

HUMA 30
Understanding and Managing Stress Weekly Lecture Notes
(Developed by: The Center for Mind Body Medicine)

Introductions & Participation Guidelines

I. Meditation

We will open and close each class with a brief (5-7 min) meditation that is simple and accessible to all regardless of experience.

II. Overview of Mind-Body Medicine

Mind-body medicine focuses on the interactions between the mind and the body and the powerful ways in which you can participate in your own healing and health. Thoughts, feelings, beliefs and attitudes can affect and shape every aspect of our biological functioning. Mind-body medicine combines ancient and modern techniques to help us become aware of the way we deal with stress, illness and our lives. Some of these techniques are meditation, guided imagery, biofeedback, writing, and drawing.

Learning and practicing mind-body techniques provides a way for us to learn skills for taking care of ourselves and to practice them with others in a supportive environment. It is possible through the mastery of these techniques to experience deeper relaxation, fewer physical symptoms of illness, less pain, less fatigue, more energy, and enhanced immune system functioning. Also, many individuals become more successful in dealing with pain, chronic illness, stress, anxiety and depression. Self-care is the heart of health care and active engagement in helping oneself is powerfully therapeutic.

III. Introductions in small groups

- *Tell us a little bit about your background, personally and professionally?*
- *What drew you to this class?*
- *What are you looking forward to in this experience?*
- *What's going on with you right now—physically and/or emotionally?*

IV. Weekly journal writing on select topics

- Neatly hand written on a sheet of paper or journal (8.5 x 11 in)
- Refer to weekly assignments sheet for topics and detailed guideline

V. Participation Guidelines

A. Confidentiality

To create a safe and supportive environment, group members are asked to keep all information shared by any member of the group in strict confidence.

B. Mutual Respect

All members are asked to treat one another with courtesy and respect. We will use a talking object to avoid interruptions, advising or cross talk. By sitting silently and observing what is coming up for us as others speak, we become more self-aware. Cultivating a “beginner's mind” will help you to remain open to new ideas and new experiences. We can learn from each other because everyone’s experience has something to teach us.

C. “I Pass” Rule

While members are encouraged to participate in group discussions, at no time will anyone be asked to reveal information which he/she is uncomfortable sharing. By saying “I Pass”, the group member’s wish to be silent at that time will be honored.

D. Punctuality

It is important to be on time for class; if for some reason you are late, just come in quietly and sit down. If you know you will be late for any reason, please let me know in advance.

E. Commitment

We will be learning a different mind-body technique every week, so in order to fully benefit it is important to attend class regularly. If you are unable to attend class, please notify me in advance at (408)864-5778.

F. Home Practice

Consistent home practice is important if you wish to gain the most benefit from the techniques being taught.

Do you agree to abide by the following group guidelines? Are you willing to follow them?

If yes, please sign and date: _____

Drawings

I. Exercise using three drawings

Drawings are an exercise in self-awareness and a form of self-expression. They can unlock your subconscious and help you to discover more about yourself. Through drawing, you will have the opportunity to use imagination and intuition to become aware of issues and to explore possible answers or new possibilities.

This exercise is not about making a perfect drawing, it is about communicating with a deeper part of yourself. You will be guided and asked to create 3 separate drawings. The first is of how you see yourself today, the second is of you with your biggest problem, or issue, and the third is of you with your biggest problem, or issue, solved.

It is not an art contest and you are not being judged or graded, so try to let go of any thoughts you have about performance and relax into the process. Other than the subject matter, there are no rules. When finished, everyone who wishes will have the opportunity to share their drawings in their groups.

II. Discussion Questions for All Three Drawings

- *How do you feel when you look at your drawings?*
- *How are you represented in your drawings? Big*
- *What do you see when all the drawings are in front of you?*
- *Do you look different in the three drawings? If so, how?*
- *What is the most important thing to you notice about your drawings?*
- *Is there a story here in these three drawings? What is it?*
- *Is there anything in the drawing of the biggest problem that gives a hint to the solution of the problem?*

III. Practice: use drawings and reflection writing as a means of cultivating awareness.

The Biological Underpinnings of Mind-Body Medicine (Autogenic Phrases)

I. Biological Underpinnings of Mind-Body Medicine

All animals and humans experience a “fight or flight” response when stressed out or threatened. When this happens, blood flows to our heart and lungs, thus taking blood away from the skin, resulting in cold hands and feet. After the emergency is over, the body begins to return to normal, this state of equilibrium is a result of the body’s autonomic nervous system. There are two main branches of the autonomic nervous system: the parasympathetic nervous system and the sympathetic nervous system. The sympathetic system is activated much like pressing on the gas pedal of a car and the parasympathetic system acts like the car’s brake. It calms, slows the heart rate, and lowers blood pressure.

