival tribesmen. These days, the situations we perceive as threatening can be as simple as a bill arriving in the mail, a traffic jam when we are running late or even a conversation with a difficult relative!

When the Fight-or-Flight Response is initiated, hormones and chemicals are released and rush through our bodies like a tsunami, giving us ultimate power and muscle strength.

Everything we don't need to survive, during this perceived emergency, is suspended. Digestion shuts down, tears and saliva production stop, breathing becomes shallow, and our immune system closes down, just to name a very few. Many other functions are accelerated. Our heart rate increases, additional blood sugar is produced (as fuel for our muscles), muscles tense for action, our peripheral vision is expanded and the blood in the front of our brain (the logical part) is squeezed back to activate our survival brain (also known as the reptilian brain, which is not the place we want to be making important decisions and life choices from).

As we have discussed, the ideal is that once we have perceived a threat and are automatically and instantaneously catapulted into the Fight-or-Flight Response, we run or fight for our lives; all the chemicals and responses are burned up during that action. We can then return to our 'normal' relaxed state once we are safe, with perfect hormonal balance and resume ordinary body function with our immune system working at optimal levels; have regular heartbeat, relaxed muscles, healthy oxygenation through normal breathing, a digestive and elimination system that works perfectly and a brain that is clear and intelligent.

Unfortunately, most people don't realise they are in the Fight-or-Flight Response most, if not all, of the time. This causes their bodies to function in a way that causes ill health; in the long-term this is responsible for a multitude of diseases from poor eyesight to digestive problems and most certainly cancer.

Prolonged time in the Fight-or-Flight Response also causes emotional problems and mood swings along with depression and anxiety. There are many wonderful natural therapies and conventional medical procedures available to try and combat these illnesses and diseases. The problem is, while the Fight-or-Flight Response is still 'turned on', they are fighting a losing battle. They are trying to heal cells that are living in a toxic environment and working against, rather than with, the body's natural functions.

Once we understand how to turn the Fight-or-Flight Response off and return our body to its relaxed state, our amazing bodies have ultimate power to regenerate and heal themselves.

Meditation is the principal way to maintain a relaxed body and calm mind. Regular practice not only helps us switch the Fight-or-Flight Reaction off, it helps to release old, unhelpful belief systems that are often the cause of us perceiving danger (and getting stressed out) when we are not being physically threatened. So, we experience the Fight-or-Flight Response less, when it is not necessary to save our lives.

In conventional medicine, the apparent disappearance of cancer cells is called "remission". We don't say it's gone or "yay, your healed", it is just in remission. That is because it so often comes back. The dis-ease is still there, hiding somewhere. We will keep checking; every six weeks, then every three months, every six months, every year, every five years. Because it almost always comes back...and that is because the root cause has not been eradicated.

So, what is the root cause of illness (whether its cancer or depression or addiction or thyroid issues or absolutely anything else)? It is faulty belief systems that manifest in:

Self-hatred

Shame

Anger

Resentment

Fear

insecurity

Frustration

And so many other similar emotions.

Meditation Therapy allows people to be present in the moment and it disengages the Fight-or-Flight Response, which has been disabling their minds and filling their bodies with unhealthy chemical imbalances.

Meditation Therapy combines the practice of Meditation with other therapies and systems for reprogramming damaging subconscious belief programs to provide a strong, essential platform for faster healing and lasting good health.

ACTIVITY

Write a short, guided meditation lasting around three minutes that guides students to visualise, imagine or feel each area of their body in a healing process.

Remember to make it suitable for both visual and non-visual learners.

Movement Meditation

Movement Meditation is not for everyone (like most other meditation styles.) Whether or not a person enjoys Movement Meditation or not will depend on a few different factors.

Generally, people who like to dance will enjoy this style, along with people who enjoy music and those who are physically orientated (who like Yoga, sports, etc.).

A great side effect of Movement Meditation is that we can get physical exercise at the same time as practicing Meditation. It is particularly good for relieving stress because it burns up excess energy stored in the muscles and disengages the Fight-or-Flight response.

