



FREAA

FINDING RECOVERY & EMPOWERMENT FROM ABUSE

Introduction to the Self-Help Techniques

Below you will find a list of *self-help techniques for emotional first aid*. Therapy can be very valuable and is highly recommended, especially for survivors of long-term sexual abuse.

But not everyone has the money or access to therapy or counseling. And therapy, even at its best, is usually parceled out in little, one-hour packages, once a week. Treating long-term abuse with psychotherapy can be a long, difficult process. But we human beings are resilient; and there is a lot we can do for ourselves.

We are all familiar ---- sometimes too familiar! ---- with stress. Whether from abusive bosses or partners, screaming children, work demands and deadlines or money worries, stress affects all of us. It's important to recognize that *stress is not "all in your head;" stress is very physical*.

We all have ways of managing our stress.- Common coping strategies include:

- smoking;
- drinking;
- drugging;
- over-eating;
- taking pills;
- anti-anxiety and anti-depressant medications; and
- 'zoning out' by watching TV, media or video games.

An addiction is "anything we have to have." It is anything we use compulsively to reduce our stress and avoid feeling. None of these behaviors are "bad," in moderation. But when we do them repeatedly over and over again, to avoid our pain and "handle our stress," they become habits; and then we get hooked.

What Causes Stress?

We have an innate protective response called the **Fight or Flight (F/F) response**. When confronted by a lion or a tiger, our bodies react immediately: our hearts beat and our lungs breathe faster, blood pressure increases, digestive and immune functions stop or slow down, blood flows from the internal organs to the muscles in our arms and legs, and we get ready to fight or flee.

But the original problems that Fight or Flight was designed to protect us from ----- lions, tigers and bears ---- is no longer an issue for most of us. When our F/F response gets triggered constantly

every day by cellphones, negative media, and demanding family members, we begin to experience chronic stress. When we're in a continual state of stress, both our blood pressure and stress hormones rise and remain elevated; we feel upset, irritated, and "stressed"; and we can't relax, let go, get to sleep, and re-charge.

This is the mind-body connection: our state of mind affects our bodies; and our bodies affect our minds. What we tell ourselves --- and how we treat ourselves --- directly affects our bodies. Simple physical activities such as eating, walking, sleep and exercise ---- affect our state of mind. Our minds and bodies are intimately connected: *we can heal our minds by tuning into our bodies.*

Fortunately, in addition to the Fight/Flight response, we also have an innate natural antidote called the **Relaxation Response**. Tuning into the Relaxation Response slows our bodies and calms our minds. When we engage the Relaxation Response pounding hearts and fast shallow breathing are replaced by a slower heart rate and deeper breathing; our minds become quiet and our ability to think clearly increases. As the Fight/Flight response is turned OFF, we shift into R & R (Rest and Repair) mode, where we can begin to relax, let go, and heal.

How can we turn off the Fight/Flight response, and turn on the Relaxation Response?

There are many ways to do this. Healthy ways of turning on the Relaxation Response, reducing our stress, and finding balance include:

- Yoga
- Deep breathing
- Meditation
- Listening to soft music
- Deep, restful sleep
- Exercises like tai chi and qi gong
- Self-help energy techniques.

Here (LINK) you will find a list of *self-help techniques for emotional first aid*. These are mind-body energy techniques that reduce stress and calm the mind by balancing our inner energies. They are simple and surprisingly effective. They can be done almost anywhere, either by yourself or with a partner. They tend to work quickly, and can be done in less than 10 minutes. And best of all, they are FUN and enjoyable.

Here's the basic process for all the self-help techniques:

Find a safe space: both externally and inside yourself.

Tune into your body, and notice your emotions and state of mind.

Choose an energy technique that feels right for you.

Practice the technique, several times as needed.

Again tune into your body; notice what you're feeling and experiencing in your body now.

Developing your own mind-body healing program

Feel free to experiment with the different techniques. Everyone is unique, and there are “different strokes for different folks”. As you experiment, you will find the ones that work best for you. Then put together a “mind-body energy routine” ---- just like an exercise routine---- and commit to practicing it every day.

This is part of healthy mind-body self-care.

Remember that *you are beautiful and worthwhile, and you deserve to be well taken care of!* If you want others to treat you well, and take good care of you, begin by *treating yourself well*, by practicing your mind-body self-care routine, every day.

We wish you well, on your Healing Journey.