The Mind/Body Connection:  Deep Breathing, Meditation, and Stretching Exercises for Flexibility and Stress Release

Facilitator Guide

This program helps you learn and practice safe, deep breathing exercises, simple meditation techniques and basic standing and seated stretching exercises. Through this program, you will increase your physical activity levels and flexibility and will know how to release stress and tension.

The Mind/Body Connection is designed to be conducted in a series of four to five programs. A series of programs will allow participants to practice techniques between sessions and build confidence. If a series of programs is not possible, the publication, The Mind/Body Connection: An Overview (HSW-AP.002), provides an overview of the topic and can entice participants to seek additional information.

Program Goal
To apply research-based information on the mind/body connection and assess how you are affected by and manage stress, physically and emotionally.

Program Objectives
- Describe some physical activities that help you reach and maintain good health, physical condition and function.
- Understand some of the negative effects of stress.
- Learn various ways to control stress.
- Practice basic meditation and deep breathing, as well as standing and seated stretches and balance exercises.

The Mind-Body Connection: What does it mean for you?
Your body responds to the way you think, feel and act. This is the “mind/body connection.”
- Individuals with good emotional health are aware of their thoughts, feelings and behaviors. They have learned healthy ways to cope with the problems and stress that are a normal part of life.
- People who are always stressed, anxious and/or upset may not have learned how to handle some of the stresses in life. They may begin feeling ill and even may have physical symptoms such as muscle spasms or ulcers. These changes could be the body trying to tell them that something is not right.

Materials

Publications
- HSW-AP.002  The Mind/Body Connection: An Overview
- HSW-AP.003  The Mind/Body Connection: Introduction and Safe Exercise Practice for Adults
- HSW-AP.004  The Mind/Body Connection: Deep Breathing and Simple Meditation
The Mind/Body Connection: Basic Standing and Seated Stretching Exercises

The Mind/Body Connection: Beginner Level Balance and Standing Stretches

PowerPoint Presentations

- The Mind/Body Connection: An Overview
- The Mind/Body Connection: Introduction and Safe Exercise Practice for Adults
- The Mind/Body Connection: Deep Breathing and Simple Meditation
- The Mind/Body Connection: Basic Standing and Seated Stretching Exercises
- The Mind/Body Connection: Beginner Level Balance and Standing Stretches

Before the program

- Read through the publications.
- Determine publication(s) that you will incorporate in your program(s). Duplicate copies for participants.
- Review the PowerPoint presentation(s). Print a copy of "Note Page," containing the script for the PowerPoint presentations that you plan to use. If you will not have access to a projector for the PowerPoint presentation(s), create a handout to share with participants.
- Read through the script that corresponds with each of the four PowerPoint presentations. The “notes” for each slide contain directions and additional information not included in the publications in some cases; the facilitator shares this information verbally.
- If you can access a digital projector to project the PowerPoint presentation, be sure to reserve it for the date you will be facilitating the program.
- Bring writing implements for participants to use to take notes or complete fitness readiness assessment, etc.
- Practice the exercises and learning tasks in the PowerPoint presentation that will actually be conducted with the participants.
- Make copies of the evaluation form(s) that corresponds to the program(s) that you will present. Make one for each participant.
- Be sure to set up your presentation space appropriately. If you are able to modify the space, consider a U-shaped setup, with a table at the top open end of the U for the presenter’s items and projector. This type of setup allows participants to see and interact with each other and the presenter, in a way that is more appropriate for informal, community learning programs.

Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire (PAR-Q)

The PAR-Q is designed to quickly assess the ability to begin physical activity. Before your group begins physical activity go through the questionnaire and follow the recommendations.

Answer yes or no to the following questions:

- Has your doctor ever said that you have a heart condition and that you should only do physical activity recommended by a doctor?
- Do you feel pain in your chest when you do physical activity?
- In the past month, have you had chest pain when you were not doing physical activity?
- Do you lose your balance because of dizziness or do you ever lose consciousness?
• Do you have a bone or joint problem that could be made worse by a change in your physical activity?
• Is your doctor currently prescribing drugs (for example, water pills) for your blood pressure or heart condition?
• Do you know of any other reason why you should not do physical activity?

If you answered yes:
If you answered yes to one or more questions, are older than age 40, and have been inactive or are concerned about your health, consult a physician before taking a fitness test or substantially increasing your physical activity. You should ask for a medical clearance along with information about specific exercise limitations you may have. In most cases, you will still be able to do any type of activity you want as long as you adhere to some guidelines.

If you answered no:
If you answered no to all the PAR-Q questions, you can be reasonably sure that you can exercise safely and have low risk of having any medical complications from exercise. It is still important to start slowly and increase gradually. It may also be helpful to have a fitness assessment with a personal trainer or coach, in order to determine where to begin.

During the Program
Introduce yourself and the topic of the program. Distribute evaluation forms to participants and ask them to complete the pre-program evaluation section. Consider asking each person to introduce themselves and share a positive stress they have experienced in the last month. A positive stressor might be a family member coming to visit, going on vacation, harvesting from the garden, starting a new job, moving, etc.
View the PowerPoint presentation OR distribute the PowerPoint presentation and the member overview handout for participants to follow along.

As you reach an exercise, take time to demonstrate it, then invite the participants to attempt the exercise.

Distribute copies of the publication(s) to participants. Review the key messages included in the publication and encourage participants to incorporate stress reduction techniques into their daily lives.

Evaluation
Ask each participant to complete the evaluation form that corresponds to the program(s) presented.

Collect the forms and tabulate to determine the increase in knowledge and practices. Data can be used for impact statements.

Conduct a follow up survey. Contact participants six weeks or longer after completing the program(s). Ask participants:
• Have you initiated the practice(s) that you identified on their evaluation?
• Have you continued the practice(s)?
• Can you describe a benefit you have experienced from the change in behavior?

Send evaluation results and number of program participants via email to Lynn Blankenship at lynn.blankenship@uky.edu.
Sample Impact Statement

______________ County presented ____ programs on Mind and Body Connection to encourage adults to assess their personal health, incorporate exercise into their lives, reduce stress, and improve flexibility and balance. Of the ___________ participants, _________ increased their knowledge and understanding while ______________ conducted personal health assessments, __________ practiced exercises three or more times per week that reduced their stress, and improved their flexibility and balance. According to one participant, <share a testimonial from follow up survey. 

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