

LOVE,

WORK, and

HEALING

A CLIENT HANDBOOK

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PRINCIPLES OF THERAPY

1. RESPECT

True human respect is necessary for healing and growth. Your counselor should treat you with respect and kindness.

2. HEALING IS NATURAL

Our deepest nature is to awaken and flower.

3. MINDFULNESS

It is healing to be alert and awake to the present moment.

4. EQUALITY

Client and counselor meet as equals. They are both of infinite value.

5. CONFIDENTIALITY

Counseling is a setting where you can speak freely, knowing that what you say will remain private. (Exceptions will be discussed).

*“OUR DEEPEST NATURE
IS TO AWAKEN AND FLOWER”*

TARA BRACH, RADICAL ACCEPTANCE

Human beings have a strong natural impulse toward health and healing.

We need only to remove those obstacles which block our own fresh, alive, sometimes joyful nature.

THE MAGIC QUARTER SECOND

In this life we have a choice.

Our actions can be in the service of our awakening, our flowering, or they can be in the service of our distractions, defenses, and thoughtlessness.

We can respond with kindness or we can react with irritation and unkindness. But in the rush of emotion we may have only a split second to decide to respond skillfully rather than react thoughtlessly.

It may be as little as a quarter of a second, but it offers us the opportunity to break out of old habits and act bravely in the best interests of ourselves and others.

*FROM THE BOOK *EMOTIONAL ALCHEMY* BY TARA BENNETT-GOLEMAN

ACCESSING INNER WISDOM

We all have deep wisdom within us.

What we need is a way to access that wisdom. It just requires quietly looking within.

The Wise Person Within:

Imagine that as you sit in quiet and stillness . . .
. . . a wise person comes and sits with you.

“Let me help you,” the wise person says.

“You can rest now.”

“I’m here for you.”

“You’re safe with me.”

“I have plenty of time for you.”

“It’s OK to be vulnerable.”

“I see you and I hear you.”

“You’re a very good person.”

“I know it’s been hard.”

“I love you for who you are.”

And the wise person continues:

“There are many wonderful possibilities ahead in your life.”

“Think about the happiness that is coming in your life.”

“Think about touching and being touched with love and gentleness.”

“Think about the many ways you can help others, your children, your friends, people who are very special to you.”

“Think about healing and rest.”

You let a smile come to your face as you think about enjoying rest in a place of love, safety, and comfort.

And you find yourself wondering, who is this wise person?
(It’s you of course).

ACCEPTING YOURSELF AS YOU ARE

In the following story, a young person tells of his unhappiness:

I was unhappy for years. I was anxious and depressed and selfish. Everyone kept telling me to change.

I resented them, and I agreed with them, and I wanted to change, but I simply couldn't, no matter how hard I tried.

What hurt the most was that, like the others, my best friend kept insisting that I change. So I felt powerless and trapped.

Then, one day, he said to me, "Don't change. I love you just the way you are."

Those words were music to my ears: "Don't change. Don't change. Don't change . . . I love you just the way you are."

I relaxed. I came alive. And suddenly I changed!

Now I know that I couldn't really change until I found someone who would love me whether I changed or not.

KINDNESS TO THE SELF

“I am larger and better than I thought. I did not think I held so much goodness.”

Walt Whitman

“You can search throughout the entire universe for someone who is more deserving of your love and affection than you are yourself and that person is not to be found anywhere.”

Gautama Buddha

It is often difficult in times of stress and distress to bring thoughts of kindness to the self. The following may help us access kind, positive feelings:

1. Think about some act of giving you have done and appreciate yourself for having done it.
2. Think about a time you held back from hurting someone and rejoice in your own goodness.
3. Bring to mind something you have done or said that you feel was a kind or good action.

4. Bring to mind a time when you were generous or caring or contributed to someone's well-being.
5. Bring to mind a quality you like about yourself.
6. Bring to mind an ability or strength you recognize in yourself.
7. See yourself through the eyes of the grandmother (or other) who adored you.
8. Picture yourself as the child you once were, so vulnerable, so innocent, so tender, so deserving of love (you still are).

LOVE AND WORK

We are all on a road that began long ago.