After animals experience “fight or flight” they naturally return to normal activities. However, humans often prolong the “fight or flight” beyond the original situation. Our brains have associations with whatever is threatening to us and we often keep the threat in our minds which keeps us stuck in “fight or flight” mode.

Eventually we begin to do damage to our bodies; blood pressure may stay high for long periods of time, contributing to heart disease and stroke. Chronic stress produces high levels of cortisol which is related to increased blood sugar, decreased immune functioning and depression.

II. Biofeedback & Autogenic Phrases

“Thermal biofeedback” uses a device called a thermistor taped to the finger, or a bio-dot on the hand, to measure the temperature at the periphery of the body. When your eyes see your body temperature going up as you relax, your brain learns what it needs to tell your body to relax. Thermistors and Bio-Dots work by measuring the “fight-or-flight” response and are often used with autogenic phrases.

Autogenics are simple relaxation phrases that are used to balance the sympathetic & parasympathetic nervous system, which have an effect on the center of the brain that registers images.

III. Exercise using Autogenic phrases

Autogenics script (not published): Sit or lie in a comfortable position, preferably in a position where the limbs do not touch any other part of the body. Take a few slow, abdominal breaths. There are six phrases, I will read aloud, each designed to balance the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system for relaxation.

I’ll say each phrase six times and each time, I’d like you to repeat it back to yourself silently. So that’s six phrases, each said six times. Imagine the sensations in each phrase happening in the body as completely as possible...

V. Practice options:

-Practice the autogenic phrases silently with yourself or engage a friend. Make sure you are in a quiet, warm place, as this enhances the efficacy of these exercises. Cold temperatures can inhibit the warming process.

-Record the autogenic phrases for yourself and use the recording to lead yourself through the exercise. The more you practice, the more you can create a state of relaxation and the more quickly your symptoms of stress or pain will be relieved

-Carry the phrases on a piece of paper so you can use them wherever you go. Eventually you will learn them by heart and be able to use them when you need them.

Remember: it generally takes several weeks, sometimes months, of practice to become proficient enough to relax quickly using autogenic training, so be patient with yourself.

Course: HUMA 30
Instructor: Shireen Luna Woo

Guided Imagery & Visualization *(Lemon Exercise and Safe Place Imagery)*

I. What is Imagery?

Guided imagery is a form of deliberate and directed daydreaming, and uses all of the senses. The unconscious mind communicates information and inspiration to the conscious mind and to the body as well. Imagery makes thoughts vivid and is connected with many important functions in the brain.

II. Experiential Exercise: Lemon Imagery

To illustrate the effect of imagery on physiological processes, we will examine the process of eating a lemon.

Script for Lemon Imagery (not published): *Take a deep breath and allow your eyes to close.... I would like you to imagine now that you are.....*

The lemon imagery is a simple illustration of imagery's ability to trigger a physical response. Imagery pertains not only to visual images—that is, things you can see—but also to auditory images or sounds as well as images of smell, taste, movement and touch. Imagery brings about physiological changes because it activates parts of the brain virtually identical to those you experience in a real situation where you are actually seeing or hearing or smelling. When you imagine the lemon, for example, the optical cortex, that part of the your brain that is concerned with receiving sensory images though your eyes, is stimulated in much the same a way it would be if you actually saw a lemon.

The impact of images on brain activity opens up all kinds of possibilities for self-healing and improved immune functioning. We can use imagery to engage our parasympathetic nervous system and reduce our stress response.

Research has shown the usefulness of imagery in lowering blood pressure or heart rate, decreasing anxiety, improving mood and reducing the symptoms of PTSD. Imagery has also been shown to improve immune function for people with illnesses such as in cancer & HIV.

