The Mind Spa is a quiet sanctuary where any current OSU student, faculty or staff member can learn about holistic health and begin a personal wellness plan.

The Mind Spa has specific programs that can help students learn to connect more fully to themselves and how they feel and manage these feelings. The programs help students learn how to use their breath in optimal ways whether to manage test anxiety, build their tolerance for a sport, or learn better communication skills. Each term we will focus on one aspect of the Mind Spa.

Thrive is our theme for spring term! Thrive is about flourishing or feeling prosperous. What a perfect theme for spring when some students are preparing for graduation, others for summer employment or school and still others for travel or returning home for a break. The rain will be a little less and the sun a little more, at least in theory. We have all made it through winter and can see “light” at the end of a long academic year. This term’s articles are focusing on thriving in our bodies and how to appreciate our wholeness. Biofeedback, particularly heart rate variability, and the benefits will be discussed as well as learning more about yoga in managing not only stress, but pain, depression and anxiety. The Mind Spa has various programs that can assist you in thriving this term, so don’t hesitate to stop in and spend some time reconnecting to yourself.

The Mind Spa has four different types of biofeedback programs: Journey to the Wild Divine, Relaxing Rhythms, Dual Drive and emWave. Each program is uniquely different to attract the various interests of our campus community. Wild Divine is like journeying through an adventure game as you ride through a hot air balloon with the rhythm of your breath. Relaxing Rhythms offers personalized instruction by mind-body health experts in the field as well as fun exercises that measure your heart variability and skin response. The Dual Drive program consists of driving a race car that moves as a response to a controlled breathing pattern and emWave PC is a biofeedback program that offers simple graphic output of your heart rate coherence. Dr. Donna Champeau, a public health educator, provides helpful information about biofeedback and the benefits inside this newsletter while Dr. Mariette Brouwers, a body image expert, has offered insights into healthier ways to “body acceptance, respect and love.” Dr. Michele Ribeiro rounds out the newsletter with a focus on yoga as a clinical therapeutic tool for wellbeing.

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The Brain Body Connection: Using Biofeedback to Control Your Stress

Donna Champeau, Ph.D.; Associate Professor in Public Health and Director of the Office for Women’s Advancement and Gender Equity

Tests, papers, presentations, pop quizzes, and unexpected demands to speak in class after you have tried so hard to hide in the back of the room...these events can increase our heart rate, raise our blood pressure, create tension in our muscles, raise our skin temperature, and even keep us from sleeping well. Eventually, these involuntary stress responses can affect our overall health. What can we do to keep these things from happening when we encounter situations that cause stress? We can’t always avoid these situations and many of these events are necessary to get us to our chosen goals in life.

So, can we teach ourselves to control our responses? The answer is yes with practice we can, and it involves a technique called Biofeedback. This is a well respected therapy that can be done by a trained professional with specialized equipment or you can learn to do it yourself using less expensive means as offered through The Mind Spa. The goal of biofeedback is to give you feedback on how well your chosen stress reduction techniques are working to control certain bodily processes that normally happen involuntarily. There are 3 most common types of biofeedback, Electromyography (EMG), which measures muscle tension, Thermal Biofeedback, which measures skin temperature, and Neurofeedback or Electroencephalography (EEG), which measures brain wave activity. The biofeedback available in The Mind Spa through Counseling and Psychological Services (500 Snell Hall) is uniquely designed so individuals can learn on their own. The biofeedback hardware and finger sensors in the Mind Spa measures two critical components of your physiology: Skin conductance Level (SCL) and Heart Rate Variability (HRV). SCL measures sweat gland activity. The finger sensors connected to the biofeedback program record perspiration in your fingertips which correlates to the rise and fall of physical and mental stress. HRV is the variable time between heart beats. Research has suggested that increases in HRV have shown improvements in brain and heart activity and boosts to your immune system, which can assist in reducing negative effects of stress.

