The Mind Spa

What is the Mind Spa?

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 resources that can help individuals learn strategies for self-care. Several programs teach how to use the breath in optimal ways whether to manage test anxiety, build concentration and focus or improve endurance and strength. Other programs assist with improving communication skills. Whatever your mind/body needs, the mind spa likely has something for everyone.

Winter term has just begun and as I write this introduction, heavy rains are falling and quenching the thirst of our earth after a fairly sunny, colorful fall. The rains in the Willamette Valley can be a reminder of how important it is to RESTORE ourselves when the darkness of the afternoon occurs by 4p.m. and our need for light becomes more prevalent. This term we are excited to finally get our day light bright light therapy lamps out to the community through the Valley Library Circulation Desk. They are available for 3 hour reserve/check-out while studying in the library. Our hope is to eventually have full spectrum lights available in study carrels in the library so if you want to see this change, please fill out the survey (available at the library circulation desk) requesting regular access to the light therapy. We also had approximately 35 students utilize our Mind Spa Study Break in the Valley Library, during dead week this fall. This term’s Mind Spa Study Break will be held in the Willamette Room on Wednesday, March 14th from 7p.m. to 9:30p.m. We will again host demonstrations with our Relaxing Rhythms Biofeedback, personalized biofeedback and yoga stretches. Of course we’ll also serve refreshments, so be sure to take advantage of this Satellite Mind Spa program. Finally, the APCC continues to collaborate with the Mind Spa and sponsors a Satellite Mind Spa that offers a meditation corner, Day Light Bright Light Therapy, the mPower Wellness Workshop and access to the Yoga DVD.

Continuing with our theme of positive psychology, Dr. Winston McCullough has written for the Mind Spa Newsletter this term, encouraging folks to make small changes in their life that can have lasting impressions. Dr. McCullough and Dr. Edwards will be hosting a screening of HAPPY on February 11, 2012 as the ‘Happy Movement’ will encourage film showings throughout the world on this day. So if you missed the showing this past November at OSU or just want to see it again, be sure to check out details at upbeatcafe.org. Another contributor to this term’s newsletter includes Dr. Michele Ribeiro who writes on the importance of finding time for Silence in our busy, often hectic lives. Finally Dr. Anjaneya Murty Kanury shares his personal success journey through yoga. Whether through reading an inspiring book on mindfulness, managing stress through biofeedback programs or stretching those tense muscles through downward dog, the Mind Spa has many things to create a better, healthier YOU in 2012!
Do You Want to Be Happy?
by Winston McCullough, PhD, Instructor, Department of Psychology

Do you want to be Happy? Not just cotton candy happy, or like that yellow smiley face, but do you actually want more joy, optimism, serenity, wonder, calm, and hilarity in your life? What about more enjoyable and meaningful connections with others? Better physical health and more energy? How about a sense of direction and purpose in your life? That stuff is top priority for most of us, and fortunately there’s now a scientific field that’s studying these exact questions.

For its first 150 or so years, the field of psychology has aimed in a big way at understanding human problems and how to remedy them. We now have some very effective ways to deal with anxiety, depression and other daily challenges. An emerging 21st century approach called Positive Psychology has added a scientific focus on understanding what goes right in life, what makes life worth living, ways to cultivate human flourishing.

You can tap into this new exciting field today. Here are a few quick tips you can try this week, to boost your level of well-being. These exercises have been scientifically shown to reduce depression and anxiety and improve our moods and overall wellbeing... even our physical health and getting a better night’s sleep!

-Enlarge Your Gratitude: Every day for a week, write down three things that went well that day, and explain why; if you prefer, record your good fortunes/blessings once a week for a month. Here are some alternatives to build Gratitude – choose the one that feels best to you: 1) Write a letter to someone who has been really kind or helpful to you but whom you’ve never adequately thanked; visit them and read the letter out loud – could be a friend, parent, teacher, coach, employer, anyone; 2) Before your feet hit the floor each morning, think about five specific things you’re grateful for, that make life worth living – there are literally thousands of positive things we often take for granted that are actually quite wonderful.

