

Compasspoint Nonprofit Services Nonprofit Day 2011
Inspired Resilience: Rethinking How We Sustain People, Organizations, and Causes
Monday, September 19, 2011; Oakland Marriott

Sustaining Self:

*How to Create a Practice for Creating and Sustaining Well-being
in the Workplace, Even During Difficult Times*

1:30 PM-2:45 PM

Agenda

Time	Segment
1:30 PM	Welcome - Workshop Overview
1:35 PM	What's the State of Your Self-Care Ship?
1:45 PM	Self-Care Toolbox
2:00 PM	Work: Depletion or Nourishment?
2:15 PM	Take Your Work-Life Balance Temperature
2:30 PM	Craft Your Self-Care Plan
2:45 PM	Workshop Concludes

Resources

- Books:
 - Full Catastrophe Living, by Jon Kabat-Zin
 - The One Who Is Not Busy, by Darlene Cohen
 - The Miracle of Mindfulness, by Thich Nhat Hanh
 - A Path with Heart, by Jack Kornfield
 - Less, by Marc Lesser
- Meditation and Mindfulness:
 - *Awakening Heart Sangha*, meditation for nonprofit staff and volunteers, www.lisahoffman.net; lisa@lisahoffman.net
 - *Berkeley Zen Center*, www.bzc.org
 - *San Francisco Zen Center*, www.sfzc.org
 - *Spirit Rock Meditation Center*, www.spiritrock.org

Worksheet: What's the State of Your Self-Care Ship?

What Challenges Your Self-Care?

What Encourages Your Self-Care?

Worksheet: Work: Depletion or Nourishment?

Why do you do the work that you do?

How can your self-care practice be supported by that work?

Worksheet: Craft Your Self-Care Plan

My Self-Care goals are:

My Self-Care practices and tools are:

I will be accountable to:

Mindfulness in the Workplace

Have you ever...

- Taken public transportation or driven to work, arrived, and had no idea whatsoever how you got there?
- Grown so anxious about how an important meeting might go wrong that it distracted from your preparation?
- Found yourself with a cup of tea or coffee with no recollection of having made it?

What is mindfulness in these every day situations we all experience?

Thich Nhat Hanh puts it in simple and elegant terms:

- Walking, I know I am walking; drinking tea, I know I am drinking tea; breathing, I know I am breathing...
- Or, preparing for a meeting, I know I am preparing for a meeting.
- Everyday mindfulness is simply experiencing our lives as they unfold, from tea to giving a training to hugging a loved one.
- How can we cultivate the skill and practice of mindfulness? Of being here, now, rather than living in what might go wrong (or right!), how dinner will taste after you've shopped and cooked, or how you want to get a difficult employee evaluation over with.

The Buddha taught...

Four foundations of mindfulness that are within our reach and simple, but not easy, to develop. These levels of awareness we can cultivate are:

- **Body:** what is our physical experience?
- **Feelings:** what is our feeling experience -- positive, negative or neutral? Are we grasping at experiences we like, pushing away experiences we don't like, or lulled into delusion by experiences that seem inconsequential?
- **Thoughts:** are we having a direct experience, or are we having thoughts and feelings about our experience? And are we aware of what underpins our thoughts and feelings, which in Buddhism is typically greed, hate, delusion?
- **People, places and things:** our particular focus -- another person, a sound, a meal -- also known as phenomena or objects of mind. Are we experiencing what's in front of us or our ideas about it? Job interviews, donor solicitations and first dates can be great examples of how our focus on the person or thing before us so easily distorts our actual experience.

Everyday Mindfulness Practices

Breathe!

Mindful breathing -- even for just a few minutes -- is a powerful way to handle stress. Breathing is a biological tool that slows the heart rate, lowers blood pressure, and gets you out of the "fight or flight system" that is our animal response to threats -- whether it is a speeding car, a difficult board member, or a challenging staff situation.

Please try this three minute practice next time you find your breathing shallow and your heart beating faster... you can do it just about anywhere:

- Close your eyes
- Tell yourself that for these few moments there is no pressure, no goals, no particular way you need to be
- Take a few quiet, deep breaths
- Slowly fill your belly, then your chest, with life-giving air
- Follow your breathing: in... out, in... out
- As you breathe in, feel your breath in every part of your body, toes to head
- As you breathe out, feel your breath carry away the day's stress
- Release the tension in your neck, and your back
- Drop your shoulders -- they don't need to be touching your ears!
- Slowly breathe in... slowly breathe out
- When you are ready, open your eyes
- Feel the impact of your breathing and see if you can carry it throughout your day

To-Do List Practice

You have written your to-do list and have a momentary feeling of satisfaction. Then, as you look at what seems like an endless list, your chest tightens and you feel completely overwhelmed. How can you ever accomplish all of this? The answer is: you can't. Not all at the same time. And this kind of overwhelming anxiety arises when you are focused on everything you need to do, all at once. Try this next time you are about to write your to-do list:

