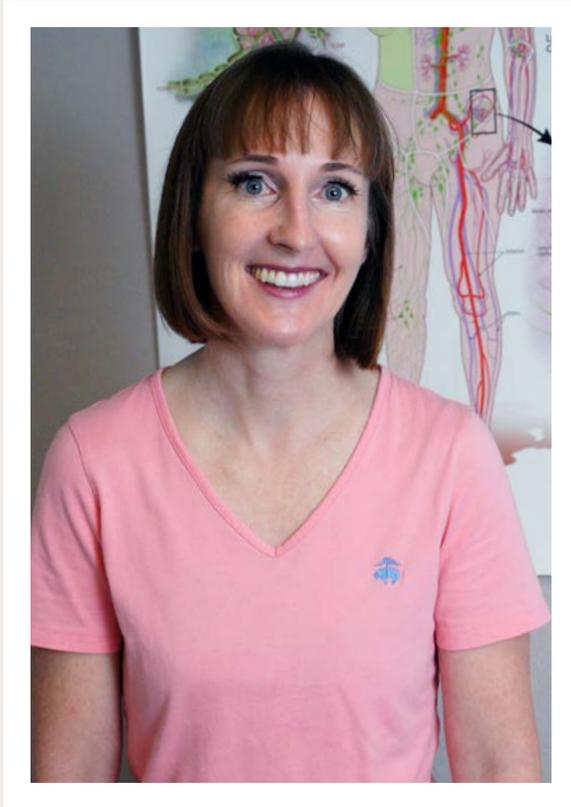


MINDFULNESS INTERVENTIONS FOR TOXIC (AND CHRONIC) STRESS

Kathleen Helen Lisson, **CLT**



WHO AM I?



**Meditation and
Mindfulness teacher**

**ACE Certified
Health Coach**

**Certified Lymphedema
Therapist**

**Board Certified
Massage Therapist**

Taught mindfulness at **IPSB
massage college**

OBJECTIVES

- ✦ **DISCUSS THE EFFECTS OF TOXIC AND CHRONIC STRESS ON THE BODY**
- ✦ **DISCUSS THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN POSITIVE, TOLERABLE AND TOXIC STRESS**
- ✦ **DISCUSS INTERVENTIONS TO REDUCE THE EFFECTS OF STRESS ON THE BODY**



