

# Self Care & Stress



**You cannot be fixed. You were never broken.**

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CALS Advisor retreat ≈ May 8, 2018 ≈ Jenny Simon MC, LPC, PhD

# OBJECTIVES

# What are we going to do today?

- I am making an assumption that your “self-care game” would be strong when you are on vacation or during the weekends? The place where you need self-care when you are stressed out at work?
- Define stress as an obstacle to self-care
- Learn why the amygdala is the unconscious blocker
- Parasympathetic state is KEY!
- Practice at least 3 new ideas to add in self-care
- Return to work tomorrow with a plan!

# What do we already know?

- What are your pre thoughts and ideas about self-care and stress?
  - What do you know?
  - What do you want to know?

at the center  
of your being you  
have the answer;  
you know who you  
are and you know  
what you want.

(lao tzu)

Do you have **RESISTANCE** to this workshop on self-care or thinking about stress?



# It's ok...

- I understand and embrace that resistance is a normal part of the learning process.

## If you feel annoyed...just know that

- Resistance is a healthy signal to the body that something is about to change. Just be mindful and acknowledge the resistance instead of avoiding it.

**EXPERIENCIAL**

# Change your attention

Breathe into the back

- Breathe into your back and back of the shoulders, when you breathe in hold it for a few extra seconds and then let it go. When you let it go, blow it out for a few seconds longer.
  - Do this three times.
- 
- *It is up to you to decide to place, shift or remove attention.*

# STRESS as EPIDEMIC

# Stress as an epidemic

- American Institute of Stress notes that 75-90 percent of visits to primary care physicians are for stress-related complaints.
- People who are unable to effectively manage their stress have a 40% higher death rate than their non-stressed counterparts.
- People spend 18 billion a year on antidepressants and anti-anxiety drugs.
- The Society for Human Resource Professionals found that in the U.S., 8 out of 10 people want to find another job.
- Stress is the body's warning signal that something is out of sync, but we have ignored it and become accustomed to the stimulation of tension, strain, worry become normal.

# Stress

## The Emotional/Mental Response

- depression
- apathy
- lack of direction
- feeling trapped
- racing thoughts
- worrying frequently
- feeling rejected
- feelings of helplessness
- irritability

# Stress

## The Behavioral Response

- being late to work
- arguing
- isolation
- neglecting appearance
- avoiding tasks
- over eating
- poor job performance
- procrastination
- loss of appetite
- increased drug use
- no exercise

# Stress

## The Physical Response

- breathlessness
- fatigue
- pounding heart
- nightmares
- change in appetite
- muscles aches
- sleeping problems
- stomach aches
- constipation or diarrhea
- chest pains

# Self-awareness

Self-awareness of your WORST self

*How do you act and communicate when you are not happy, pressured about deadlines, or worried about an outcome?*

*WHO triggers you? What type of student or situation.*

*We can't change anything until we define it.*

# How does it effect you?

- Please take a few minutes to write down what your symptoms are during stress:

Do you eat, shop, sleep, get angry?

- Who is the trigger?



# Is stress anger?

- Some theorists hypothesize that all stress is rooted in anger
- Anger is an emotional state that ranges from irritability to fury

(HINT: Helplessness is usually an emotion that we avoid, anger helps us feel stronger?)



# Tool #1: Self-Awareness

- Encourage self-reflection by asking loved ones, What do I look like when I am stressed or angry
- **SEEKING FEEDBACK FROM PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE**

You can start with your closest people, the ones you would most trust love and care about you, who would be willing to do it in order to support you. Let them know how much of a gift their honesty would be for you. In the process, you will discover how much more intimacy this added level of honesty can bring to your relationship, even if it's uncomfortable for both of you along the way.