- Organize your PDA, pen and paper, or computer in front of you
- Breathe in deeply a couple of times
- Write your to-do list with care -- this is your life and your work
- Continue breathing slowly and deeply while you write your list
- When you complete your list, pause for a moment and honor the fact that you are finished
- Put your list away and turn your attention to the next thing
- Notice when thoughts of your entire list arise and trigger anxiety
- Bring your thoughts and attention back to your breath and the task at hand
- Gently note that all you can do is what's in front of you
- The list will wait until you are ready to check off what you're working on and do the next thing
- Focus your attention on the task at hand and your breath
- If you notice that your shoulders and neck are tight, relax them
- Repeat this practice every time you feel overwhelmed at the thought of all you need to do
- You can actually use the task at hand and breathing to center and ground you

Multitasking Practice

As with to-do lists, multitasking is also stressful when you are obsessing about everything on your plate while working on a particular task. Apply your To-Do List Practice skills to multitasking:

- Notice when thoughts of everything you need to do arise and trigger anxiety while you're working on something else, or when doing two things at once
- Bring your thoughts and attention back to your breath and the task/tasks at hand
- Gently note that all you can do is what's in front of you
- Everything else will wait until you are ready to tackle the next thing
- Focus your attention on the task/tasks at hand and your breath
- If you notice that your shoulders and neck are tight, relax them
- Repeat this practice every time you feel overwhelmed at the thought of all you need to do
- You can actually use the task at hand and breathing to center and ground you.

Telephone Practice

How many times does the phone ring and cause you to tighten up at the interruption, stressed out at being taken away from e-mail, finally writing your Directors report for the board meeting, or finally going to the restroom? As you reach for the phone, you wonder how long this will take, focused on your endless to-do list for the day. Next time the phone rings, this might be a practice for you:

- Take three slow, deep breaths, one for each ring
- On the first ring, consciously move your attention from what you have been doing to your breath
- On the second ring, follow your breath completely: in... out
- On the third ring, consciously move your attention to the telephone, feeling your breath as your foundation
- Now pick up the phone, completely engaging in this activity: it is not an interruption, it is simply the next thing you need to do
- When you conclude your phone conversation, repeat the process using three slow, deep breaths to now transition to the next thing.

How to Meditate

Meditation Skills

The beauty, one of many, of meditation is that you are cultivating the very skills you need to meditate, which are:

- ✓ **Focusing at will.** **Breath** practice in particular develops the ability to focus rather than being constantly distracted by whatever thoughts, feelings and events are before you. This skill is particularly helpful with everyday activities like active listening.
- ✓ **Awareness of everything.** Open awareness meditation practice refines the consciousness by developing the ability to be aware of many things at the same time, rather than just focusing on what is dictated by your self-interest alone. This skill is especially useful when you are in complex situations in which many layers of communication, people and activity are impinging upon you at the same time. It is also an important skill for people in pain who wish to include sources of pleasure in their experience of pain and anguish.

Chair Posture

- ✓ Sit toward the edge of your chair.
- ✓ Find your sit bones by swaying gently back and forth and side-to-side. You'll know when you find them because your spine will be aligned, your muscles will be relaxed, and you'll be able to sit with little effort.
- ✓ Imagine a golden cord stretching from the back part of the top of your head into the sky, gently supporting you, and helping your spine align with spaciousness.
- ✓ Sit with your feet flat on the ground.
- ✓ Position your knees so they are about your shoulders distance apart.
- ✓ Make sure your knees are slightly lower than your behind; this allows for circulation.
- ✓ Line up your ears, shoulders and hips; and your nose and belly button.
- ✓ Gently tuck in your chin so your head and neck are upright rather than jutting forward -- there should be no strain.
- ✓ Position your hands together, left palm resting in right, or fingers interwoven together, above your lap or hands resting on your thighs in a comfortable position as close as possible to the hip so your shoulders are not drawn forward. Or, try the universal mudra taught at the meditation group; hold your mudra belly button level, close to your body.
- ✓ Your eyes should be partially open, cast downward, initially focused on the ground slightly forward of your legs, though your vision may become diffuse after awhile.
- ✓ You should feel a balance between alertness and relaxation in this posture.

Zafu (Meditation cushion) Posture

- ✓ Sit on your cushion, crossing your legs Indian style.
- ✓ Position yourself so your behind is a little higher than your crossed legs, which will promote circulation.
- ✓ If your knees are not touching the floor, use cushions or rolled up towels to support them; this creates stability.
- ✓ Find your sit bones by swaying gently back and forth and side-to-side. You'll know when you find them because your spine will be aligned, your muscles will be relaxed, and you'll be able to sit with little effort.