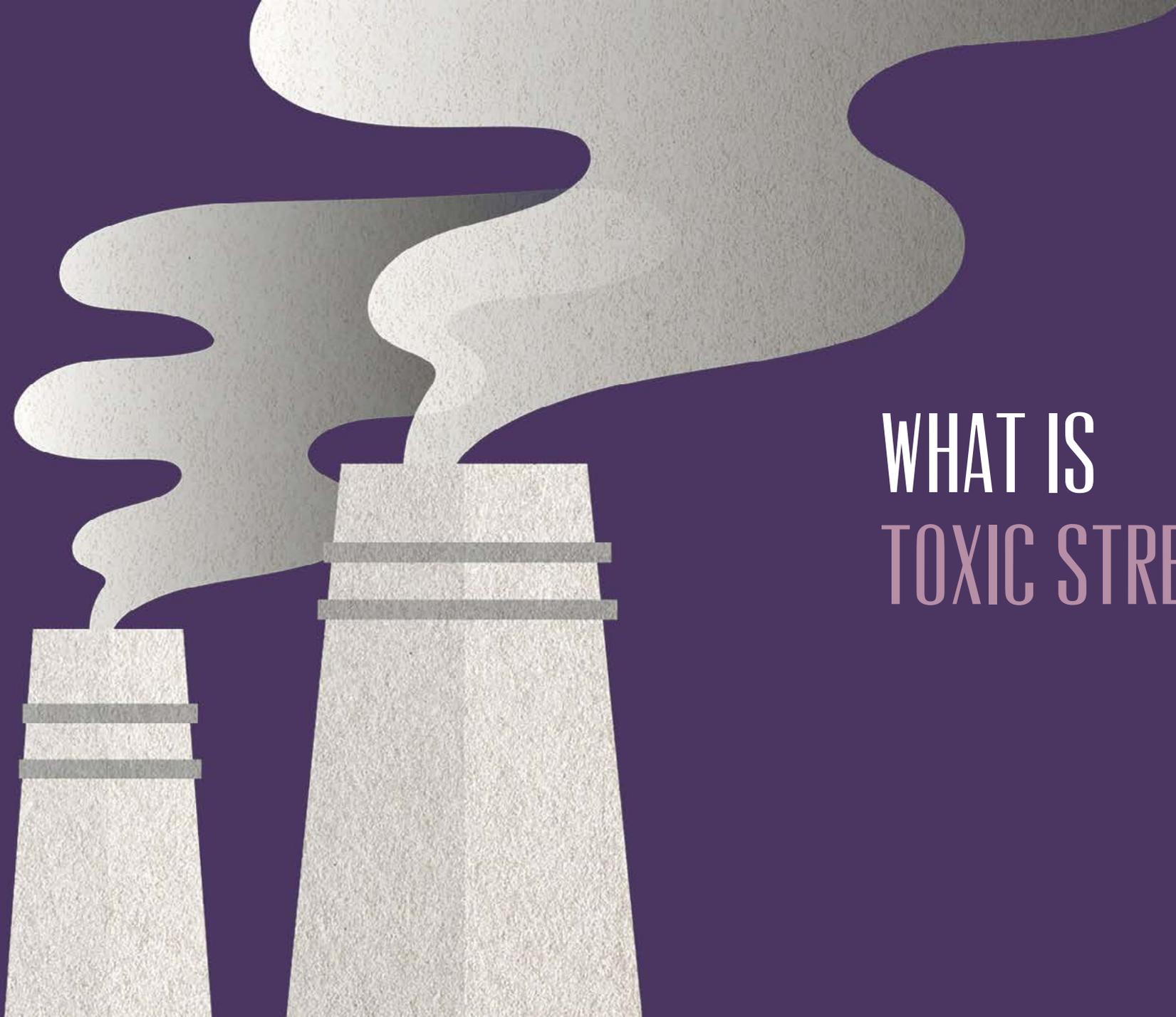
WE WILL TRY FOUR TYPES OF MINDFULNESS:



- ✦ **Loving-kindness meditation**
- ✦ **Awareness of sound**
- ✦ **Self-compassion meditation**
- ✦ **Upper body ROM with breathing**

MINDFUL MOMENT





WHAT IS TOXIC STRESS?

According to the article, 'Toxic Stress: Effects, Prevention and Treatment,'

“Toxic stress responses include a prolonged or permanent abnormal physiologic response to a stressor with risk of end organ dysfunction” and “childhood toxic stress is severe, prolonged, or repetitive adversity with a lack of the necessary nurturance or support of a caregiver to prevent an abnormal stress response” (Franke, 2014).

Learn more about Adverse Childhood Experiences and take the ACE quiz:

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2015/03/02/387007941/take-the-ace-quiz-and-learn-what-it-does-and-doesnt-mean>

What happens to the body during toxic stress? Franke explains that the result is a “prolonged cortisol activation and a persistent inflammatory state, with failure of the body to normalize these changes after the stressor is removed. Children who experience early life toxic stress are at risk of long-term adverse health effects” including “maladaptive coping skills, poor stress management, unhealthy lifestyles, mental illness and physical disease”

(Franke, 2014).



Toxic and Chronic Stress in childhood and/or adulthood is specifically connected to cancer

In the journal article ‘Chronic Stress Promotes Cancer Development,’ Dai et al. state:

- ✦ “The relationship between chronic stress and cancers has aroused increasingly widespread interest and concern in the medical community”
- ✦ “Chronic stress can activate the HPA axis, and the SNS, and cause immune disorders and inflammatory responses. There is no doubt that this is harmful to the body.” (Dai et al., 2020)
- ✦ Hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis - our stress response system
Sympathetic nervous system (SNS) - “fight or flight”
“hyperarousal”



How does Chronic Stress promote cancer development?