Guided imagery can be active or passive. **Active imagery** is when we use words and sometimes music to guide you through an imagery experience. **Passive imagery** is when images come to you spontaneously that are yours alone. Both active and passive imagery have an effect on your brain and body.

III. Experiential Exercise: Safe Place Imagery

Just as negative images can provoke fear and distress, positive images can evoke warmth, relaxation, peace, and love. Because the body responds in essentially the same way to made-up imagery as it does to real experiences, positive healing images such as a relaxing safe place can be an effective tool for stress and pain management. Creating a safe or comfortable place provides a kind of mental and emotional time out.

Safe Place Script (not published):

We are going to use imagery now to help you go to a safe and comfortable place where you can relax.....Creating a safe or comfortable place provides a kind of mental and emotional time out.....

IV. Practice:

Please practice safe place imagery at home and write about your experience in your weekly reflections

-Think about how you might use the Safe Place Imagery at home?

-Use the Safe Place imagery regularly, either when you feel especially upset or agitated or simply at a certain time every day.

-You may go back to the same safe place or to a new safe place. Be open to whatever comes to you.

-Allow 15-20 minutes for this exercise when you begin to use it. With practice you may be able to find and enjoy the benefits of your safe place in far less time.

- Remember, if these exercises are difficult the first time, try again later. The more often you do it, the easier it will become. The work of guided imagery is about accepting the wisdom of your own unconscious.

Mindful Eating, walking & Healthy Nutrition

I. Nutrition and Healthy Eating:

Eating has a profound effect on our health. Every time we put food in our mouths, we have an opportunity to either enhance or diminish our lives. Making good food choices is perhaps the single most important way we can care for our bodies.

Many people have chronic health problems related to diet such as: obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, anxiety and depression. Diets high in sugar, refined carbohydrates and high fructose corn syrup can lead to chronic high blood sugar or high insulin which increases the risk of developing diabetes. Diets high in saturated fats may increase the risk of developing cardiovascular disease. Also, processed foods, animal fats, sugar, white flour and pasta all increase inflammation in the body which leads to a variety of chronic illnesses.

Stress has an impact on eating and nutrition; it inhibits digestion and absorption and can lead to deficiencies. In order to counter the effects of stress and create a lifestyle that does not contribute to chronic disease, it is important to eat healthy. Once you increase your awareness, your food choices will change. Also, each of us is biochemically unique, so we need to discover how foods affects us all differently, and experimentation is a very good way to figure this out.

II. Experiential Exercise: Mindful Eating

Mindful Meditative Eating means giving your full attention to your experience of food. No TV, reading, driving, arguing or walking down the street. Mindful eating can also provide you with information about which foods make you feel energetic and happy and which make you feel tired, anxious, depressed or uncomfortable.

People eat for many different reasons. Though most animals eat when they're hungry and stop when they're full, human beings often eat to fulfill emotional needs and don't stop when their physical hunger is satisfied.

The exercise we will do involves eating slowly and meditatively. It is to help you become more fully aware of how, why and what you are choosing to eat, as well as, what food actually smells and tastes like. Practicing meditative eating may change what and how you eat; you may even develop a new appreciation of healthy foods, and crave a big bowl of vegetables sautéed in olive oil and garlic, rather than a plate full of french fries.

Normally, most of us eat automatically or mechanically, so we are going to experiment with eating differently, paying full attention in a non-judgmental, open way, and staying in the present

moment as much as possible. Take a food object and see if you can entertain the notion that you are seeing and sensing this object for the very first time, and then...

Note: In creating a new relationship with food, it is important to not only rely on your common sense but to remember a few basic principles of good nutrition such as the following:

1. Eat real food: food that has to be refrigerated and that you have to prepare.
2. Eat more whole plant foods: fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains like brown rice, nuts and seeds.
3. Eat more fish and chicken and less red meat.
4. Eat a rainbow diet: a wide variety of fruits and vegetables of different colors.
5. Avoid processed foods which contain unhealthy additives.
6. Notice when you are full.
7. Be aware of how food makes you feel, physically and emotionally.
8. Drink 7-8 glasses of water daily.

