

Ensuring Balance Practices

Wellbeing & Resilience

Grounding

Grounding is a way of helping us come back into balance, calm down, find peace, see reality, listen to ourselves, get closer to the earth, and clear our minds so that we can really see what is needed. It is also very important for stress management. There are several grounding exercises that are helpful. It often takes only three minutes to start to feel relaxed.

Space Awareness: Take a pause to just look around the room. Notice anyone else near you. Notice the doors and windows and spaces within the room. Feel how you are feeling today sitting on your chair. Feel your feet on the ground and feel how strong the floor and chair feels holding you up. Notice how your body feels. If you feel stiff, give yourself a moment to stretch your arms and legs, wrists, ankles and head so you can relax. Let any worries that might be lingering rest for a moment if they can.

Feeling the Earth: Feel your feet on the ground. Wiggle your toes, try to find four corners of your feet. If appropriate, touch your feet, massage your feet and feel the way the ground feels under your feet while sitting. If sitting on the ground, touch the floor or carpet or grass, feeling the land under you. This supports a sense of connection to the earth. If possible, allow yourself to stand or walk barefoot on the dirt, a walkway, or grass. Any attention to the feet is powerfully grounding.

Forward Bends: Forward bends are very effective as well. Stand and bend forward, holding both of your elbows and let your neck and head relax. Just swinging there for a moment gently can be supportive of grounding. Your knees should be soft, not locked. As you stand up, stand very slowly, rolling upwards one vertebra at a time. This forward bend can also be done over a chair or desk at any time. Placing hands on the seat of the chair, you can experience both the forward bend and focus on the strength of the chair holding you up.

Taking a Deep Slow Breath: When we are activated, we often take very quick breaths or hold our breath. A deep breath in through the nose, and then a very slow breath out – as slow as possible – through the nose is also very effective.

Walking Meditation: Choose a natural setting in which you feel safe and embraced. Before you move, take a few moments to come into contact with your breath, then your

mind, heart and body. Explore whether there is anything you need before you can bring your entire attention to the activity. Next, expand your sense to take in the depth of the earth to its core below you. Imagine breath coming in through the top of your head and going through your feet and sitting bones all the way into the earth below you. Then, when you feel ready, begin walking extremely slowly, allowing all of your attention to be focused upon your body moving across the earth. If you can try to walk barefoot so that you can really feel your feet on the earth. As you walk, say in your mind - “lifting...placing” as you lift and place each foot. Ensure you are not only mindful of your own movement on the earth, but what is happening around you – the sun, birds, wind, sounds, smell, temperature. Walk for about 10 minutes each day regardless of the weather. You may walk in a circle or anywhere you feel called to go.

Self-Care Plan – What is Needed?

Tension Points

Start with a few moments of your favorite meditation practice. Then, take a moment to write down all the tension points in your life right now - those things that are keeping you from thriving or living in the way you hope to live. These may take the form of personal relationships, time management, profession, financial, etc.

Stress Coping

Then write down how you cope with those things. Be honest with yourself. Coping is not always healthy and we need to be aware of our typical mechanisms for dealing with what challenges us (e.g., that extra glass of wine, shopping, eating unhealthy food, working out obsessively, avoiding people, snapping at loved ones, etc.). These may be positive or negative responses – don’t judge, just notice what you normally do. Identify all the ways you tend to cope that don’t always help you. These will be your sign-posts of stress and falling out of balance. With greater awareness, you can start to catch yourself when you are falling out of balance before you start to fall into these old patterns. Instead, we will invest in a Self-Care Plan:

Self-Care Plan

Increasing awareness of the common coping mechanisms for stress will ensure you will have greater capacity for seeking out and investing in self-care when it is needed. One of the most important things you can do in readying yourself for living a life of wellbeing and balance is creating a self-care plan for yourself. Transformation takes energy, and we need to be able to bring our whole self to whatever we pursue. This includes not only personal transformation and self-awareness work, but it means understanding your own needs, your limitations and taking time to restore yourself and take care of yourself. After all, if you are not taking care of your needs, then you are less likely to be able to respond with wisdom to others.

Consider the following and write down what comes to you in your journal...

- When do I most feel peace?
- When do I most feel joy?
- When do I most feel alive?

Envision these occasions and think about what supports these feelings. Sometimes just reflecting on such an experience and how you felt emotionally, physically and mentally about those moments can bring back the same emotional states. It may also help you define where you need to go and what you need to do to find balance. Now ask yourself: What do I really need to feel balance?

Build a Self-Care Plan that makes sense to you – things you can commit to when you recognize your own tension points are leading you to habitual (and less helpful) coping mechanisms. Consider a few ways you can nurture your body, heart, mind and, if it resonates with you, your spirit. Here are a few examples:

Nurturing the Body

Our bodies are our sacred temple for being able to bring change into the world. It's important that we take care of them so that they can do their job for us. What might caring for the body include?

Nurturing the Mind

Our minds allow for clarity, learning, new ideas and discernment of what is and what response is needed. It allows us to recognize the extraordinary beauty and wisdom that can be found all around us, while bearing witness to reality even when it is difficult. How do we cultivate our minds?

Nurturing the Heart

The heart is the center of love and connection, where we find joy, gratitude, compassion, unity and guidance through the emotional self. How do we nurture the heart-center?

Nurturing the Spirit

For those who may find the idea of spirit resonates for them, this can include our sense of connection to something larger than ourselves that brings us meaning and purpose. What are some ways we can connect to our sense of spirit?

Write out the specific acts you will take to nurture each of these 3+ aspects of yourself. Within this plan, it is important to take time for solitary practice each day. Whether this is a five-minute walk, three deep breaths, or time sitting in a place you enjoy, these moments help make room for the body and heart to care for itself and for you to find clarity and perspective. Most of all, maintain compassion for yourself. Know it is perfectly normal to need to care for the self and to get out of balance. We are not superhuman, and it is critical to invest in restoration when it is needed.