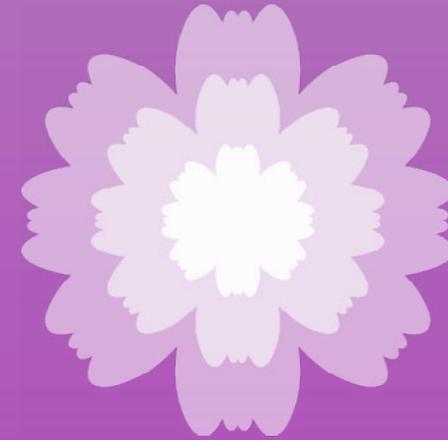
“Excessive levels of stress hormones promote carcinogenesis by inducing DNA damage accumulation, increasing p53 degradation, and other, related pathways. Excessive stress hormones also prevent immune cells from effectively controlling cancer cells by increasing inflammation and suppressing immunity”

(Dai et al., 2020).

Do I have to go live on a mountaintop
and meditate, Kathleen?



DIFFERENT TYPES OF STRESS



Positive stress response is:

- ✦ Normal stress response
- ✦ Essential for the growth and development
- ✦ Infrequent, short-lived, and mild
- ✦ Person is supported through this stressful event
- ✦ Results in increased motivation and resilience
- ✦ Biochemical reactions that occur with such a stressful event return to baseline afterward

(Franke, 2014).

Tolerable Stress is:

- ✦ Response is severe, frequent or sustained
- ✦ Person is protected with responsive relationships and strong social and emotional support.
- ✦ Biochemical responses have the potential to negatively affect brain architecture.
- ✦ Biochemical reactions that occur with such a stressful event return to baseline afterward
(Franke, 2014).



TOXIC STRESS

IS:

- ◆ Prolonged activation of the stress response
- ◆ Lack of support, reassurance, or emotional attachments
- ◆ Failure of the body to recover fully
- ◆ Results in increased vulnerability to maladaptive health outcomes (Franke, 2014).



Tolerable vs. Toxic Stress

The “tolerable stress response activates the body’s alert systems to a greater degree as a result of more severe, longer-lasting difficulties, such as the loss of a loved one, a natural disaster, or a frightening injury.



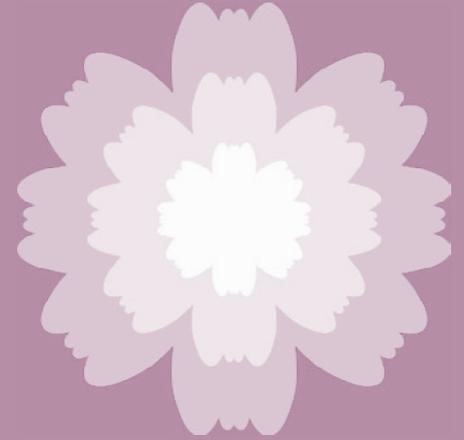
If the activation is time-limited and buffered by relationships with adults who help the child adapt, the brain and other organs recover from what might otherwise be damaging effects” (Toxic Stress, n.d.)

The “toxic stress response can occur when a child experiences strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity—such as physical or emotional abuse, chronic neglect, caregiver substance abuse or mental illness, exposure to violence, and/or the accumulated burdens of family economic hardship—without adequate adult support.

This kind of prolonged activation of the stress response systems can disrupt the development of brain architecture and other organ systems, and increase the risk for stress-related disease and cognitive impairment, well into the adult years.” (Toxic Stress, n.d.)



What do the effects of stress look like?



FIGHT - FLIGHT - FREEZE - FAWN

“Self-criticism activates the threat defense system... When we feel in danger, the amygdala sends signals that increase blood pressure, adrenaline and the hormone cortisol”

(Germer & Neff, 2019)

“Trauma makes the inner world too uncomfortable and chaotic to hold with curious awareness. Feeling alone with intense fear and anxiety triggers the urgent need to protect one’s self. Instead, a person seeks to escape overwhelming feelings, because there’s no way to explore them safely”

(Brickel, 2018).



“Experiencing 4 or more ACEs is associated with significantly increased risk for 7 out of 10 leading adult causes of death, including heart disease, stroke, cancer, COPD, diabetes, Alzheimers and suicide.”

(How ACEs Affect Health)



SHAKE

it

OUT



Resilience is the ability to:

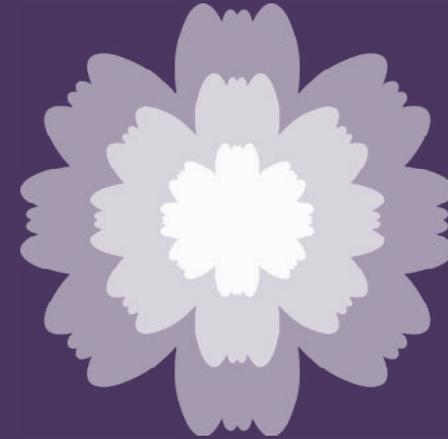
**think clearly,
make intentional choices,
communicate, and
connect with others during stressful situations.**

(Our Approach, n.d.)



