

WRAIR Minds, Ep. 104

Transcript

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[Music]

HELLO, AND WELCOME TO 'WRAIR MINDS,' A PODCAST BY WALTER REED ARMY INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH, WHICH WE CALL 'WRAIR.' I'M YOUR HOST, ARMY CAPTAIN TOM NASSIF.

TODAY'S EXERCISE IS AN EXTENDED ONE AND WE'RE GOING TO GET RIGHT TO IT, SO, BEFORE YOU GET STARTED, YOU MAY WANT TO MAKE SURE YOU'RE LISTENING AT A TIME -- AND IN A PLACE -- WHERE YOU CAN HAVE AN UNINTERRUPTED HALF HOUR OR SO. IF YOU'RE READY, THOUGH, LET'S BEGIN.

THIS PRACTICE IS CALLED YOGA NIDRA - YOGA MEANING UNION OR INTEGRATION OF BODY, MIND, SPIRIT, AND NIDRA STANDING FOR SLEEP WHICH POINTS TO THE IDEA OF DIFFERENT STAGES OF WAKEFULNESS. SO, FOR EXAMPLE, BEING WIDE AWAKE AND BEING ALERT AND FOCUSED AND MAYBE EVEN SOMEWHAT STRESSED TO BEING CALM GROUNDED AND AT EASE TO MAYBE EVEN BEING DROWSY AND NODDING OFF TO SLEEP AND EVEN DEEP SLEEP. SO THIS PRACTICE REALLY ALLOWS US TO EXPLORE THE INTERFACE BETWEEN WAKING AND SLEEPING AND TO ACCESS A SENSE OF GROUNDING AND EASE AND ABILITY TO RESPOND MOST EFFECTIVELY IN

THE PRESENT MOMENT. AND IT CAN ALSO HELP WITH SLEEP WITH FEELING MORE REJUVENATED AND FOCUSED ON THE DAY'S DAY-TO-DAY TASKS AND TO JUST IMPROVE OVERALL WELL-BEING.

SO WE BEGIN THIS YOGA NIDRA PRACTICE BY SETTling INTO A COMFORTABLE POSITION EITHER SEATED OR LYING DOWN ALLOWING ARMS AND LEGS TO BE SLIGHTLY APART. AND IF LYING DOWN YOU MIGHT PLACE A PILLOW UNDER THE BACK OF YOUR HEAD. YOU MIGHT EVEN WISH TO ELEVATE YOUR LEGS BY PLACING A ROLLED BLANKET UNDER YOUR KNEES TO PROTECT YOUR LOWER BACK. AND FEEL FREE TO ADJUST YOUR BODY SO YOU ARE 5 OR 10 PERCENT MORE COMFORTABLE.

AND ALLOW YOUR SENSES TO BE WIDE AWAKE AND RECEPTIVE TO SOUNDS, SMELLS, TASTE. THE TEMPERATURE OF THE AIR ON YOUR SKIN. LIGHT TRICKLING THROUGH THE EYELIDS. AND SETTLE IN NOW TO THE BODY AND THE SENSATIONS THAT ARISE BEGINNING WITH THE MOUTH AND LIPS, PEELING THE TEETH, GUMS, ROOF, AND FLOOR OF THE MOUTH. IN THE BACK OF THE THROAT. YOUR ENTIRE MOUTH, THE SENSATION.

AND TRACKING THAT SENSATION FROM YOUR MOUTH TO THE INNER EAR CANAL OF THE LEFT EAR. THE FLUID SENSATION OF THE INNER EAR AND THE OUTER LEFT EAR. FEELING YOUR EAR SENSATION. AND THEN TRACKING SENSATION BACK FROM THE MOUTH, THE INSIDE WALLS OF THE MOUTH, TO THE RIGHT INNER EAR. FLUID-FILLED INNER EAR AND OUTER

RIGHT EAR, A SENSATION. AND FEELING BOTH EARS. AND NOW FEELING SENSATION IN THE LEFT CHEEKBONE, RIGHT CHEEK.

AND AS YOU BREATHE, FEELING AIR PASS THROUGH THE LEFT NOSTRIL AND RIGHT NOSTRIL. AND FOCUSING ATTENTION TO THE EYES FEELING THE LEFT EYE, EYEBROW, AND EYELID. AND FEELING THE RIGHT EYE, EYEBROW, AND EYELID. AND JUST FEELING BOTH EYES, THE SENSATION. FOREHEAD. SCALP. THE BACK OF THE NECK. AND THE THYROID GLAND AT THE FRONT OF YOUR NECK. THE ENTIRE HEAD, A SENSATION.

