



CHAIR YOGA FOR GOOD LIVING

A six week relaxation course
for people living with
chronic pain and disability

American Pain Foundation

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Then add this guided imagery script: *Try to imagine you can see yourself sitting here. You are sitting, nothing else. Say to yourself: "I am sitting here. I am breathing. I am thinking." Say to yourself, "At this moment, I just am." I am in a state of non-doing where I am ok to just be. I let go of the desire to do, do, do. There is nothing I need to accomplish. Right now, there is nothing to do, nowhere to be...*

10. Meditation

11. Affirmation

12. Closing/check-out

The daily practice for the last week is to take all that you've learned with you. Study the poster and try and practice the exercises a few times a week, or once a day. Stay committed to the practice of learning how to be mindful, restful, positive, compassionate, and in love with life!

~ Don't forget to administer the participant evaluation! ~

Week 6: Just Plain Being

1. Theme

Time: ½ minute

The theme of our final class is “Just Plain Being.” Today we will reflect on the nature of non-doing.

2. Check-in

Our culture is addicted to outcomes, goals, and accomplishments. None of this is inherently bad or wrong. But when it becomes the entire focus, we move out of balance.

The distinction is often made between “doing” and “non-doing.” Which concept do you think our culture values more and why? When we are in pain or when we are suffering, is it easier to do or not do? It is a challenge to learn how to “just be.” When we have many things to accomplish and many people to please (including ourselves), it is really hard to just pause for a bit to rest and recuperate. It’s funny though that recuperating can give us more energy and more focus later when we feel better or have less pain. If your life is already filled with “non-doing”, is there a way embrace and enjoy it?

3. Centering

4. Sound-play

5. Mudra

6. Affirmation

7. Breathing practice

8. Movement

9. Guided Relaxation

Refer to the guided relaxation script from week one for the contract/relax, body scan, breath observation, and mental observation parts of the guided relaxation.

*There is no need to run outside
for better seeing
Nor to peer from a window. Rather,
abide at the center of your being.
Search your heart.
The way to do is to be.*

--Lao Tze

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12. Closing/check-out

Time: 1 minute

Fill in the blanks: I have compassion for _____ because _____.

The daily practice for our fifth week is, again, to take the affirmation with you. Try and be your most compassionate self. When you have pain, try and feel compassion towards yourself and the pain. Say to yourself, "I have compassion for myself because things are tough right now." Also, be sure to show compassion towards others, especially those who you have conflict with.

Then place your awareness at the heart again. Visualize the face and body of someone who you have conflict with. Send these words to this person:

May I have peace

Again, place the awareness at the heart, visualize the person who you have conflict with and send these words to this person:

May I have peace

Repeat this one more time.

Again, place your awareness at the heart. Get a sense of the whole world that surrounds you. Send these words out to all the people and animals in the world:

May all beings have peace

Repeat this two more times.

Finally, place the awareness at the heart and as you repeat these words, send the awareness out to your whole being:

May I have peace

10. Meditation

Time: 3 minutes, you can skip the meditation here since the practice already included the loving-kindness meditation. But if you have time, you can keep it in.

11. Affirmation

Time: 1 minute

Repeat the affirmation again here in coordination with a few deep breaths.

Introduction

What is this course?

This is a six week relaxation course tailored to meet the needs of people who are safer practicing yoga in chairs. The course is appropriate for those who do or do not use wheelchairs, who live in long term care facilities or live independently, and who cope daily with chronic pain, stress, illness, and disability. Each session lasts one hour and is meant to bring about a feeling of ease and well-being. When we encourage feelings of ease over stress and tension, the perception of pain can be altered. By the end of the six week course, participants will have an understanding of how to incorporate relaxation and stress relief into their daily lives.

What is the philosophy behind this course?

The ideas and practices are derived from the philosophies of yoga, mindfulness, peer empowerment, and self-advocacy. Self-care at the emotional and mental level lies at the core of our philosophy. The course is designed so that participants actively engage in their own care and treatment. Participants gain awareness that assists in identifying their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs. They are respected as individuals with vast resources for healing, self-care, and empowerment. The course doesn't claim to teach anybody how to do anything; rather, people teach themselves how to do for themselves. Additionally, there is a belief that relationships are intrinsic to health and therefore have included many techniques that nurture communication, community, and dignity.

What is the structure of the course?

Each weekly class has a different theme. We have experimented with many themes and chosen the ones which seemed to benefit our participants the most.

The weekly themes are:

Week 1: Being Positive

Week 2: Being Mindful

Week 3: Being in Community

Week 4: Being Love
Week 5: Being Compassion
Week 6: Just Plain Being

Each weekly class contains 12 components:

1. Introduction of Theme
2. Check-in
3. Centering
4. Sound-play
5. Mudra (hand gesture)
6. Affirmation
7. Breathing practice
8. Movement
9. Guided Relaxation
10. Meditation
11. Affirmation
12. Closing/check-out

**When you see italicized type in this document, it signifies the facilitator's script.*

Who can facilitate this course?

Certified yoga teachers, social workers, therapeutic recreation staff, activities staff, certified nursing assistants, registered nurses, peer advocates, chaplains, and volunteers. Because this course derives much of its content from the yoga tradition, the facility management may consider hiring a certified yoga instructor. To hire a yoga instructor or yoga therapist, search the International Association of Yoga Therapists (<http://www.iayt.org>), Yoga Journal (<http://www.yogajournal.com>) or do a Google search (<http://www.google.com>) for a teacher in your area.

