February 2020

At the Heart of Wellness

Message from Maria

Dear friends;

After my mom died in October of 2012, I did all the things I knew how to do to cope with that grief. I wrote, went for runs, spent precious time with my family and dear friends, cried and prayed. I did a LOT of all those important and healing things…and then, I jumped back into my busy life with both feet. In fact, I kept myself SO busy, I hardly had time to continue grieving – which I now realize was the point. I’d rationalize this. After all, I was helping my kids through their heartache.

The Power of Presence

You may have heard that mindfulness - paying attention to the present moment, on purpose and without judgment, with an attitude of acceptance curiosity and kindness—has many benefits to your mind, body, and soul. Mindfulness can decrease stress and depression and increase happiness and energy. Mindfulness is also a powerful tool in recovery. It is a tool that’s with us all the time and everywhere we go, and we can use it at any time in order to support ourselves in the moment. Mindfulness helps us discover who we are in a way that provides comfort through the ups and downs of recovery. There is no “one size fits all” in mindfulness. For some, it is as simple as awareness of breath, something that can be done anywhere and anytime. For others, mindfulness comes through visualization practices including meditation, which can be done in a quick 2-minute session in a quiet space (sometimes created simply by using a noise-canceling headset).

If you have more time and a quiet, uninterrupted space, meditation can take on a more in-depth form. After 10 to 20 minutes of mindful meditation you can come away refreshed with a greater sense of the patterns of thoughts that run through your mind.

For those who are new to meditation, an auditory guided meditation may be just right; there are many free smartphone apps that provide guided sessions of various types, subjects, and lengths.

Mindfulness can take many other forms as well. Sound therapy is a technique in which musical frequencies and tones are used in physical, mental, and spiritual healing. A study published in the Journal of Evidence-Based Integrative Medicine found that an hour-long session of sound meditation helped people reduce tension, anger, fatigue, anxiety, and depression while increasing a sense of spiritual well-being.
at losing their Gram, helping the families I worked with here at McCall deal with their various challenges, going to important meetings--and on and on. Oh, and I kept on running. No matter what, that morning run was my salvation. And it worked--it got me through some very dark days. The problem was that I never stopped running, metaphorically speaking. I'd run and run and run all day long, evading the stillness. Until one morning I slipped on a patch of ice and broke my leg. As in, ‘really did a number on it’ kind of break. As in, needed surgery and a whole lot of hardware to put me back together sort of break. No more running, my friends. Full stop.

Oh yeah, it was my right leg so I couldn’t drive either. I had to do this thing that’s super hard for so many of us; I had to ask for help. To do everything! And that grief I was running so fast to evade? There it was, waiting for me. In the forced stillness, wow did I feel it. And, here’s the thing, it was the greatest gift I never wanted. I had to be with my sadness, my grief, my raw vulnerability. I spent time in the cars of my family, friends and co-workers and we talked about everything including the full experience of grief. I became mindful of how

Mindful eating, paying attention to our food, on purpose, moment by moment, without judgment, is an approach to food that focuses on the individuals’ sensual awareness and experiences of the food. According to an article written by Joseph B. Nelson and published by the American Diabetes Association “It has little to do with calories, carbohydrates, fat, or protein. The purpose of mindful eating is not to lose weight, although it is highly likely that those who adopt this style of eating will lose weight. The intention is to help individuals savor the moment and the food and encourage their full presence for the eating experience”.

As more and more studies are completed and evidence produced, it becomes ever clearer that mindfulness has a valuable role to play in creating and maintaining good health. After all, our ability to listen to ourselves and be comfortable in our own presence is central to our wellbeing!

At McCall, we offer mindfulness-based recovery groups and we integrate mindfulness into all our programs. We see wonderful results. But this isn’t a practice that’s restricted to the walls of treatment clinics. It’s accessible to us all at any point in time. It’s a way of being. Give it a try... and please let us know how it goes! Be patient with yourself—everything worth doing takes some practice.
my body was processing all these overwhelming feelings and what I had unwittingly been doing to try like hell to avoid them. The result? My relationships deepened, my self-awareness grew, my grief, while still very present, found a place in my heart to reside and celebrate my extraordinary mom.

Since then, I’ve made some good strides, working at moving through my days in a mindful state of being. I’m committed to creating stillness - especially in the day to day rush. I work to be present. I’m a work in progress, though and I know my default is to fill up my days and run through life, especially when there are those tough, heavy things I’m wrestling with. My body gives me the signals when I’m in that state, and, when I’m paying attention, I listen, I stop, focus on the moment and readjust to that awareness. A gift I know treasure.

All my best to you always.

Maria

p.s. I’m still running – more slowly and not as far – but it’s still my favorite way to start the day.

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