Chances are you have used other types of biofeedback sometime in your life. You’ve used it if you have ever taken your temperature or stepped on a scale. The thermometer tells you whether you’re running a fever; the scale tells you whether you’ve gained weight. Both devices “feed back” information about your body’s condition. Equipped with this information, you can take steps you’ve learned to improve the condition. When you’re running a fever, you go to bed and drink plenty of fluids. When you’ve gained weight, you resolve to eat less. Biofeedback for controlling your stress response is very similar. The machine gives you real time feedback that lets you know if your techniques are making a difference on your stress response. One such example of a less expensive but useful device is a “Temperature biofeedback Thermal Trainer”. This device measures your temperature in your hand. When stressed, your extremities become colder because of decreased circulation due to the constriction of blood vessels as a result of the stress response. You can learn to overcome that stress with relaxation techniques and measure immediately whether or not they are working. When you are relaxed the temperature in your hands will increase. You will learn quickly how to use different relaxation techniques to successfully decrease your stress response.

Many disorders that are stress related are treated using biofeedback and scientists are not perfectly clear how exactly it works, however, they do know that an important component is relaxation. Prevention is the key. Learn to control your stress response now before it leads to serious conditions such as disorders of the digestive track, chronic pain, anxiety, high blood pressure, and depression to mention just a few.

Everyone is different and therefore a stress reducing technique that works for others, may not work for you. Deep breathing, visualization, soft music, and stretching, are all activities that may help reduce your stress response. Biofeedback can help you find one or more that work best for you.

88% of Mind Spa Users who completed our evaluation for winter term reported that “personal instruction would have been helpful” in using The Mind Spa. ½ hour Mind Spa consultations will resume on April 4, 2011. Please call 541.737.2131 to schedule a ½ hour consult for Tuesdays at 1:30p.m. or Thursdays at 11a.m.
Many of us at OSU have taken a yoga class whether as a one-time stress release program, an ongoing class at Dixon, for credit through health and human sciences or as a lunch time reprieve through the faculty and staff fitness program. And as many of you know, there are numerous styles of yoga being offered from flow/vinyasa to hot/Bikrams to alignment-focused/Iyengar yoga, just to name a few. Hatha Yoga are two Sanskrit words which mean to unite, integrate, balance and have will power (Ribeiro, 2010). Although yoga has been utilized as an integrative treatment approach for numerous mind/body ailments for thousands of years; until recently, yoga was known in the west predominantly as a stress relief practice. Fortunately; however, scientific research is supporting and promoting yoga as a treatment for multiple physical issues such as arthritis, high blood pressure, chronic back pain, and asthma as well as emotional issues including managing depression, anxiety and trauma. Iyengar (2008) has outlined particular sequences of yoga postures for specific ailments and certain counterbalance poses that are recommended for promoting optimal health of the organs and the spine. Yoga therapy is becoming a widely accepted treatment equivalent to western therapies due to the focus on root causes of ailments rather than just symptom relief. Whenever choosing to use yoga as a therapy; however, the consumer should keep in mind the credentials of the therapist, their knowledge of the body and their understanding with how to modify postures for individual needs. Certified Iyengar yoga teachers, who also have specific training in yoga interventions are specifically equipped for working with individuals with therapy concerns.

As a way to enhance our services at the Mind Spa we have collaborated to create DVDs specifically for faculty/staff and students at OSU. The yoga DVDs in the Mind Spa invite the practitioner to slow down and become more mindful of breath awareness and alignment in the body. Through proper alignment and proper sequences of yoga postures we can awaken muscles and joints that have become dormant or lethargic and invite a renewed sense of being. The relaxation component toward the end of the DVDs can also assist those struggling with insomnia or general sleep difficulties. In traditional and best practices in yoga, relaxation should always end a yoga practice so there can be a time for integration of the physical and the emotional. You are invited to practice simple strength building postures or stretches as a way to start off your spring and prepare for summer! Make an appointment today with the Mind Spa by calling 541.737.2131 and start THRIVING!


Downward Dog (Adhomukha Svanasana): Benefits... Calms the brain and gently stimulates the nerves, slows down the heartbeat, reduces stiffness in the shoulder blades and arthritis in the shoulder joints, strengthens the ankles and tones the legs, relieves pain in the heels, and helps prevent hot flashes during menopause.

