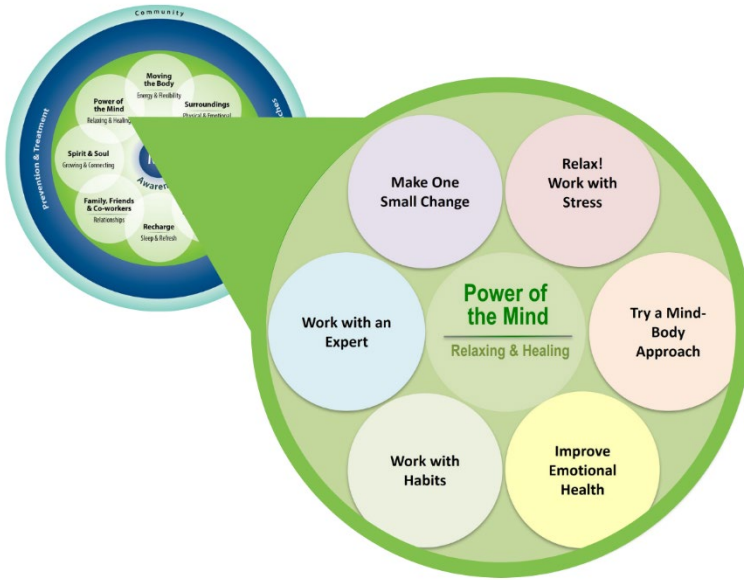


Zeroing In – Power of the Mind: Relaxing and Healing

Power of the Mind includes many aspects of our health – how we deal with stress, how we work with emotions, our thoughts, and how our minds and bodies affect each other. There are tools you can use to make even better use of your mind's power.

Key Points

- Your thoughts, feelings and beliefs affect your health in many ways.
- There are many different mind-body tools you can learn to manage stress and difficult emotions. Try different ones to see what is right for you. The VA covers meditation classes. It also covers, biofeedback, imagery, and clinical hypnosis for some problems.
- What you expect helps to shape what happens when you get a treatment or therapy.
- If your mental state is making it hard to live your life or be in control, get help.



Stress

Relax! Work With Stress. Stress helps us survive, but “fight or flight” isn’t a good place to be all the time.

- One thing all the different mind-body tools have in common is that they help you get the “Relaxation Response.” It is the opposite of being in a fight or flight.
- Doing breathing exercises, like “In for a count of 3, out for a count of 6” is a quick way to help yourself relax.
- Ask yourself about the things that help you to relax in your life. What helps you feel calm? And *who* in your life helps you feel relaxed and calm?

Mind-Body Approaches

Try a Mind-Body Approach. There are many mind-body approaches to choose from, and studies have found that they can be quite helpful.

- Biofeedback uses equipment to track how your body responds to your mind’s control. You can teach yourself to loosen tight muscles, change your heart rhythm, and other skills.
- Meditation includes many practices, and some are for reducing stress and building more awareness. Examples include sitting and watching your thoughts, doing body scans, sending compassion, and breathing.
- Guided imagery involves working with images to get more information about your health. The images that come up can give you ideas about how to improve your health.
- Clinical hypnosis is different from “stage hypnosis.” You always have control as you move into a state of trance. In that state, you can respond better to suggestions to do things that are good for your health.

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Emotions

Improve Emotional Health. Don't forget about the "Power of Your Heart."

- People who are happier live longer, with fewer health problems. Angry people have more health problems.
- Relaxing can calm emotions as well as thoughts. Mind-body skills can help you work with difficult emotions too, like sadness and depression, anxiety, and anger.
- It isn't about turning off feelings, it is about understanding triggers, being aware of how you act when you feel something, and then working with emotions in new, helpful ways.

Habits

Work with Habits. Things we routinely do can be either healthy or unhealthy.

- A person can learn the habit of being optimistic (having a positive outlook), or be in the habit of drinking, using drugs, eating poorly, or gambling too much.
- If you find that a habit is making it harder for you to live your life, find help. Studies show that twelve-step programs like Alcoholics Anonymous can help.

Experts

Work with an Expert. The VA has excellent mental health providers, including psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers who can do counseling, substance use experts, and people who work specifically with suicide prevention, PTSD, sexual trauma, and other problems.

- Psychiatrists are medical doctors, and they know about medications, especially.
- Psychologists are more likely to work with psychotherapies. There are many different types of psychotherapy. One of the best-known is cognitive behavioral therapy. You take time to learn how to notice your patterns and come up with ways to shift them or work with them.
- Your primary care team can help you find the right professional.
- It might be helpful to take a mind-body-related course in your local VA, like a meditation class.

One Small Change

Make One Small Change. There are all sorts of opportunities. Think about what would work best for you and decide when you will start. Choose a goal you feel you can easily achieve. Here are a few ideas:

- Take a pause (take a knee) before you react to something. Give yourself a moment to collect yourself when things are stressful.
- Take a few minutes to breathe every hour. You can set a timer to remind you.
- Work on decreasing something that you do that isn't a healthy habit. Cut down on one cigarette a day, or one drink.
- Start meditating for five minutes a day. (See the links list for more information.)
- Take a martial arts class, to help your focus.
- Play more of a sport and see if you can "get into the zone."
- Try out one of the mind-body therapies.
- Create a list of times in your life when the power of your mind helped you succeed.

