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.

Spring term is here and as I write this introduction, rain continues to fall with moments and sometimes afternoons of glorious sunshine! Coming out of the dark days of winter, reminds us that we often thrive when the sun shines and we are invited to reconnect to mother earth through walks, biking and enjoying sports in the great outdoors. To support the community’s resilience, we continue to offer Satellite Mind Spa services at the APCC on Thursdays from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., personalized biofeedback programs for loan through CAPS and day light bright light therapy lamps at CAPS and through three hour reserve at the Valley Library. Further, our Mind Spa Study Break, welcomed over 50 students over winter term’s dead week, so we’ll be again offering a Spring Study Break in the Willamette Room on Monday, June 4, 2012 from 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. in the Valley Library. While enjoying Downtown Hero subs during this break, you can also try out tools including our Relaxing Rhythms Biofeedback, personalized biofeedback and yoga stretches.

Our final exciting addition to our satellite services is the new offering of the Relaxing Rhythms Biofeedback program for Vet Med students, which is now available in the Vet Med Library. We understand how stressful medical school can be and are pleased to work collaboratively in offering this new program. And a sneak preview into the fall... We are also excited about receiving a grant from the Healthy Campus Initiatives, so stay tuned to see what new ways we are expanding our biofeedback services to the OSU community. Thanks for your ongoing support!
Meditation and Mindfulness

By Emi Sumida, PhD, Psychologist Resident, Counseling and Psychological Services

I am the newest member of OSU’s Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), having started my position in the 2nd week of the winter term. Looking back at my first term it’s hard to believe it all went by so quickly especially considering, that at the time, I thought I would never get to the end. Between the stress of moving to a new city and settling into a new job, at times I felt so overwhelmed that I wondered how I would ever make it through. Many of my students reported similar feelings of being overwhelmed, stressed, or anxious throughout the term and the negative effects it has had on their health and well being. While we all know how unhealthy unresolved stress can be for us; it can be difficult sometimes to know exactly how to deal with it. As such, I would like to share with you my thoughts on the importance of developing your own set of skills to manage stress.

In my early training as a therapist; a psychologist I knew very closely taught me a very important lesson about resiliency. At that time, she was about to go to Central Asia to adopt the young boy who would become her first child. She said that one of the greatest gifts we can give to babies, a gift that will serve them well for their entire lives, is to give them the tools and the knowledge needed to manage their stress and anxiety. When we’re little, these things could be simple, such as a safety blanket, a teddy bear, nice calming music when we cry, and pets to play with. Unfortunately as we age the challenges we face, change along with us. Although the simple solutions of our younger years may no longer solve our stress, the good news is that there are still simple, easy to learn methods of dealing with stress and anxiety that can fit into the schedule of even the busiest student.

When I was young girl in Japan I had two main ways of dealing with stress. The first was having a giant stuffed panda bear in my room. The second was a particular type of self-soothing that has grown in popularity among Americans in recent years: meditation. My kindergarten was built on the same grounds as a Buddhist temple, where we would sit in front of a big statue of a golden Buddha and learn to meditate. While there are many different styles of meditation the one I was exposed to was the famous sitting style known as zazen. Developed by Buddhist monks as a method of achieving enlightenment, zazen emphasizes stilling and emptying the mind by concentrating on a single object, like one’s breath, until all the distractions of the mind come to a stop. By practicing zazen you learn to increase your concentration and to gain greater control over your emotions.

A similar technique, that I was introduced, was the breathing technique called shinkokyu (深呼吸), literally translated as deep breathing. Though similar in some ways to zazen, shinkokyu is more of a pure relaxation technique than a method of controlling the mind. At school I would begin and end my classes with shinkokyu. I was encouraged to practice shinkokyu before presentations, tests, and public speaking. My athlete friends would also practice by sitting on tatami mats and deeply breathe. To this day, I still use the deep breathing technique when I feel nervous.

Although we do not have a Buddhist temple on campus, we do have a place for you to learn how to meditate and learn ways of handling the stress of school. That place is called the Mind Spa. Housed within Counseling and Psychological Services, the Mind Spa offers books and manuals on meditation techniques as well as a quiet and serene environment in which to practice. In addition, CAPS offers a mindfulness drop-in group every Friday from 2:00 to 3:00. Stop by and take your first step on the path to enlightenment…or at least experience a less stressful term!
Engaging your Mind, Body, and Spirit

Michele D. Ribeiro, Licensed Psychologist, CAPS

Spring in Corvallis... flowers blooming, rain falling and students focusing on their studies during the final term of the academic year; all remind me of transitions and the importance of self-care. In many ways the only constant in our lives is change. Although we do not always have control with what happens around us, we do have some control of what happens within us.

