

Mindfulness and Other  
Self-Care Practices for  
Parents

January 26, 2023  
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## Cultivating Parental Self-Care

Today we will Cover:

- \* Importance & Challenges of Self-Care
  
- \* Sleep, Exercise & Enjoyable Activities
  
- \* Mindfulness Practice & Self-Compassion
  - \* A few example mindful exercises
  - \* And a discussion of self-compassion

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## It is Hard to Practice Self-care

Some comments from parents:

- \* “Self-care is self-centered, indulgent, or lazy.”
- \* “Taking time out for self-care feel like a burden.”
- \* “I don’t have any time for self-care. I know I need it, but I feel like I’m a bad parent if I take time for myself.”

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## Importance of Self-Care

- \* “You cannot give anyone water from an empty well”
- \* Parent self-care increases parents’ wellbeing as well as their ability to care for their children.
- \* Parental self-care fills up the well so there is plenty of water for everyone in the family!

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## Time Challenge of Self-Care

- \* Taking the time for self-care is challenging.
- \* Many parents learn to do it in small doses that can fit into complicated and busy schedules.
- \* Today, the goal is to provide self-care strategies that are time efficient.
- \* Some self-care activities can be done with your children, they too need exercise and relaxation.
- \* Self-care is taking time to do things you love 😊

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## Self-care: Benefits of Sleep

Improves Physical Health  
Improves Mood  
Improves Concentration  
Improves Memory  
Improves Exercise Performance



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## Few Tips for Sleep

- \* If you can set up a bedtime routine
- \* Mind-Body exercises to disengage from overstimulating thoughts at bedtime
  - \* Counting breaths to 10 and then repeat
  - \* Body Scan to relax mind and body  
(instructions given later in the presentation)
- \* Find times during the day to rest the mind and body, even if for only a few minutes.

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## Self-care: Benefits of Exercise

Improves sleep  
Increases energy level  
Improves mood  
Improves physical health



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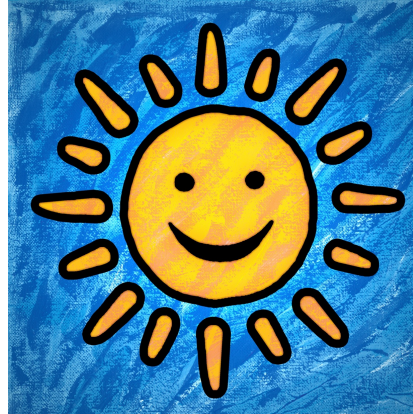
## Few Tips for Exercise

- \* You don't need to do all your exercise at one time can break it up during the day/week
- \* Exercise with a friend
- \* Key thing is to move. Examples: stand or walk while on the phone or while listening to this webinar
- \* Listen to music, audiobook (etc) during exercise
- \* Exercise with your children – like taking a walk together

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## Self-care: Benefits of Enjoyable Activities

- \* Increases wellbeing
- \* Improve stress coping
- \* Lowers fatigue
- \* More life satisfaction



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## Enjoyable Activities

Social Connections

Taking a walk or other exercise

Sleep/Naps

Spiritual/Religion Engagement

Music – like singing, dancing or playing an Instrument

Creative Activities: like cooking, gardening, art, needlework etc.

Reading or Journaling

Coffee/Tea/cold drink or Mealtime or Snack

Other

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## Self-care: Benefits of Mindfulness Relaxing the Mind & Body

- \* Improves focus and mood
- \* Less emotional reactivity
- \* Increases compassion
- \* Reduces muscle tension
- \* Improves sleep quality



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## Mindfulness Definition

- \* Jon Kabat-Zinn
- \* Psychological State of Awareness

“Mindfulness is about being fully aware of whatever is happening in the present moment, without the filter of judgment”

- \* Aware of body sensations, thoughts, emotions, sounds, sights, smells, sense of motion

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## So Where are We When we are not Living in the Moment

Often Our Minds Are are caught up in...

