

00:31:46:04 - 00:32:18:06

Unknown

Happy to introduce to you today. Now, as I said previously, a psychotherapist for individuals and couples for many years and also importantly, has developed a meditation and mindful based stress reduction practice. Welcome, Mindy. Great to see you. Tell us a little bit about yourself and how you got into this. Great. It's great being here. So I actually started my career as a lawyer, but have been interested in emotional health and well-being for my entire life.

00:32:18:07 - 00:32:42:23

Unknown

And so about 25 years ago, I became a social worker and opened up a practice in New York City where I was treating a lot of stressed out people for a variety of different mood disorders. And I love the practice for couples. So a lot of different people in different walks of life. But at some point in my practice, I realized that stress was sort of the basic issue.

00:32:42:23 - 00:33:11:17

Unknown

That was people were coming in with and without the ability to deal with the stress, we really couldn't access what was underneath the emotional experience, and it was very hard to talk about things because there's a lot of denial and there's a lot of repression. So I began to become interested in mindfulness based practices and the transformative moment for me was studying with two psychiatrists who pioneered Breathwork.

00:33:11:19 - 00:33:36:05

Unknown

And I began to learn about the power of mindful breathing, and I started to do it myself and felt great results and then actually did practice on some family members. And they they also felt better. And now I use it in my practice. So it's been a great just it's a great it's a great technique. And I want to get into how people can employ it in their in their life.

00:33:36:05 - 00:33:59:21

Unknown

But let's let's dig into a little bit about what is stress really like, what's happening in the body and how does your work sort of seek to intervene there? Right, exactly. So listening to Dr. Drew, I'm thinking how all of this is so stressful. So let's just admit you are here. You have prostate cancer. What happens to the body?

00:33:59:23 - 00:34:30:03

Unknown

The body goes into sympathetic overdrive. We are autonomic nervous systems. We have a fight or flight response and we have rest, relaxation, digest, response. And the minute you hear some triggering event, your body starts to cortisol and adrenaline starts to race through your body. And the first thing you want to do is either fight or flee. It's sort of an angry response to danger.

00:34:30:05 - 00:35:02:22

Unknown

And, you know, you hear it in the narrative, you get angry, you want to run away, you say, not me. So that's an enormous emotional, stress based response to getting a cancer diagnosis. And then after that initial shock, if you sort of become worried chronically, the thoughts become persistent. And there's a lot of feeling of dread or a lot of depression or sadness that can become anxiety, can become depression and become a mental health disorder.

00:35:02:24 - 00:35:43:20

Unknown

But the good news is that we are structured to also relax and get relief from stress because we have a parasympathetic branch of the nervous system which is there to balance us out. But when you're undergoing extreme stress that goes almost off line and you become in sympathetic arousal, and then to learn how to strengthen the parasympathetic branch of the nervous system through breathing meditation and other stress reducing practices, you will not only learn how to relax, but think clearly and be able to deal with whatever you have to deal with in life.

00:35:43:22 - 00:36:09:01

Unknown

So you've got the sympathetic nervous system, the fighter flight system, which is going to be triggered when you're diagnosed or when you're going through the stress of life. But what you're saying is by activating the other system, we almost by necessity, will tamp down the sympathetic nervous system. And so it's really an understanding of kind of finding and elevating that parasympathetic nervous system through various practices.

00:36:09:03 - 00:36:43:18

Unknown

Exactly. So a lot, you know, when you do pharmacological interventions, that's dampening the sympathetic, which is fine and make it enormous relief. But there are many practices that are very simple to do that strengthen the parasympathetic and then you get balance. The sympathetic becomes less intense, and the parasympathetic becomes stronger and overall quality of life improves because you're not only feel more relaxed and energized, but you also can function well and have a very good quality of life.

00:36:43:20 - 00:37:01:06

Unknown

You know, I've found in my own sort of meditation practice that the key that started it all, that made it really work for me was just understanding to kind of pop out of my thoughts. That was the term that I learned, you know, which is basically to say, I've got this stress, but this stress isn't me. I am me.

