HE 242

Week 6
Diaphragmatic Breathing

Chapter 18
Diaphragmatic breathing

The most basic relaxation technique - breathing from lower stomach or diaphragm rather than the thoracic area

We often focus on chest breathing

**Pranayama**: restoring one’s vital life force of energy through diaphragmatic breathing

**Belly breathing**: place emphasis of breathing on the lower stomach area, decreasing sympathetic response and inducing a greater sense of relaxation
Diaphragmatic breathing

In a normal resting state, a typical person breathes between 14–16 breath cycles/minute.

Under stressful conditions, people tend to breathe as many as 28–30 breaths per minute (though many people actually hold their breath).

In a relaxed state, people may comfortably breathe as few as 3–4 breath cycles.
Diaphragmatic breathing

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Pressure is taken off the thoracic cavity - sympathetic drive decreases

Breathing from the diaphragm, with its accentuation of pauses, creates a calming effect.
How to

1. Assume a comfortable position

- can be done anywhere, at anytime
- eyes closed
- loosen constrictive clothing
How to

Concentration

• Requires focused concentration
• Minimize external interruptions
• When you first start mind begins to wander

Normal breathing is automatic and involuntary - diaphragmatic breathing requires conscious effort. One approach - mentally follow the air as it enters your body and back out again “feel the air come into my nose, down into my lungs, and feel my stomach rise and then descend as I exhale the air, feeling it leave my lungs, throat, and nasal cavity.”
How to

The cycle:
• Phase I: Inspiration (in breath)
• Phase II: Very slight pause
• Phase III: Exhalation (out breath)
• Phase IV: Very slight pause

These phases can be experienced to a greater extent by exaggerating the breathing style - taking a very slow and comfortable deep breath

**REMEMBER** - don’t hold your breath, but learn to make it go smoothly

The most relaxing stage is the exhale - focus on how relaxed your body is during this phase (chest, shoulders, and abdomen)
3. Visualization

Many images can be combined with breathing...

a.) Breathing Clouds
   • Close your eyes, focus all of your attention on breathing - visualize the air you take in as clean, fresh, and pure. Visualize this as you breath it in cleaning out your body
   • When you exhale, visualize the air leaving as dirty air - carrying stressors, frustration and toxins.
   • Repeat - as you continue you’ll see that over time the air you exhale becomes cleaner

b.) Alternate nostril breathing

c.) Energy breathing
Meditation

Chapter 19
Meditation

**SENSORY OVERLOAD:** an inundation of information and distractions that overwhelm the mind

Leads to...
- Burnout
- Frustration/anger
- Lethargy
- Apathy
- Other less-than-desirable human traits
Meditation

A practice of increased concentration that leads to increased awareness; a solitary practice of reflection on internal rather than external stimuli

Meditation is...

• not a religion
• reflection on internal rather than external stimulation
• increasing concentration and awareness
• the old recognized relaxation technique
• gaining lots of ground in the Modern World
a bit of history

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qsHH7INW6So

one moment meditation:
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=F6eFFCi12v8
Meditation

**Insightful meditation** - any type of meditation whereby a person, once clearing the mind of interrupting thoughts and ego chit-chat, begins to expand his or awareness to the intuition, for the deep-seated wisdom of the collective unconscious, thus giving insight into the person’s life.

**Restrictive/Exclusive meditation** - a form of meditation wherein concentration is focused on one object (mantra, tratak) to the exclusion of all other thoughts, to increase self-awareness and promote relaxation.
Meditation

Five actions used to refine attention on the single thought...

1. Mental repetition - the thought is produced over and over again
   • Mantra - typically a one-syllable word or a short phrase that acts like a broom to sweep the mind of nonessential thoughts
     • om, one, peace, love....
     • some cultures believe that certain sounds have the capability to heal (om.)

2. Visual concentration - visually focusing on or staring at an object or image
   • Tratak - a visual type of mantra, such as a seashell, used by the eyes to focus attention and ignore distracting thoughts
   • Mandala - a circular shaped object used as a visual mantrat for the purpose of clearing the mind of unnecessary thoughts
     • about 3-5 feet away, for 60 seconds, close eyes
Meditation

3. **Repeated sounds** - in some forms of meditation a sound is repeated continually to help focus the mind
   - **nadam** - an auditory mantra for which a repetitive sound is used

4. **Physical reception** - repetitive motion such as breathing, or aerobic exercise to produce a meditative state
   - runners high
   - shift the mind to an altered state of consciousness
   - some say they are most creative at this time

