

restore

news and views on the well-being of the whole person

a quarterly publication of Whole Story Psychotherapy and Counseling Services • 303-477-7833

choice

CHOOSING TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR HEALTH

A significant shift happens when an individual chooses to be radically responsible for his or her health. To be responsible does not mean to be guilty or ashamed, nor does it encourage you to blame, judge, or criticize yourself. Not at all! To choose to be responsible means that you are willing to start freshly in this moment to **respond** to the situation you find yourself in.

If you are hungry, you choose to feed yourself. If you are tired, you choose to rest. If you are scared, you find a way to feel safe; if sad or mad, you find a way to soothe yourself. To choose to be responsible is to set aside for the moment the question of who or what is to blame. Instead you choose to use your energy for Self Care.

self-care

BECOMING AN ALLY TO YOUR WHOLE SELF

The first step in psychological hygiene is taking good care of yourself. This means caring for your mind, your heart, and your spirit as well as you care for your body. Just as brushing and flossing your teeth are part of

daily dental health, and eating well, and exercise are daily necessities for physical health, there are ways you can care for your **emotional health** on a daily basis as well. This begins with care for your body.

CARE FOR YOUR BODY

A healthy psyche is maintained on the foundation of a healthy body.

- Drink 6-8 glasses of water per day.
- Eat a balanced diet with fresh vegetables, and fruit, whole grains, nuts, fish and meat.
- Walk 20-30 minutes or do some other sorts of exercise every day.
- Get adequate sleep on a regular schedule.
- Take any medications as prescribed.

These basic forms of care can seem daunting when we are going through times of crisis, when those we live

with don't practice them, or when they are not already part of our daily routine. All habits can be changed by starting small and making regular efforts. Do even a few jumping jacks or stretches or walk around the block as a way to start energizing your body. Make a new habit of always bringing water with you whenever you sit down. Seeing yourself making small gestures of self-care will raise your sense of worth and your feeling of effectiveness. Feeling the benefits of greater vitality from making even these **small efforts** will motivate you to increase your care for your well-being.

CARE FOR YOUR PSYCHE

Your psyche includes all of your mental, emotional, and spiritual life. It can lose its ability to self-regulate, to arouse its energy to an appropriate response to a challenging situation and then to return to a state of calm awareness and full presence in life. Psychological hygiene involves knowing how to not only energize,

defend, and express oneself, but also to relax, calm, and restore ourselves. Because our current lives tend to tip us in the direction of stressful arousal, what I will stress in *this* issue are the caring abilities that allow you to **soothe yourself** and to take a break from stressful emotions.

need support?

At times we lose the ability to care for ourselves and just want to give up. At such times it is good to find a psychotherapist who can help restore our ability to find our own way back to psychological well-being. This newsletter was written by me, Christopher Maier, a psychotherapist and mindfulness teacher with a private therapy practice in the Cherry Creek area. I assist adults dealing with emotional pain and times of transition. Many of my clients come to therapy due to symptoms of anxiety, depression, trauma, grief, or relationship issues. Some are motivated just by a desire to deepen their spiritual life so as to live more abundantly.

In every case, there is something about their current story of who they are that is restricting their full aliveness.

I see pain and relationship upsets as calls to change these limiting stories and to discover your whole story.

If you might need support to care for yourself, call me at 303-477-7833 for a free consultation.



self-soothing

1. BREATHE!

The simplest and yet most effective tool we have for calming our psyche is **conscious breathing**. Stress, fear, and anger can lead to an unconscious pattern of shallow breathing. Shallow breathing in turn makes the stressful feelings increase. You can interrupt this cycle by consciously breathing in your abdomen. Studies have shown that 20 minutes of abdominal breathing in the morning will set the anxiety “thermostat” to a lower point to which you can return throughout the day.

2. DO SOOTHING ACTIVITIES

There are many other ways human beings have found to soothe their psyche and release stress. Make a short list of at least three things you can do alone, and two things you can do with someone else that can help

WHAT TO DO BY YOURSELF:

- Take a nap.
- Take a bath.
- Listen to soothing music.
- Write a kind note to yourself.
- Drink herbal tea (hot or cold).
- Massage your hands or feet, with or without lotion.
- Go outside or look out the window at trees and sky.
- Chop vegetables to make a soup, or bake something (you can give it away if you're on a diet!)

3. TAKE A BREAK from Upsetting Thoughts & Feelings

Another aspect of self-care is knowing how to take a break from upsetting thoughts and feelings. Consciousness breathing and all the self-soothing activities above can be effective at giving you such a break, but only if you can keep your attention on the activity you are doing and not get caught up in a tangle of upsetting thoughts. To be able to set aside your worries takes another skill of psychological hygiene, a skill called **mindfulness**.

WHAT TO DO: Let your shoulders, jaw, and whole body relax. Consciously follow your breath as your abdomen rises and falls. Place one or both hands on your tummy to help remind your body to breathe in the abdomen. Insert 3 minute “breathing breaks” into your day whenever you feel your thoughts racing and your body tense. Your breathe is a wonderful tool for self-care as it is something you always have with you!

calm yourself. Keep a copy of your list with you and post copies of it in your home and work place. Here are some activities that work to soothe some people. How might you adapt them to **soothe yourself?**

WHAT TO DO WITH OTHERS:

- Watch a funny movies with someone.
- Have a chat with someone easy to talk to.
- Get a massage from a friend or a professional.
- Offer to walk someone's dog. Talk with the dog!
- Get a joke book from the library and learn a few jokes which you can share with anyone you meet.
- Write a letter to someone you haven't been in touch with for awhile.
- Volunteer to help others through a non-profit group.

WHAT TO DO: Begin with the intention to be aware of your direct experience rather than your commentary about your experience. Choose (again and again and again) to be in the present moment **without judgment**. Label thoughts as thoughts to remain aware of them rather than just believe them. Below the thoughts is a changing stream of sensations and perceptions. As you stay aware of this stream, your mind can begin to calm and your spirit to rest.

practicing peace

A CLASS IN MINDFULNESS-BASED STRESS REDUCTION

Reduce stress and boost your immune system this fall with an 8-week course in stress reduction. Learn to cultivate moment-by-moment awareness without judgment. Classes will include instruction, discussion, and practice of mindfulness while sitting, lying down, and in simple yoga stretches. Instructor Christopher Maier, LPC, is a Certified Mindfulness Teacher with over 30 years experience.

THURSDAYS 7-9 PM

beginning October 16 in Capitol Hill

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER, CALL 303-477-7833

or email CM@Whole-Story.com