# THE AMYGDALA= The fear center

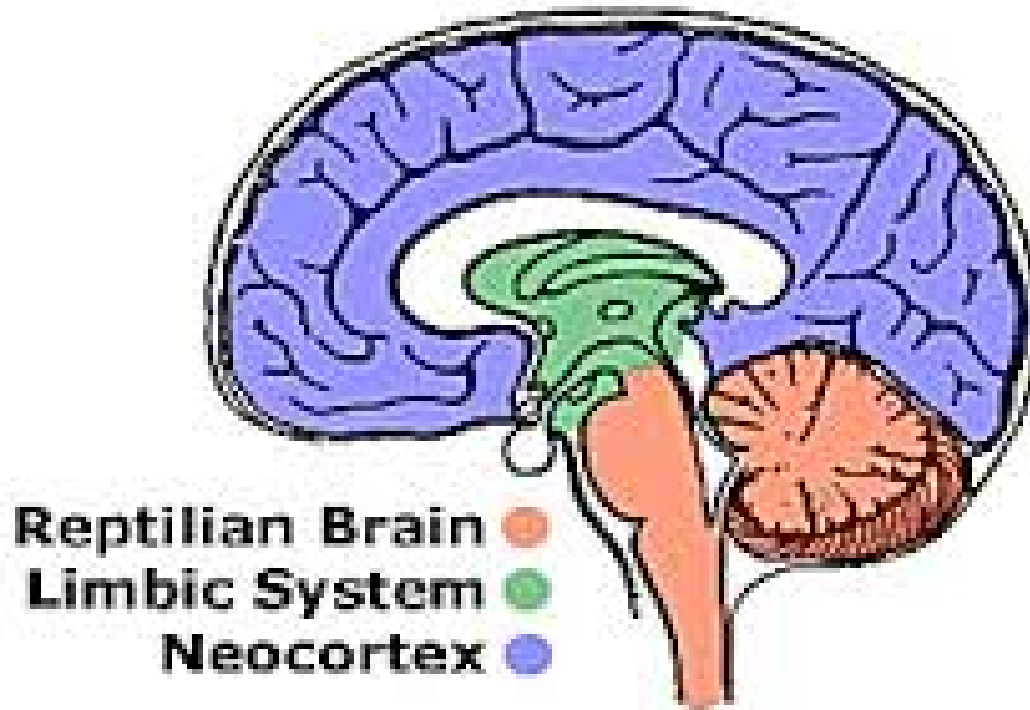


# AMYGDALA

- If you feel the back of your neck where the neck and head meet there is a dent.
- This is the reptilian brain. The reptilian brain is responsible for breath, heartbeat, & nervous system function
- Right on top of that is the amygdala. The amygdala is located in the mammalian brain, it controls internal temperature, emotions, and flight-fight.
- On top of that is the cortex, this is used for decisions, inventions, math, creativity, reasoning, thinking,
- As rational humans we think we use the cortex to rationalize and problem solve, but this is often not true.
- In fact, this problem solving part is often ignored and it doesn't finish growing until we are 26!

# The cortex is not in charge!

## The Evolution-Designed Brain



# AMYGDALA

- The truth is, many of our actions are controlled by the amygdala. When we start thinking about a problem, often our fight flight response is stimulated and takes over. Whenever the amygdala senses danger, the cortex is out of commission.
- We are no longer THINKING!!!!

# AMYGDALA

- The amygdala's job is to shut down the cortex so that we can act quickly!
- No thinking, just escape. Think after you are safe!
- A lion chasing us feels the same as a yelling student or a flat tire to the amygdala!



# TROUBLE SANDWICH

- If you are stressed...your amygdala is triggered AND
- You have NO frontal cortex decision making (your thinking brain is off)AND
- AND your heart rate, blood pressure, and other systems are being elevated...
- You are stuck!

# THINK LIKE A NINJA

- Positive thinking may not be enough!
- Shifting our attention to the mall or listening to your breathing may not do it!
- In fact, when you are upset your breathing increases and some people feel heart attack like symptoms.
- You are going to have to calm down your breath, calm down your heart rate and get that amygdala to go to sleep.

# Don't wake the baby

- We need to take very small, soft steps.
- We need to slowly walk by our fears into rational thought.
- We need to bypass the brain's alarm system
- More anger and worry will create more shut down!
- NO big renovations
- NO major changes
  
- Slow and steady.

**THE SOLUTION=  
PARASYMPATHETIC**

# Autonomic Nervous System

**Sympathetic**- how we are all day long, running, fight or flight, during scary movies, all blood rushes to our core...in this state we are like a little car pulling a trailer up hill...putting so much stress and tension on the motor (fight-flight...conquer the enemy or run away)

- It is designed to work quickly
- Eventually the motor wears out...