How to get started

If you are an employee at a long term care facility, you will need to gather the people for the course. In certain environments, you may

7. Breathing practice

Time: 2 minutes

8. Movement

Time: 30 minutes

9. Guided Relaxation

Time: 4-5 minutes

Refer to the guided relaxation script from week one for the contract/relax, body scan, breath observation, and mental observation parts of the guided relaxation.

Then add this guided imagery script. This is known as a loving-kindness meditation:

Place your awareness in your heart. Then send the awareness from the heart out to your whole body. As you do this, say to yourself:

May I have peace

Again, place the awareness at the heart and as you repeat these words, send the awareness out to your whole being:

May I have peace

Repeat this one more time.

Then place your awareness at your heart again. Visualize the face and body of someone you love. Send these words to this person:

May you have peace

Again, place the awareness at the heart. Visualize the face and body of someone you love. Send these words to this person:

May you have peace

Repeat this one more time.

Week 5: Being Compassion

1. Theme

Time: 1 minute

The theme of our first class is “Being Compassion.” Today we will reflect on the nature of compassion and how it functions in our daily lives.

2. Check-in

Time: 4-5 minutes

Do you have compassion for yourself? When you are in pain or when you are suffering, how might you show a compassionate attitude towards yourself and others?

What is the kindest thing anyone has ever done for you? Some people believe that we can express compassion towards all being equally, even, and especially, the one who hurt us. Do you agree or disagree?

The word “compassion” comes from the words “to feel with,” meaning that when we express compassion, we feel with the other person. It does not mean that we take on their burdens. Rather, we observe with a non-judgmental eye and lessen feelings of resentment, distaste, and negativity towards ourselves and others.

3. Centering

Time: 2 minutes

4. Sound-play

Time: 1 minute

5. Mudra

Time: 1 minute

6. Affirmation

Time: 1 minute

want to initially avoid using the term “yoga.” Explain that the course involves stretching, breathing, and relaxation and that you yourself have found these techniques to be very helpful in life (if you have). It is good to encourage people who live with chronic pain to attend the course since relaxation has been shown to help people manage their pain. Explain that deep breathing and relaxation releases endorphins (naturally produced morphine) and can help make life more enjoyable.

If you do not already work in a facility, you will have to call the Activities Director or Director of Therapeutic Recreation and schedule a meeting. Tell them that you want to initiate a 6 week Relaxation Course and that you will be using a curriculum that has been approved by the American Pain Foundation as a method for helping to manage the effects of pain, stress, illness, and disability for seniors.

Who can benefit from taking this course?

Each participant should receive doctor approval prior to beginning the course. The doctor should understand that the participant will engage in gentle yoga exercises, will have their arms over their head at times, the head will go below the heart (in a forward leaning position), the spine with twist gently side to side, forward, and back, and deep breathing will be encouraged. Do not exclude people who have had strokes and can only move one side of the body. As others are moving that side of the body, have the person close their eyes and visualize the movement on the immobile side. It is recommended that those with mid to late stage dementia participate in a course specifically designed for them. They will need more prompting and attention than this course offers. From our experience, people with the following conditions have succeeded in our course: chronic pain, Fibromyalgia, neuropathic pain, diabetes, hip and knee replacement, strokes, Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson’s, amputees, those who are blind, those with tracheotomies, and heart disease (it is important that the blood pressure is controlled). All participants ought to avoid exercises that cause pain, exertion, and dizziness.

Making the environment completely safe

First, do no harm! Always prioritize. If the facilitator of the course is an independent contractor and not an employee of the facility, she/he should obtain provider insurance and should be CPR certified. The facilitator is responsible for knowing what medical conditions the participants live with, what their limitations are, and what movements are to be avoided. Watch for cues. For example, watch for over-exertion. If a participant is grimacing more than usual, they may be pushing too hard and hurting themselves. Mild grunts and groans are normal at first, but be sure that people do not exceed their physical, mental, or emotional limits. Do not manually adjust anyone's body unless you are specifically trained to do so.

Other considerations

Be certain that the room is quiet and that the door will close. Preferably, choose a room that does not have an intercom but does have an emergency phone. Natural light is nice, in addition to lighting that can be dimmed or decreased. Music is optional and can be used for motivational purposes. Ask the participants if they prefer music or silence. Often, silence is much appreciated if you are in a facility where privacy is hard to come by.

Participant intake form

Use the intake form to obtain pertinent information from the participants prior to the first class.

Participant evaluation form

Use the participant evaluation form at the end of the six weeks to assess the effectiveness of the course and to make improvements.

10. Meditation

Time: 3 minutes

11. Affirmation

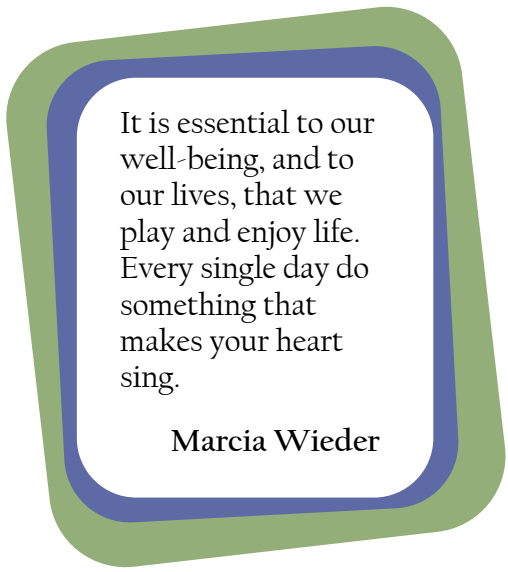
Time: 1 minute

Repeat the affirmation again here in coordination with a few deep breaths.

