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**MINDFULNESS PRACTICES: “In the Moment” Resourcing**

According to the psychologist Sarah Ross, resourcing is the practice of inviting our mind/body to attune to sensations of safety or goodness, however small they may be. The process of attending to a felt sense of “okayness” begins the process of teaching our nervous system that it can experience stress, and then come back to a state of calm. There are many types of resourcing, and this handout will cover methods that come in handy in those moments when we are getting swept away by our automatic reactions. You can also consider them mini-mindfulness practices.

These are resourcing techniques that largely come from the mental health world as a way to get at least a tiny break from unhelpful thoughts and emotions. These approaches are all about pausing, noticing what is going on in your mind and body, and then offering yourself some quick kindness for what you are experiencing. Doing this breaks the harmful cycle of both mental and physical clenching that happens with stress—a cycle that digs itself in deeper and deeper. Breaking that cycle for even a moment helps because, left undetected, it will close you off from who you really are.

Taking even a moment to care for yourself can have beneficial physiological and psychological effects. Granted, when one is really stressed-out it would be great to have a technique that could drop you from a 10 on a 1-10 scale to maybe a 3, and probably only general anesthesia can do that. But if you can get from a 10 to a 9.8 or 9.6 with a quick moment of self-care—that can be huge. Plus, these things are cumulative. Although there may not be a huge immediate effect at any one time, when you intentionally add these to your life, the ability to pause and collect yourself becomes more of a default way of being. And that means that you have more options going into the next moment—you are less likely to fall back into reactivity that can perpetuate a difficult situation.

With these moves you are taking the time to deeply notice your body, and that ties up neural processing power so there is less bandwidth available for unhelpful rumination. They all include at least one conscious deep breath, even if it isn’t explicitly stated. ([Here](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6137615/) is a link to a review of the efficacy of breathing techniques if you need some evidence prior to trying it.) The final component is to see if you can offer yourself some kindness as you do this—whatever that means to you (the self-compassion break at the end gives you an idea if you aren’t sure). These are loosely divided into three approaches based on the breath, the body, or a mix of things.

Breath-based resourcing (also see Breath Work handout):

* One conscious deep breath, noticing how it fills the body on the inbreath, and then promoting some parasympathetic activity with a slow extended outbreath. Really try to pause to do this and let the breath soften your mind and body—even if it is only for a few nanoseconds.
* The effect can be enhanced by adding a gentle sigh, “Ahhhh”, as you exhale (if the situation allows). Let the sigh represent what you feel when you slip into a warm bath, allowing that sense of relief to spread throughout your body. Seriously, you have to try this.
* Even better, three such breaths. Another version is to use each of the three breaths in a different way:
  + First breath: bring attention to the simple process of breathing.
  + Second breath: note tension in the body and try to calm it.
  + Third breath: think of something that brings you pleasure--a person, pet, place, or anything—and use that feeling to try to bring a little joy into your body. Start small.
  + Extra time? Go crazy and grab 10 such breaths—but slowly so you don’t hyperventilate!
* Pausing to feel the normal inbreath/outbreath for a minute or so after one deep breath.

Body-based resourcing (remember to toss in a conscious breath!):

* Doing a ‘body scan’. This means checking into different parts of the body, looking for any increased tension and gently releasing that. Tightness in the body often means tightness in the mind and softening one will soften the other. Places that famously store unrecognized tension include the neck and shoulders, the jaw muscles and the abdomen.
* Related to this, as you do work tasks, like typing, notice what is happening in your body. Look especially for tightness in places like the jaw, shoulders, abdomen or legs. Toss in some of those deep breaths, too.
* Walking a little slower and noticing the details of each step: the lift, the swing, the placing. Or even notice how your feet feel as you stand or sit in a chair. Our feet provide a lot of information that we usually never notice, and paying attention to that can return you to the present moment rather than letting the discursive mind whip itself into its usual frenzy.
* Washing hands and feeling the warmth/flow of the water. Like the feet, sensations from the hands take up a lot of real estate on the cerebral cortex. So deeply noticing the hands is another way to shift that bandwidth from negative to positive experiences.
* This one sounds odd, but try bringing your cup of tea or coffee up to your cheeks and lips and feeling the warmth of the cup itself, assuming this can be done safely. As with the hands and feet, the oral region has lots of innervation and savoring the feeling of warmth can quiet a few stressed-out neurons. (At least until you bathe them in caffeine, but that is a subject for a different handout!)
* Eating slowly and noticing all the sensations, even if only for a bite or two.
* Listening to sounds around you—not naming or judging them, but rather letting them flow through you as simply sensations to be noticed.
* The way we approach the world with our physical bodies shapes the way we think and feel. Even just being in a neutral, open posture is better than being hunched over and clenched. Feel free to add in some ‘power poses’ as advocated by Amy Cuddy, et. al., if they work for you!
* Take a page from the Taylor Swift playbook and Shake It Off. This may be as simple as wiggling your fingers, or maybe you can do a whole-body shimmy and shake for a moment or two. You might even find yourself smiling as you do it, and definitely take a moment to notice how your body feels afterwards.

Mixed approaches (Did someone mention add a breath?):

* Whisper what you are doing as you are doing it.
* Whisper what you are feeling as each feeling arises.
* The **STOP** practice: **S**topping in the midst of a stressful time; **T**aking that conscious breath; **O**bserving what's going on in and around you; **P**roceeding with what you are doing, ideally with calmer sense of the best way to do that.
* Reminding yourself how caring for others is aligned with your core values—even if the logistics of doing that is hard right now. Of course, if what you are doing isn’t aligned with your core values, maybe it’s time to open that surf shop on Maui.

(If you aren’t sure about your core values, here is a great site with research-based ways to help you explore them: <https://positivepsychology.com/values-questionnaire/>)

* Doing a self-compassion break. This means really noticing difficult emotions that are present, naming them and allowing them to be there without fighting them. Then acknowledging that you are not alone in this, even if it feels that way—these feelings are part of our common humanity. And then taking a moment to offer yourself some kindness, perhaps with a phrase like “Hey, it’s ok, I’m here for you; we’ve got this,” or placing your hand over your heart. This is part of a research-proven approach known as Mindful Self-Compassion that can be very valuable. [Here](https://self-compassion.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/self-compassion.break__01-cleanedbydan.mp3) is a link to a 5-minute guided audio version (although it can be done much faster):
* 5,4,3,2,1 Practice: This is a classic from the mental health world. The idea is to ground yourself in the present moment by systematically paying attention to what is here in order to redirect the mind from anxiety or a panic attack.
  + Pause and then name mentally or out loud 5 things you see, 4 things you feel, 3 things you hear, 2 things you can smell and 1 thing you taste. [Here](https://insighttimer.com/blog/54321-grounding-technique/) is a good link for more info.

Hopefully these ideas will be of some help. Remember, after doing these things you’ll still be stuck in the same tough situation you started with, but just maybe you’ll be bringing more of your wiser self into the mix as opposed to that scared caveman or cavewoman that thinks everything is a saber tooth tiger. And, over time, doing this consistently can rewire your brain so that you more automatically learn to pause and get in touch with your higher self no matter the situation. To encourage you, here is a quote from the author and educator Parker Palmer:

“Self-care is never a selfish act. It is simply good stewardship of the only gift we have, the gift we were put on earth to offer others. Anytime we can listen to our true self and give the care it requires, we do it not just for ourselves, but for the many others whose lives we aim to serve.”