

Breathe, Stretch and Pray:
A Well-Being Class for Moms Who R.O.C.K.*
**(Raising Our Challenging Kids)*

I. Time/Place/Facilitator

- A. Saturday mornings from 7-8
- B. Beth Powell, LCSW

II. Objective

- A. Reduce immediate stress (decrease worry, get off fight/flight)
- B. Reduce emotional sources and symptoms of long-term chronic stress (anxiety, depression, addictions, fear, insecurity)
- C. Reduce physical sources and symptoms of body discomfort and concern (certain respiratory ailments, blood pressure, chronic pain, fatigue, glandular imbalances)
- D. Build better brains (increase oxygen intake, improve brain circuitry)
- E. Habituate better breathing and improved self-care

III. Class Requirements

- A. For moms only (no childcare available).
- B. Turn off cell phones.
- C. Arrive and go to the bathroom early. Leave when class ends.
- D. Be ready to begin class by 7 a.m. Class ends promptly at 8 a.m.
- E. Please stay home and rest if coughing or sick.
- F. Wear comfortable, modest clothing.
- G. The objective of the class is to reduce stress. The body must be comfortable. Feel free to sit in a chair or to sit on the floor.
- H. Drink lots of water afterward.
- I. Class is free; donations are appreciated.

IV. Contents of Class:

- Therapeutic breathing
- Gentle vestibular system movements
- Stretching
- Muscle contractions and releases
- Focused Prayer
- Centering Prayer

V. Rationale for Class

The facilitator had chronic, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, onset early in childhood from growing up in a dangerous home. By the time she was an adult, she was a nervous wreck, an addict and an alcoholic. When she was 23 or 24 a psychiatrist told her she was going to be anxiety-disordered for the rest of her life. She refused to accept (claim) the prognosis. Besides the professional therapies she did to heal (cognitive-behavioral helped very little), She practiced a home program much like what she is teaching to moms with challenging children. She is certain that practice was a major factor in the resetting of her nervous system and in getting her off alcohol and psychotropic medication.

VI. Therapeutic Breath

Various forms of voluntary breath control through inhalation, retention and exhalation helps shift the autonomic nervous system away from its sympathetic (excitatory) dominance. Therapeutic breath positively affects immune function, hypertension, asthma, autonomic nervous system imbalances, certain respiratory disorders and psychological or stress-related

problems. Note it may take a few weeks or as long as 6 months to ultimately change the way one breathes.

Oxygen is the most vital nutrient for our bodies. It is essential for the integrity of the brain, nerves, glands and internal organs. One of the major secrets of vitality and rejuvenation is a purified blood stream. The quickest and most effective way to purify the blood stream is by taking in extra supplies of oxygen from the air. Breathing exercises are the most effective means ever devised for saturating the blood with extra oxygen. Oxygen recharges the batteries and burns up toxins in the body. And it's free.

VII. Gentle, Vestibular System Movements

The vestibular system is essentially the inner ear. Think of this tiny area as the "air traffic controller" of the brain. Almost everything one does goes directly or indirectly through the vestibular system to get into the brain. The more optimally this system operates, the more power one has to process information, regulate emotions, and better utilize the senses. Specific, gentle, therapeutic movements strengthen the efficiency of this system.

VIII. Stretching

Stretching legs, spine, torso, shoulders and neck areas combined with therapeutic breath helps to rid the body of painful lactic acid build up and clean the blood. It helps to relieve chronic pain. Stretching of the sciatic nerve in the legs can help one move, walk and feel younger. Stretching of the spine can help to regulate the flow of the cerebral-spinal fluid. The smooth flow of cerebral spinal fluid (cranial-sacral fluid) acts as a brain massage and can increase clarity of thought (more efficient thinking).

IX. Muscle Contractions and Releases.

Almost everyone has heard of kegel exercises for urinary incontinence. Clenching and unclenching of the pubococcygeus muscles can help to restore muscle tone and strength in this area that has been weakened by childbirth, aging and weight gain. Regulation of the cerebral spinal fluid can aid cause-effect thinking, memory retention and focus.

X. Focused Prayer

Christians are accustomed to praying. Prayers of encouragement are spoken for moms to concentrate on and at times verbally repeat in order to increase their endurance, patience, wisdom, faith and hope as they go about their day and to strengthen their personal relationship with God. Group, focused intention magnifies the power of this type of prayer.

XI. Centering Prayer

Centering prayer allows you to experience God's presence now, to develop a personal relationship with him, and be touched by him where and when one needs it the most. Participants get practice in disciplining thoughts so that when a conscious prayer is spoken, such as the Lord's Prayer, it becomes easier to listen to the true meaning and internalize it.

*Note: This class is **not** a yoga class. One need **not** be in good, physical shape to attend. The physical postures are simple and designed to fit the participant's physical abilities. Participants are encouraged to do only what is physically comfortable.*