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“4 x 4 x 4” STRESS MANAGEMENT TOOL

In an age when so many of us seem to be “captured” by our smart phones, the 4 x 4 x 4 stress management tool may seem out of step with the times. But I offer it to you as a substantive beginning step in acquiring an authentic life where you are more self-regulating of the thoughts that come into your mind, the feelings that you feel in your body and what you say and what you do.

The 4 x 4 x 4 formula looks like this:

- Meditate **four times a day** before breakfast, lunch, dinner and bedtime. The central idea is to stay in touch with yourself (your thoughts, feelings, spirit, what you are inclined to say and do) so that you are stronger in managing yourself.
- The second four stands for meditating for **four minutes**. This brief amount of time is chosen because most everyone can carve out four minutes four times a day. Admittedly, four minutes may be insufficient in the beginning of your awareness journey, but the greater your adherence to this protocol the more pronounced will be your benefit.
- Remember the three most important parts of being mentally healthy are (1) AWARENESS (2) AWARENESS (3) AWARENESS!! Just like the three most important aspects of real estate are (1) Location (2) Location (3) Location!!
- The third “4” in 4 x 4 x 4 stands for **four steps** in the mindfulness meditation.
 1. The first step is staying with your **BREATHING**. Focus your mind’s eye on your breath until you move from short shallow, uptight breaths to deep, full, relaxed breaths. Take in/inhale peace and relaxation; exhale stress and tightness. Notice that the deeper you relax, the awareness you have of your thoughts, feelings and spirit.
 2. Then you add to your breathing the practice of being **OBSERVATIONAL**. You observe the thoughts that come into your mind; the feelings that come into your body; what you are inclined to say or do. The idea is to get the thoughts, feelings, what you’re inclined to say or do at arms length and to have choice or freedom about these four parts of you; that you control them instead of them controlling you.
 3. Then as you are staying with your **BREATHING** and being **OBSERVATIONAL**, you **ACCEPT** whatever comes into your awareness and then simply let it float on by like a cloud in the sky. (Some of you might have to sit still long enough to realize and visually see that the clouds are moving!)

4. The fourth step I inadvertently already mentioned. It is to LET GO of whatever comes into your awareness. So the four steps again are:
 - 1.) Breathing
 - 2.) Observe
 - 3.) Accept
 - 4.) Let go

Very briefly, the benefits of the 4 x 4 x 4 are:

1. Relaxation – Stress management
2. Greater awareness – more observational
3. Being a friend to yourself – more “okayness” just in being
4. Emergence of new thought – fresh perspectives
5. Connecting with the Love, Peace and Joy already inside of you.

For related reading, see my Handouts entitled:

- “The Healing Power of Awareness”
- “Feelings”
- “Addendum to the Daily Mood Log”
- “The Healthy Bug Diagram”
- “AUDIO”
- “COSTS”

Enjoy!!!