

Mindfulness and Meditation for School Social Workers

By Jill Wojcik Pula, LCSW, YTT-500

BENEFITS OF YOGA & MINDFULNESS

- Improves flexibility & balance
- Enhances muscle strength & tone
- Improves respiration
- Improves circulation & cardiac health
- Reduces physical pain
- Better body alignment & awareness
- Develops focus & concentration
- Reduces stress
- Strengthens the mind-body connection
- Improves memory
- Teaches self-love & acceptance
- Releases tension & promotes relaxation
- Improves digestion

BENEFITS OF BREATHING EXERCISES

- Releases stress & tension
- Slows & regulates the heart
- Increases oxygen in the bloodstream
- Lowers blood pressure
- Alleviates fatigue & increases energy
- Reduces depression & anxiety symptoms
- Improves concentration
- Relieves pain
- Stimulates the lymphatic system to detoxify the body
- Improves immunity & digestion
- Increases endorphins
- Helps support correct posture
- Improves sleep
- Regulates body temperature

WAYS TO INCORPORATE BREATH

Nostril/Nose Breathing – Feeling your breath. Breathing in and out of the nose, see if you can feel the air as it enters and leaves through the nostrils. (Some people are not physically capable of doing this. Have them focus on their mouth and the sensation there).

Belly Breathing – Feeling your breath, Lying down, hands on belly. Inhale, belly rises. Exhale, belly empties. Then practice sitting up.

Count Breathing – Inhale 5, exhale 5
Inhale 4, exhale 6 (Longer exhale lowers heart, breathing & blood pressure rates)

Ujjayi/Ocean/Wave Breathing – Hearing your breath, Deepen the sound of your breath so you can hear your breath (riding the wave of your breath).

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BENEFITS OF MEDITATION

- Improves self-awareness
- Lengthens attention span
- Reduces stress
- Lessens anxiety
- Strengthens the mind-body connection
- Improves memory
- Enhances emotional regulation
- Helps control pain
- Improves sleep & promotes relaxation
- Decrease blood pressure

LOVING-KINDNESS MEDITATION

Finding a relaxed and centered position.

Bring someone or something to mind that you find easy to hold with compassion (such as a family member, friend, pet, loved one). Hold that image in your mind and offer the following phrases – “May you be happy. May you know peace. May you be free from suffering”. Pay attention to what it feels like as you reflect upon this experience.

Next bring someone or something in mind that you have no particular feelings towards (this may be a neighbor, an acquaintance, someone you passed by in a store). Offering them the same phrases – “May you be happy. May you know peace. May you be free from suffering”. Notice what this practice feels like.

Next, call to mind someone who evokes strong feelings in you. This may be someone you struggle to get along with, someone who tries your patience, this may be someone who has harmed you. Bring in mind their image and offer them the same loving wishes – May you be happy. May you know peace. May you be free from suffering”. (This focus is on love and compassion both for yourself and forgiveness for the other person). Notice all your feelings and thoughts as they arise, all responses are correct. (Forgiveness/healing is QUIET/RELAXATION TIME continued generally not a quick process so move this this section with self-compassion and judgment free).

Progressively, sending out loving-kindness to all living beings – “May all beings be happy. May all beings know peace. May all beings be free from suffering”. Sit a moment in stillness to reflect upon this phase.

Lastly, extending these same wishes to yourself – May I be happy. May I know peace. May I be free from suffering.”