

Spiritual Practices for Challenging Times

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Workshop sponsored by Loyola Press, publisher of Anne's book,
"Spiritual Practices for the Brain: Caring for Mind, Body and Soul"

- Basics of Neuroplasticity- Building neural pathways:
We are what we practice
- Breath and Spirit: Why the Breath is key to overall well-being, bringing positive psychological outcomes, enhancing our brains, bodies, and souls
 - ~The Breath and Stress
 - ~Telomeres and Stress
 - ~Our Brains on Stress
 - ~Breath Practices:
Physiological Sighs, 4-6 Breath, Inhale and Top with Shorter Inhale, Hands on Heart and Belly, One-Minute Test, Daily Breath Pauses, Nasal Breathing, Counting the Breath
- Gratitude: Boosts pro-social outcomes, strengthens our bodies, improves sleep and metabolism, reduces perceived stress, grows resilience, nourishes relationships
 - ~Grateful In situations, not FOR situations (Steindl-Rast)
 - ~Most effective Gratitude practice: explained by Andrew Huberman, PhD <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVjfFN89qvQ>

(<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0238715>)

***https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/is_gratitude_good_for_your_health

***https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_gratitude_changes_you_and_your_brain

- Nature/Creation
 - ~How Awe Walks boost health
 - ~Natural Light (Morning and Evening) for Mood, Sleep and Health
 - Relieves depression/anxiety
 - Improves focus
 - Decreases stress
 - Improves memory
 - ~Forest Bathing
 - ~Blue Spaces

- Self-Compassion
 - Three Components
 1. Self-Kindness vs. Self-Judgment (Perfectionism, Acceptance)
 2. Common Humanity - We all struggle and fail
 3. Mindfulness - Creates space to gently respond to difficulties
 - Builds resilience
 - ~Practice Self-Compassion Break

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

~Parker Palmer

Discussion Questions:

1. When and why do you become distracted or anxious during the day? Imagine yourself stopping to take a breath during these moments, letting go of worrisome thoughts, and come into the here and now. How does that feel?
2. Have you noticed any changes in the way you've been breathing this past year? More sighs? More deep breaths? What daily actions can remind you to pause for a moment and breathe?
3. What ordinary gifts do you sometimes take for granted? What would your life be like without them?
3. Have you experienced the healing power of nature walks, gardening, or simply observing creation? Can you imagine a few ways you could bring more nature into your life?
4. When difficulties arise, do you offer yourself kindness like you would to a friend? Why/why not? Does perfectionism creep into your thoughts?
5. How might Self-Compassion change your reactions to daily challenges?
5. Play Gratitude alphabet game