III. Experiential Exercise: Mindful Walking

In the mindful walking exercise, we will go outdoors and walk slowly in silence for about 20 to 40 minutes, with our eyes looking down at the ground in front of us. As you walk, notice your thoughts, feelings and sensations as they arise. Acknowledge them each moment you become aware of them, for example, left foot touching the ground, sunlight on the grass, wondering what you will eat for lunch, what papers you need to write, feeling like this is silly, etc...

IV. Share the experience in your group

What was your experience like eating/walking mindfully?

Were there particular thoughts, feelings or sensations during this meditation that surprised you?

Did you have any memories come up?

Did this bring up any past experiences or teachings about food or health?

V. Mindful Walking Practice:

-Practice 20-30 minutes of mindful walking a day for 3 days, or pick any of the food experiments mentioned below, or a combination, and practice them for 3 days. Notice the effects of specific foods, or mindful walking, on your energy and mood.

Mindful Eating Practice:

-Try eating a variety of foods meditatively, including your favorite snacks, as well as those foods you don't often eat. Follow the same basic steps as you did with the exercise.

-Eat an entire meal meditatively. Write down your observations every time you do this exercise. The more often you eat meditatively, the more you'll learn about your relationship to food.

-Each time you're about to eat something, notice if you're really hungry. If not, ask yourself: "Why am I eating this food." Is it out of boredom? Loneliness? Anxiety? Just notice your answers.

Remember: Because each of us is biochemically unique and no one diet is right for everyone, we need to discover which foods give us energy and which foods seem to cause problems.

Course: HUMA 30
Instructor: Shireen Luna Woo

Mobilizing, Transforming & Celebrating Emotion *(Dialogue with a symptom problem or issue)*

I. Changing Emotions:

They are only problematic when you get stuck and can't move through them. If you're constantly seething with rage or resentment, contracted by fear or anxiety, or burdened by sadness or grief, you affect not only your emotional life, but also your physical body, and you increase your risk of developing or exacerbating a chronic illness. Emotions are intimately connected with sensations. Physical sensations may bring up emotional feelings, and emotions may in turn affect physical functioning.

One of the keys to stress management is experiencing your emotions fully and moving through them, rather than becoming stuck in them. Getting stuck in sadness can become depression. Getting stuck in joy can become hysteria. Anxiety can turn into panic. Fear can become paranoia. Anger may become hostility. If you get stuck in them, these very normal feelings may lead to depression, decreased immune cell activity and increased ongoing levels of stress hormones.

The first step is to become aware of your emotions; the next step is to express them. Meditation practices help you to develop awareness of emotions, and activities like drawing, dancing, and journaling provide an opportunity for self-expression.

The work of mind-body medicine depends on the continual interplay between becoming aware of our emotions and expressing them, between exploring emotions through words, actions, images and written dialogues and allowing them to work in us and to change us.

II. Experiential Exercise: Dialogue with an Issue, Symptom or Problem:

In this exercise, you will have a written dialogue with a particular issue, problem or symptom, as if it were another person sitting across from you. Symptom dialogue is a way of accessing the unconscious knowledge that you have. It is similar to guided imagery and drawings. It is a way to find out what is really going on, and the message and/or answer is often contained in the symptom. You will write fast without analyzing what you are writing. Just let the dialogue unfold.

Possible Challenges: if you can't think of anything to write about, think about what primary feeling is coming up for you right now? Is it boredom? Is it resistance? Is it stuckness or anger that you are not doing something else? Whatever feeling that comes up, write about that.

If nothing is coming to mind, start with writing about not being able to write, and go from there.

III. Questions for your reflection writing and group discussion

As you look over the dialogue, what did you learn?

What surprises you about the dialogue, if anything?

What are some of the most important lessons?

What new directions does this dialogue suggest to you?

Write these down along with anything else that comes to you.

IV. Continue the Dialogue Process:

The dialogue process can continue to be useful because you're constantly changing. The answers you receive tomorrow will likely be different from those that come today. As you become aware of your emotions and explore and express them, you naturally change and become aware of new emotions to explore.

Think of the Dialogue with a Symptom as an ongoing process. If you don't feel complete now, feel free to continue the dialogue at a later time. If you do feel a sense of completion and you've received the information you need, you may want to dialogue with the question: "How am I going to act on it."