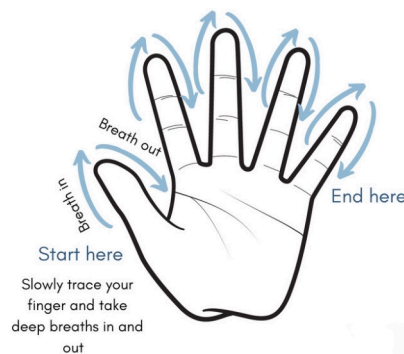
### Wandering Thoughts

“Thinking about something other than what we are currently doing/experiencing”

Our brains are thought machines (autopilot), producing thoughts all the time; planning thoughts, random thoughts, whole stories, fantasies, ruminations, creative thoughts, etc,

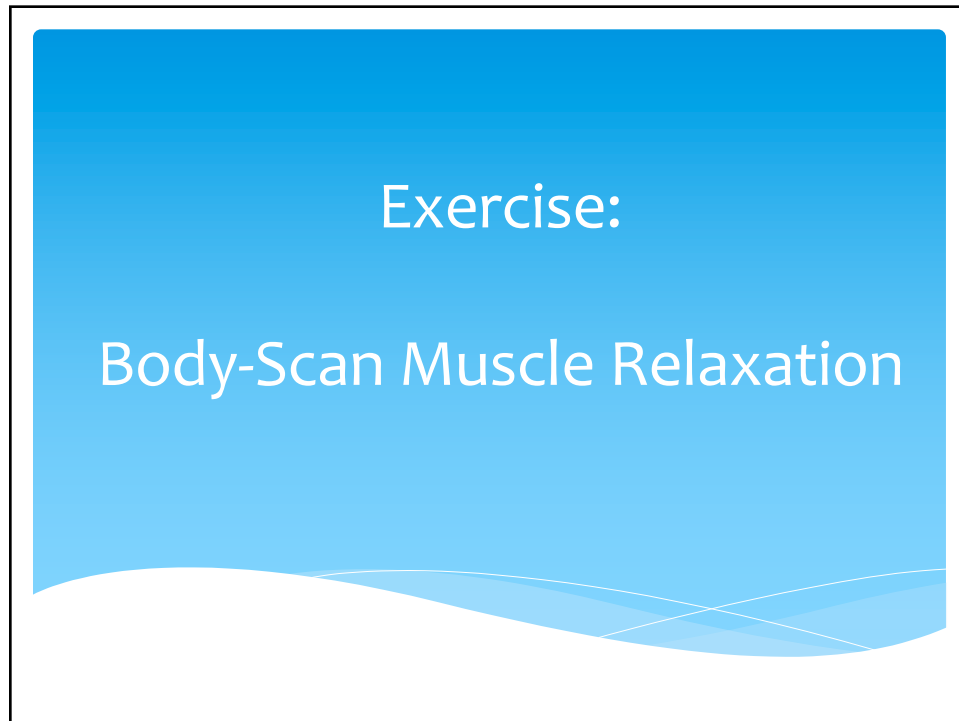
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## Exercise: Finger Breathing