STRESS BUSTERS:

- ✦ Supportive Relationships
- ✦ Quality Sleep
- ✦ Balanced Nutrition
- ✦ Physical Activity
- ✦ Experiencing Nature
- ✦ Mental Healthcare
- ✦ Mindfulness Practices



https://www.pacesconnection.com/ws/StressBusters_General_English.pdf

WHAT ARE WE DOING IN MEDITATION?

“Underlying each of the different meditation techniques is a simple coming to awareness of the present moment. Being aware of what is happening in the present moment allows the individual to observe what is arising and what is falling away. By doing this and by allowing thoughts to come and go without attachment, without trying to hold on to them, we learn that calm and stillness follows”

(Behan, 2020)

“We come to know our own minds over time and to be aware of patterns of thinking that habitually arise. The key is to gently catch a spiral of thoughts, mind flurry or mind chatter, and observe, noting ‘worry’, ‘lists’, ‘craving’, ‘fear’, and allow the spiral to gently fall away without judgement”

(Behan, 2020)



Can't I Just Try an App?

“Sometimes breathwork or meditation can be overwhelming. For clients with trauma and toxic stress - traditional meditation and mindfulness techniques may not be beneficial.”

“Attention can retrigger traumatized states, feel the freeze of trauma when paying attention to what arises”

(Treleaven, 2018)

“Mindfulness practitioners who are self-critical may find it difficult to practice mindfulness consistently until they engage their inner critics. Therefore, self-critical people might benefit from starting with self-compassion practice before taking mindfulness training (Germer & Neff, 2019).

If these interventions just aren't working, your body is giving you signs that you are ready to find a quality mental health professional.



WINDOW OF TOLERANCE



Self-compassion Behaviors - Using Grounding and Resources when we are overwhelmed

Sight:

- ✦ Keep eyes open
- ✦ Search out the colors of the rainbow in your environment
- ✦ Look into the eyes of a pet or a loved one
- ✦ Look at a nature scene

Sound:

- ✦ Listen to sounds in your environment
- ✦ Soothing music - Weightless by Marconi Union
- ✦ Ask a safe person to record a reassuring video or voicemail - listen to it

Grounding and Resources for when we are overwhelmed

Touch:

- ✦ Feel your body against the furniture
- ✦ Place one hand over heart and the other on belly. Switch hands and see which one feels better.
- ✦ Fidget toys

Thoughts

- ✦ Who makes you feel supported, the being that when you think of them you smile?
- ✦ Think of 'happy place' and focus on feelings generated in your body by the thoughts



GROUNDING AND RESOURCES FOR WHEN WE ARE OVERWHELMED

Movement

- ◆ Count backwards from 20 as you walk around the room, feeling your feet while walking
- ◆ Push against a wall or do wall squats
- ◆ Forearm massage
- ◆ Walking the labyrinth



“Loving-kindness and compassion meditation cultivates the qualities of warmth and goodwill toward oneself and others, which are essential for tolerating and transforming difficult states of mind”
(Germer & Neff, 2019)

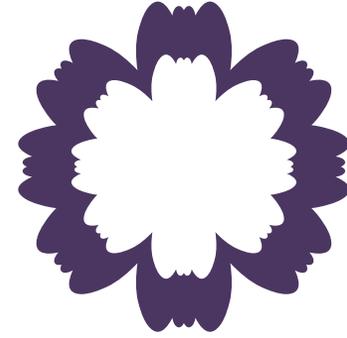
LOVING KINDNESS MEDITATION

Two minute practice

If it feels overwhelming, turn to your Resource

- ✦ Think of a person who loves you very much.
- ✦ Imagine them sending you love and well wishes.
- ✦ Send the love that you feel back to that person.
Just like you, they wish to be happy.
- ✦ You may wish to repeat silently:
May you be happy. May you be healthy.
May you have ease of being.