V. Practice:

Set aside 10 minutes this week to dialogue in writing with a problem, issue, or symptom. Then review what you've written for any new insights.

Meditation/Expressive Meditation

I. Meditation

Meditation creates a relaxed state of moment to moment awareness which is critical to stress reduction and self-awareness. Meditation is the heart of healing and it's about being in the moment. Every spiritual and religious tradition in the world has meditative practices. If we belong to a particular religion, practice a spiritual tradition, or have no religious/spiritual affiliations, we may still use other practices. I invite you to use what is comfortable for you.

There are three major types of meditation: (1) concentrative, (2) mindfulness and (3) expressive. All three have powerful and beneficial effects. The more often you do them, the more you will experience their effects.

We have already been doing Soft Belly breathing which is a **concentrative meditation**. Concentrative meditation consists of focused awareness on a particular object, such as an image or sound. Prayers and visual meditations are also concentrative meditations.

The second type is called **mindfulness (or awareness) meditation**, which involves being relaxed and aware of thoughts, feelings and sensations as they arise, without focusing on a particular object. Studies of mindfulness meditation have emphasized its value as a stress management technique. For example, walking can be a meditation. As you walk, focus on staying aware of your thoughts, feelings and sensations as they arise. As sights, smells and emotions come to you, name them to yourself. Observe what is around you. Notice how your body feels and whatever comes to you.

The third type is **expressive meditation**. This is probably the oldest kind of meditation. It's the one that indigenous healers around the world have used for thousands of years. This includes such active techniques as chanting, dancing, shaking, rapid breath work, and whirling.

Studies show that concentrative and mindfulness meditation can change brain wave activity and neurotransmitter levels, increase parasympathetic activity and increase heart rate variability. Studies have also demonstrated the effectiveness of concentrative meditation in lowering blood pressure, decreasing pain, decreasing frequency and intensity of asthma attacks, improving mood and decreasing anxiety.

As we practice meditative techniques the physiology of our body may change. Sometimes medications need to be reassessed and dosages changed after a regular meditation practice is established.

Meditation wakes us to the experience of the here and now and to our connection with that which is larger than ourselves. Meditation practice brings benefits to ALL aspects of our life.

II. Experiential Exercise: Expressive Meditation of “Shaking and Dancing”

This meditation can be useful for releasing any state of “stuckness” that we feel. We get stuck in our bodies and our joints don’t move well. We get stuck in emotional states and feel sad and depressed.

Shaking helps us to physically begin to break up the stuck patterns in the body and open the joints, to relax the muscles and to break up those fixed postural patterns. Shaking also works to break up fixed ideas that we carry in our minds such as “Nothing is ever going to work out for me,” and helps us to move stuck feelings such as sadness, anger and despair. The movement of shaking helps to create open space where new ways of seeing, feeling, and experiencing can come in.

III. Movement and Exercise

Breathing is crucial to every aspect of our life. Living in a highly industrialized society where movement is constrained and constricted we have to recover this experience of movement to make it consciously a regular part of our life. Running, jogging, dancing, weight-lifting, playing ball and swimming are generally described as aerobic exercises, which means they’re oxygen consuming. Technically, a definition of an aerobic workout is raising the heartbeat to 70 to 80 percent of its maximum for 20 minutes at a time. Many studies have been done on aerobic exercise showing its effectiveness in helping to prevent and treat many illnesses.

There are other forms of exercise that may not reach the level of heart rate that’s characteristic of an aerobic exercise but are still helpful. These include the exercises that come out of the Eastern healing traditions—Chinese Tai Chi, a moving meditation, and Qi Gong, a short form of meditation as well as the movements of Indian Hatha Yoga. These exercises promote flexibility and may increase aerobic capacity.

