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*God forbid you live in an era of change. But if that happened, then God grant you take advantage of new unlimited possibilities!*

## **TEACHING GUIDE ON POSITIVE PSYCHOTHERAPY IN TIMES OF WAR: DEVELOPMENT OF MINDFUL DISTRESS TOLERANCE**

We are delighted to welcome all participants of the conference.

We are sending special greetings to our Ukrainian colleagues who have been “in the midst of war” for over 9 months and continue to be and live in the here and now.

We are living in "awfully interesting time".

We also extend our thanks to the organizers of this gorgeous event.

### **WHO ARE WE?**

The authors of the teaching guide to be presented “**Positive psychotherapy: teaching guide on psychotherapeutic methods for developing mindful distress tolerance**” are residents of Kharkiv.

### **WHY WE DECIDED TO WRITE THIS TEACHING GUIDE**

Having survived the "invaluable" experience of being in the midst of hostilities, we developed our own tool for accepting the "unbearable lightness of being" in a state of total uncertainty, specifically the ***tool for developing mindful distress tolerance***.

Then we tested it in the course of experimental training in April.

From May to October, we worked with several volunteer groups once a week.

Our work on the teaching guide took the whole summer.

Denis is under shelling in Kharkiv.

I am 600 km away from the city I love so much.

## ONE MORE REASON WHY WE WROTE THIS TEACHING GUIDE



To be honest, there is one more reason that motivated us to develop this teaching guide.

When considering internet content including the information about trainings and workshops, we came across **unprofessional presentation of well-known therapeutic techniques**, such as Alexandr Lowen's «Grouding», Lucina Artigas «Butterfly Hug», Francine Shapiro's «Calm / Safe place», Self-Hypnosis Technique by Betty Alice Erickson and many other ones.

## THREE FOCUS POINTS

Our teaching guide evidently focuses on three components.

These are **positive psychotherapy, mindful distress tolerance, and integration of psychotherapeutic methods.**

Speaking about positive psychotherapy, we mean first of all Nossrat Pezeshkian's conception of health/disease.

Let's go through them.

## WHAT IS THE MINDFUL DISTRESS TOLERANCE?

In our teaching guide, we define mindful distress tolerance as an integrative personality attribute, which manifests itself in the ability of self-management in a state of stress, primarily in the ability to quickly reach a state of relaxation through the release of emotional and muscular tension; this attribute is based on the mindful skills and abilities.

S. Bishop with colleagues proposed a two-component model of mindfulness.

The first component involves the self-regulation of attention so that it is maintained on immediate experience, thereby allowing for increased recognition of mental events in the present moment.

The second component involves adopting a particular orientation toward one's experiences in the present moment, an orientation that is characterized by curiosity, openness, and acceptance (Bishop et al., 2004).

## **FIVE FACET MINDFULNESS QUESTIONNAIRE**

Also known Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ).

Ruth A. Baer with colleagues examine the facet structure of mindfulness using five recently developed mindfulness questionnaires.

Factor analyses of the combined pool of items from the mindfulness questionnaires suggested that collectively they contain five clear, interpretable facets of mindfulness.

**Observing.** Observation entails in the ways we use our sensory awareness. It involves how we see, feel, and perceive the internal and external world around us and select the stimuli that require our attention and focus.

**Describing.** The statements evaluating descriptive qualities study the way we label our experiences and express them in words to ourselves and others.

**Act with Awareness.** Mindfulness is closely related to self-awareness and calculated actions. This facet studies the movements we choose after attending to the information present at the moment. It delves deep into whether we can act out of quick judgment and get out of the autopilot mode before responding to a situation.

**Nonjudging.** Non-judgmental inner experience is tied in with not letting the inner critic take a toll on our happiness and positive state of mind. It calls for self-acceptance and unconditional empathy for oneself and others.

**Nonreactivity.** This aspect refers to active detachment from negative thoughts and emotions so that we can accept their existence and choose not to react to them. Non-reactivity makes way for emotional resilience and restores mental balance.

## **NOSSRAT PESECHKIAN'S BALANCE MODEL AND 5 MINDFULNESS SKILLS**

Based on the construct of mindfulness we presented development of mindful stress tolerance by means of widely known techniques spread across the four spheres of the balance model, and correlated it with mindfulness skills actualizing the Observer position (fig. 1).

Our model includes 5 steps, each of them can be done independently: **Step 1.** In the first position is the feeling of the BODY as a manifestation of the "Self".

This area is represented by such techniques as A. Lowen's basic grounding exercise, J. S. Everly's method of accelerated relaxation and L. Artigas' "Butterfly Hug", which develop the ability to connect with the world through one's sensations.

These are for developing the "Act with Awareness" skill.