**Open your eyes, wiggle your fingers and toes,
stretch if you need to.**

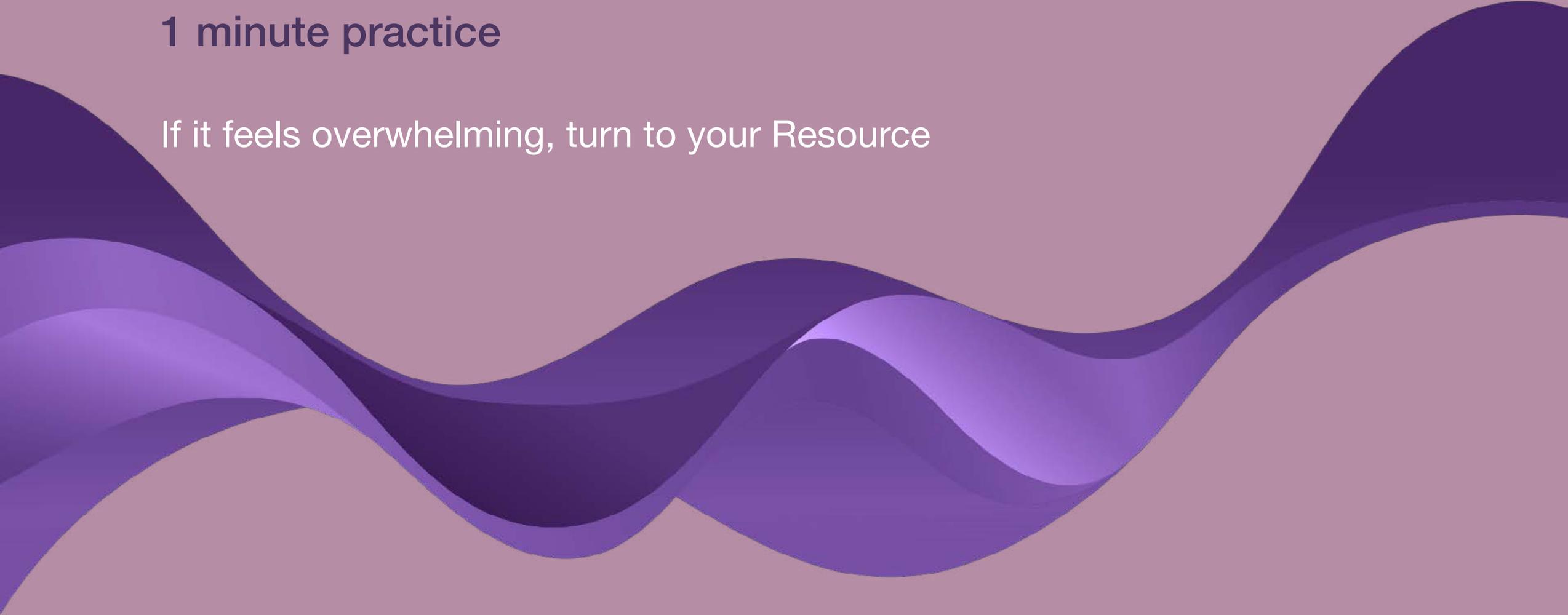
What did you notice?

When could you add that to your self-care practices?

AWARENESS OF SOUND

1 minute practice

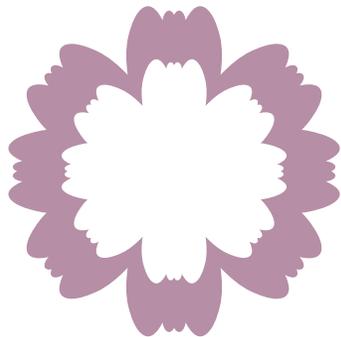
If it feels overwhelming, turn to your Resource



**Open your eyes, wiggle your fingers and toes,
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What did you notice?

When could you add that to your self-care practices?