00:37:01:06 - 00:37:17:21

Unknown

And the stress is almost something external that I'm going to try to focus on or to try to move away from. And and it gets into this idea that I think people get so caught up in their own stress that they don't even know that there there's an option to not be stressed, if you know what I'm saying.

00:37:17:21 - 00:37:46:12

Unknown

They're so buried in deep inside of it. And so it's really key to just sort of think about the work that you do and how we can help our patients and how our how we can all help ourselves to really kind of pop out of that spiral, if you will, of stress. So, you know, tell us a little bit about how we might want to just begin the process of becoming aware of the role of stress in our life before we think about reducing it.

00:37:46:14 - 00:38:28:16

Unknown

Well, so, I mean, the bottom line is that we're all stressed. And once you find that your body doesn't feel good, you are having persistent negative thoughts. You're not sleeping, you're not eating, just the quality of your life is really diminished. You might ask yourself, how am I dealing with stress? What coping mechanisms do I have? And it is very interesting how easy it is to breathing to address these problems, because what we've learned through laboratory experiments is that there's a nerve that connects the brain to the lungs.

00:38:28:18 - 00:39:04:05

Unknown

So that when you start to breathe in an easy, relaxed way, you're sending messages to the brain that you are relaxed. We know that when we're stressed, our breath changes. We breathe quickly. We breathe in a shallow way, sometimes even hold your breath so we know there's a direct linkage between the breath and emotion. So when we re-engineer it to start with breathing, breathing in relaxed way, slowly, deeply in the belly, we start to send feel good chemicals up into the brain.

00:39:04:11 - 00:39:37:18

Unknown

And that starts a very positive feedback loop where we feel better and we start to feel better emotionally and physically. So it's a deliberate it's a deliberateness of the breathing. There's a lot of terms that are used kind of interchangeably. I wonder if you could help clarify, you know, mindfulness meditation, mindfulness meditation, you know, and this breathing, breathing exercise, how how do these things relate as sort of terms and entities and ideas the way I mean, they're all related.

00:39:37:18 - 00:40:28:06

Unknown

The way I think about it is mindfulness is controlling your thoughts. It's deciding what you pay attention to. Because if we run after our thoughts, you know, it's like a dog who has no

obedience training. You're going to go from one thought to another, thought into another thought when you can switch your attention from those thoughts to your body, bringing it back to the feeling in your body, the feeling of the breath coming in and out through your nose, you're starting to direct your attention internally, and then you can regulate your nervous system by slowing yourself down, relaxing your muscles, feeling yourself in your chair, your feet on the floor, doing, grounding exercises so that

00:40:28:06 - 00:40:57:14

Unknown

you begin to focus on the physical sensations of the body and let your mind the thoughts just float by. And as you learn, practice to turn your attention back to whatever you want to do, you start to regain control over these sort of circular thinking. Then you can start to regulate your system. So let's let's get into a little bit of the details of how one does this.

00:40:57:16 - 00:41:21:00

Unknown

And, you know, talk a little bit about the timing, the place. How does one set oneself up for a breathing experience where they're going to try to reduce their stresses the other times when they shouldn't do it and times than they should? Or is it all good any time? Well, so the one thing that's great about breathing is it's very easy.

00:41:21:00 - 00:41:46:16

Unknown

I mean, we all breathe and what we're doing is basically slowing down the breath, breathing in a very relaxed way. And you can do it any time you need to. You don't need equipment, you don't need it. Costs anything. It's easy to learn and you can control it. So once you learn to slow down your breathing, you can use it any time you feel stressed.

00:41:46:18 - 00:42:20:22

Unknown

I often tell people before they go in to see a doctor's appointment. When the stress level obviously is increased. You take a few moments, you breathe deeply into your belly, you relax your body, you focus on the breath coming in and out through the nose. You take those moments before you enter into a stressful situation, and then you're much more relaxed, but also you're mentally alert so that whatever information you're getting, you can listen to it, absorb it and respond.