So here we are, the middle of the term is upon us and the end of the term will soon be approaching. New adventures will abound. No matter what your plans are for the end of the term, everyone will be going through some sort of change. Some of you will be graduating from college, others going on a study abroad program, travelling, returning home, starting a new job or returning to an old one, starting summer school, starting a new relationship, and/or ending a current relationship. Whatever it is, you will likely be feeling a plethora of emotions. So, what do you do with all these emotions? For starters, take the time to become aware of what you are feeling. Stress and anxiety are normal reactions to both positive change as well as unexpected or disappointing change. Next, notice if there are any physiological changes in your body, such as accelerated heart beats, shallow breathing or difficulty breathing, difficulty with sleep, increase or decrease in appetite, and/or difficulty concentrating or feeling that your mind is wandering. Often changes in our physical body correlate to how one is feeling emotionally. Managing stress requires a holistic approach to changing one’s lifestyle, but there are simple practices one can implement to cause an immediate relaxing response on the body.

One way to manage stress is through practicing diaphragmatic (abdominal) breathing. In managing our busy lives, we rarely activate our parasympathetic nervous system because we tend to not think as much about our breathing or nervous system. When practicing abdominal breathing we are actively slowing down our nervous systems and thus inviting a natural sense of calmness. When starting to practice, keep your mouth closed and allow all breaths to come in and go out through the nostrils. When you breathe in, try to fill your stomach with air, which will expand the stomach. When exhaling, allow the stomach to naturally collapse and release all the air that was inhaled. Repeat this pattern for at least a minute or two. As you practice and become more comfortable with this breathing pattern, try to allow your breathing to be more relaxed and natural after your first few attempts.

A second way to calm yourself if you are experiencing stress is to do some visualization exercises. Our ability to create scenes and sounds in our mind that invoke a sense of tranquility can be quite profound. So rather than turn to worry, try creating a sense of serenity through creative visualizations. Imagine yourself on a sunny day in a meadow, on the beach or in the forest. Imagine hearing the sounds associated with whatever scene you choose and allow your breathing to be in sync with the calm sensation that the visualization invokes. There are many exercises that you can find on the web. If you need help coming up with a scene, just type in creative visualizations on Google and see what you find.

Another resource for stress management for the OSU community is The Mind Spa, located at 500 Snell Hall. The Mind Spa offers mindfulness audio resources as well as biofeedback that can assist you in managing your stress and learning optimum ways to balance your mind, body and spirit. Call 541-737-2131 today, to make a half hour / one hour appointment or if you have never used the Mind Spa before, half hour personal instruction/consultations are also available. Not everyone can master breathing/visualizations without using programs that provide assistance and build skills. So, specific programs such as Relaxing Rhythms and the mPower Wellness Workshop in the Mind Spa, specifically have interactive programs that have step-by-step modules for self-empowerment and self-care. The Wellness Workshop covers the following modules: Have Fun, Relax and Focus, Coach Yourself, Stay Active and Engage Others whereas the Relaxing Rhythms’ self-exploration section gives instructions on how to practice balance, invigoration, mindfulness, breathing, and relaxation.

Other ways to manage stress are through seeking support from family, friends, or through various group supports. CAPS currently has 25 groups being offered that range from relationship oriented groups to ADHD support to Grief and Loss support. For the list of groups being offered go to www.oregonstate.edu/counsel. Many groups are drop-in and you don’t even need an appointment to attend. Whatever your emotional need, CAPS can assist in finding the right program, therapy or referral for you! So, don’t hesitate, check out the Mind Spa and CAPS today!
Iyengar Yoga is the most scientifically studied form of yoga today. It specifically decelerates and/or heals numerous physical and emotional ailments. Subbappa Ribeiro, a student of BKS Iyengar and certified Iyengar Yoga instructor and yoga therapist, consulted with the Mind Spa to create the Yoga DVD Series: Yoga in Higher Education. The photos capture his work with OSU students, faculty and staff.

**Virabhadrasana 1 (Warrior pose 1)**
Warrior Pose relieves backache and sciatica; strengthens the back muscles; tones the abdominal muscles; relieves acidity and improves digestion. The pose should not be practiced if you have high blood pressure or a cardiac condition.

**Salamba Sarvangasana (Shoulderstand)**
Shoulder stand alleviates hypertension; relieves insomnia and soothes the nerves; improves the functioning of the thyroid and parathyroid glands; alleviates asthma, bronchitis and throat ailments; helps treat colds and sinus blockages; and helps treat hemorrhoids and ovarian cysts. Women should not practice this pose during menstruation.

**Ustrasana (Camel pose)**
Camel pose helps correct posture; increases lung capacity; improves blood circulation to all the organs of the body; tones the muscles of the back and spine; removes stiffness in the shoulders, back and ankles; relieves abdominal cramps; and regulates menstrual flow. This pose should not be practiced if you have severe constipation, diarrhea, headaches, migraines or hypertension. Props should be used for heart attack history.

**Janu Sirsasana (Head on knee pose)**
This particular forward bend eases the effects of stress on the heart and mind; stabilizes blood pressure; eases stiffness in the shoulders, hips, elbows, wrists and finger joints. The pose also relieves stiffness in the legs and strengthens the leg muscles.

Excerpts from *Yoga in Higher Education* DVD available in the Mind Spa.