

The following are exercises that demonstrate techniques that you can use to take care of yourself. Please engage in the exercises.

Exercise * Shake to the Music * put some music on and dance!

Exercise: Body scanning * Close your eyes. Starting with your toes and moving up your body, ask yourself, "Where am I tense?" Whenever you discover a tense area, exaggerate it slightly so you can become aware of it. Be aware of the muscles in your body that are tense. Then, for example, say to yourself, "I am tensing my neck muscles*I am hurting myself*I am creating tension in my body." Note that all muscular tension is self-produced. At this point, be aware of any life situation that may be causing the tension in your body and what you could do to change it. Now that you hopefully have gained an awareness of where you store stress, where in your body you feel stress.

Exercise: Color My Body - Think about where in your body you feel stress. Draw your body and color that part of your body red. Many of us feel stress in the "stress triangle"; our shoulders, neck and head. Some of you may feel your fists clench, or your heart rate increase. There is no right or wrong answer, just color what you feel where you feel it. Almost every system in your body can be damaged by stress. You can take a Body Mapping class to help you to better know yourself and to reduce stress.

Exercise * Abdominal breathing is natural for newborns and sleeping adults. Stress causes chest breathing and decreases oxygen exchange. Deep breathing increases oxygen exchange and interrupts the stress response. We take 24,000 breaths per day, that's 24,000 opportunities to reduce stress. Practice taking deep breaths. You will also notice a decrease in your stress level and will be better able to manage your day if you set aside time every day to meditate, to focus on one thing, for instance the word calm or running water. It only takes a few minutes. You can even do it in the shower. Take a deep breath in, all the way from your belly, hold and slowly release. There is nowhere else that you have to be and nothing else that you have to do at this moment. Just breathe deeply in and slowly out. Breathe in relaxation and breathe out calm. As you continue to breathe focus on the word calm. When another thought comes into your head just let it go, watch it float away. Continue to breathe in this manner for about ten minutes.

Relaxation therapy can help you for formulate new tools and habits to combat stress and to care for yourself. Please remember that if you do not take care of yourself you cannot take care of anyone else. You have inherent value and worth aside from just what you do for others. Honor yourself.

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