12. Closing/check-out

Time: 1 minute

Script: *The daily practice for our fourth week is again, to take the affirmation with you. Your practice is also to try and increase the amount of things you do that you love and decrease the amount of things you do that you despise or resent. You can accomplish this either by becoming aware of your attitude and working to change it, or stopping the activity all together (if you have that luxury). Either way, the idea is to become mindful of your physical, mental, and emotional reactions to things you love and things you despise so that you can then choose how to respond. Try and get yourself out of reactivity and into a place where you have control over your reactions.*



It is essential to our well-being, and to our lives, that we play and enjoy life. Every single day do something that makes your heart sing.

Marcia Wieder

3. Centering

Time: 2 minutes

4. Sound-play

Time: 1 minute

5. Mudra

Time: 1 minute

6. Affirmation

Time: 1 minute

7. Breathing practice

Time: 2 minutes

8. Movement

Time: 30 minutes

9. Guided Relaxation

Time: 4-5 minutes

Refer to the guided relaxation script from week one for the contract/relax, body scan, breath observation, and mental observation parts of the guided relaxation.

Then add this guided imagery script:

Bring your attention to the area where your heart lies in the chest. Get a sense of the space the heart occupies behind the rib cage. Imagine there is a crescent moon surrounding and protecting the heart. Feel how relaxed the heart is. Feel how the heart is protected but open.

Imagine a brilliant greenish light emanating from your heart. The light fills the entire chest, the spreads down your arms and into your fingers, legs, toes and up into the head as well. You feel the whole body absorbed in light. The heart circulates a greenish healing light throughout your whole body.

Chair Yoga for Good Living Participant Intake

1. What is your experience with stress management, yoga or meditation?
2. Are there any physical conditions, injuries, or other circumstances you would like to tell me about that might affect your experience in this class?
3. Do you have any physical pain? If so, please describe.
4. How do you manage your pain?
5. How is your posture?
6. What is your stress level? What tends to bring on or trigger stress in your life?
7. How do you cope with stress?
8. Do you find yourself getting upset and irritated often? If so, when?
9. Do you have nurturing relationships in your life? Do you have people to confide in?
10. What are the main challenges in your life right now? What are the losses you have endured?
11. Are there habits you would like to change?
12. What do you consider the most important thing in life?
13. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me?

Thank you!!

Chair Yoga for Good Living Participant Evaluation

What did you like about the chair yoga course?

Is there anything you would change?

Do you feel that you have more understanding of how to cope with stress and pain?

What did you learn?

Are you able to integrate what you learned into your life? How?

Do you have any other feedback?

Thank you!!

Be mindful of your interactions throughout the day—pay close attention especially to the interactions that tend to bother you or disturb your peace. Also, think about and become aware of the interactions you have with family, friends, doctors, nurses, and other health practitioners. If these interactions are not positive, is there anything you can do to make them positive? Who do you have positive interactions with? Practice mindfulness by pausing to breathe and not allowing the other person take you away from your center.

Week 4: Being Love

1. Theme

Time: 1 minute

The theme of our fourth class is “Being Love.” Today we will reflect on the concept of love in our lives.

2. Check-in

Time: 4-5 minutes

As this check-in may conjure up intense emotions, focus particularly on the buoyant qualities of joy and love as opposed to the heavier qualities of loss and grief. Keep smiling.

Can anyone tell us a good story about love? Of course there are so many different kinds of love. The kind of love we will focus on today is unconditional, all-pervasive love—the kind you feel when you are in love with the world, when you feel good about yourself and see yourself in others and others in yourself. When we are in love with life, we enjoy life, as we also feel pain, but we revel in the enjoyment. We laugh and feel good about the small things.

Love is the great miracle cure. Loving ourselves works miracles in our lives.

Louise Hay

What are the things you love in life? What makes your heart sing?

8. Movement

Time: 30 minutes

9. Guided Relaxation

Time: 4-5 minutes

Refer to the guided relaxation script from week one for the contract/relax, body scan, breath observation, and mental observation parts of the guided relaxation.

Then add this guided imagery script: *Imagine you are somewhere with any number of people around you. You might imagine that you are lying in soft grass and an entourage of saints and healer encircle around you. Or, you are at the beach on the sand and people that you love are around you. You can feel that you are connected to those around you and that you play an important role in the world. You feel connected to others and you feel that you are an intrinsic part of something larger than you.*

10. Meditation

Time: 3 minutes

11. Affirmation

Time: 1 minute

Repeat the affirmation again here in coordination with a few deep breaths.

12. Closing/check-out

Time: 1 minute

Pat yourself on the back and say “good job” to yourself. Turn to the person next to you and pat them gently on the back and tell them “good job” as well. Turn to the person on the other side of you and do the same.