It is important to find the exercise that suits you. If you hate doing a particular exercise, it’s not likely that you will do it. So find something you enjoy doing which fits with your lifestyle. Breathing, exercise and movement can also be a part of our spiritual life. They’ve been used in virtually every spiritual and religious tradition. **With exercise it’s important that you do a form you like and that you do it regularly.**

Research says that exercise has a direct effect on physiology and is a powerful agent both in preventing and treating a number of major illnesses. It has been shown to improve mood, perhaps by increasing the levels of neurotransmitters in the brain.... chemicals called peptides like serotonin and norepinephrine. These are the same chemicals that antidepressants are designed to increase. Physical exercise seems to increase the levels of these substances without any of the negative side effects of the antidepressants and, of course, without the expense. Exercise may also improve mood by increasing levels of endorphin—the morphine-like

substances that our own bodies produce. In addition, exercise has been shown to reduce anxiety, improve mental functioning, prevent and treat coronary heart disease, diabetes, and osteoporosis, as well as improve the sense of wellbeing, appetite, and emotional and mental functioning in people who are being treated with cancer. However, if you have a physical limitation or illness you need to exercise in a way that takes care of your physical body. If you have concerns be sure to check with your doctor.

IV. Practice:

-Experiment with both the quiet and the active meditations and write about it. Where were you? What time of day was it? What was the exercise like?

-Practice shaking and dancing once a day for a week. Do it in a private place where you won't be interrupted. If you worry about what other would think if they saw you, notice the worry and keep shaking. If you want to stop, shake even more.

-Find a form of exercise that you like and that you will do regularly, at least 4 or 5 times a week for 30 or 40 minutes each day.

NOTE: It is useful to have more than one meditative practice to choose from. Different types of meditation are appropriate in different situations.

Whichever meditation practice you choose, attempt to practice it for several weeks. Remember, meditation does not always come easy so be patient with yourself.

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Compassion

(Reference: *Self-Esteem, McKay & Fanning, 1992*)

Compassion is a skill – a skill that you can acquire if you lack it or improve it if you already have it. Second, compassion is not something you feel only for others. It can also inspire you to be kind, sympathetic, and helpful to yourself.

There are three basic components to the skill of compassion:

- 1) **Understanding** – An attempt to understand is the first step toward a compassionate relationship to yourself and others. Understanding something important about yourself or a loved one can totally change your feelings and attitudes.
- 2) **Acceptance** – Acceptance is perhaps the most difficult aspect of compassion. Acceptance is an acknowledgement of the facts, with all value judgments suspended. You neither approve or disapprove – you accept.
- 3) **Forgiveness** – Forgiveness flows out of understanding and acceptance. Like those two traits, it doesn't mean approval. It means letting go of the past, reaffirming self-respect in the present, and looking toward a better future.

The Compassionate Response

Understanding

To promote an understanding of the problematic behavior, you can ask yourself the following three questions:

1. What need was (he, she, I) trying to meet with that behavior?
2. What beliefs or awarenesses influenced the behavior?
3. What pain, hurt, or other feelings influenced the behavior?

Acceptance

To remind yourself that you can accept a person without blame or judgement, no matter how unfortunate his or her choices have been, you repeat the following three statements to yourself.

4. I wish _____ hadn't happened, but it was merely an attempt to meet (his, her, my) needs.
5. I accept (him, her, myself) without judgment or feeling of wrongness for that attempt.
6. No matter how unfortunate (his, her, my) decision, I accept the person who did it as someone who is, like all of us, trying to survive.

Forgiveness

Finally, the following two statements suggest that the slate can be wiped clean, that it is time to forgive and let go of it.

7. It's over, I can let go of it.
8. Nothing is owed for this mistake.

Guided Imagery: Future Self Visualization

I. Imagery

Imagery is the dominant language of the unconscious mind. Imagery includes words and thoughts that represent all the senses...hearing, touch, smell, sight and taste.

Receptive imagery is the use of a relaxed meditative state to access information from what we sometimes call “the unconscious” or our “intuition.” One receptive imagery that we can use is an “**inner guide technique.**” The guide is a representation of our inner knowing or our intuition. This is the wisdom that can come to us when we are deeply relaxed and paying careful attention. It represents the quiet sureness which exists in each of us. Most of the major philosophical, religious and psychological traditions acknowledge the value of this “knowing” and concern themselves with inner guidance in one form or another.

In this exercise we will be working to help you learn from your inner guide. This process can help you understand yourself better and learn how to take better care of yourself. The inner guide often serves to remind us of insights and understandings forgotten, or of what’s really important. The inner guide may also help us decide when faced with two equally valuable or confusing courses of action.

