

## Taming The Brain Exercise 3: Week Three

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### The Space Between Stimulus and Response

*Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In the space there is the power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.*

---Victor Frankl

This quote from Victor Frankl, the Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, is profound. It is worth contemplating. It will be one of the central themes for the Transform University.

The meditative disciplines that we will be engaging are a key practice in expanding the space between stimulus and response.

*In many ways the growth paths the 15 Transformational Disciplines and Practices illuminate are all about growing the space between stimulus and response and then using that space well.*

Practice is the key. Intentional practice.

### This Week's Practice

First, continue your daily practicing stillness/meditating in silence and solitude. You may be getting the point by now that I am recommending this as a life long habit. It is a practice that enhances our ability to BE PRESENT.

Every day, every moment is a new opportunity to be present in that moment. Yet, presence takes practice.

Get in a quiet place, with no distractions. Sit upright, or lie down--whatever will support you best in this exercise. Close your eyes. Consciously relax.

- Breathe deeply, down into your belly. Your stomach should go out when you inhale and back in when you exhale.
- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Clear your mind of all extraneous thought and focus on your breath and your bodily sensations.
- Don't try to figure anything out. There is nothing else you are supposed to do other than be fully present in your body.

- When a thought enters your mind, when you notice it, just release it and let it float away, and bring your attention back to your breath and bodily presence.
- Do this for as many minutes as you can. Two minutes is a start. If you can do this for twelve minutes, it is a home run for today.

When you are complete, non-judgmentally reflect on what your experience was. Continue to do so throughout the day as it occurs to you.

**From Your Taming The Brain Participant Guide, read Taming The Brain Exercise #2: Reversing Overwhelmedness.**

- **During your daily meditation time this week, practice number 2 from Taming The Brain Exercise #2, which is the Body-scan muscle relaxation.**

The way you do the Body-scan muscle relaxation exercise is to take a few moments to attend to your deep breathing and consciously relax your body, starting at the top of your head and then slowly working down, to your forehead, facial muscles, neck, shoulders, upper back, chest stomach, lower back, midriff area, upper legs, lower legs, feet, upper arms, lower arms and hands.

To do this slowly and gradually can take much longer than twelve minutes. But, if you don't have a lot of time, then go ahead and start it and go as far with the body scan as your time allows.

## **Getting Off The Merry Go Round**

Many people find silence, solitude, and the clearing of your the mind uncomfortable at first. You may find your mind going in all sorts of directions.

*For many of us, keeping constantly busy and stimulated with noise and activity is an unconscious avoidance strategy, designed to keep bothersome internal conversations about ourselves, others, and life at bay.*

When you actually stop, and "get off the Merry-Go-Round" of constant activity, in life, you may be surprised about at what you notice is coming up for you, in terms of emotions and thoughts. If this occurs, you can simply notice it, non-judgmentally, clear the thoughts, stay present in the emotions, and be with them, not resisting them.

This week, when you are meditating in silence and solitude, follow the same steps outlined in the previous weekly emails. Quiet your mind, clear extraneous thoughts, attend to breathing, release thoughts as they come into your mind and bring your attention back to what you are experiencing in your body.

This Week, continue to experiment with the Body-Scan muscle relaxation we introduced in last week's email.

And, this week, you can add another Mindfulness exercise from your **Participant Guide Exercise #2—Reversing Overwhelmedness**. That is number 3 from that exercise, which is **Guided Imagery and Visualization**.

**Guided Imagery and Visualization** can be done in a variety of ways. One powerful way to do this is while you are attending to breathing during your meditation time, you **imagine in your mind's eye any combination of possibilities**:

- One possibility is to **inhale peace and health, and exhale all tension, discord, angst, etc.**
- Another is to **inhale love and acceptance and exhale love and acceptance** for someone in your life.
- Another is to **inhale gratitude and appreciation for the blessings in your life and exhale gratitude and appreciation for a particular person** in your life.
- You can also picture a person in your mind's eye as you inhale and exhale and **inhale appreciation and exhale love as you picture them**.

In all these, when you notice your mind wandering, just bring it back, non-judgmentally.