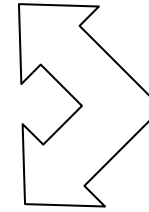
The daily practice for the third week is again, to take the affirmation with you. Be sure you have remembered it, or written it down. Try and repeat it when you are having a difficult communication with someone. Repeat it in conjunction with a few deep breaths.

Overview of Components

Here again is the list of components followed by the allotted time, the intention behind the component, and an explanation of it. This section should give you a good understanding of each component and of the overall structure of each weekly class.

Components:

1. Introduction of theme
2. Check-in
3. Centering
4. Sound-play
5. Mudra (hand gesture)*
6. Breathing practice*
7. Affirmation*
8. Movement*
9. Guided Relaxation*
10. Meditation*
11. Affirmation*
12. Closing/check-out



*Components 5 to 11 have the same script throughout the six weeks.

Components 1 to 4 and 12 change each week to accommodate the specific theme for that week.

The imagery part of the guided relaxation (no. 9) changes each week.

1. Theme

Time: 1 minute

Intention and explanation: The theme awakens interest, motivates, and creates coherence. The theme acts like glue; it ties everything together. Introduce the theme briefly. Show your excitement. Then move onto the next section—the check-in.

See each weekly class for the theme script.

2. Check-in

Time: 5-7 minutes

Intention and explanation: The check-in spurs discussion. It ensures that everyone receives recognition and interacts with the whole group. Try to avoid the participants engaging in conversation with only you as they will do. Ask each participant to look each other in the eye as they contribute. To do this, you may need to say “Look at each other as you share. Others are interested in what you have to say as well.” Let go of all your judgments as to what types of things ought to be said and just enjoy the creative and free flowing discourse. Listen intently and teach others to listen by your example. Be certain that each person gets a chance to share, but limit your time! Do some quick math in your head—if you have seven participants, then each participant shares for an average of 45 seconds to one minute. Be firm about the timing and do not let any one participant usurp all the time.

See each weekly class for the check-in script.

3. Centering

Time: 2 minutes

Intention and explanation: Centering is crucial to any relaxation practice. It is the time when everything else outside the practices is dropped or allowed to move to the rear of the mind. It’s a type of intention in itself that clears the way for beneficial things to happen.

See each weekly class for the centering script.

4. Sound-play

Time: 1 minute

Intention and explanation: Bells work well, especially Tibetan Tsing-sha, although any bell or resonate instrument will do. As the sound of the bells resonates for about 15 seconds, have everyone listen to the sound until it completely disappears. Do it two more times. This practice increases the ability to concentrate. It also signifies a new beginning where something magical, and not at all mundane, is about to happen.

See each weekly class for the sound-play script.

Week 3: Being in Community

1. Theme

Time: 1 minute

The theme of our first class is “Being in Community.” Today we will reflect on the nature of relationships and our connections to people.

2. Check-in

Time: 4-5 minutes

See if there is anyone who can go around the circle and give the names of all the participants. Allow more than one person to do this. Then have everyone look around at each person in the circle and make eye contact. Ask the participants to acknowledge each person with a nod or a bow.

Why is community so important? Who feels like they belong to a community, and if so, what community do you feel you belong to? What relationships are important to you? We need other people to support us and make us feel human. We need positive relationships to get by in life. By joyfully being in the company of others, we nurture a sense of connectedness and belonging.

3. Centering

Time: 2 minutes

4. Sound-play

Time: 1 minute

5. Mudra

Time: 1 minute

6. Affirmation

Time: 1 minute

7. Breathing practice

Time: 2 minutes

whole class can share one affirmation. A few good affirmations to use if the class is sharing are: *All is well* or *I am calm, I am relaxed*. The whole group could create one that works for them. Be sure everyone agrees on it. The affirmation should be repeated throughout each class and over the six weeks. Integrate the affirmation into the practice such that when participants take a deep breath, they repeat the positive statement in conjunction with the breath.

The affirmation remains the same throughout the six weeks. You will find an extended version of the script only in week one.

8. Movement

Time: 30 minutes

Intention and explanation: This is the largest portion of the class. It is what is typically called yoga exercises. In addition to the mudra and breathing practice staying the same throughout the six weeks, the movement also is repeated. We have found this consistency and repetitiousness imperative because it offers participants an opportunity to witness improvement and growth. Repetitiousness has also galvanized confidence among our seniors and others with disabilities. One of our intentions is that participants integrate the practices into their daily lives—an integration that happens over time after much repetition. **All movements must be safe and cause no harm. The movements are gentle and slow and performed without strain.**

The movement portion remains the same throughout the six weeks. You will find an extended version of the script only in week one.

9. Guided Relaxation

Time: 4-5 minutes

Intention and explanation: The guided relaxation includes,

Contract/relax

Body scan

Breath observation

Mental observation

Guided imagery

We may be able to prevent falls when we move mindfully. Moving mindfully means that we do not move our bodies unless we feel that we have some kind of control over the movement. We become present and attentive to the body's abilities and recognize the full extent of safe movement. Mindfulness teaches us to center ourselves before action. This includes making sure that the breaks on the wheelchair are locked before standing or transferring.

What are the other transitions that create scary or unsafe situations? What specific movements feel safest to you—when do you feel the strongest? What movements feel the worst to you—when do you feel the weakest, most unstable?

3. Centering

Time: 2 minutes

Refer to the centering script from week one.

4. Sound-play

Time: 1 minute

Refer to the sound-play script from week one.