**Step 2.** The "ACHIEVEMENT" area is represented by F. Shapiro's "Negative Cognitions" technique, which develops the ability to verbalize distress in three directions (responsibility /

insecurity / lack of control) by expanding the "Self" concept, forming a holistic (objective) view of oneself and accepting oneself.

This is for developing the “**Describing**” skill.

**Step 3.** The "CONTACTS" area is also represented by F. Shapiro's technique "Cartoon Character", which develops the ability to build and maintain a relationship with oneself through overcoming negative inner dialogue and contributes to picking up the "**Nonjudging**" skill.

The inner dialogue in this technique is constructed as the interaction of different ego states (Parent, Adult and Child) in the frame of E. Berne's theory of transactional analysis.

**Step 4:** The "FUTURE" sphere is again represented by F. Shapiro's "Safe Place" technique. It develops imagination "expanding access to positive memory networks".

It develops the "**Nonreactivity**" skill.

And finally, **Step 5.** The self-hypnosis technique by B. Erickson develops the ability to harmonize and balance all the areas and contributes to picking up the "**Observing**" skill.

By the way, it should be noted that such techniques as “Grounding” by Alexander Lowen, “Butterfly hug” by Lucina Artigas, and Betty Erickson's self-hypnosis *have particularly "suffered" from unprofessional interpretation.*

We turned to the original techniques and translated them from English.

The teaching guide comprises Ukrainian and English versions of the techniques.

There is also an equivalent version of our teaching guide in Russian at the link.

Thus, the teaching guide presents the author's concept of developing mindful distress tolerance according to N. Pezeshkian's balance model in the frame of integration of the methods of positive, body-oriented, Eriksonian therapy and hypnosis, desensitization and eye movement reprocessing, techniques of slow controlled breathing.

## **IYENGAR AND THE ART OF BREATHING**

### **DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING AND NOSE TIP GAZING**

It is important to say that in many of the techniques presented, the focus on using **diaphragmatic breathing** and **gazing on the tip of the nose with both eyes (“nose tip gazing”)** is essential to achieve mindfulness.

Breathing in meditative and breathing exercises is to be consciously controlled by movements of the anterior abdominal wall and diaphragm and thus contributes to development of mindfulness.

This suggests that these techniques are *never recommended to be practised by or with those people who are not familiar with either diaphragmatic breathing or nose tip gazing.*

Therefore, we began the second section of our teaching guide with the fundamentals of the art of breathing referring to the work of one of the most prominent modern yoga masters, Bellur Krishnamachar Sundararaja Iyengar. We have turned just to Iyengar because, while remaining steadfast in the philosophy of the ancient Indian traditions, his writings meet the requirements of modern scientific knowledge.

### **SAMAVRITTI. VISAMAVRITTI**

The two simple pie charts you can see on this slide illustrate two pranayama methods.

The breathing cycle consists of four parts: inhalation, exhalation and two main types of the cessation of breath.

These four breathing processes form one breathing cycle.

**Samavritti** is a pranayama method in which **all 4 breathing processes have the same duration: inhalation** (puraka), **the cessation of breath when the inhalation is complete** (antara kumbhaka), covered by the term “inside hold” in fig. 2-3, **exhalation** (rechaka) and **the cessation of breath when the exhalation is complete** (bahya kumbhaka), covered by the term “outside hold” in fig. 2-3.

For example, if the duration of inhalation is 5 seconds, then the duration of exhalation and the cessation of breath after inhalation / exhalation should be the same.

**Visamavritti** is a pranayama method in which the duration of the 4 breathing processes is different and varied.

The duration of the 4 breathing processes can be varied in various proportions. Variations and combinations in visamavritti pranayama are numerous, and no mortal, according to B.K.S. Iyengar, can perform all possible combinations in his life. B. K. S. Iyengar strongly recommends not to practice it on your own, without being observed of an experienced guru, citing the words of Swatmarama in his Hat-ha-Yoga Pradipika that prana should be tamed more gradually than lions, elephants and tigers; otherwise, it will kill the practitioner (Айенгар, 1995: 157).

### **COHERENT BREATHING. BREATHING 4-7-8. BOX BREATHING**

If you look carefully at the charts, you will see that the modern popular breathing techniques are different stages of mastering **samavritti** and **visamavritti**.

**Coherent breathing** is the first stage of mastering **samavritti pranayama**, where the focus is on the 2 breathing processes: inhalation and exhalation.

**Breathing 4-7-8** is a modification of mastering the first stage of **visamavritti pranayama**.

**Box breathing** is the third stage of mastering **visamavritti pranayama**.

### **"THE HYDRAULIC PRINCIPLES OF BREATHING"**

We also considered it important to get the readers familiar with the article of scientific journalist Paul Ingraham who explains the workings of breathing using the principle of hydraulics as an example.

