

Choosing Mindfulness



Trauma, Resilience and Mindfulness Tools

Presented by Bhanu Joy Harrison, LCSW

Mindfulness Skills and Practices to Increase Resilience

Mindfulness is paying attention to this moment, on purpose with curiosity, non-judgment and kindness. It is the awareness of what is happening as it's happening.

Resilience increases when we can be 'present' and aware of what is happening in the moment, as it offers us a chance to respond rather than react. This gives our nervous system an opportunity to 'rewire' itself, creating more lasting change over time.

Mindfulness Tools for Yourself and Clients

1. Nervous System Check-In

Are you in the green, yellow or red zone? What sensations am I aware of right now? What activities can I do to move back to the green zone?

2. S-T-O-P exercise

Stop – Take a Breath – Observe (body sensations, thoughts, emotions) – Proceed.

3. Speedometer Exercise

What speed is my body/mind going right now? Is it too fast or slow for my current activity? Take a moment to adjust your speed, feeling your body slow down or speed up as needed.

4. Orienting

Look around with your eyes, turn your neck and check out if you are safe right now, in this moment. Be curious! This exercise can engage the green zone (ventral vagal system).

5. Orienting with your 5 senses

Look around and notice what you SEE, what you HEAR, what you SMELL, what you TASTE, what you feel through TOUCH. Name it to yourself or another.

6. Abdominal Breathing with longer Exhales

Place your hands on your belly and breathe into your lower abdomen, feeling it expand. Make your exhales a bit longer than your inhaleds, as this will induce the parasympathetic system to come online, helping you calm down.

7. Don't believe everything you think!

Our thoughts and emotions are always shifting and changing. Take a pause and observe your thoughts and emotions. Move towards responding.

Choosing Mindfulness



8. Less is more (Titration)

It is better to practice mindfulness skills for shorter periods of time, more frequently. It can be very difficult for some people to attend to their inner sensory experience, especially if they have a trauma history. For those with psychotic disorders, it is often best to keep the focus on external (environmental rather than body) experiences. If you or your clients are feeling overwhelmed by these practices, honor this experience and back off.

9. Deep listening and cultivating presence

Attend to the person you are with. Listen deeply, without formulating a response, or judging what they are saying. This can help prevent burnout, create a safe space for you and the other and invite creativity and intuition.

10. Other Ideas!

- Take an “Awe Walk” – pay attention to sights, sounds, colors, textures, temperatures, etc.
- Make a Gratitude Board for your classroom or office.
- Educate students and clients about their brain and nervous system.
- Make a glitter jar - www.instructables.com/id/DIY-Calming-Glitter-Jars.
- Play with a bobble head toy – watch it settle.
- Create a worry box – children write/draw their worry and put in box at start of class.
- Breathing Exercises – Inhale for 7, exhale for 11 (7-11 breath); Hot chocolate breath: inhale thru nose and exhale thru pursed lips as if cooling hot chocolate.
- Quieting Strategies: glitter jar; swaying from side to side; stretching; stand up and shake your body, then stop and ground, repeat.
- Resource Jar – have kids/clients write down their strategies to regulate. Put in jar. When they are feeling dysregulated, they can pull an idea from the jar and practice it.
- Tune into your body – notice sensations, squeeze arms or legs, put your hand on your heart.
- “Just Like Me” compassion practice – “Just like me, my friend wants that toy,” “Just like me, that child wants to be chosen for the game,” “Just like me, she wants to be happy,” “Just like me, he is hangry and wants to jump ahead in line.”

For these skills to have a positive effect, you must practice them yourself, before sharing with clients or students. You are your own wonderful laboratory! See what happens!



Bhanu Joy Harrison, LCSW

IMTA Certified Mindfulness Teacher-Professional

505-837-2100 x3 www.choosingmindfulness.net bjoy47@comcast.net