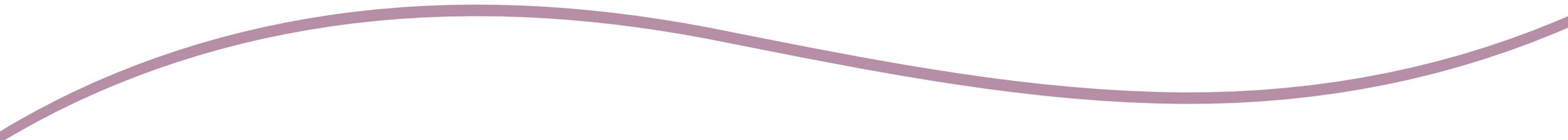


Self-compassion Mindfulness

2 minute practice

If it feels overwhelming, turn to your Resource

- ✦ It is hard to experience this chronic stress
- ✦ This is part of being human, nothing wrong with feeling frustrated about our stressors, we are not the only one
- ✦ Put hand on heart - say something kind to ourselves
(What would you say to a friend struggling with chronic stress?)
- ✦ Ground yourself - feel your body against the furniture



**Open your eyes, wiggle your fingers and toes,
stretch if you need to.**

What did you notice?

When could you add that to your self-care practices?

UPPER BODY ROM WITH BREATHING

1 minute practice

If it feels overwhelming, turn to your Resource



**Open your eyes, wiggle your fingers and toes,
stretch if you need to.**

How did that feel?

When could you add that to your self-care practices?

MINDFUL MOMENT

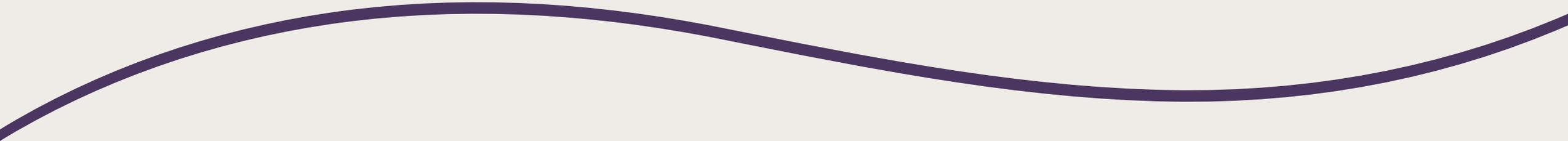


FURTHER LEARNING

More information on Toxic Stress and Trauma:

- ✦ <https://brickelandassociates.com/9-signs-you-need-better-self-care-trauma-survivor/>
 - ✦ <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2015/03/02/387007941/take-the-ace-quiz-and-learn-what-it-does-and-doesnt-mean>
- 

Self-Care for Toxic Stress:

- ✦ https://www.pacesconnection.com/ws/StressBusters_General_English.pdf
 - ✦ https://www.pacesconnection.com/ws/StressBusters_General_Spanish.pdf
 - ✦ <https://www.acesaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Lower-Toxic-Stress-Handout-Adult-English.pdf>
- 

WHERE TO FIND ME

Social Media:

 <https://www.instagram.com/mindfulcoachkathleen>

 <https://www.linkedin.com/in/kathleenlisson/>

 <https://twitter.com/kathleenlisson>

 <https://solacesandiego.wixsite.com/website>

MY VIDEO PRESENTATIONS

Mindful Breathwork Stress Reduction & Lymphatic Health

 <https://youtu.be/32w7eaLiYPM>

Lymphedema: Let's talk Self-Compassion

 <https://youtu.be/4bstvn8fswE>

Meditation and Mindfulness Interventions for Patients with Fat Disorders

 <https://youtu.be/tSFyeYI1I9o>

Meditation Tips if you have a lymphatic disorder

 <https://youtu.be/wPpADK-xKzM>

RESOURCES

Behan C. (2020). The benefits of meditation and mindfulness practices during times of crisis such as COVID-19. *Irish journal of psychological medicine*, 37(4), 256–258. <https://doi.org/10.1017/ipm.2020.38> Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7287297/>

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Franke H. A. (2014). Toxic Stress: Effects, Prevention and Treatment. *Children (Basel, Switzerland)*, 1(3), 390–402. <https://doi.org/10.3390/children1030390> Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4928741/>

Germer, C. K., & Neff, K. (2019). *Teaching the mindful self-compassion program: A guide for professionals*. The Guilford Press.

How ACEs Affect Health (n.d.) Retrieved from: <https://centerforyouthwellness.org/health-impacts/>

Our Approach (n.d.) Retrieved from: <https://originstraining.org/our-approach/>

Toxic Stress (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/toxic-stress/>

THANK YOU