00:42:20:24 - 00:42:40:13

Unknown

Wonderful, wonderful. So really something that people can use anywhere. But you've pointed out a couple of situational, if you will. Situational awareness is where where one might say, I've developed this skill set. I'm just about to meet with my doctor. I'm just about to get the results of my tests. I'm going to do my breathing exercise. I'm going to be more prepared.

00:42:40:15 - 00:43:02:20

Unknown

And as you've indicated, it makes your mind more open and able to absorb the information and probably retain it a little bit better. So so I think what we would like to do is and through zoom here, through the wonders of Zoom and with several hundred people watching, let's let's have you demonstrate what what you teach people and and how it can be useful.

00:43:02:24 - 00:43:32:03

Unknown

And then we'll take some questions on the other side. Terrific. So let's do a little bit of mindful breathing. Why don't you find yourself a comfortable seated position and let's take a few deep, cleansing breaths together. So we're going to breathe in through the nose, deep belly, breathing in, and then just blow it out through the mouth. Just do that again.

00:43:32:03 - 00:44:19:22

Unknown

Breathing in slowly and deeply through the nose, and then breathe it out through the mouth. Now, if you're comfortable, close your eyes. But if not, then just soften your gaze. And let's do a brief body scan, relaxing your eyes and the muscles around your eyes. Relax your jaw, your lips are closed, but your teeth are apart. Feel your shoulders relax, relax your chest and belly.

00:44:19:24 - 00:45:01:24

Unknown

Feel your feet resting firmly on the ground and feel your seat supporting you. And now turn your attention to your breath and notice how your body moves as you breathe. Notice that the belly expands as you breathe in and the belly contracts as you breathe out and take a breath here, breathing in. Let your belly expand and breathing out.

00:45:02:01 - 00:46:01:21

Unknown

Let your belly contract now feel how it feels as the air moves in and out through those. As you breathe in and as you breathe out, notice the natural rhythm of your own breath, breathing in and breathing out. And let's begin to slow down the breath just a little bit. Breathing in, make it gentle slowly and deeply and breathing out slowly, deeply, continuously, breath in gentle, relaxed, breathing and breathing out.

00:46:02:00 - 00:47:01:21

Unknown

Let the body relax, breath in, taking a little bit of breath at a time and breathing out. Let it go just a little bit at a time. See if you can become absorbed in the rhythm of your body, breathing, breathing out, breathing in, breathing out, breathing in. Imagine energy filling every cell in your body. Now imagine your breath moving around your body breathing in.

00:47:01:21 - 00:47:45:09

Unknown

Imagine the breath moves to the top of your head and breathing out. It moves down to the base of your spine, breath in like a wave of water moving up to the top of the head and washing down to the base of your spine, breathing in top of your head and breathing down the entire body, out the soles of your feet and let a gentle smile light on your face.

00:47:45:11 - 00:48:30:16

Unknown

It makes the breathing and everything so much easier. And if at any time during your breathing you become distracted by thoughts, gently turn your attention back to the feeling of the breath going in and out your nose and throat. And let's take a few more deep breaths. Breathing in and breathing out, Relaxing more and more on each exhale, breathing in and breathing out.

00:48:30:18 - 00:49:28:14

Unknown

And now let your breath go back to its normal rhythm and notice how you feel. Notice any sensations in your body and notice the quality of your breaths. And now notice the activity in your mind. Maybe your thoughts have slowed down a bit. Maybe there's more space between your thoughts. And before we come back to awareness, can you imagine that your entire body is filled with empty space?

00:49:28:16 - 00:50:05:08

Unknown

And when you're ready, open your eyes. So that's just a few minutes of mindful breathing. Deep, relaxed, breathing. What I recommend is that people who are going through a very stressful period in their lives do about 10 to 15 minutes a day of breathing to a chime or some sort of pacing mechanism so that you can slow down your breath.

