



THE WELCOMING PRACTICE

Whenever, in the course of your life, you become aware of feeling an emotion such as fear, anger or sadness, say, "Welcome, [name of emotion]."

You are not welcoming the circumstances that caused the emotion, or the pain that it brings. But in acknowledging the emotion itself, greeting it as part of you, giving it its name, you diminish its power to hurt you.

By saying its name, you move your mental activity from the emotional right brain to the verbal left brain.

Practice welcoming the Big Four (sadness, fear, anger and guilt) in the shower each morning. This develops the habit of the Welcoming Practice.

(From a concept developed originally by Mary Mrozowski.)

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RELAXATION RESPONSE PRACTICE

1. Choose a word or short phrase as a focus. If you hold religious or spiritual beliefs, you could use a name, word or phrase associated with those beliefs; if not, choose one which reflects important values to you, like "peace" or "compassion".
2. Find a quiet place and sit comfortably.
3. Close your eyes.
4. Progressively relax your muscles, either from head to foot or foot to head. Let your muscles relax, don't try to "make" them relax. Become aware of any tension in them, and allow that tension to release as if it was leaking out.
5. Breathe slowly and deeply, but without forcing, and say your focus word or phrase silently to yourself on each outbreath.
6. Thoughts will come to mind. Let them go past.
7. If you find you have followed a trail of thoughts away from your repetition, just gently let the thoughts go and return to your focus on the next breath.
8. Use a timer to signal you after 10 to 20 minutes.
9. When the timer goes off, let other thoughts gradually return for a minute or so, then open your eyes and sit for another minute before standing.
10. Practice once or twice daily. Good times are before breakfast and before dinner.

(Adapted from material by Dr Herbert Benson, Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine.)



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