5. Mudra

Time: 1 minute

Refer to the mudra script from week one.

6. Affirmation

Time: 1 minute

Repeat the affirmation as you take a deep breath.

7. Breathing practice

Time: 2 minutes, can be used throughout

Refer to the breathing practice script from week one.

8. Movement

Time: 30 minutes

Refer to the movement script from week one.

9. Guided Relaxation

Time: 4-5 minutes

Refer to the guided relaxation script from week one for the contract/relax, body scan, breath observation, and mental observation parts of the guided relaxation.

Then add this guided imagery script: *Imagine you are somewhere far away from here, somewhere you can deeply rest. You are still wide awake and you are imagining yourself fully present somewhere safe and beautiful. Try and see yourself, in your mind's eye, beginning to move the body. See yourself as a sacred elephant, or some other kind of animal that moves very slowly with intention. See yourself moving the body without feeling rushed and without moving beyond safe limits. You move almost in slow motion, gracefully like a swan.*

10. Meditation

Time: 3 minutes

Refer to the meditation script from week one.

11. Affirmation

Time: 1 minute

Repeat the affirmation again here in coordination with a few deep breaths.

12. Closing/check-out

Time: 1 minute

Script: *The daily practice for the second week is again, to take the affirmation with you. Be sure you have remembered it, or written it down. Try and repeat it before you transition yourself from bed to standing, and from the toilet to standing. Repeat it in conjunction with a few deep breaths. Be mindful of your movements throughout the day, especially the movements that feel shakier than the others.*

5. Mudra (hand gesture)

Time: 1 minute, can be repeated throughout

Intention and explanation: Instruct everyone to place their hands (or hand, if some folks have mobility in one hand only) into a mudra. A mudra is a hand position that can facilitate calm and focus. It is just as beneficial when done with one hand. See pictures for the four variations. The mudra can be held throughout the centering, Sound-play, affirmation, and breathing practice. After those four components are completed, the hand position is released. It is also possible to insert the mudra again in various places.

The mudra remains the same throughout the six weeks. You will find an extended version of the script only in week one.

6. Breathing practice

Time: 2 minutes, can be used throughout

Intention and explanation: The breathing practice is a simple deep breath. The deep breath does not cause exertion or hyperventilation, rather it brings about ease and comfort. If it does not bring about ease, then it hasn't yet been mastered. It should also be as noiseless as possible. As the facilitator, though, you may want to make a sound when you breathe at times. This indicates non-verbally to the class that they may also take a deep breath. When you breathe and relax, it reminds them to breathe and relax. The breathing practice remains the same throughout the six weeks.

The breathing practice remains the same throughout the six weeks. You will find an extended version of the script only in week one.

7. Affirmation

Time: 1 minute, then can be repeated throughout at appropriate times.

Intention and explanation: The affirmation is a concise positive statement that should feel useful to the person using it. It can be used to replace negative thoughts. The affirmation works best if the person using it has created it themselves. You have two options here in terms of the affirmation. Each participant can create their own affirmation that suits their particular personality and life circumstance. Or, the

10. Meditation

Time: 3 minutes

Refer to the meditation script from week one.

11. Affirmation

Time: 1 minute

Repeat the affirmation again here in coordination with a few deep breaths.

12. Closing/check-out

Time: 1 minute

Script: *The daily practice for the second week is again, to take the affirmation with you. Be sure you have remembered it, or written it down. Try and repeat it before you transition yourself from bed to standing, and from the toilet to standing. Repeat it in conjunction with a few deep breaths. Be mindful of your movements throughout the day, especially the movements that feel shakier than the others.*

Week 2: Being Mindful

1. Theme

Time: ½ minute

Intention and explanation: To give focus to the practice

Instruction: *The theme of our second class is “Being Mindful.” Mindfulness means that we are paying attention to and engaged in the present. Thich Nhat Hahn, a Tibetan Buddhist teacher, says “When you are washing the dishes, wash the dishes.” Let’s explore what mindfulness means to us in our daily lives.*

2. Check-in

Time: 4-5 minutes

Intention and explanation: To understand mindfulness and how it can create both safety and serenity during movement.

Be sure to go around the circle and learn everyone’s name. Repeat the names of the participants so everyone can learn everyone else’s name.

To instruct the guided relaxation, have everyone come to a comfortable position that they can hold for a few minutes. They can lean against the back of the chair or remain seated upright. Use a moderately strong voice that will keep everyone awake and alert.

The guided relaxation remains the same throughout the six weeks. You will find an extended version of the script only in week one.

10. Meditation

Time: 3 minutes

Intention and explanation: You will be teaching the meditation technique that focuses on the natural breath. It is a mindfulness technique which means that there is nothing that happens that is not part of the meditation. Everything is part of the meditation. Yet, the awareness is drawn again and again back to the natural breathing.

The meditation remains the same throughout the six weeks. You will find an extended version of the script only in week one.

11. Affirmation

Time: 1 minute

Intention and explanation: Repeat the affirmation again here in coordination with a few deep breaths.

The affirmation remains the same throughout the six weeks. You will find an extended version of the script only in week one.

12. Closing (check-out)

Time: 4-5 minutes

Intention and explanation: The closing is where we work on incorporating the session into our daily lives. The closing will change for each weekly session according to the theme. Refer to the individual classes and proceed from there.