Looking for a leadership opportunity? Join us May 11th at 12pm or May 12th at 5:30pm for a CAPS Advisory Board info meeting. There will be FREE pizza! Located in 500 Snell.

A sincere THANK YOU to Melanie Wright, graphic artist for all Mind Spa materials! CAPS will miss your creativity and talent next year!
Hi, my name is Roshni Patel. I am the Mind Spa Coordinator at CAPS. I am a freshman and majoring in Biochemistry & Biophysics with a pre-med track. My future goals include becoming a doctor and professor to promote and prevent mental health. Working at CAPS is a great learning experience to help further my future and support stability in mental health for students.

Please email: Michele.Ribeiro@oregonstate.edu if you have comments and/or suggestions on this issue or an upcoming newsletter.

**Body Image**

Mariette Brouwers PhD, Counseling and Psychological Services, with inspiration from Cherie Carter-Scott, If Life is a Game, These are the Rules; and the websites Something Fishy and Body Positive.

When you were born, you received a body (as Cherie Carter-Scott reminded us in If Life is a Game, These are the Rules). You may love it or hate it, but it’s the only thing you are sure to keep for the rest of your life. This precious body contains the inner YOU — all feelings, hopes, dreams, memories, thoughts, beliefs, and expectations. It is essential to have a positive relationship with your body as it is the closest, longest, and most important relationship of your life. If you love and respect your body, you are most likely thriving in many areas of life.

Unfortunately, we live in a culture that glorifies thinness. We learn from a very young age to be critical of and unhappy with this body unless it is ‘perfect’ which is, of course, impossible. Some people believe that they would be happier if they were thinner, taller, shorter, smaller, bigger, or otherwise different. They judge and berate their body and may abuse it. They may find themselves thinking about the ‘flaws’ of their body all day long, won’t appear in public in certain clothes, are constantly on and off diets, may deny themselves social opportunities because of their appearance or use their looks as an excuse for other problems. This negative body image can limit so many things in life and can have a profound effect on self-esteem.

Imagine if you could accept the body you have. What would it be like to not judge and defer happiness until some unknown point in the future where your body will appear different? Remember that YOU live in this body and that you have the power to improve your relationship with it. This does not mean you can’t try to improve your health and even your appearance, but it needs to come from a place of acceptance and self love. It is natural and normal to want to look nice and to feel attractive. Below are some ideas to help you work toward body acceptance, respect and love.

1. Emphasize how you feel, rather than how you look. Use positive self-talk - ”I feel great.”
2. Use positive language when describing your own body and others’ bodies. Make body size acceptance statements about your own and others’ bodies.
3. Focus on what your body can do rather than on how it looks.
4. Focus on who you are rather than on how you look.
5. Nourish your inner child – that person you used to be who does not think or worry about body size or appearance and just lives.
6. Aim for lifestyle mastery rather than mastery over your appearance. “Lifestyle mastery” promotes the development of your unique gifts and potential, having meaningful relationships, expressing yourself, and growing as a person.
7. Work on developing an attractive personality and inner beauty. Focus on what you can contribute to the world, rather than on how you look.
8. Create multiple ways to soothe, stimulate, nourish and rest your body. E.g. Check out the massage chair in the Mind Spa.
9. Wear clothes you feel comfortable in. Dress to express yourself, not to impress others. You should feel good in what you wear.
10. Develop a healthy lifestyle that includes good nutritional habits and moderate exercise rather than going on weight loss diets.
11. Remind yourself that the people, who truly love you, love you for YOU, not for what you look like.
12. Use resources! The CAPS Mind Spa has tools like mPower’s Wellness Workshop that can assist you in becoming a positive “coach” rather than a self-critic; biofeedback that assists in building self-compassion and inner peace; and mindfulness audio resources that teach skills toward self-acceptance.

CAPS will be offering daily programs during Anxiety and Depression Awareness Week, May 2nd–6th. Be sure to look for “FREE Week” promotions mid-April.

Please email: Michele.Ribeiro@oregonstate.edu if you have comments and/or suggestions on this issue or an upcoming newsletter.