

Stepping Stones



STEP 3 - BATTLING THE BLUES





Next Stop: Battling the Blues

I can't tell you how many clients start with "I just feel anxious and I don't know why" or "I just feel so down". Typically, throughout the process of figuring out what they want and realizing that they CAN have it is when the blues slowly seep away.

The beautiful thing is that there are SO many tools that you can learn to deal with your sadness and worry in healthy ways. You're about to begin that process now!

Let's do this!



Here's my story about Battling the Blues:

I struggled with anxiety throughout my childhood and into my 20's. As I entered college, I was diagnosed with an eating disorder, which also led to more anxiety. As I went through college and later, graduate school for counseling education, I began to develop strategies to combat those feelings and behaviors that came with the eating disorder. I wanted to get better, I wanted to feel happy, and I wanted relief from those feelings.

As I started to make decisions that were empowering, like leaving jobs that were not satisfying, and leaving unhealthy relationships, I started to discover a power in myself. I began to discover that I was in charge of how I felt. I got to decide how I perceived a situation. I got to decide whether it would affect me or not. I got to decide that I was IN CONTROL.

So often our sense of control is taken away from us by being labeled with diagnoses, like anxiety, depression, eating disorder, etc. I learned that I could rise above those labels. I learned that I got to choose my own label and I chose “healthy”. Then I started making decisions based on my new label. Through this, I found a sense of freedom and inner peace.





Write down some things below that you tend to worry about.

A large, empty rectangular box with a green border, intended for writing down things that cause worry.

When you worry about those things, does it change the situation? If so, how? For example, when you worry about money, do you find yourself suddenly richer?

When you worry about your children, do you find them suddenly safer?

A large, empty rectangular box with a green border, intended for writing down answers to the questions above.

You most likely answered “no” because worrying causes more anxiety, not less. Let’s put this to the test!



Activity

On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the least anxious you feel and 10 being the most, how do you feel right now?

1 __ 2 __ 3 __ 4 __ 5 __ 6 __ 7 __ 8 __ 9 __ 10 __

Now, choose one thing that you tend to worry about a lot and focus on it. Give yourself permission to worry about this one thing for 2 minutes.

On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the least anxious you feel and 10 being the most, how do you feel right now?

1 __ 2 __ 3 __ 4 __ 5 __ 6 __ 7 __ 8 __ 9 __ 10 __

What was it like to spend 2 minutes purposely worrying hard about something?



How did this worrying affect your anxiety level?



Describe any way that the worrying will have a positive effect on the outcome of the situation.



Describe something that you could do instead of worrying that would be more productive.





In most cases, your level of anxiety will increase with this activity. However, the problem is still there. Worrying is incredibly pointless, yet we waste so much energy engaging in it.

Now I would strongly encourage you to use one of the meditation resources located in the Stepping Stones membership site to relieve some of the anxiety that you just created for yourself (with my encouragement – so sorry)!!!

Let's move on! Make sure you listened to the audio recording to understand what mindfulness is and we will do an activity!

Mindfulness Activity





Choose an activity that you plan to do within the next few hours (ie: eating, going for a walk, doing the dishes, playing with your kids) and write it below.

A large, empty rectangular box with a green border, intended for writing the chosen activity.

As you perform the activity, focus on what you are doing precisely in the moment. If you feel yourself losing focus, remind yourself of what you are doing, by simply stating what you are doing (ie: I am eating a piece of chocolate). Use all 5 senses to experience the activity: taste, touch, sound, smell and sight.

Reflect on what this activity was like.

A large, empty rectangular box with a green border, intended for reflecting on the activity.



Did you struggle to stay present? If so, what were you distracted by?

A large, empty rectangular box with a green border, intended for writing a response to the question above.

What is another activity that you will commit to practicing mindfulness in?

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What are some ways that you can ensure that you will continue to live in the present moment rather than focus on the past or the future?

A large, empty rectangular box with a green border, intended for writing a response to the question above.



Thoughts are POWERFUL!

Our thoughts and perception play a HUGE role in how we feel on a day to day basis. Think of the last time you were angry about something. Do you remember repeating the events of what lead to the anger over and over in your mind? Did you obsess about what you shoulda, coulda, woulda said or did? Many of us do that because we're not aware of the impact that process has on our feelings and behaviors. After this step – you WILL be more aware and you WILL have the tools to change that process.

Anxiety comes from thoughts, sometimes those thoughts are on autopilot and we don't even know they're happening. It's time for you to take the reins and shut off those automatic thoughts that lead to those negative feelings and those unwanted behaviors!