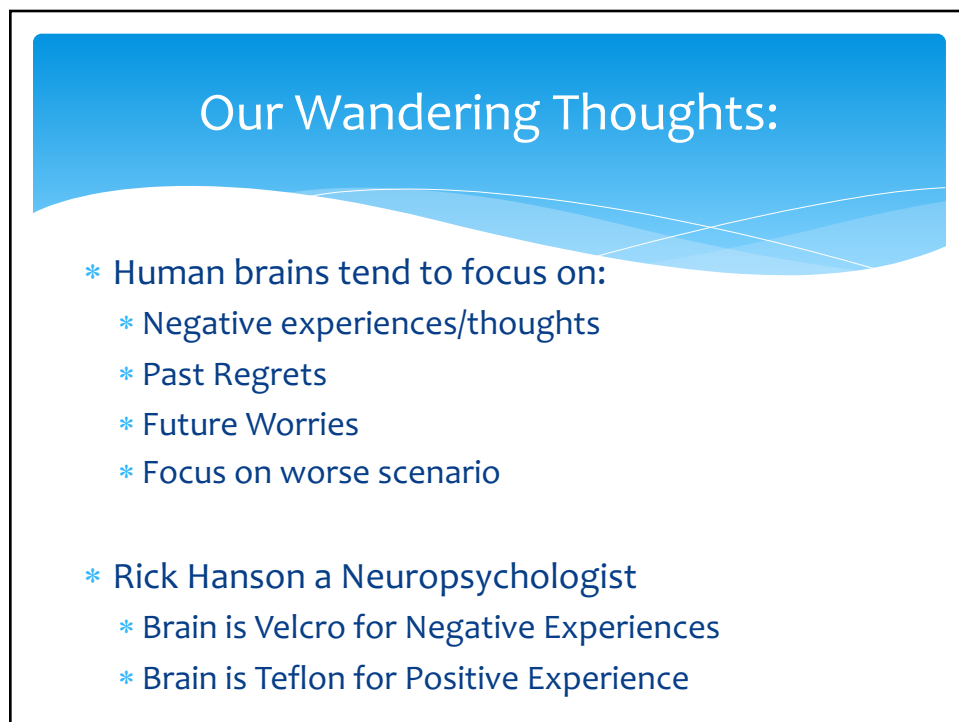


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## Evolution of the Brain Early Mammalian Brain

- \* Reactive negative emotions helped early humans to survive and reproduce in primitive circumstances
- \* Brains are wired to into Fight, Flight, or Freeze when we perceive a stress/threat.
- \* So, our minds focus more on negative events in our life than the positive ones

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## Mindful Practice: STOP Can use during stress

- S - Stop
- T - Take a Breath (in and out)
- O - Observe  
(surroundings, physically, mentally, emotionally)
- P - Proceed

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## Exercise: Mental Break

- \* This exercise might be helpful when your mind is stuck on stressful, overwhelming thoughts
- \* Scan the room for corners, one at a time
- \* This can also be done with colors. Scanning the room for colors and labeling them, one at a time
- \* OR scan for sounds, (what sounds are being noticed) or body sensations (what sensations are being noticed)

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## Exercise: Mental Break

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## Mindfulness Practices

- \* Formal Practices  
Different Meditations to train the muscle of the mind to settle and not get lost in thoughts
- \* Informal Practices  
Applying mindfulness to everyday activities and parenting, including stressful ones
- \* Cultivating Self-Compassion

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## Mindfulness Settles the Mind

- \* When we develop a mindfulness practice, we are enhancing our awareness. This provides us with more space to observe, feel, & acknowledge what is happening for us and others.
- \* In this space we can
  - \* Choose to respond instead of reacting to stress
  - \* Notice positive events in our lives that we tend to take for granted or minimize
  - \* We can better choose how we want to spend our time
  - \* What we want to expose our mind/body to

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## Self-Compassion

- \* Kristin Neff's book - Self-Compassion: The proven power of being kind to yourself (2011)

Self-Compassion Involves:

- \* Being Aware that this is a moment of suffering (mindfulness)
- \* Connecting with our common humanity  
(ALL people suffer, so we are not alone)
- \* Responding with self-kindness (being our own ally)

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## Bringing Kindness to Ourselves & Others

- \* We can bring kindness to ourselves, just like we would for a dear friend who is stressed.
- \* We can also extend kindness to children and others in our lives.

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## Bringing Kindness to Ourselves

- \* Bringing kindness to ourselves is self-compassion.
- \* Kristin Neff, PhD, is a mother of a youth with autism, and she is a psychologist and researcher at the University of Texas
- \* Her career is devoted to researching and teaching the benefits of self-compassion
- \* <https://self-compassion.org>

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## Stanford Mindful Parenting Course

- \* 8-week Online (Zoom) course
  - \* For parents of children/adolescents/adults with behavior challenges and/or learning differences.
  - \* Offered three times a year (next course in the spring 2023)
  - \* Stanford Parenting Center, Division of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry and Child Development
  - \* This website also has audio recordings of mindful practices
  - \* (scroll to the bottom)
- <https://med.stanford.edu/childpsychiatry/parenting.html>
- <https://med.stanford.edu/childpsychiatry/parenting/topics/mindfulparenting.html>

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## Community Mindfulness Classes

Mindfulness-based Stress Reductions (MBSR)  
Most medical centers offer MBSR courses

Awareness Relaxation Training Program (MBSR Course)  
Different Mindfulness Classes for the Community  
Teacher: Bob Stahl, PhD and others  
<http://mindfulnessprograms.com>

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## Mindful Practice Apps

Insight Timer  
Calm  
Headspace

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