Sustaining Self; Page | 8

- ✓ Imagine a golden cord stretching from the back part of the top of your head into the sky, gently supporting you, and helping your spine align with spaciousness.
- ✓ Line up your ears, shoulders and hips; and your nose and belly button.
- ✓ Gently tuck in your chin so your head and neck are upright rather than jutting forward -- there should be no strain.
- ✓ Position your hands together, left palm resting in right, or fingers interwoven together, above your lap or hands resting on your thighs in a comfortable position as close as possible to the hip so your shoulders are not drawn forward. Or, try the universal mudra taught at the meditation group; hold your mudra belly button level, close to your body.
- ✓ Your eyes should be partially open, cast downward, initially focused on the ground slightly forward of your legs, though your vision may become diffuse after awhile.
- ✓ You should feel a balance between alertness and relaxation in this posture.

Breath and Working with Your Mind and Emotions

Meditation Practice #1: Breath Counting

- ✓ Count your breaths up to 10.
- ✓ Each in-and-out is one breath.
- ✓ When you notice that you have gotten lost in thoughts and feelings, go back to number one and continue your breath counting practice.
- ✓ This practice deepens your ability to concentrate.
- ✓ In this practice, thoughts and feelings are in the background, and your breath counting practice is in the foreground.
- ✓ When you notice that thoughts and feelings become the foreground, simply return to your breath.
- ✓ This practice is especially helpful for people who have a challenge with focusing.

Meditation Practice #2: Following Your Breath

- ✓ Breathe in and out normally, without strain.
- ✓ Follow your breath, in-and-out, in-and-out.
- ✓ Let your thoughts and feelings arise and fall away.
- ✓ When you notice that you have gotten lost in thoughts and feelings, gently bring your attention back to your breath.
- ✓ Do this as many times as you need to during your meditation.
- ✓ This practice is especially helpful for people who have a challenge with focusing.

Meditation Practice #3: Open Awareness (The Zen practice of Shikantaza -- Just Sitting)

- ✓ Sit with an awareness of everything in the present moment: your posture, the feeling of your clothes on your body, the earth beneath you, the people around you (if there are any), sounds, the taste in your mouth, etc.
- ✓ When you notice your thoughts narrowing to a single track, i.e., composing a to-do list, open out to include everything.
- ✓ This is a challenging meditation practices because you must interweave everything you are aware of simultaneously.

- ✓ The skill involved in open awareness is developing the Middle Way balance between allowing thoughts to arise without keeping them around and allowing them to pass out of awareness without holding onto them.

Combining Meditation Practices

- ✓ Begin your meditation with the Counting or Following Breath practices.
- ✓ Once you are settled and focused, switch to Open Awareness.
- ✓ Combining these approaches grounds Open Awareness in the preceding concentration practice.
- ✓ You are also developing your mental flexibility and the ability to "switch gears" as called for by what's in front of you.

Meditation Practice #4: Labeling

- ✓ As thoughts and feelings arise, gently label them and let them fall away.
- ✓ When anger comes up, softly say to yourself "anger, anger," while the anger passes.
- ✓ This practice enables you to disentangle from your thoughts and feelings and let them fall away.
- ✓ This practice is especially helpful for people who have hard time knowing what they are experiencing internally.

Remember

- ✓ There is no good or bad meditation.
- ✓ If you have the impulse to move, scratch, etc., sit with that impulse and observe it -- see what happens.
- ✓ Not reacting to your impulses to move cultivates your ability to make choices rather than automatically reacting to what is in front of you or your internal whims.
- ✓ If the impulse to move continues, allow it to come up at least three times before moving; bow gently to acknowledge the people around you, move very slowly and mindfully, maintaining your meditation posture.
- ✓ If your need to move is because of physical pain or a sleeping limb, bow gently to acknowledge the people around you, move very slowly and mindfully, and adjust your posture.
- ✓ Distractions during meditation -- like the loud breathing of a neighbor, the sound of cars or voices nearby or a whirring air-conditioner or heating system -- are actually part of your meditation, since meditation is about being with the present moment, including your reaction to the "distraction," exactly as it is.
- ✓ The heart of meditation practice is to keep coming back to the present moment when you are caught in your thoughts and feelings.
- ✓ Practicing this "coming back" develops your skill in being present as you meditate and throughout your life.

The Freedom of Mindfulness

by Lisa Hoffman

A phone ringing in the middle of the night is rarely a good thing, and the 12:30 a.m. call I received on Labor Day 2007 was no exception. It was my sister-in-law phoning from Ohio because my mother had started hemorrhaging and was in intensive care. It was touch and go over the next two days because the bleeding wouldn't stop. When she was finally stabilized, her doctors determined that she had cancer. She was finally released 10 days after being admitted.