Identify any recurring thoughts that you have:

- _____ I have so much stress in my life.
- _____ I hate my body.
- _____ I feel fat.
- _____ This is just too hard.
- _____ Nobody cares about my problems.
- _____ I will never be happy.
- _____ I get mad at little things, but I can't change it.
- _____ I am always anxious and depressed.
- _____ Nothing ever goes right for me.
- _____ My life will never get better.
- _____ I am anxious because I was traumatized.
- _____ Why can't I be normal?

Other:



Great place to start!

Thoughts can be toxic! Look back at some of the thoughts you checked off. They are stopping you from experiencing true happiness. Not only are you saying them in your head, chances are you are repeating them to others as well – your spouse, friends, a parent, co-worker...

These thoughts repeated over and over create your belief system. Your belief system is often, not even close to reality – it's created by your own experiences and perceptions of those experiences.

Imagine that two different people (Sam and Alex) are walking through the mall (separately) and they both see someone they know. They smile, say "hi" and wave, only to have the person keep walking.

Sam thinks "I can't believe she ignored me...what did I do wrong??? Maybe she's avoiding me". She can't get it out of her head and she stresses about it all day. She ends up downing a pint of Ben & Jerry's later to relieve the feelings of self-loathing.

Alex thinks "She must not have seen me". And goes about her day, shopping and enjoying herself.

Both people experienced the same event, but their thoughts about the event created an entirely different story and then outcome.

Now imagine you could change your automatic thoughts and actually think like Alex – ALL THE TIME!

You can...but it takes practice.

Let's replace some of those toxic thoughts with healthy ones. At first it will seem difficult, but once you get the hang of it, it will become second nature.





Below are thoughts you can use to replace the ones written above.
You may cut these out and carry them around with you as reminders.

Replace: "I have so much stress in my life" with:

- I can cope with my stress and keep it from making my anxiety worse.
- Not all stress is the same. I don't have to let the little things bother me so much.

Replace: "I hate my body" with:

- There are some many things that my body can do and they are:
- These are the favorite things about my body.

Replace: "I feel fat" with:

- I feel energetic (even if it's not true yet).
- I feel fit and in control.

Replace: "This is just too hard" with:

- This feels difficult right now, but I know with the right strategies and support, it will become easier.
- I've handled more difficult things before, I can do this.

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Replace: "Nobody cares about my problems" with:

- I have people in my life who care about me, I know there are people who I can turn to for support. They are :

Replace: "I will never be happy" with:

- There are some things that make me happy, they are:

Replace: "I get mad at little things and I cannot change this" with:

- I can learn to let the little things go.
- I am proud of myself for times that I have been able to let the little things go.

Replace: "I am always anxious and depressed" with:

- There are certain situations, people or events that trigger my anxiety and/or depression. I can learn what these are and how to cope with them.

Replace: "Nothing ever goes right for me" with:

- Having a positive attitude will help me see that there are many times when everything is fine.
- I can think of at least one positive thing that happened today:

Replace: "My life will never get better" with:

- If I really try, I can make things go better for myself.
- My problem with anxiety changes my view of the world, as I learn to use new thoughts, I will feel much happier.

Replace: "I am anxious because I was traumatized" with:

- Even if it is hard, I can learn to overcome the hurtful part of my past and heal from it.
- I have the ability to move forward by focusing on my goals and dreams, rather than looking back at pain in my past.



Writing an Affirmation

Create your own positive affirmations based on your automatic thoughts.

- Begin the statement with “I” or “My”
- Write them in the present tense
- State them positively
- Add emotion
- Create affirmations that will work – if they are hard for you to believe, begin the statement with “I am open to...” or “I am willing to...”

Examples:

1. I believe in and have confidence in myself.
2. I am excited that I am able to make healthy food choices, exercise regularly and get plenty of rest.
3. I enjoy life to the fullest.
4. I feel empowered that I have control over my thoughts, feelings and behaviors.
5. I feel grateful that I am living in true abundance.



Choose one negative thought or limiting belief that you have about yourself and write down the opposite of that thought:

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For more on this, find “Chaos to Calm” and “Kick Anxiety to the Curb: Journal & Workbook” in the Resources section of the Stepping Stones program.



Meditation

Think of yourself as a snow globe - as you go through your chaotic day you're shaken around and cloudy.

When does it clear? When it sits still.

When you create time for yourself to sit still, your mind will clear. Meditation is an opportunity to clear your mind to hear your inner voice, Spirit, Universe, or subconscious mind.