See each weekly class for the closing script.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1: Being Positive

Supplies needed: bells, bookmark-size pieces of paper, markers

1. Theme

Time: ½ minute

Intention and explanation: To give a thematic center of gravity to the class.

Script: *The theme of our first class is “Being Positive.” As we arrange the room and get started today, observe your attitude and thoughts. See if you can stay positive.*

2. Check-in

Time: 4-5 minutes

Intention and explanation: Week 1 check-in will take more time than the rest of the check-ins. Assemble the class into a circle. Thank everyone for attending. Introduce yourself and explain that this is a relaxation course meant to bring its participants greater ease and well-being. Very briefly explain that the class includes gentle stretching, deep breathing, and guided relaxation and imagery. Explain that the course is set up as one hour classes, but that the most important work is done incorporating the mentality of relaxation into everyday life. Talk about how at the end of each class, we will commit to practicing some form of physical, mental, or emotional relaxation during our daily lives.

Be sure to go around the circle and learn everyone’s name. Repeat the names of the participants so everyone can learn everyone else’s name.

Script: *Are you a positive person? Being positive is tough. Sometimes negative thinking gets the best of us. In this course, we try to replace every negative with a positive. This is the benefit of affirmations. An affirmation is a positive, concise statement that is easily remembered. Does anyone know or have an affirmation? Here*

Breath Observation:

Feel the whole body resting and relaxing. Now, move your attention to your natural breath. The breath is flowing in and out without your assistance. You are breathing. It feels good. Feel breath moving in and out of your nostrils. Notice your belly and chest moving up and down with the movement of breath. Say to yourself: I am breathing. (Pause here for a bit).

Mental Observation:

Now become aware of what you are thinking. Let your thoughts be just the way they are. Observe the mind like it was an entertaining movie. Observe yourself thinking. Say to yourself: I am thinking. (Pause here for a bit).

Guided Imagery:

Visualize a wide open blue sky. Try and see, inside your mind, the image of a bright blue sky. Imagine the openness and beauty of the sky. Imagine you can see the curvature of the earth. Then again, you see the wide open blue sky. (Pause here for a bit).

Now you become aware of the room here and your body sitting in the chair. You no longer see the sky, but you can see light seeping through your eyelids. Prepare yourself now for meditation.

10. Meditation

Time: 3 minutes

Intention and explanation: The meditation focuses on the natural breath. It is a mindfulness technique which means that there is nothing that happens that is not part of the meditation. Everything is part of the meditation. Yet, the awareness is drawn again and again back to the natural breathing.

Instruction: *Close the eyes and relax. Say to yourself: I am breathing...it feels good to breath. Become aware of the breathing mechanism. My breath is moving in and out. I feel my breath moving in and out. Watch the breath as it moves through the nostrils. Now, notice the environment in the room. Notice your body sitting here. Say to yourself: I am sitting here. I am thinking. Notice what you are*

toes. Let the spine curl. Lift the spine one vertebra at a time, extend the arms out to the sides inhaling with fingers fully extended. Lift the chest and look slightly up. Exhale and mindfully place the palms into prayer position. Observe yourself breathing. Repeat a few more times. Enjoy.

9. Guided Relaxation

Time: 4-5 minutes

Intention and explanation: Have everyone come to a comfortable position that they can hold for a few minutes. They can lean against the back of the chair or remain seated upright. Use a moderately strong voice that will keep everyone awake and alert.

Contract/Relax:

Tighten the muscles of the legs; inhale, then exhale and relax the legs letting out a sigh. Tighten the muscles of the stomach, back, and chest; inhale, then exhale and relax the stomach, back, and chest letting out a sigh. Make tight fists; inhale, then exhale and relax the fists letting out a sigh. Squeeze the face tight; inhale, then exhale and relax the face.

Body Scan:

Close your eyes and relax. Become even calmer, more relaxed. Again, become even more calm. Bring your awareness to the bottoms of the feet. The toes, the ankles. Bring your awareness to the shins and calves. Knees and thighs. The back of the legs. Pay attention to the feeling in your lower body, both legs. Bring your awareness to the hips and internal organs in the lower abdomen. Feel your lower back. Try not to have an emotional reaction to any part of the body. Just observe the body as it is. Bring your awareness to the middle back. The upper back between the shoulder blades. The shoulders. Feel the fingertips and hands. The wrists and forearms. The elbows and upper arms. Bring your awareness to the neck. Sides of the neck, front of the neck, back of the neck. Jaw, tongue, cheeks, nose, eyes, temples, forehead. Rest your awareness on the top of the head. Say to yourself: My body is completely relaxed. (Pause here for a bit).

are some examples of affirmations: All is well, I am the embodiment of compassion, I am a positive person, I am calm, I am relaxed.

Now, let the group decide if they want to choose individual affirmations or use one group affirmation. Explain that it will be used throughout the next six weeks.

Individual Affirmations:

If they choose to create individual affirmations, it is best that they begin with “I” and are in the present tense. Keep them short. Then write each one out on a bookmark-size paper. They can choose to take it with them and hang it in their room (or you can do that to ensure it goes there). Make certain that you keep a record of each affirmation so you can have it for each succeeding session.

One Group Affirmation:

If the group chooses to use one group affirmation, be sure everyone agrees on it. If they cannot think of one themselves, or agree on one, use “All is well.”