5. **Tactile repetition** - holding a small object to bring focus
   - strands of beads
   - rolling the beads
Transcendental Meditation - the epitome of exclusive meditation in which all thoughts are eliminated save the mantra

- simplified version of yoga meditation - stripping it of religious dogma
- popular in the late 60's
- "secret" mantra
- lots of health benefits; induced physiological homeostasis
- pricey
Relaxation Response

Quite environment - reduce all stimuli (external and internal)
1. A mental device - tool to replace all other thoughts, if your mind wanders tell yourself “no”
2. A passive attitude - open to all thoughts rather than blocking it
3. A comfortable position - sitting with most of the body weight supported, no muscle tension - not a position conducive to sleep
4. A comfortable position - sitting with most of the body weight supported, no muscle tension - not a position conducive to sleep
Meditation

**Inclusive Meditation** - a form of meditation where all thoughts are invited into awareness without emotional evaluation, judgement, or analysis.

**Mindfulness** - a type of meditation where all sense concentrate on the activity being performed during the present moment, like eating apple or washing the dishes

Very similar to free association where the mind wanders aimlessly
- no attempt is made to control the minds content
- mind accepts spontaneous thoughts from the unconscious mind
- one condition:
  - Detached observation - a term derived from inclusive mediation during which the individual observes him or herself meditating, in essence detaching from the ego’s desire

To goal is to observe the observer - step outside yourself to observe your thought process - you retrain your mind to keep an even keel during times of stress - “being mindful of the present moment”
Zen Meditation

a form of meditation wherein one learns to detach from one's emotional thoughts by becoming the observer of those thoughts.

abandonment of the concept of dualities (right vs wrong, male vs female, good vs bad...) because these are thought to separate rather than unite and expressed in analytical nature.

purpose is to reach the highest level of consciousness for the purpose of diving enlightenment - truth and knowledge come from within.
Zen Meditation

many forms - all very difficult and disciplined
often asks unanswerable questions

• **koan** - an unsolvable riddle that aims to shift one’s
  consciousness from analytical thoughts to
  profound contemplation
• “what is the sound of one hand clapping?”
• “what did your face look like before you were conceived?”
• “An egg is placed through the narrow opening of
  a glass bottle. In less than one day the egg
  hatches, yet the chick is too big to escape through
  the opening. How do you remove the chick from
  the glass bottle without harming the chick or
  destroying the bottle??”

Because there are no answers - the mind gives in to
the riddle

Very difficult to practice - it is challenging to divorce
your emotions from your thoughts
meditation produces a different type of brain wave than that observed in non-meditative waking states or sleep

*Altered state of consciousness* - a shift in one’s thought process, typically from left brain to right brain thinking, to become more aware and more receptive
BRAIN WAVES

**Beta (β)**
- 13+ cps
- Mind and body active and busy
- Short-term memory being used

**Alpha (α)**
- 8-12 cps
- Mind and body calm and relaxed
- Long-term memory activated
- Learning is easy and rapid

**Theta (θ)**
- 4-7 cps
- A state of deep relaxation
- High creativity and insight
- Sub-conscious mind accessible

**Delta (δ)**
- 0.5-3 cps
- Minimum brain activity
- Sleeping
**brain stuff**

**Time distortion** - one’s perception of time is changed or disordered so that segment of time seems either seems much longer or shorter than it actually is

**Ineffability** - Experiences that cannot be expressed verbally; especially common during meditation

Present-centeredness - one is fully aware of the present moment with no regard to past or future time periods

**Perception distortion** - a sense during meditation in which for example one’s arms and legs feel very heavy

Synesthesia - sensory cross over - a cross wiring of one’s sense during which one smells sounds or sees noises

**Enhanced receptivity** - one’s mind opens to becoming more receptive to ideas that are often censored during normal consciousness

**Self transcendence** - becoming one with something bigger than oneself; a mystical experience that occurs in meditation
benefits

physiological and psychological effects
• reduces alpha waves (EEGs)
• reduces muscle tension
• reduces resting blood pressure
• reduces resting heart rate
• reduces blood lactate levels
• promotes mental calmness
• promotes better quality sleep
• increases concentration skills
• enhances efficacy of immune system
• decreases anxiety
• enhances cardiac efficiency
• pain relief
Humor Therapy

Chapter 13
Humor

A perception of something funny or comical, not a mood, but a perception that can trigger a feeling or mood of joy and happiness (even if only for a brief moment!)