We seldom look inside for answers, though we all have untapped resources within us. We are so accustomed to using our rational, linear minds to solve problems that we rarely look to our inner knowing or intuition for guidance. This exercise offers a way to explore your unconscious mind and to access your own deep inner intuitive wisdom. It can help you understand yourself better, make decisions and solve problems.

II. Experiential Exercise: Future Self Visualization

Visualization Script (not published): You are going to take an imaginary journey into the future. Then, I’m going to suggest that you will meet your future self. He/she is there to answer your questions and help you discover what you want and need to learn about.

- **REMEMBER:** Because guided imagery helps people gain access to unconscious processes, the experience can be challenging for some. Also, you may be confronting big issues and might be afraid of what your future self tells you. Therefore, you always have the option of opening their eyes and stopping the exercise if it feels too difficult for you.

III. Questions for discussion

- *What was the experience like for you?*
- *Were there difficulties along the way?*
- *Did fear come up at any point?*
- *What did you most enjoy?*
- *What did you see, hear, smell and feel?*
- *What was your future self like?*
- *Did you have a question? If so, was the question answered? You may want to write down your questions and the answers you received.*
- *Did you receive a gift? If so what was it?*
- *What lessons did you learn?*
- *What surprised you?*

IV. Practice:

-Practice the future self visualization at least twice over the next week. You may have additional questions about your current issue/experience, or want to explore a new one with your future self.

-Enjoy each step of the journey and appreciate whatever comes, because whatever comes is coming from deep within yourself, from that place where we actually do know what we need to do and how we need to act.

Drawings & Closing Ritual

I. Experiential Exercise: Drawings

You will create a set of drawings, similar to but not quite the same as the drawings created in the first session. Before you begin to draw, keep in mind that:

- Drawings are a form of self-expression and a way of accessing the unconscious
- It is important to be in a relaxed state and trusting what comes from the unconscious
- Drawings can help unlock feelings and thoughts that we have difficulty expressing verbally
- In the process of sharing our drawings, it is important is to do so without analyzing or interpreting other members drawings
- You will do three separate drawings with crayons
- I will instruct you when it is time to move on the next drawing

II. Share your current drawings, then, revisit your 1st set of drawings. Any observations about your 1st drawings compared to the 2nd set?

Questions for group discussion:

- *How do you appear in each drawing? Are you bigger or smaller? Are other people there?*
- *Is one drawing more concrete and the other more abstract? Did you use different colors?*
- *How do you feel when you look at them? Do they bring up different feelings or the same ones?*
- *What difference/similarities do you see between today's representation of yourself and your first set of drawings?*
- *Remind them that sometimes it takes time to understand what the drawing is revealing. Sometimes the meaning may not be so obvious. That is okay. Just write down what you think and feel.*
- *Notice what lessons the drawing reveals over time?*

III. The Use of Rituals

Rituals are repeated patterns of meaningful acts. They are often performed on special occasions as a means to separate the ordinary from the extraordinary. They help to add meaning and value to our lives. Rituals are a part of all cultures.

Rituals can be used to transform individuals into members of communities or to help comprehend life transitions.

There are many kinds of rituals: Daily Rituals, Family Rituals, Holiday Rituals, And Lifecycle Rituals. Ritual is one of the oldest ways to mobilize the power of the community for healing. When we feel the support of others, many of us can face the unknown with greater strength. Creating a ritual can be a spiritual act because it helps to connect us to ourselves, to each other and to the divine.

Our group ritual offers us a way to acknowledge the time we have spent together. It gives us the opportunity to celebrate the changes in awareness we have undergone.

With ritual we try to create a meditative way to acknowledge the connections we have made and celebrate them. As we have to say goodbye, the ritual will help to anchor our shared experience and when recalled, it will help trigger our memory of the group.

IV. *Experiential Exercise (not published): This Closing Ritual is a symbolic expression of what you want to “leave behind” as well as “take with you.”*

V. How to continue to develop your own mind-body practice:

- In daily practice, you'll probably want to be working with one active technique, such as yoga, walking, or shaking and dancing and one quiet technique, such as Soft Belly meditation or Safe Place imagery. When you are doing them in sequence, begin with the active and conclude with the quiet.