00:50:05:10 - 00:50:34:11

Unknown

There are many timing devices that you can download, but I would recommend that people who are interested in learning this kind of technique look at the website, [breath heights and body hyphen, mind dot com](http://breathheights.com). That's the work of Dr. Richard Brown and Patricia Gersbach. They are pioneers, psychiatrists who have done a lot of research on the healing power of the breath.

00:50:34:13 - 00:50:56:13

Unknown

And there are many websites also [coherent breathing dot com](http://coherentbreathing.com) is another very helpful website. Well, it's an amazing, amazingly relaxing exercise and and just even I had a funny thing happen my zoom quit while we were in the middle of it and I thought I was falling asleep or something. I looked up and you were frozen so I had to log back on.

00:50:56:13 - 00:51:20:21

Unknown

But, but it's, it's even just doing that for a few minutes, you know, you can feel your heart beating a little bit slower. You can feel your breath being a little bit deeper. You can feel your mind just getting a little bit more clarity on so many things. So, you know, we've had a lot of questions coming in, hundreds of questions actually, during the course of the conversations, both the conversations we've had here.

00:51:20:21 - 00:52:04:05

Unknown

And, you know, some of them would be, you know, how how is this benefit of patients with cancer, maybe some anecdotes or some times when you've had clients or situations where you've you've seen real or heard of real benefit coming to them, what are some of the things happening in real life? There are many people in my life with cancer right now, both professionally and personally, and all of them have benefited from learning the breathing techniques, both when they're preparing for doctor's visits, for scans, we're going in for chemotherapy, for sitting and trying to listen to the chimes that are chime tracks.

00:52:04:07 - 00:52:37:01

Unknown

One of my very dear friends recently said to me, My breath is my companion. And so she turned to her breath for support and for an easy, accessible way to feel supported and calm under stressful situations. I think it can be enormously useful for patients to learn. It ties back in a little bit to what we were talking about with Dr. Drew, about areas where you can gain your locus of control.

00:52:37:03 - 00:52:55:20

Unknown

You know, in a situation where you're waiting for a scan result or you're waiting for your PSA result or you just received bad news, there are some things that are out of your control, but with your breath as your companion, your breath is something that you can control, that can help feedback on, and helping you to relax and deal with that stressful situation.

00:52:55:22 - 00:53:23:23

Unknown

So really, I really like that comment. And and so you mentioned a couple of websites, a couple of other things. People. One question I got is can we use smart wearables with this practice? And I'm assuming that means, you know, there are now things you can buy to monitor your brainwaves and your pulse and things like that. So yeah, that would be very helpful.

00:53:23:23 - 00:53:46:02

Unknown

Sure. Absolutely. It's interesting. I have done exercises like this. I have I have a blood pressure monitor at home a little. You press the button, take your blood pressure, and I'll do a breathing exercise. I'll retake my blood pressure. 10 minutes later, pulse is always a few points lower.

Blood pressure is always a little bit lower. And you imagine just doing that through the course of your daily life over the course of years.

00:53:46:08 - 00:54:09:10

Unknown

Well, you can see why breathing and stress reduction can lead to lower blood pressure and things like that. And actually a deep breath will slow the heart will slow the heart rate down good. And so we've had people writing in some anecdotes. I've done it during my smart PET scan session, and that's another thing, people lying and scanning where they have to be.

00:54:09:10 - 00:54:46:01

Unknown

Still, this is another good opportunity for people to practice to do this type of a practice. So excellent. So other thoughts on timing of this and how one incorporates that into their life, working with other members of their life, perhaps doing it, trying to engage other family members to be involved, etc.. Exactly. So this is a you know, cancer is a family affair and it would be so useful for everybody to learn.

00:54:46:03 - 00:55:08:01

Unknown

And there are many couples who do it together so you can put on one of the chime tracks and you and your partner, you and your children can just breathe together, learn the pacing. It's a wonderful way to stay connected, support each other and do something good for you, you know, whether you're dealing with a stressful event or not.