His brief and comprehensible explanation, even to a child, describes diaphragm as the most important breathing muscle and discovers how dysfunctional breathing might be a root cause of a variety of common upper body pain problems and injuries.

**Diaphragm** — our most important breathing muscle — it always has to work, even in relaxed breathing.

If the diaphragm doesn't do its job well, muscles in the upper chest (pectoralis minor) and throat (scalenes) will try to help out (fig. 4-5).

A specialist who makes a practice of breathing techniques with his clients / patients should possess this elementary knowledge.

### **"WHAT'S NEW IN SCIENCE?"**

#### **"REVISED ANATOMY OF THE AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM"**

We also thought that within the framework of N. Pezeshkian's concept of health, and in particular of his psychosomatic arc, readers would be interested in learning about the classical and new understanding of the anatomy of the autonomic nervous system.

To be aware of the fact that this new understanding accounts for many data that were at odds with the previous one.

According to the revised anatomy of the autonomic nervous system the parasympathetic nervous system receives input from cranial nerves exclusively and the sympathetic nervous system from spinal nerves, thoracic to sacral inclusively. This simplified, bipartite architecture offers a new framework to understand pelvic neurophysiology as well as development and evolution of the autonomic nervous system (fig. 6).

### **"WHAT'S NEW IN SCIENCE?"**

#### **"YOUR BRAIN IS NOT AN ONION WITH A TINY REPTILE INSIDE"**

In "What's New in Science?" section, we have again cited extensive excerpts from Seven and a Half Lessons About the Brain by American psychologist L. Barrett, a neuroscientist, PhD, professor of psychology at Northeastern University in Boston.

In her book, Lisa Feldman Barrett debunks **the myth of the triune brain** and convincingly proves that "we have one brain, not three" (fig. 7).

Lisa Barrett points to the origins of misconceptions regarding the evolution of the nervous system and the necessity realize their consequences.

In order to overcome the ancient idea of Plato about the battle, according to Lisa Barrett we may have to fundamentally rethink what it means to be rational, what it means to be responsible for our actions and perhaps even what it means to be human.

### **WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE WHAT ELSE WE HAVE WRITTEN ABOUT?**

Then, a few words about the content of our teaching guide.

## **SECTION 1. STRESS. DISTRESS TOLERANCE. MINDFULNESS**

### **1.1 Nossrat Pezeshkian's conception of health / disease**

Appendices A. Positive psychotherapy mind-map

Appendices B. Actual abilities

Test questions. References

### **1.2. Historical background: stress, distress and eustress**

Test questions. References

### **1.3. Mindfulness. Mindful Distress Tolerance**

Test questions. References

Assignments for independent work for the first section

## **SECTION 2. DEVELOPING MINDFUL DISTRESS TOLERANCE ACCORDING TO NOSSRAT PEZESHKIAN'S BALANCE MODEL: INTEGRATION OF PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC METHODS**

### **2.1. Philosophy and physiology of controlled breathing**

Appendices A. Inhalation, exhalation and the cessation of breath techniques

Test questions. References

### **2.2. Contemporary popular breathing practices**

Test questions. References

### **2.3. Developing mindful distress tolerance according to Nossrat Pezeshkian's balance model**

Appendices A. Energy autodiagnosis

Appendices B. "Basic Grounding Exercise" technique

Appendices C. "Butterfly's Hug" technique

Appendices D. "Accelerated Relaxation" technique

Appendices E. "Negative Cognitions" technique

Appendices F. "Cartoon Character" technique

Appendices G. "Calm / Safe Place" technique

Appendices H. Self-hypnosis technique

Test questions. References

Assignments for independent work for the second section

## **SECTION 3. DEFENCE MECHANISMS AND COPING STRATEGIES**

### **3.1. Defence mechanisms. Ways of processing the conflict as defence mechanisms**

Appendix A. Methodology for measuring the psychological defence

Test questions. References

### **3.2. Coping strategies. Sincerity-courtesy balance as a coping strategy**

Appendix A. "Coping Behaviours" questionnaire

Test questions. References

### **3.3. Mindfulness. Mindful Distress Tolerance**

Test questions. References

Assignments for independent work for the third section

**SECTION 4. CLASSICS AND MODERNITY: WHAT'S NEW IN SCIENCE?****4.1. Classical and new understanding of the anatomy of the autonomic nervous system**

Test questions. References

**4.2. The Critique of Pure Reason or critique of the triune brain**

Test questions. References

Assignments for independent work for the fourth section

**IN CONCLUSION**

*We are buffeted by events that are beyond our control, but we can still react constructively.*

In conclusion, I would like to once again focus your attention on the fact that the entire structure of our teaching guide is in the framework of the Nossrat Pezeshkian's conception of health / disease (fig. 8).

**Thank you very much for your attention.**