-Cultivate Optimism: For the next three days, write for 15 minutes about your life five or ten years from now, assuming it has all turned out as you want – your relationships, work, health, interests, and so on. Here are some alternatives for cultivating optimism: 1) Fantasize, like when you were a little kid, about the superhero you identify with most (or make one up!), and think about his or her special qualities that you yourself might embody – try it when going to bed or when you first wake up; 2) Counter pessimism – for a worrisome situation, ask yourself: Is it realistic to worry about this situation? How likely is it that things will turn out as I fear? What good thing could come from this situation? What might I learn to make me stronger? In the big scheme of my life, does this situation really warrant so much worry?

-Bolster Your Strengths: Identify two or three positive aspects of your character that you feel good about, and put them into practice in novel ways each day this week. These “character strengths” could include: persistence, generosity, loving (and allowing yourself to be loved!), leadership, love of learning, spirituality, teamwork, and so on.

-Deepen Your Connections with Others: Try active and constructive responding when a friend shares good news with you: respond with appropriate enthusiasm and by reflecting the positive feelings and meaning expressed by your friend. Take an interest in what matters to them.

Want to learn more? These are just a few of the many methods that Positive Psychology has found to boost our wellbeing and help us to flourish. The Mind Spa has a particular biofeedback program, Relaxing Rhythms, which specifically focuses on cultivating positive emotions, discovering gratitude and exploring exercises on invigoration. The Mind Spa also has a small selection of books that covers the art of forgiveness, lovingkindness meditation and the power of now. There are also other resources to develop positivity, including courses taught in the Psychology Department, a Mindfulness Meditation group/resources offered through CAPS and other new opportunities in the community. For more information about community resources please visit: upbeatcafe.org and pathstohappiness.org.
How Did Yoga Help Me in My Coping With Life?

Dr. Anjaneya Murty Kanury, Emeritus Professor of Mechanical Engineering, OSU

I was born in 1940 in a rural rice paddy farming family in the Krishna Delta of India’s east coast. When I was a lad, my mother introduced me to quite a bit of the ancient Hindu literature. Although I could even read Devanagiri, the deep meaning of the slokas and the sutras remained beyond my grasp. Besides, my determination to grow up to study science and engineering deprived me of an opportunity to flourish in upanishads, vedas, epics, the Gita and Yoga Sutras.

About 5 years ago, a caring friend got me to accompany her to her yoga class. It was at a time when my back, which was damaged in building my cottage single-handedly, was troubling me much. I could not drive even for a couple of hours without feeling painfully stiff upon reaching my destination. My joints were terribly arthritic. Except for gardening, woodworking and carpentry, I did not do any exercises in stretching and physical conditioning for over six decades of my life. My body was in poor shape in posture, tone, strength and endurance. To top it all off, smoking two packs a day for over 30 years took its toll on my lungs and breathing effectiveness. (Sixteen years ago, I did succeed in quitting the habit cold turkey; the greatest gift I had given myself ever.) And as an engineer and professor, I did not read books for spiritual and philosophical growth. Even worse, I was constantly on the go with physical and mental stresses, deadlines, anxieties and workplace conflicts.

After my first class, I was hooked on Yoga instantly and still am. I have utmost respect to, and trust in, my teacher. Respect and trust between a student and his/her teacher are the most important requirements to make success in yoga practice. My teacher is a student of BKS Iyengar who developed the techniques we follow in our classes. My teacher’s style of teaching the class, doing a pose step by step along with the students. His commentaries on Pathanjali and the Sutras make it easier to assimilate the meaning of various aspects of yoga. His philosophical remarks make the student visualize his/her vast internal and external universes, each needing nurturing care and awareness of its owner. Whereas these commentaries and remarks matter much to the health of the mind; coordination of breathing with stretching cleanse and detoxify the body. Our yoga classes, thus always promote the mind-body connection.