00:55:08:01 - 00:55:32:04

Unknown

We're all under a lot of stress and to be there for each other in this crazy world, it's wonderful to know how to do to be in our bodies, to be present and mindful and supportive with each other. So it's a wonderful practice for couples to do together as well. I actually started meditating a little bit with my son when it ended, when he was in high school, and he really enjoyed it.

00:55:32:04 - 00:55:57:04

Unknown

And it was it was it was a fun thing that we did together. I think he learned a little bit of a life skill that he could use even at that early age. So you're sorry children can learn this as well very easily. But maybe can benefit from it very, very well. Now, in the in the video that we've done in previous sessions that I've seen, you do you do a little bit more than just the breathing?

00:55:57:04 - 00:56:16:18

Unknown

You've done some things with standing up and and helping to relax the body if you want to speak to that. I mean, the way we talk through this went through this tonight, it was sit down



flat. But there's other ways that that you can go through this, correct? Right. So when I do a breathing workshop with people, we usually stand up and we shake the body.

00:56:16:23 - 00:56:36:14

Unknown

One of the easiest ways of getting rid of a layer of stress is just to shake your body up and down. And so we do that bending at the knees, and you can do that in the morning just to get the energy flowing in your body. It's a very healthy way to start the day. It's just simple bouncing up and down.

00:56:36:16 - 00:57:03:09

Unknown

This tapping, which is a wonderful therapeutic device. You just take your hands. And if you can do that with me right now, just tap your body, just going up and down the arms. This just stimulates all of the trigger points, gets the chin and the energy moving in the body. So we want energy to be moving so that it can heal and bring oxygen to every cell in the body.

00:57:03:11 - 00:57:44:09

Unknown

Often we start with a very simple breathing exercise that brings your hands up and makes big circles breathing down. It's an easy way to pace the breath so we can do breathing in to three, four and breathing out big circles down. So we pace with movement shaking and it's a process. And then ultimately it's the breathing alone. Haste, slow and just for about 20 minutes would be optimal if you could do that once or twice a day, you would, within a month feel an enormous change in the way you cope with stress.

00:57:44:11 - 00:58:05:09

Unknown

Some people say, Well, what happens if I just fall asleep while I'm sitting at my chair, my right? So in the beginning you might if you've had a lot of stress, you may just have a strong sleep response, but you practice that will change and you won't fall asleep. You'll be able to just become balanced in the sympathetic parasympathetic branches.

00:58:05:12 - 00:58:34:01

Unknown

Very good to point that out so well. Mindy, thank you so much for your time and your expertise on this topic. It's it's something that I think everybody can benefit from, even those who don't currently think of themselves as having a problem with stress. It's just a great way to help you get through a normal day. We have a number of resources that you have mentioned and we will be sending those out via email to all who registered immediately after or soon after the completion of this webinar.

00:58:34:01 - 00:59:01:20

Unknown

So many. Any parting thoughts for for those out there? We've got several hundred listeners hopefully now more relaxed and that were 25 minutes ago. And your parting thoughts? Well, it's great to know that there's something so easy that you can do anywhere, any time, which is just to bring your attention inside your body and regulate your breathing and know that you can feel much better very, very quickly.

00:59:01:22 - 00:59:24:16

Unknown

Cancer is a stressful thing. It is emotional. It's it's emotional. It's psychological. But we have tools inside of us to help deal with it and help cope. And I think to bring some control back into your life. It's very simple and I hope people will try it. I cannot add to that. That's a great way to end our webinar tonight.

00:59:24:16 - 00:59:51:18

Unknown

I want to thank everybody for joining us. Sorry about my technical glitch and I hope that this session has helped you to tell. It's helped you gain a little bit more understanding of the role of stress in our lives and what things we can do, simple things and very effective things we can do to reduce them. So thank you all for joining us and we'll see you next month.