3. Centering

Time: 2 minutes

Intention and explanation: Centering is crucial to any relaxation practice. It is the time when everything else outside the practices is dropped or allowed to move to the rear of the mind. It’s a type of intention in itself that clears the way for beneficial things to happen.

Script: *Wipe the mind clean. Let go of all your worries. Whatever you’re concerned about today, let it go for now. Bring your mind to the present so that you are here with us in the room. Try and be present with your body. Feel that you have a body and simply observe whatever the body presents you with today. Do not judge or react mentally as you observe the body.*

Lift the spine into an upright position, without straining. Relax the shoulders. Lift up like a tall tree reaching towards the sky... good. Then bring your attention to the base of the spine and try to feel how it supports everything that is above it. Close the eyes and imagine

you can see a tall mountain in your mind's eye. Notice how the base of the mountain is larger than the summit. Try to feel your feet acting like the base. Have the feet in firm contact with the ground or the pedals of the wheelchair. Feel how the bottoms of the feet connect with the surface.

Next, observe the gentle wave of breath in and out. The lungs fill, the lungs empty. They fill, they empty. That is it for now, just the breath.

Now, you gain a sense of well-being and peacefulness in your mind. Your thoughts are coming and going, but you remain calm. Don't let your thoughts disturb you. Stay focused on calm, relaxed attention.

4. Sound-play

Time: 1 minute

Intention and explanation: Ring the bells three times. This practice increases the ability to concentrate. It also signifies a new beginning where something magical, and not at all mundane, is about to happen.

Instruction: *Listen to the sound of the bell all the way until the sound completely disappears. Let your mind concentrate deeply on the sound. If your mind wanders away from the sound, bring its attention back to hear the sound of the bell.*

5. Mudra (hand gesture)

Time: 1 minute

Intention and explanation: Instruct everyone to place their hands (or hand, if some folks have mobility in one hand only) into a mudra. A mudra is a hand position that can facilitate calm and focus. It is just as beneficial when done with one hand. See pictures for the four variations. The mudra remains the same throughout the six weeks. The mudra can be held throughout the centering, Sound-play, affirmation, and breathing practice. After those four components are completed, the hand position is released. It is also possible to insert the mudra again in various places.

Script: *Position one or both hands into a mudra. Let me demonstrate. Once you have found a comfortable and stable position for the hands,*

you are in, rest deeply. Pause for a bit. Rest even your mind. Then, slowly roll up the spine again trying to feel each vertebra as it lifts you back up. Feel the vertebrae stacking one on top of the other. Pause here and rest.

Backbend

Inhale, then exhale and stretch the arms out to the sides. Extend through the outstretched fingers. Try and straighten the arms. Have a lot of energy in the arms. Then lean slightly back against the chair, lift the chest. Remain easeful and comfortable. Do not strain. Take a few deep breaths and enjoy. Then return to the neutral seated position and pause.

Triangle

Now, reach the right arm down to the right shin or any part of the leg. Inhale, exhale and relax. Keep the right arm reaching to the right leg as you lift the left arm up to the ceiling, palm facing to the left. Try and look up past the outstretched left fingers. Reach through the fingers of the left hand. Then fold the spine into the forward bend and rest. Dangle the arms. Slowly roll the spine up, one vertebra at a time. Reach the left arm down to the left shin or any part of the leg. Try not to strain. Inhale, exhale and relax. Keep the left arm reaching to the left leg as you lift the right arm up to the ceiling, palm facing to the right. Try and look up past the outstretched right fingers. Reach through the fingers of the right hand. Then fold the spine into the forward bend and rest. Dangle the arms. Slowly roll the spine up, one vertebra at a time.

Sun salutation

Get ready for the sun salutation. This is a series of eight positions that flow together into one beautiful dance. Remember to move slowly and mindfully. If something feels uncomfortable, change the position. Begin with the palms together in the prayer position. Close the eyes and take a deep breath. Exhale and stretch the arms down along the side of the chair, then inhale and lift the arms out to the sides and up above the head. With awareness, exhale and lower the arms back down along the sides of the body resting the palms on the thighs. Inhale, then exhale and bend forward reaching towards the

palm facing from front. Then twist to the left, extend the left arm reaching it behind you to the left. Fully extend the fingers with the palm facing from front. Take a deep breath and relax. Say to yourself, I am calm, I am relaxed. As you inhale say I am calm, as you exhale say I am relaxed. Repeat.

Riding the Camel Through the Desert

Begin in the neutral seated position. Then slump the spine forward, chin to chest, as in the droopy mountain position. Let the spine, including the head, curl forward. Then bring the spine into the opposite position: lift the chin and chest up toward the ceiling and arch the back. Pull the shoulders gently back. Repeat, then return to the neutral position and rest.

Half Moon

Inhale, then exhale and deeply relax. Then slowly raise the right arm out to the side then above the head. Place the left arm outside the wheelchair (or chair) and reach towards the ground. Lean the body over to the left, maintaining stability at your center. Keep the buttocks connected to the chair and the torso facing forward. Try and stretch the whole right side of the body. Repeat on the other side. Place the right arm outside the wheelchair (or chair) and reach towards the ground. Lean the body over to the right, maintaining stability at your center. Keep the buttocks connected to the chair. Repeat, then return to neutral. Take a deep breath and relax. Say to yourself, I am calm, I am relaxed. As you inhale say I am calm, as you exhale say I am relaxed. Repeat.