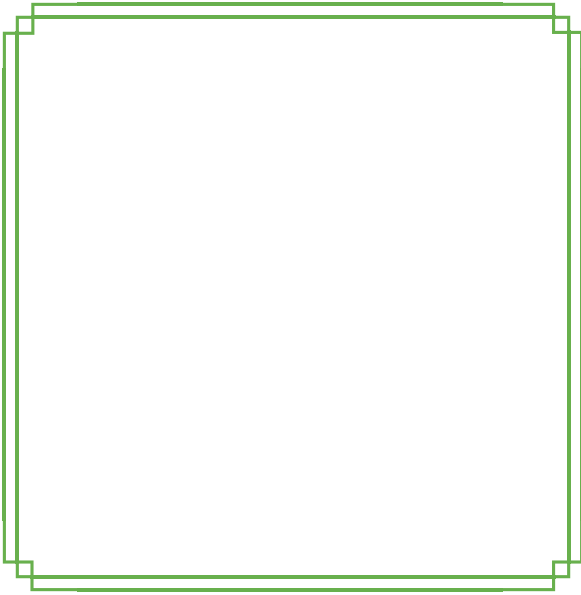
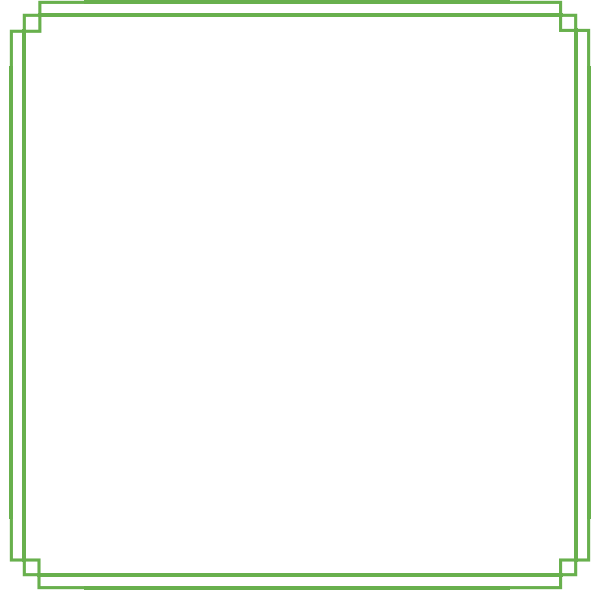
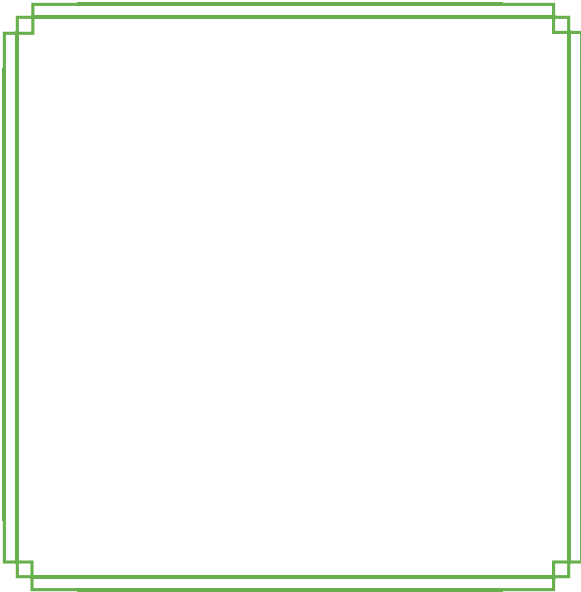
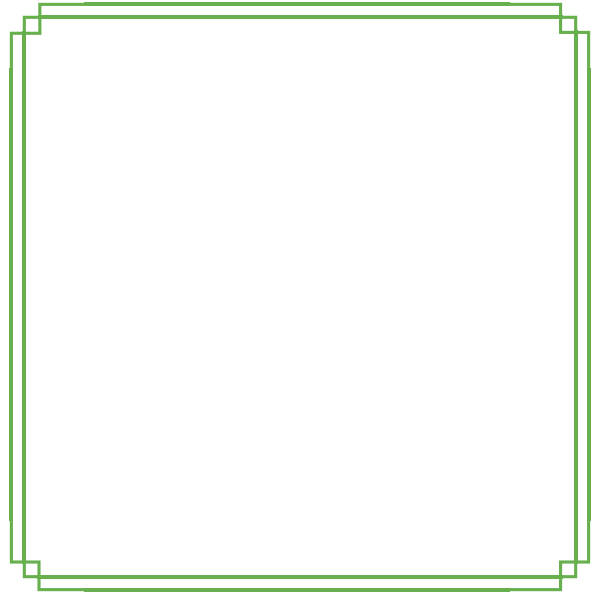
Meditation is not an easy task for some! Make sure to check out "Meditation for Beginners" in the resources tab of this program for tips and strategies.

Click [HERE](#) to read my blog on "How to Meditate like a Child"

LIST 3 ACTION STEPS, BIG OR SMALL, THAT YOU CAN TAKE THIS WEEK THAT WILL BRING YOU CLOSER TO YOUR DREAM.

My Dream is:

What are 4 things you would do, be, have or create if money, time, gender, or education were NOT factors?

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