# SELF Care

USING MINDFULNESS TO IMPROVE OUR RELATIONSHIPS, DAILY INTERACTIONS, AND REACTIONS TO TRAUMA

"Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose in the present moment and non-judgmentally" and "...shows us what is happening in our bodies, our emotions, our minds, and in the world. Through mindfulness, we avoid harming ourselves and others." Jon Kabat-Zinn and Thich Nhat Hanh

Practicing mindfulness improves

- Psychological well-being
- Emotional regulation
- Life satisfaction
- Physical health
- Stress
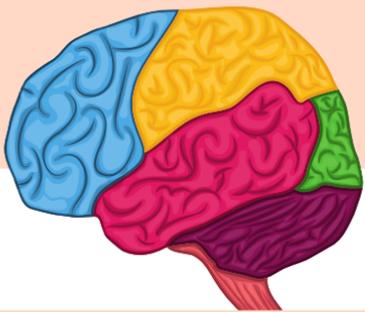
YOUR BRAIN

The Amygdala is responsible for the flight-fight-freeze response and errs on the side of overactivation to keep us safe. The prefrontal cortex is responsible for slowing us down and reasoning. Mindfulness engages the prefrontal cortex dialing down our response when it is not needed.

ACTIVITIES TO INFLUENCE YOUR RESPONSE

Hand-to-Heart

Begin by placing your hand on your heart, feeling the gentle pressure and warmth of your hand. Feel your chest rising and falling as you breathe in and out. While a simple activity, gentle touch instantly generates physiological relaxation in our bodies as it activates the vagus nerve in the parasympathetic nervous system, releases oxytocin, and activates the prefrontal cortex.

Emotional Labeling

Self-care starts with self-awareness: understanding your feelings and needs, so that you can make adaptations and shifts to take care of yourself. Labeling your emotions, or putting words to how you feel, shifts brain activity from the amygdala to the prefrontal cortex allowing you to calm and access all of your resources for problem solving. This simple activity helps your brain to regulate and work more efficiently.

THE POWER OF TWO

When we combine strategies for calming our brain and bodies we put ourselves in the very best position to respond with calm and care within our relationships and daily experiences. This has the power to change interactions and families have the opportunity to learn from you. For more information, review the reference list.

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