I go to yoga class twice a week regularly. I practice a bit at home but never enough. Most of my practice, however, comes from my mindful way of thinking, moving, breathing, talking, eating and living every moment and day. And today, I can walk a few miles without fear of falling or losing balance. My stance is straight, breath is deep and each move is slow and deliberate. I can climb the loop over the Smith Rock. I can pile firewood all day, cut grass, blow leaves, clean and repair the roof over my house. I can move and move again many heavy boxes left behind by my sons as they went to college, all without pulling my back. I drive thirteen hours to California without feeling the least bit of stiffness and back pain. I walk around the campus everyday with an upright back, wide open chest and motion that is unhurried. When and if I encounter something unpleasant or upsetting, I close my eyes and take a deliberate deep breath and exhale very, very, slowly. Within a minute, I reclaim my pleasant world.

I am free of anxieties and mental or physical stresses. I live my days with renewed confidence, self-respect and contentment. I sleep my nights like a baby. I regularly read and ponder philosophical and spiritual books and poetry written by some of the best writers. I ponder Buddha, Jesus, Gandhi and other great souls in my unending contemplation of purpose and resolve for life. Yoga brings me clarity of mind and sanctity of soul. Yoga brought me to be at peace with myself and with the world around me. My Yoga is entirely personal in that it is not for me to show off but to live. Yoga makes me happy. With happiness comes good health and good thoughts. Everything else nice and noble surely follows. What more can a fortunate man beg for?

Whether you introduce yourself to yoga for the first time or are a regular practitioner, the Mind Spa offers a quiet space for a personal practice. Our Yoga in Higher Education DVDs offer a class for students and faculty/staffs needs. Make an appointment today.
New Mind Spa Consultations

½ Hour consultations: Tuesdays from 2 to 3pm at the APCC (Asian Pacific Islander Cultural Center) with Roshni Patel, Mind Spa Student Coordinator, OR
½ Hour Consultations: Tuesdays from 9 to 10am* at the Mind Spa, CAPS, with Dr. Michele Ribeiro, Mind Spa Coordinator (*Times can vary depending on scheduling needs of patron)

CALL 541-737-2131 to schedule a consult.

Silence
Michele D. Ribeiro, Ed.D. Psychologist & Coordinator of The Mind Spa, CAPS

Each year I take what I call a respite from my life, a ten day silent Vipassana meditation retreat. The silence is a time to replenish and purify my mind. In a world where we are asked or even required to be plugged in to our cell phones, computers, and ipods; being quiet has become even more of a life preserver. When stress starts to take over and I have to juggle multiple demands, the rhythm of my breath, awareness and equanimity become my inner compass. Since I don’t have control over what happens in life, the best I can do is to manage my reactions, moment to moment. Vipassana is a Pali word which means insight. The meditation is a practice that trains my mind to see things as they are, not as I would like them to be. I realize through this practice that all pain, pleasure, anger, and attachments are manifested through sensations on my body. By training the mind to become more keenly aware of these sensations I can learn to recognize them as helpful tools rather than merely difficult processes that I have to get through. Once I become aware of sensations (e.g. heat, itching, pain, vibrations) I can either learn to observe them and understand their impermanence or if feeling too overwhelmed, I can turn back to the breath as a tool to focus and ground me in the present.

Fortunately for the OSU community, The Mind Spa is a quiet space on campus where silence is offered and encouraged. In the Mind Spa, there is a corner area with a zafu cushion where one can sit simple crossed in quiet contemplation, prayer or meditation. Or, if the body limits sitting in simple cross, there is an ergonomic chair where one can sit upright and listen to a variety of mindfulness/meditation CDs that will guide newbies or seasoned meditators alike. Mindfulness is a non-sectarian practice, so anyone one with or without a religious or spiritual practice can benefit from moment to moment awareness. CAPS also offers a mindfulness meditation group on Fridays from 2 to 3p.m. on the 5th floor of CAPS. No appointment is required! Just show up and Jim and Isaac will begin the group with brief instructions on beginning a mindfulness practice. For those of you who don’t have the time during the day to visit CAPS, all the cultural centers also offer a quite meditative space and are open into the evening hours.

You can also visit the CAPS website for a list of mindfulness/meditation groups in the community. Though we do not endorse any particular community group, we do encourage each of you to find a time for silence, in the midst of your busy days. For only in silence can we explore the vast inner world of ourselves.

The Happy Movie Screening
Saturday, February 11th. Dennis Community Hall, 7:00pm. Followed by music, socializing, and dance.