

**How Life Coach Training Transforms My Practice:  
Weaving Mindfulness, Body Awareness, and Neuroscience into Educational Therapy**

**AET 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference -- October 27, 2013**  
**Presenter: Debra Hori, M.A., ET/P. Certified Martha Beck Life Coach**  
**www.DebraHori.com    Email: Debra@DebraHori.com**

**Key Concepts, Mindfulness Practices, and Resources**

Important ideas about mindfulness:

- In the moment, focus on present moment, “Now is like this.”
- Non-judgmental
- Experiential
- Connecting to a focal point: breath, body, sensory
- Body awareness: brings us into the present moment

“Original Medicine”: many indigenous cultures share the concept of each individual being born with “original medicine” or power, the gifts, talents, passions, that make us who we are as our true selves. Martha Beck calls it the “essential self”. Gail Larsen in Transformational Speaking, talks about original medicine being at the heart of our work as change agents, it is what Larsen calls our “home zone”.

**Body Compass** – A Martha Beck tool (Reference: Martha Beck, Finding Your North Star, Exercise “Using Your North Star-O-Meter, p. 120)

- Create a “compass” from your body’s reaction to a negative and a positive experience or task. Try using your body compass to guide you instead of your thoughts. What happens?
- What are the sensations you feel in your body? Describe them in as much detail as possible.
- Name the sensations so you have a shorthand way to refer to them.
- This is likely the way your body communicates “No” and “Yes”
- We have neural nets in other parts of our bodies besides our brain. There are neural nets in our abdomen (“gut feelings”), and around our heart (a “broken heart”). Our bodies tell us all the time whether we truly mean yes/no.

Martha Beck also has a short hand way to think of the body compass. Ask yourself if the feeling in your body feels like “Shackles on” or “Shackles off” (Reference: Martha Beck, Steering by Starlight, p. 40)

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Adaptation of Body Compass for Children: Simplify this concept. Kids usually can identify the “no”, but they often don’t think about the “yes”. Sometimes kids relate to asking as if the negative or positive feeling is like a certain animal, then hook it back to their body sensations.

Neuroscience Support for Mindfulness:

- What fires together, wires together: creating new neural networks takes time and practice. This does not happen instantly. Step by step changes.
- Improved focus and self-regulation: When we ask ourselves to pause and calm the mind, return to a focal point, isn’t that how we define attention?
- Fight or Flight – parasympathetic nervous system that is getting the signal to go into “fight or flight” can be de-activated with the breath. Watch kid’s reactions when you remind them to breathe.
- Explain working memory and how this goes “off-line” when we are anxious or filled with very intense feelings. Self-calming techniques will foster resilience and get us to return to balance in less time, especially if we have practiced this! “Learn to return” (Martha Beck)

What are your “take aways”?

Set an intention and choose an action step to get started. It helps if you verbalize your intention to another person.

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**Mindfulness Practices**

**Grounding:** All mindfulness is grounding, but I like to pause with the intention of grounding, especially when I notice that I or my student (sometimes both of us!) feel scattered, or are showing signs of stress.

Take time to be aware of your body sitting, you may want to plant your feet firmly on the ground, even take off your shoes to feel the ground better. Notice the place where your body touches the ground. Close your eyes. Imagine that your feet are growing roots down deep into the earth. Take a few deep breaths, and notice especially the exhale or the out-breath. Make the out-breath longer than the in-breath. Imagine yourself deeply rooted to the earth. Open your eyes slowly.

**Introducing Mindfulness to Children:**

Glitter ball: when shaken up it's not clear. When given a chance to settle, it is clear.

Breathing: Parasympathetic Nervous system is over-active in a world filled with stimulation that requires fast pace processing. It often kicks into "fight or flight" when we are just reacting on "autopilot" to what happens to us without really pausing to make a choice. Slower breathing, particularly the out-breath, signals the parasympathetic nervous system that "all is well." Older students: reduced heart rate, decreased blood pressure, alert state.

**Movement Meditation:** The key is the breath, moving purposefully, slowly.

Source: Thich Nhat Hanh – [Mindful Movements](#), Video: Ten Mindful Movements led by Thich Nhat Hanh, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FCUyf-IPPOQ>

**RAIN:** Dealing with strong emotions

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>R: Recognize</b>    | Notice the emotion, and name it. Try to refrain from judgment about the emotion. (For younger students, this may be an opportunity to develop vocabulary for these feelings.) |
| <b>A: Allow/Accept</b> | Bring a gentle acceptance to the emotion, allow it to come. Know that it will pass. Be curious about it. Let the emotion take its course.                                     |
| <b>I: Investigate</b>  | Ask: Where in my body do I feel this emotion? How does it show up in my body?   |

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**RAIN:** Dealing with strong emotions, continued

**N:** Not Identify        This emotion is a set of reactions and sensations, not your whole identity. Watch your experience and learn what you can from it. Think about the language you use: instead of "I am sad," try "I feel sadness."