Three factors must occur for humor to register in the mind:

- Sources that act as potential stimuli
- The interpretation of the stimuli (perceiving a whipped cream face as funny)
- Behavioral response: Laughter, smiling
Humor Types

Conventional
• More than one person laughing at the same thing, all agreeing to its humor

Life-of-the-party
• Class clown... gets the laughs

Creative
• The person who thinks of the funny things; may be shy to share

Good Sport
• One who can take a practical joke without getting upset
Humor Theories

**Superiority Theory**
- The reason why people laugh is at other people’s expense

**Incongruity (Surprise) Theory**
- The reason we laugh is because when two concepts come together in our head and they don’t make sense, we get a chuckle

**Release/Relief Theory**
- Freud… The reason people laugh is because they need to release nervous energy built up from suppressed sexual tension

**Divinity Theory**
- Belief that humor is a gift from the divine
Humor & Health

As a defense mechanism, humor decreases anxiety and increases pleasure.

Humor helps crack open the right side of the brain to gain a wider perspective on things so we can laugh at ourselves.

Humor (e.g., joy, mirth, happiness) balances out common feelings of fears and frustrations.
Humor & Health

The Effects of Humor:

- Decreased muscle tension
- Decreases resting heart rate, blood pressure
- Decreases emotional stress (anxiety)
- Increased neuropeptides (endorphins)
- Increased immune system integrity
- Increased overall sense of well-being
How to...

- Don’t take life TOO seriously
- Find one humorous thing a day
- Improve your imagination and creativity
- Start a joke cartoon collection
- Learn to hyper-exaggerate when telling a story
- Build a humor library & start a tickler notebook
- Seek a host of humorous venues
- Access your humor network (friends)
- Improve your self-esteem
Hatha Yoga

Chapter 20
Yoga is...

The union of mind, body, and spirit

Hatha yoga is one of 5 types of meditation

Most common form of meditation in the US
Yoga is...

A non ego-based exercise

American culture has added ego
- certifications
- fashion
- studios
- competition

no room for ego in true yoga

Polartec® Power Stretch® Pant
$98.00
Available in Special Sizes
Benefits

- Decreased stress levels
- Increased strength
- Increased flexibility
- Decreased blood pressure
- Effective in addictions
- Decreases sign of depression
- Helps cope with breast cancer
- Chronic pain
How to...

• Don’t perform yoga on a full stomach
• Wear loose fitting clothing
• Find a quiet place to practice
• Early A.M. is recommended to start day right
• Concentrate on postures and breathing
• A balanced diet parallels a balanced life
• No ego involvement (yoga is not a contest)
• Meditation is a nice complement to yoga

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aAjazBC1HCk
Stress and Spirituality

Chapter 8
Spirituality is..

Stress and Spirituality are not polar opposites

Stress provides the opportunity for spiritual growth... when we learn from the experience!
Spirituality is..

**Spiritual Hunger**
A term to illustrate the quest for understanding of life’s biggest questions, the bigger picture, and how each of us fit into it.

**Spiritual bankruptcy**
a term to convey the lack of spiritual direction, values, or less than desirable behaviors, suggesting moral decay.

**Spiritual dormancy**
a state in which someone chooses not to recognize the importance of the spiritual dimension of life, individually and socially.
Spirituality is..

No one definition....

However, it often includes
• Higher consciousness
• Transcendence
• Self-reliance
• Self-efficacy
• Self-actualization
• Love
• Faith
• Enlightenment
• Mysticism
• Self-assertiveness
• Community bonding
“Human spirituality is neither a religion nor the practice of religion”

People tend to describe spiritual experiences as a journey or path...

Enhance the maturation / evolution of the soul

- Must be creative (not destructive)
- Must be progressive (not regressive)
- Must stimulate and enhance (not stifle)
Stress Management

Human spirituality is the maturation process of our higher consciousness as developed through the integration of three facets

**Internal and External relationships:** how well do you know and love yourself? What is your relationship with your higher self?

**Divine Personification:** a term signifying one’s evolving perception or image of the divine, whatever this happens to be

**External relationships:** one’s relationships with others as well as the earth, water, and air we breath
Also consider

**Personal Value System** - what are your values?

**Meaningful purpose in life** - why are you here?

**Roadblocks:** a metaphor to explain how stressors act as obstructions on the human journey or spiritual path, yet they are no meant to be avoided - rather they are meant to be dismantled, circumnavigated, or transcended so that one can move on with one’s life

**Distractions:** material possessions and/or behaviors that distract one from making progress on the spiritual path. Distractions begin as attractions, pulling one off the spiritual path indefinitely