AND THEN DRAWING ATTENTION TO YOUR LEFT SHOULDER, UPPER ARM, ELBOW, WRIST, PALM, AND FINGERS OF YOUR LEFT HAND, A SENSATION. AND FEELING THE RIGHT SHOULDER, UPPER ARM, ELBOW, FOREARM, WRIST, HAND, AND FINGERS IN THE RIGHT HAND, A SENSATION. FEELING BOTH ARMS. AND THEN SHIFTING ATTENTION NOW TO THE TORSO, FEELING YOUR CHEST INCLUDING THE HEART AND THE LUNGS DOWN TO THE STOMACH AND INTESTINES.

AND FEELING YOUR BACK FROM THE SHOULDER BLADES, UPPER, BACK, MIDDLE, AND LOWER BACK, NOTICING SENSATIONS AND WHETHER THEY ARE PLEASANT, UNPLEASANT, OR NEUTRAL. NOT TRYING TO CHANGE ANYTHING, BUT JUST NOTICING WITHOUT JUDGMENT, WITHOUT REACTION, AND CONTINUING DOWN TO SHIFT YOUR ATTENTION TO YOUR LEFT THIGH, KNEE, CALF, ANKLE, AND TOES OF THE LEFT FOOT, A SENSATION. AND

THEN SHIFTING ATTENTION TO THE RIGHT LEG, THE RIGHT THIGH, KNEE, CALF, ANKLE, AND TOES, A SENSATION. FEELING BOTH LEGS AT THE SAME TIME. AND FEELING THE ENTIRE BODY NOW FROM HEAD TO TOE, SIDE TO SIDE, BELLY TO BACK. AND TRYING TO FIX OR CHANGE ANYTHING TO MAKE IT MORE PLEASANT OR LESS PAINFUL IF THAT ARISES IN YOUR EXPERIENCE, JUST BEING PRESENT IN THE MOMENT.

[SILENCE]

NOW FOCUSING IN ON THE BREATH, FEELING THE BELLY RISE AND FALL WITH EACH BREATH, AND NOW COUNTING YOUR BREATHS FROM SEVEN TO ONE LIKE THIS: INHALE BELLY RISING SEVEN, EXHALE BELLY FALLING SEVEN, INHALE BELLY RISING SIX, EXHALE BELLY FALLING SIX. JUST LIKE THAT, BREATHING IN AND OUT, COUNTING THE BREATHS FROM SEVEN TO ONE.

[SILENCE]

FOCUSED ON COUNTING THE BREATH.

[SILENCE]

AND IF YOU LOSE COUNT OR GET TO ONE, JUST START OVER AGAIN AT SEVEN. COUNTING BREATHS FROM SEVEN TO ONE AT YOUR OWN PACE.

[SILENCE]

ALERT AND AWARE, FOCUSED ON COUNTING THE BREATH, BUT CALM AND AT EASE.

[SILENCE]

AND NOW LET GO OF THE COUNTING AND ALLOW THE BREATH TO JUST BE JUST AS IT IS WITHOUT CONTROLLING IT, ALLOWING THE BODY JUST TO BREATHE ITSELF. ONCE YOU DO THIS, FEEL YOURSELF GROUNDED, SUPPORTED, PERHAPS A FEELING OF SAFETY. IF YOU FEEL THE HEAVINESS AND WEIGHT OF YOUR BODY BEING TAKEN BY THE SUPPORT OF THE SURFACE YOU'RE RESTING ON AND PERHAPS IMAGINING THE ELEMENT OF EARTH AND YOUR CONNECTION TO THE EARTH, GROUNDED, STABLE, AND SECURE. AND AS YOU CONTINUE TO BE AWARE OF THE BREATH, ALLOW THE INHALE TO BRING IN A SENSE THE OPPOSITE FEELING, A LIGHTNESS, PERHAPS FEELING MORE EXPANSIVE AND OPEN.

AND THEN RETURN TO THE WEIGHT AND HEAVINESS, THE BODY FEELING SOLID, STABLE. AND RETURN TO A FEELING OF LIGHTNESS, MAYBE A SENSE OF LIQUID OR WATER, QUALITY OF WATER AS YOU BREATHE THROUGHOUT THE BODY. SENSE A FEELING OF COOLNESS, NOTICING IF YOU FEEL COOLNESS SOMEWHERE IN THE BODY OR AROUND YOUR BODY, LETTING GO OF THINKING. JUST DELVE INTO THIS FIRST-HAND

EXPERIENCE OF FEELING COOL. AND THEN FIND ITS OPPOSITE, PERHAPS
A FEELING OF WARMTH OR HEAT, PERHAPS ON YOUR SKIN INSIDE OR
AROUND THE BODY, FEELING A SENSE OF WARMTH, AND PERHAPS THE
ELEMENT OF FIRE. AS YOU DRAW ATTENTION TO THE SOLAR PLEXUS, THE
POINT ABOVE THE BELLY, AND NOTICE IF AN EMOTION OR FEELING
ARISES, ONE THAT MAYBE YOU'VE BEEN EXPERIENCING A LOT LATELY OF.
JUST PERHAPS NOTICE THAT EMOTION OR FEELING AS A SENSATION IN
THE BODY. AND IF AN EMOTION OR FEELING IS NOT COMING UP FOR YOU,
JUST BE PRESENT WITH YOUR EXPERIENCE. AND JUST BE IN THE MOMENT.