**Notes:** Karla McLaren, [The Language of Emotions](#), book and abridged audiobook. Ms. McLaren describes each emotion as having its "job", a particular message to communicate to us, even the more difficult emotions.

This can also be used for all types of feelings, even the ones we might call "positive".

If the feelings are very intense, doing something to "step aside" from the feelings may help: drawing or writing.

**Loving Kindness Practice:** (See video: <http://vimeo.com/20121374>, Sylvia Boorstein)

Start with a blessing for yourself: May I feel safe... May I feel content... May I feel strong...May I live with ease.

Blessing for a loved one: May you feel safe... May you feel content... May you feel strong...May you live with ease.

Think about someone else that you love that you see less often: (blessing as above)

Think about someone you rarely think about, but is a familiar stranger: (blessing as above)

Think about unfamiliar strangers, in the room, in the world: All beings near and far...May you feel safe...May you feel content...May you feel strong...May you live with ease.

May all of us everywhere feel safe, content, strong, and live with ease.

Before you open your eyes, think of the person to your right, to your left, in front of you, behind you....May you feel safe, may you feel content, may you feel strong, and may you live with ease.

You can open your eyes, and look around and see all the people around you who are blessing you.

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**Other mindful activities:**

Celtic Art Therapy Plates, [www.celticarttherapy.com](http://www.celticarttherapy.com), Anne Ravensdaughter, artist, have students trace the lines in the design with the stylus.

Transferring stones

Brain Gym – PACE exercises

Try practicing mindfulness when you do something routine: brushing teeth, driving, sitting in traffic, washing dishes, crossing a threshold, standing in line, waiting on hold for customer service!

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**ANNOTATED RESOURCE LIST**  
**Mindfulness, Neuroscience Support for Mindfulness Practices**

**Elisha Goldstein, PhD:** The Now Effect, Dr. Goldstein provides exercises and examples to calm the mind and come into the present, or the “Now Moment”. The effects of this practice are explained in terms of neuroscience, with anecdotes from his private practice. The book is linked to instructional videos available through the Internet that correspond with the text.

**Rick Hanson, PhD:** Neuropsychologist, author of Hardwiring Happiness, Buddha’s Brain, Just One Thing, Meditations for Happiness. Dr. Hanson grounds his mindfulness practices in neuroscience and explains the connection throughout his writings. The book, Just One Thing helps us start with one simple idea at a time to begin or extend a mindfulness practice. Dr. Hanson has guided meditations on his audiobooks.

<http://www.rickhanson.net/writings/just-one-thing> (free e-newsletter)

**Kelly McGonigal, PhD:** The Neuroscience of Change (audiobook), Dr. McGonigal takes listeners through the neuroscience involved in changing behaviors, and explains how contemplative practice changes the brain. She includes guided meditations with this audiobook.

<http://kellymcgonigal.com/2012/04/05/the-neuroscience-of-change/>

**Susan Smalley, PhD and Diana Winston:** Fully Present: The Science, Art, and Practice of Mindfulness. Susan Smalley was a keynote speaker at a recent AET national conference, and is Founder and Founding Director of UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center (MARC). Diana Winston is Director of Mindfulness Education at MARC.

**Guided Meditations:**

Mindful Meditations (cd), Diana Winston, This cd saved my life during a very stressful period.

Loving kindness Meditation video: Lead by Sylvia Boorstein -- <http://vimeo.com/20121374>

Free Downloadable Guided Meditations from MARC:

<http://marc.ucla.edu/body.cfm?id=22>

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**Life Coaching**

**Martha Beck, PhD: [www.MarthaBeck.com](http://www.MarthaBeck.com)**

The Martha Beck Collection – Essays for Creating Your Right Life, Volume One. These are Martha's essays from O, The Oprah Magazine. The topics of these articles offer an overview of important coaching concepts a la Martha Beck.

Finding Your Own North Star – Foundational work for self-coaching, involving Martha's concept of the "Change Cycle", a four-part process that tracks through steps to transition to new behaviors and change.

Steering By Starlight – Tools and exercises to become your own guide. A funny read and full of hope.

The Joy Diet – 10 Daily Practices for a Happier Life. Each chapter offers a way to put more joy in life: Nothing, Truth, Desire, Creativity, Risk, Treats, Play, Laughter, Connection, Feasting. The chapter on "Nothing" is actually doing nothing, being still and looking inward. This is one of my favorites because it reminds me to give myself permission to enjoy the wonders in this life.

**Other Coaching Technique: Thought Work** – Identifying limiting thoughts or beliefs that stand in the way of positive change and replacing them with equally powerful, truthful thoughts that serve a person better.