Forward Bend

Become calm and centered. Take a deep breath. Like in the first part of Riding the Camel, fold the body forward over the legs, but do it very slowly. See if you can feel each one of the vertebra moving. Try to completely relax the body forward. Let it hang forward. Reach towards your toes, then also let the arms hang limp. Pause in this position. The feet remain connected to the ground or pedals of the wheelchair so that you have support under you and will not fall out of the chair. Keep a lot of weight on the buttocks to remain balanced. If you feel dizzy, come slowly out of the position. Whatever position

close the eyes. Feel yourself becoming calm and focused. Stay alert, yet completely relaxed.

6. Affirmation

Time: 1 minute

Intention and explanation: Repeat the affirmation again here in coordination with a few deep breaths.

7. Breathing practice

Time: 2 minutes, can be used throughout

Intention and explanation: The deep breath does not cause exertion or hyperventilation, rather it brings about ease and comfort. If it does not bring about ease, then it hasn't yet been mastered. It should also be as noiseless as possible. As the facilitator, though, you may want to make a sound at times when you breathe. This indicates non-verbally to the class that they may also take a deep breath. When you breathe and relax, it reminds them to breathe and relax.

Script: *As you inhale, expand the belly, the chest, and the collarbone area. As you exhale, relax the collarbone area down, relax the chest down, and draw the belly slightly inward towards the spine. Inhale slowly, exhale deeply. Repeat.*

8. Movement

Time: 30 minutes

Intention and explanation: All movements must be safe and cause no harm. The movements are gentle and slow and performed without strain.

Script:

Droopy Mountain/Tall Mountain

Dip the spine as if you were falling asleep forward, then sit back up straight. Repeat a few times.

Sit with the Spine Upright

Create a very tall mountain...still taller, still taller. Be wide awake in a proud posture. You are awake, alert, present, and relaxed.

Eye Movements

Remove the eyeglasses and place them in a safe place. Then, close the eyes. Relax the eyes in their sockets. Then, slowly open the eyes. Gaze directly forward, keep the eye muscles relaxed. Then look up to the ceiling. The head remains still. Moving the eyes very slowly, follow in imaginary vertical line until the eyes are gazing down towards the ground. Follow the imaginary vertical line back up to the ceiling, then slowly down to the floor again. Then repeat, gazing slowly up then down. Try to maintain a lot of control over the eye movements. Gaze again directly forward, then close the eyes. Relax the eye muscles and take a deep soothing breath.

Open the eyes again, gazing directly forward. Then, look to the far right. Keep the head completely still. Trace a straight line across the horizon with the eyes, looking all the way to the left. Follow the imaginary horizontal line to the right again. Then slowly back to the left. Continue to move the eyes slowly and consciously. Gaze again directly forward, then close the eyes. Relax the eye muscles and take a deep soothing breath.

Palm Rub and Self-massage

Bring the palms together and rub them briskly, creating heat between them. Or, using one hand, rub the palm of the hand on the thigh to generate heat. Place the warm palms over the closed eyes and soak in the darkness. Melt into the warmth and comfort. Then, use your fingertips to press between the eyebrows. Press the fingertips over top the eyelids then out to the temples. Do this again. Make circular movements with the fingertips around the temples. Drag the fingertips down the side of the face, over top the jaw. Press the fingertips into the jaw muscles next to and below the ear. Then massage the sides and back of the neck. Take a deep breath and relax. Say to yourself, I am calm, I am relaxed. As you inhale say I am calm, as you exhale say I am relaxed. Repeat.

Put the eyeglasses back on if that is preferable.

Jaw Stretch

Stretch open the jaw. Close the jaw and repeat.

Extended Mountain

Begin with the palms in the prayer position in front of the heart. Very slowly, stretch the arms (or arm) out to the sides then up above head. Reach for the sky. Reach for the heavens. Extend upward. Then, lower the arms slowly and bring the hands into the prayer position in front of the heart. Repeat a few times. Inhale as you lift the arms, exhale as you lower them.

Extended Mountain with Fingers Interlaced

Interlace the fingers of the right hand with the fingers of the left hand. Place the palms, with fingers interlaced, over the heart. Then, turn the palms outward and reach out from the heart. Lift the arms, with fingers still interlaced, above the head then stretch upwards. Reach the palms up towards the sky. Lower the arms slowly. Take a deep breath and relax. Say to yourself, I am calm, I am relaxed. As you inhale say I am calm, as you exhale say I am relaxed. Repeat.

Neck Movements

Close the eyes, take a deep breath and relax. Very mindfully, turn the head to the right as if you were looking over the shoulder. Bring the head back to center. Then slowly turn the head to the left as far as it will comfortably go. Remain calm and comfortable. Gently lift the chin to look up. Gently lower the chin to look down. Lift back to neutral and repeat. Pause, relax.

Spinaltwist

From a neutral seated position, turn the head so that you are looking over the right shoulder. Allow the shoulder to also move towards the right, and then the whole spine twists gently to the right. The whole spine is rotated to the right. Remember to avoid positions that hurt or feel uncomfortable. You are the steward of your own body. Pay attention to it and heed its warnings. Return to neutral, then ease the spine into a twist to the left. Repeat, then return to face the front. Take a deep breath and relax.

Spinaltwist Variation

Repeat the spinal twist. As you turn to the right, extend the right arm reaching it behind you to the right. Fully extend the fingers with the