Power of the Mind Links

You can check out the links below to get more information about Power of the Mind:

Whole Health Library Veteran Handouts. These are indexed at

<https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/veteran-handouts/index.asp>.

- An Introduction to the Power of the Mind. <https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/Veteran-Handouts/docs/IntroPowerofMind-508Final-9-5-2018.pdf>.
- Breathing and Health. <https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/Veteran-Handouts/docs/BreathingAndHealth-508Final-9-4-2018.pdf>.
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation and Progressive Relaxation. https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/Veteran-Handouts/docs/ProgressMuscleRelax_Final508_11-13-2018.pdf.
- Seated Meditation. https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/Veteran-Handouts/docs/SeatedMeditation_Final508_07-25-2019.pdf.
- Biofeedback. <https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/Veteran-Handouts/docs/Biofeedback-Final508-07-12-2018.pdf>.
- Autogenic Training. <https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/Veteran-Handouts/docs/AutogenicTraining-508Final-9-5-2018.pdf>.
- Hypnotherapy. <https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/Veteran-Handouts/docs/Hypnotherapy-508Final-02-18-2019.pdf>.

Other VA Whole Health Resources

- VA Whole Health for Life Multimedia Resources. These focus on mindful awareness, but primarily through various meditation techniques. <https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/video/videos.asp>. Videos included.
 - Four Ways to Cultivate Mindfulness. <https://youtu.be/sU-xRVB7rVE>.
 - Mindfulness of Breath. <https://youtu.be/Ha9yHW9JFgE>.
 - One Minute Mindfulness. <https://youtu.be/0QMN-6CV0ow>.
- A Patient-Centered Approach to Power of the Mind. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dbPNgJ4YkpM&feature=youtu.be>

General Mind-Body Resources

- National Institutes for Mental Health Index. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health>. Guides to multiple mental health problems.
- Unstuck – Website and free app. Resources and articles to help change your mindset. <https://gettingunstuck.com.au/>.
- Help guides. <https://www.helpguide.org/>. Organization devoted to supporting mental and emotional health. See their Emotional Intelligence Toolkit at <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/emotional-intelligence-toolkit.htm>.

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Meditation and Mindfulness Resources:

- UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center: Guided Meditations. <https://www.uclahealth.org/programs/marc>. Meditations in English and Spanish.
- Meditation Oasis. <https://meditationoasis.com/>. Under the Podcast link, there are guided meditations, instructions for meditation, and music for meditation. You can also listen to them on iTunes, Google Play, or by clicking on the play buttons below.
- University of Wisconsin Integrative Health, Mindfulness Meditation Podcasts. <http://www.fammed.wisc.edu/mindfulness-meditation-podcast-series/>. A podcast series that goes through several exercises and experiences in mindfulness and meditation.
- The Free Mindfulness Project. <https://www.freemindfulness.org/>. A website that helps people start to explore mindfulness and breathing for free. The free resources section has mp3s for download that are all under 20 MB.
- Calm. www.calm.com. A website and app with some free resources for meditation. Also, a great resource for nature-related white noise.
- Gratefulness. <http://www.gratefulness.io/>. A free online gratitude journal. Sends a daily email or text asking you what you're grateful for.
- This page streams free meditations by leading practitioners in the mind-body field. Kaiser Permanente features several podcasts available to listen to online, download, or read to help with different medical conditions but also mental health at <https://www.ansi.org/standards-news/member-updates/2020/11/11-5-20-kaiser-permanente-offers-free-meditation-podcasts-for-specific-conditions-and-diseases>.

Where to Find Practitioners of Different Mind-Body Approaches

- Biofeedback. <https://www.resourcenter.net/Scripts/4Disapi9.dll/4DCGI/resctr/search.html>.
- Clinical Hypnosis. https://www.asch.net/aws/ASCH/pt/sp/home_page.
- Guided Imagery. <https://acadgi.com/newdirectory/>.

Power of the Mind Apps

- Defense Health Agency, Military Meditation Coach Podcast. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/military-meditation-coach-podcast/id1313813296?mt=2>. Available on iTunes, this podcast provides a way to learn and practice meditation techniques. Designed with the military and Veteran community in mind.
- EliteHRV. <https://elitehrv.com/>. Free App available on Apple and Google products. Helps you measure your heart rate variability to learn about stress management.
- Insight Timer. <https://insighttimer.com/>. An app for Apple and Android users that has over 10,000 free guided meditations. It tells you who else around the whole world meditated at the same time you did, to give you a sense of global community.
- Stop, Breathe, and Think. This app checks in with how you're feeling in the moment and suggests guided meditations for you to try. https://play.google.com/store/apps/dev?id=6123809417984357973&hl=en_US&gl=US&pli=1.

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- Headspace. <https://www.headspace.com>. This app has a quick guide to meditation and then provides brief meditations on many topics for people with busy schedules.
- Life Calendar. <https://lifecal.me/>. A free journaling app for Apple or Android users. Allows you to journal about your week and assign a color to it. You can color code the weeks and then do a quick review of your months, years, when you look back.