It includes all the ups and downs of our lives.
It leads us in the direction of our greatest potential.
Here are four questions you can ask yourself
about your journey on this road:

- 1. Where am I now in my life's journey?*
- 2. What is my next step?*
- 3. What is getting in my way?*
- 4. What do I need to develop in order to take the next step?*

MEANING AND PURPOSE

We all need a larger meaning and purpose in our lives, an “ultimate concern.” Sharon Salzberg, in her book *Faith*, says:

Our ultimate concern is the touchstone we turn to over and over again, the thread that we reach for to convey a sense of meaning in our lives. It is the glue that connects the disparate pieces, the frame that gives shape to the picture of our experiences. We turn to our ultimate concern when we are afraid, or bewildered, or when we don't quite know who we are anymore. We turn urgently toward our ultimate concern to give us context when we are shaken by loss or the threat of loss; we turn there quietly when something we wanted disappoints us or begins to fade away.

Here are some examples of ultimate concerns that others have embraced:

Justice
Compassion
Freedom
Beauty

Creativity
Being loving
Designing objects to enhance people's well-being
Seeking medicines to relieve suffering
Helping people design better communities
Helping children grow into loving, fully functioning adults

GIVING THANKS (GRATITUDE)

Think of the many blessings that have been given to you in this lifetime . . . and let yourself feel a deep sense of gratitude.

And if you are grateful to a person, be sure to tell them.

Giving thanks brings a new sense of joy and release.

GIVING!

“**G**ive.

Flow outward then.

Amaze yourself in service.

Discover what the Gods have always known.

For what is there to gather or to get?

*In giving is the wonder,
the delight.”*

PERSPECTIVE

Life has its ups and downs.

Things always change.

So remember this:

If you are suffering,

And your heart is in pain . . .

This too will pass.

WHAT'S NOT WRONG (or the joy of a “non-toothache”)

Everyone wants a peaceful and happy life, free of unhappiness, abuse, and suffering.

Most or many of the moments in our lives are like that - peaceful, painfree, and pleasant.

But, often we don't notice because we have a tendency to focus on problems . . . on what's wrong.

But we can also focus on what's NOT wrong.

Vietnamese zen master Thich Nhat Hanh tells us how a toothache can be a valuable teacher: when we have a toothache, we are sharply reminded of how wonderful it is when we don't have a toothache.

It is possible right now, he tells us, to really enjoy our non-toothache (or what's not wrong).

REACHING OUT TO OTHERS

Our distress has its beginning in relationships that did not meet our needs.

In a similar way our healing can be helped through relationships that do meet our needs.

So reach out . . . to a friend, a partner, a counselor, a pastor . . . someone who can be there for you in a time of need.

BEING GOOD

Cherish and care for others.

Take only those things that are freely given.

Be truthful and honest in your dealings.

Only use intoxicants to the extent that they are not harmful to yourself or others.

Only be active sexually in the presence of love and a long-term relationship.

*Do unto others
As you would have them
Do unto you.*

These things are the foundation of a happy and useful life.

FORGIVING

When the time is right . . .
. . . forgive.

Forgive yourself.
Forgive others.

Holding anger
or a grudge
is like picking up a hot coal
with your bare fingers,
hoping to harm another with it.

You *may* harm them.
You *will certainly* harm yourself.

MEDITATION

Meditation is different for everyone, but for all:

It nourishes us

It connects us to our truth

It helps us:

Be happier,

Make better decisions,

And move in the direction of our greatest potential

For some, meditation means:

Gardening

Walking in the beauty of nature

Camping

Listening to the rain

Sitting on a cushion

Lying on the beach

Walking

Boating

Skiing

Playing a sport

Dancing

Singing

Writing poems and stories

Cooking

Serving the needy

Designing

Building

Almost anything done mindfully can be meditation

What is meditation for you?

BASIC MEDITATION INSTRUCTIONS

1. Assume a comfortable posture lying on your back or sitting. If you are sitting, keep the spine straight and let your shoulders drop.
2. Close your eyes if it feels comfortable.
3. Bring your attention to your belly, feeling it rise or expand gently on the inbreath and fall or recede on the outbreath (abdominal breathing).
4. Keep the focus on your breathing, “being with” each inbreath for its full duration and with each out breath for its full duration, as if you were riding the waves of your own breathing.
5. Every time you notice that your mind has wandered off the breath, notice what it was that took you away and then gently bring your attention back to your belly and the feeling of the breath coming in and out.
6. If your mind wanders away from the breath a thousand times, then your “job” is simply to bring it back to the breath every time, no matter what it becomes preoccupied with.

FROM JON KABAT-ZINN'S BOOK *FULL CATASTROPHE LIVING*

SOFT BELLY MEDITATION

(From Stephen Levine)

Sit comfortably.