[SILENCE]

NOW, ALLOW FIRE TO GIVE RISE TO AIR AS YOU FEEL INTO YOUR
HEART'S CENTER, YOUR BREATH EXPANDING THE CHEST, OPENING THE
CHEST, AND BRING TO MIND A PERSON, A PLACE, A SITUATION THAT
INVITES JOY, HAPPINESS, OR PEACE. AND JUST FEEL INTO THIS MEMORY
OF THAT, PERSON, PLACE, OR SITUATION THAT INVITES IN THAT
FEELING OF JOY OR HAPPINESS OR PEACE, FEELING IT FULLY, AS IF
YOU'RE RELIVING THIS MOMENT IN TIME, AND EVEN ALLOWING THIS
FEELING, THIS DELIGHTFUL FEELING TO BECOME PART OF THE BREATH AS
IF YOU'RE BREATHING IT IN TO YOUR CHEST, TO YOUR HEART'S CENTER,
AND WITH EACH EXHALE, ALLOWING THIS FEELING OF HAPPINESS, JOY,
OR PEACE TO SPREAD THROUGH THE ENTIRE BODY.

[SILENCE]

AND DRAWING YOUR AWARENESS UP TO THE THROAT, FEELING A SENSE OF EXPANSION AND SPACE, AND FEELING YOURSELF TO BE OPEN, AT EASE, GROUNDED, A SENSE OF YOUR HIGHEST SELF, KNOWING THAT YOU HAVE THE PERFECT RESPONSE TO EVERY SITUATION IN LIFE I'M DRAWING ATTENTION NOW UP TO THE HEAD, BEHIND YOUR EYES, THE CENTER OF YOUR FOREHEAD AND JUST FEELING A CONNECTION-- ALL THOSE WHO LIVE, YOU WORK WITH, AND ALL THOSE YOU CARE ABOUT AND APPRECIATE.

[SILENCE]

YOU KNOW YOURSELF AND ALL YOUR EXPERIENCE TO BE PERFECT JUST AS IT IS, SAVORING AND ENJOYING EACH MOMENT IN TIME AND SPACE.

[SILENCE]

AND AS YOU SAVOR EACH MOMENT, YOU MIGHT NOTICE IF YOUR MIND BEGINS TO WANDER TO SOME OTHER THING-- A THOUGHT, A SENSATION, A FEELING. JUST NOTICE WITHOUT JUDGMENT. AND GENTLY BRING YOUR ATTENTION BACK TO THIS MOMENT, TO YOUR BODY, AND TO THE BREATH

[SILENCE]

KNOWING THAT THERE'S NOTHING TO DO AND NOWHERE TO BE BUT TO
FOCUS ON EACH PASSING MOMENT.

[SILENCE]

IT'S NOT A PRACTICE OF DOING. IT'S SIMPLY A PRACTICE OF BEING.

[SILENCE]

AND NOW, BEGINNING TO SHIFT BACK TOWARDS A STATE OF WAKEFULNESS

[SILENCE]

PERHAPS FINDING MOVEMENT INTO YOUR HANDS, ARMS, AND YOUR FEET
AND LEGS, TAKING A FEW DEEP BREATHS

[SILENCE]

AND BEFORE OPENING THE EYES, SEEING IF YOU CAN BRING A TASTE OR
A PIECE OF THIS YOGA INTO PRACTICE BACK INTO YOUR EVERYDAY
WAKING LIFE, PERHAPS A SENSE OF PEACE, HAPPINESS, EASE OR FOCUS
AND ONCE YOU'RE READY, GRADUALLY OPENING THE EYES, RETURNING TO
YOUR EVERYDAY WAKING LIFE.

[SILENCE]

[MUSIC]

'WRAIR' MINDS IS HOSTED BY ME, CAPTAIN TOM NASSIF. IT'S A PRODUCT OF THE WALTER REED ARMY INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH, COMMANDED BY COLONEL CLINT MURRAY, AND THE U-S ARMY MEDICAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMAND, COMMANDED BY BRIGADIER GENERAL MICHAEL TALLEY.

TODAY'S FINAL THOUGHT COMES FROM JAMES BALDWIN: 'TO BE SENSUAL, I THINK, IS TO RESPECT AND REJOICE IN THE FORCE OF LIFE, OF LIFE ITSELF, AND TO BE PRESENT IN ALL THAT ONE DOES, FROM THE EFFORT OF LOVING TO THE BREAKING OF BREAD.'

THANKS FOR LISTENING!

WE'LL BE BACK IN TWO WEEKS.