Movement Meditation is also fun and frivolous (not serious like many other Meditation styles). It is a wonderful way of 'loosening up' and remembering how to have fun.

Movement Meditation is particularly popular with teenagers (they can cut loose) and it can be practiced with absolutely any style of music. For older people, it is a wonderful opportunity to move.

Movement Meditation is fantastic for busy parents of young children who do not otherwise find the time for Meditation. They can practice Movement Meditation with their children and as they meditate they also get to exercise and spend time doing something fun with their children. The children are then getting to participate in active Meditation (with the benefits of Meditation blended with physical exercise) and spend fun time with mum or dad!

Some people do not enjoy Movement Meditation. These are usually people who are not comfortable with their bodies and do not usually enjoy dancing. This meditation is an especially useful exercise for them, as long as they do it alone, so they are not feeling overcome with embarrassment or caught up in how they appear to others.

To practice Movement Meditation alone you will need a private space where there is room to move and fairly loud music that you really like and that makes you feel like moving. Then you just dance!

Dance. Let's look at that word and consider what it means to us. Many people have rigid ideas about dance and what it should LOOK like. They may have set ideas about themselves as dancers (good or bad). In this instance, we are talking about dance in its purist form.

Noun: A series of movements that match the speed and rhythm of a piece of music.

So, while Movement Meditation asks us to dance, it does not require us to dance in any particular way or perform any specific movements. It is about getting out of the head and letting the body move in the way that comes naturally when surrounded by music.

Once you have chosen your music and secured a private place (somewhere that is safe, and you don't have to think too much about crashing into furniture), you simply start moving your body in any way the music suggests to you.

Some people find following the hands is a good way to start. Let your hands move to the music and allow your body to follow your hands. The main thing is not to have any preconceived ideas about how you will dance, what it will feel like or what it will look like. It is about letting go.

As you move to the music it is important to focus on the music, so thoughts are not running through your mind. Some people find affirmations help to do this. Chanting words like I am beautiful, I am free, I am love, etc. It is also important to ensure that if the music you choose has lyrics they are positive!

There is no right or wrong way to practice Movement Meditation. Some people just stand still and sway. Some dance like wild creatures from the lost forest! The important thing is to get lost in the experience of BEING the music.

Some people cry, and some people become ecstatic and laugh. Think of the dance as being a sort of practical prayer; an act of gratitude or worship being displayed through physical movement.

When teaching Movement Meditation to a group, it is very important to let your students know they never have to participate in anything that makes them feel uncomfortable and there is no right or wrong way to dance during Movement Meditation. Some of your students will LOVE it and some will not.

It is also important that you choose your music carefully. Consider your intent: what are you trying to allow your students to experience?

It is also important to consider that practicing Movement Meditation in a group will be quite challenging for some people. Still, that is not necessarily a negative thing!

You will also need to think about your space. Make sure it is safe and free of obstacles. It is a good idea to set some rules that assist people in respecting other participant's safety. Let students know that whatever experience comes up for them is valid and having a group circle, to discuss the experience afterwards, is always very interesting.

NOTE: If you enjoy Movement Meditation you may be interested in participating in the Postgraduate Certificate in Elemental Movement Meditation.

ACTIVITY

Please practice Movement Meditation at least three times this week and report your experience in your Submission Form.

End of module.

Notes and references

(1) Psychoneuroimmunology

Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) is the study of the interaction between psychological processes and the nervous and immune systems of the human body. The main interest of PNI is the relationships between mental processes (mind) and physical health (body.)

(2) Ayurveda

Developed in India more than 5,000 years ago, Ayurveda is thought to be the oldest medical system known. According to Hindu mythology, it is the medicine of the gods. Today, it is practiced less as a religion and more as a way of life. It is a complete and holistic science of healthy balanced living that views each person as an individual, with a unique Mind-Body constitution and set of life circumstances.

All these factors are considered in determining what natural healing approaches should be taken and what changes in daily living should be made to aid in healing and to promote longevity.