Take a few deep breaths.

Notice the rising and falling of your belly.

Feel calm enter your awareness.

Be aware of each inbreath, of each outbreath.

A gentle awareness of the rising and falling.

Begin to allow your belly to soften.

Soft belly rising and falling.

Soften the muscles that have been held tight.

Soften the tissue, the blood vessels, the flesh.

Let go of the holding.

Have mercy on you,

as you soften the grief, the distrust, the anger.

Levels and levels of softening,

levels and levels of letting go.

Let go of the hardness.

Let it float in something softer and kinder.

*Let thoughts come, and let them go,
floating like bubbles in the spaciousness of soft belly.
Holding to nothing, softening, softening.
Let the healing in,
let the pain go.
Have mercy on you.*

*Just let go,
into a calm and relaxed you.*

RECOGNIZING “MIND MOMENTS”

If we are somewhat still we can know the condition of our mind and heart at any moment. If we look with mindfulness, we can be aware of what we are feeling at each point in time. Sometimes when we check in, we will find that we feel happy and optimistic. At other times we may find that we feel sad and hopeless. In fact, during a day, many thoughts, feelings, and sensations will come and go. These are mind moments.

It is a useful skill to be able to use our attention to be aware of mind moments, and it is also important to learn the perspective this awareness can teach us.

One of the things it can teach us is that we are more than our thoughts and feelings. Sometimes in the thrall of a dark emotion, it can seem as if the world will always feel dark and gloomy. But the emotion we are feeling is part of a mind moment. It will come and it will pass away again.

Often our thoughts and feelings bring us messages we need to heed. Welcome your mind moments, listen to them, and look deeply for any message they may be bringing, and then let them go on their way. They will be followed by others, and we can learn to deal with them all with awareness and skill.

FIVE-STEP MINDFULNESS ACTIVITY

1. **P**ause - breath deeply - look inward.
2. Be aware of physical sensations in your body.
3. Be aware of your emotional feelings.
4. Be aware of your thoughts in this moment.
5. Pause again and then take the next appropriate action. Make it a skillful action in the best interest of yourself and those around you.

*DANCE, SING, CHANT,
PLAY A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT*

Some things, like singing and dancing, can bring healing energy into our lives.

HONOR AND CARE FOR YOUR PHYSICAL BODY

Remember the importance of good:

- * Nutrition
- * Exercise
- * Fresh air
- * Rest

*Your mind and body
Are two parts of one unity.
What affects one
Also affects the other.*

RELATIONSHIP AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

1. Speak from the heart, using:

The three Ts:

* Tact

Tactless example:

“You’re never around.”

“You don’t do things with me.”

Tactful example:

“I would like to spend more time with you.”

“I would like to plan to go out to dinner or do something together.”

* Timing

The right words at the right time.

* Tone-of-voice

A kind tone-of-voice is often more important than the words themselves.

2. Listen from the heart for “what’s right” in what the other is saying.
3. As much as possible, remove “but” from your vocabulary. Use “yes and” instead. Sometimes “but” is a way of discarding what the other has said. Try “yes and” as a way of building a more positive interaction.
4. Don’t give advice.
There may be a time for giving advice later, but for right now, try to refrain.

Why? Because advice is so often taken to mean: “You are defective. You are broken. I cannot accept you as you are. You need to be fixed. Here is what you need to do.”

Advice can feel like someone pouring salt on a wound of rejection. Rather than telling your partner what they should do, you will be better off to listen and try to understand what they need.

5. In a certain way of thinking, your partner is your flower, and you are the gardener. Your partner needs kindness, consideration, understanding, and love. These are like sunshine, rain, and nutrient-rich soil. If you look deeply at your flower, you will know what they need. Be sure to provide it, like any good gardener would. (suggested by Thich Nhat Hanh).

GET ON WITH IT!

Do what needs to be done.

We usually know what needs to be done.

Here are some possibilities:

Make something

Read something

Read to a child

Learn something

Exercise

Prepare and eat a nutritious meal

Clean your house or car

Work in the yard
Help someone in need

The author David Reynolds tells us, in his book *Constructive Living*, that:

. . . the fully functioning human being isn't someone who is utterly free of pain and happy all the time. Not at all. The mature human being goes about doing what needs to be done regardless of whether that person feels great or terrible. Knowing that you are that kind of person with that kind of self control brings all the satisfaction and confidence you will ever need. Even on the days when the satisfaction and confidence are not there, you can get the job done anyway.