- **Brooke Castillo:** Brooke is a Master Certified Martha Beck Coach. [Self-Coaching 101: Use your Mind – Don't Let it Use You.](#) This book is a good source for "thought work", or re-framing thoughts that limit us.

**Mindfulness Techniques for Children, and Children/Adults with Special Needs**

**Mark Bertin, M.D.** [The Family ADHD Solution: A Scientific Approach to Maximizing Your child's Attention and Minimizing Parental Stress.](#) Written by a developmental pediatrician, this is a helpful book for parents that includes clear explanations of the biological causes of inattention and hyperactivity, and is aimed at demystifying the diagnosis of ADHD. There is a section on Mindfulness-based stress reduction techniques for parents that can benefit the entire family.

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**Mindfulness Techniques for Children, and Children/Adults with Special Needs, continued**

**Susan Kaiser Greenland, The Mindful Child: How to Help Your Kid Manage Stress and Become Happier, Kinder, and More Compassionate.** Ms. Greenland has worked for years with children as a mindfulness educator. Her book is geared to introducing mindfulness to children from four to eighteen years of age, and includes activities, exercises, games, and stories that are age appropriate.

**Thich Nhat Hanh, Mindful Movements: Ten Exercises for Well-Being.** Thich Nhat Hanh is a Vietnamese Buddhist Monk who was exiled from his homeland for his peace activities during the Vietnam War. As illustrated in this book, mindfulness does not have to be a sedentary task, which is helpful for our students who cannot or will not sit still for a mindful moment.

Video: Ten Mindful Movements led by Thich Nhat Hanh

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FCUyf-IPPOQ>

**Lidia Zylowska, M.D., The Mindfulness Prescription for Adult ADHD: An 8-Step Program for Strengthening Attention, Managing Emotions, and Achieving your Goals.** This book comes with a cd that has eight guided mindfulness practices on it. Dr. Zylowska is a psychiatrist who is a co-founder and faculty member at UCLA's MARC and led the first study of mindfulness training with adults with ADHD. Although the word "adult" is in the title, many of the practices can be adapted for children.

**Teens**

**Gina M. Biegel, MA, LMFT, Psychotherapist and Mindfulness Educator. The Stress Reduction Workbook for Teens: Mindfulness Skills to Help you Deal with Stress.**

CD: Mindfulness for Teens: Meditation Practices to Reduce Stress and Promote Well-Being – Guided meditations designed for teens.

"Take a Chill" iPhone app

Website: [www.StressedTeens.com](http://www.StressedTeens.com)



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**Positive Psychology – The study of Happiness and Well-Being**

**Martin Seligman, PhD:** Founder of MAPP (Master of Applied Positive Psychology) at University of Pennsylvania, considered to be the “father” of Positive Psychology. [Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment](#)

[Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being](#)

**Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, PhD.:** Flow – The Psychology of Optimal Experience. Dr. Csikszentmihalyi is known as a pioneer in Positive Psychology, and originated the concept of “flow”, the state of well-being when there is meaning and happiness, heightened focus, and engagement in life.

**Bridget Grenville-Cleave, MSc:** [Positive Psychology – A Practical Guide](#). This pocket-sized book is a good primer for those who may not be familiar with Positive Psychology. There is a section devoted to mindfulness and its positive effects.

<http://positivepsychologynews.com/> - e-newsletter with articles, a good source for new books and research, and applications of positive psychology

**Good Reads for Educational Therapists**

These are books that have changed my practice, how I see my students, and how I look at my own life.

**Brene Brown, PhD., LMSW:** [The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You’re Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are](#). Launched into the spotlight with her Ted talk on shame, Dr. Brown combines research findings with practical suggestions about how to cultivate a wholehearted life.

**Susan Cain:** [Quiet – The Power of Introverts in a World That Can’t Stop Talking](#). Susan Cain’s argument is that our culture undervalues introverts, and suggests that those who are quiet, who reflect, don’t self-promote, are actually the ones who have contributed greatly to our society. She proposes a shift in our thinking about those who are introverts. Ms. Cain’s Ted Talk is very powerful, and worth checking out. TedTalk on The Power of Introverts: [http://www.ted.com/talks/susan\\_cain\\_the\\_power\\_of\\_introverts.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/susan_cain_the_power_of_introverts.html)

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**Good Reads for Educational Therapist, continued**

**Gail Larsen:** [Transformational Speaking](#). Ms. Larsen embraces the idea of “original medicine”, that each person has his/her unique gifts and passions to share. Although this is primarily a book about how to develop presentations that will transform listeners, the concepts are, well, transformational.

**Other**

Celtic Art Therapy Plates, designed by artist Anne Ravensdaughter. [www.celticarttherapy.com](http://www.celticarttherapy.com)