**Parasympathetic**- how we are when we are sleeping, floating in a pool, or meditating

- Need to drop down into this system

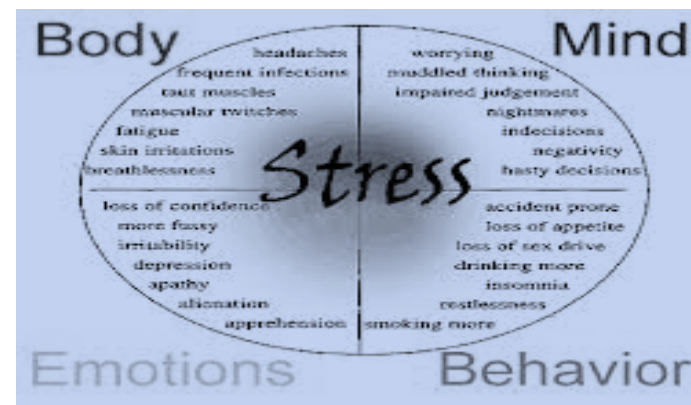
# Stress build

Draw the build and the crash...

**3 minutes- 3 x a day!**

Goal: Parasympathetic state 3 minutes, 3 times a day (sleep, floating in pool, meditation)

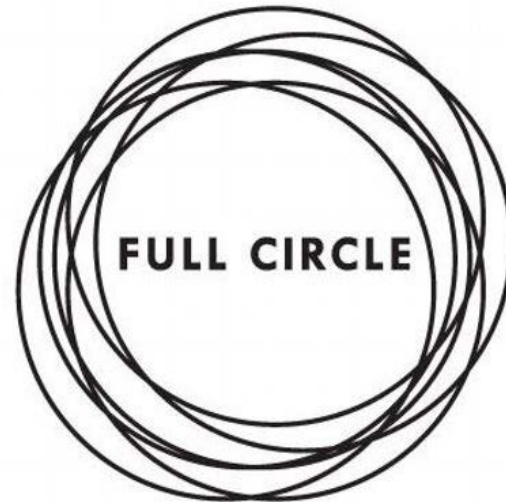
- Reduce thoughts
- Reduce blood pressure
- Reduce heart rate



# Importance of the Breath & The Importance of Emotional Regulation

- The breath affects every system of the body.
- It influences sleep, energy level, memory and concentration.
- The rate, rhythm and depth of the breath impacts the autonomic nervous system.
  - Cardiovascular
  - Digestion
  - Immune Function
  - Lower heart rate
  - Lower blood pressure
  - Lower breath rate

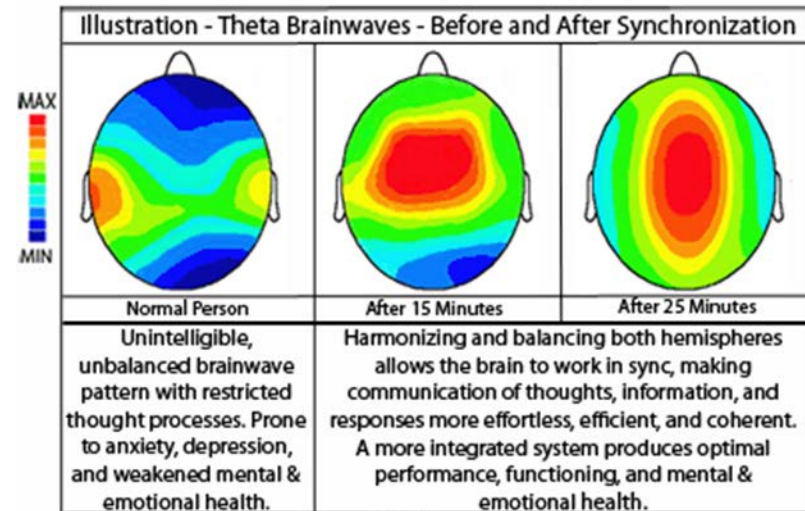
(This is why we started here.)