My family and I rode a spinning wheel of emotions that ranged from fear to anger to relief. We found out that the type of cancer she has is highly treatable -- she wouldn't even need chemo. This experience has been a reminder of how important it is to be mindful of how my life is affecting me. Otherwise, it's easy to be driven by emotions or thoughts that have nothing to do with the person in front of me. I have certainly caused hurt in this way. Have you?

Right Mindfulness is part of the Buddha's Eightfold Noble Path, among his first teachings. Practicing this path transforms suffering because we can live in harmony and connection with all people and all things. If I'm not aware of my anger about my mother having cancer, I am likely to project it onto the unlucky people who cross my path. That projection is not about what is really happening. Mindfulness can keep me connected with what's in front of me.

Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh describes it this way in *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching*: "Right mindfulness accepts everything without judging or reacting. It is inclusive and loving. The practice is to find ways to sustain appropriate attention throughout the day."

Mindfulness can seem pretty ethereal -- a vague notion of staying aware of the present moment. But how can I do this, when my thoughts and emotions so often conspire to take me away from right here and right now?

Luckily, the Buddha was practical as well as enlightened, and taught four common sense ways to be mindful -- to wake up. They are through the body, feelings, mind, and the experience before me, and are known as the four foundations of mindfulness. After learning about them, I thought *of course!* Knowing my physical state, emotions, thoughts, and how I perceive the person or thing in front of me makes it much more likely that I will have the actual experience. Without mindfulness, I will probably be stuck in reactions and projections that have little to do with right here, right now.

Over the last 12 months, I've had a real lesson in mindfulness from one of the most difficult clients I have ever worked with in my nonprofit fundraising consulting practice. He is tense, perfectionist, and the most detail-obsessed individual I have ever encountered. When my difficult client discussed *one line* in a direct mail letter 10 (perhaps more) times, I wanted to reach through the phone line and throttle him. My whole body tensed up, my shoulders practically touching my ears and my lower back clenching and aching.

After meeting with this client, I headed back to my office thinking about all the ways he was controlling, stubborn, tedious, and resistant to new approaches. I suggested using their excellent website more directly to raise money, particularly because so many of the people they serve are young, and his response was, "Oh, we could never do that!" Pretty soon, I no longer saw him; I saw a figure representing trouble and annoyance.

Sustaining Self; Page | 11

Sound familiar? Is there anyone in your life who evokes such feelings, thoughts and strong physical sensations? I decided to approach him mindfully. It was not easy! I had become comfortable with my judgments and negative reactions. I began to notice when frustrated and angry feelings came up, when thoughts about what a huge pain in the neck he was dominated my thinking, when my body felt tight and closed. At the same time, I experienced my client as largely shut down to change. It was a painful, no-win situation. Should I "give him a piece of my mind"? Should I fire him? Should I just grit my teeth and power through until our contract concluded?

I decided to try and work with what was in front of me. My tenseness and frustration made a challenging situation feel impossible. So I began paying attention to him in a different way. What would make him feel more comfortable? What were his emotional and physical cues? What was an entry point, a middle ground between the most strategic way to proceed and moving forward in a way he could accept?

As I began through mindfulness to navigate *my* experience, I began to see more clearly *the* experience. He definitely was a difficult client. But once I was mindful of my frustration and other reactions, I could breathe deeply, drop my shoulders, and look at how we might take a step forward. I worried less about the most strategic step, and focused on simple, positive actions.

And we did begin to move forward. It was slow, steady and less than perfect. I began to have compassion for my client. I actually began to like him. One day I realized with a shock that he had a sense of humor -- we were having fun! And I was absolutely floored when he opened to ideas he had previously resisted.

Mindfulness is a powerful tool. Noticing how I feel, what I'm thinking, and how my body is reacting gives me choices. I was able to change how I approached my difficult client once I really knew how I was reacting. I learned that I could have compassion in any situation, even if it took a while to develop. "When we are mindful," writes Thich Nhat Hanh, "touching deeply the present moment, we can see and listen deeply, and the fruits are always understanding, acceptance, love, and the desire to relieve suffering and bring joy. Understanding is the very foundation of love."

In the case of my difficult client, the outcome has been surprisingly positive and to my liking. Sometimes it's not. And even then I can continue to make choices about how I respond. I find mindfulness gives me freedom regardless of the results. There is power in the present moment, no matter how I feel about it.

My mother begins radiation next week, and I will be going back to Ohio to support her and my family. Her prognosis remains positive, and we are all cautiously optimistic. There are still times when I am fearful. A very close friend recently died of ovarian cancer. I know too well that there are no guaranteed outcomes. I also know that I will mindfully experience whatever happens. That is my vow, and that is my freedom.

Lisa Hoffman is an ordained Zen Buddhist priest and a nonprofit consultant with more than 25 years experience.