# NON-TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES

# The Parasympathetic Masters

- Dr. Childre (Heart-Math institute)
- Dr. Herbert Benson a cardiologist studied heart responses to prayer, meditation, biofeedback, hypnosis, guided relaxation...all of them lead to the same result...
  - Lowered heart rates
  - Lowered blood pressure
  - Slower breathing patterns
  - WHICH EQUAL= Less stress



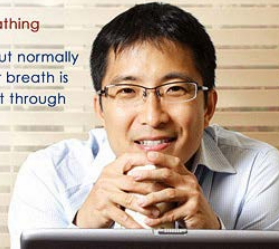
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# Coherence

## The Quick Coherence® Technique

### Step 2: Heart Breathing

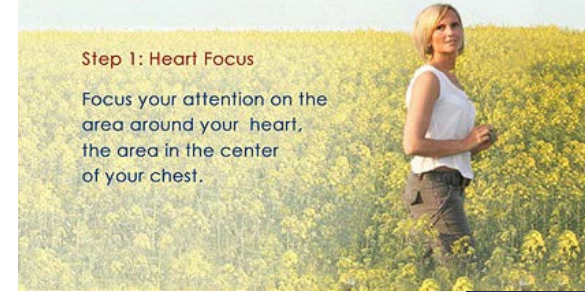
Breathe deeply but normally and feel as if your breath is coming in and out through your heart area.



## The Quick Coherence® Technique

### Step 1: Heart Focus

Focus your attention on the area around your heart, the area in the center of your chest.



## Heart breathing

- Recite a gratitude list (gratitude are the only thoughts we can have while staying in parasympathetic states)
- Take a few minutes and focus on the heart, Focus your attention on the center of your chest around your heart.
- You may want to put your hand on your heart to help.
- See if you can feel the heart beating, feel the sensations inside of your chest
- Pretend that breath is flowing in and out of that area. In for 5, out for 5...smooth & slow
- Recall a pleasant memory or a feeling of appreciation or gratitude for someone. Allow yourself to experience this positive feeling.
- Imagine that you are breathing in and out of the chest softly breathing love in and out.

# Coherence

My favorite video gadgets/games to create coherence

<http://store.heartmath.org/store/emWave2/emWave2-handheld>

# Nostril Awareness

## Nostril Awareness (CBT) (change cognitions)

- Every 90 minutes our nostrils change dominance, focus for a few seconds on which nostril is dominant, once we figure this out then switch sides...We can do this while waiting in line, while in a waiting room...

# Walk and Count Forms

Walk and Count Forms (From the text Resurfacing by Harry Palmer) (CBT) (change cognitions)

- I used to work at St. Mary's psych ward, people experiencing full panic attacks would often feel like they were going to have heart attacks, they were so stressed out and so overwhelmed...
- Take a walk and count forms (a shape, an outline, structure, material) until thinking diminishes, you feel alive, the story has quieted down, or the colors appear brighter. Usually 60-120 sec

# Other practice

- Yoga or walking meditation (Kinesthetic learners)
- Progressive Muscular Relaxation
- Gratitude (Transpersonal)
  - When we wake up in the middle of the night, gratitude is the only type of thought we can have that won't increase heart rate and breathing...if at 2:00 am I engage in prayer or gratitude I will stay in a parasympathetic state...heart slower
- Singing (Kinesthetic learners)
  - Elevates mood and increases levels of antibodies that protect us from germs...singing is a higher protection than listening...

# Mindfulness Apps: (there are over 45!)

Headspace (on-the-go), 10 minute meditation sessions (first 10 days free)

- Talks you through a body scan, has animations, sets meditation reminders and tracks activity

Mindfulness Meditation from Mental Workout

- 6 different lengths of meditation by the author of Meditation for Dummies, more instructional vs. meditation. 10 min relaxation exercise and body scan practice.

The Mindfulness App by Mind Apps

- Quiet, Similar to the practices of Jon Kabat-Zinn, MBSR based, practices 3, 5, 15, 30 minutes. Silent meditation and brief body-scan, you can customize your practice and track your progress

Buddhify

- Simple design and relaxing guided meditations. Customize your meditation to your location: It offers tailored guides for when you're at home, walking or at the gym.

Smiling Mind (7-11 year olds)

Simply being

- Short guided meditations, with or without music and nature sounds, for relaxation and presence are the focus of this \$0.99 app. Perfect for beginners looking for something simple,

Meditation Timer

- Follow your own practice, either silently or accompanied by bells. The statistics feature also allows users to track their practice and chart progress. No guided meditation

Walking Meditation by Meditation Oasis

- Meditation on-the-go. With three different guided walking meditations, users can plug in their headphones and unwind in transit. The app comes with a diary for users to keep track of their progress.

# Practice to bring home

- Review your notes...Did you change your **awareness** about anything?
- Please write down 2 or 3 things you will try out during your work day tomorrow
- Commit to a daily practice of 3min, 3x a day

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