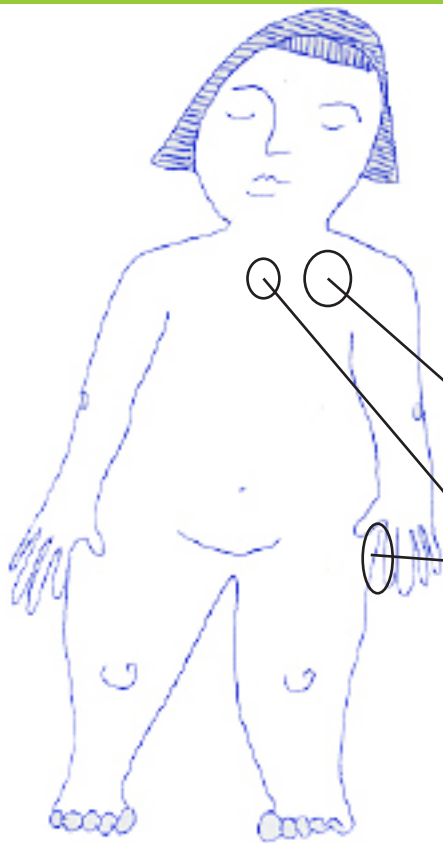


Rest as Resistance: Self-Care for Activists



Body:

Because getting to know our bodies wasn't taught in school we thought it would be helpful to acknowledge different parts of our body that's referred to.

Scapula: (Shoulder blades) flat boney planes on either side of upper back.

Pec muscles: (Pectoral) muscle tissue running from edges of sternum towards armpits, under collar bones

Sternum: flat boney plane, located under notch beneath throat on chest

Erector muscle: long muscle that runs vertically along each outer edge of the spine

Sacrum: flat boney formation of fused vertebrae at base of spine, above tailbone

Iliac Crest: boney crest running from sacrum/spine out towards outer hip

Every body is a uniquely beautiful, intricate body

Fascia:

An amazing network of tissue called fascia surrounds all of our bones, muscles and organs. It's all interconnected and weaves itself throughout the entire body. Because this tissue is interconnected, the source or cause of the pain may be different from where you feel it. Getting to know our bodies and where pain resides or originates from can help us to heal ourselves. Emotional memory also finds its way into the body and the fascia. Every time we experience stress, emotional pain, and trauma, our central nervous writes that story on our fascia.

Our mind goes into fight or flight mode to cope with these traumas, and the energy from this builds up. Without release of this energy there can be build ups of tension and tightness! Through different self-massage techniques we can release these tension spots, and let go of a lot more than just physical discomfort. This practice can be used in your on-going self care journey, as you explore what you need to heal.

"We have civilized our way out of self-expression." - Hala Khouri



Tennis ball & Me:

Using a tennis ball in a proper manner can help with the process;

Low Back/Hip/Glutes

Bring the tennis ball to the boney ridge (called the iliac crest) at the low back, above the glutes. Allow the knees to be soft. Bring some pressure here and begin to roll laterally out towards the edge of the hip. Feel free to explore sensation and movement here, include the glutes. You may want to stand with your hip at the wall and roll the side of the hip, bringing the ball lower, down the side of the leg.



Upper Back

Bring your entire back body close to a wall. Allow the feet to connect fully with the earth and soften the knees a bit. Place the tennis ball near the upper back/shoulder on either side the spine (never on the spine) between your body and the wall. Bring some pressure to the ball and take a deep breath. Begin to explore rolling the ball laterally from the outer edge of the spine outwards towards the shoulder. It is safe to roll over the shoulder blades. Lower the ball a few inches at a time, continuing to roll out across the ribs. Lastly, explore rolling the ball vertically along the long muscle (the erector) to the lateral edge of the spine by bringing a bend to the knees. Stop rolling at the base of the ribs. Do not roll over the soft area below the rib cage, where the kidneys are located. Make sure to give both sides of the back some love, one side at a time, never rolling on the spine.



Feet

Begin to roll the ball all the way back to heel, making a line from the big toe to the heel and back. Go slowly taking deep breaths along the way. Only use as much pressure as feels comfortable. Continue rolling along imaginary lines from each toe to the heel and back until you've made 5 lines. Next roll the ball around the bottom of the foot, noticing any areas that may feel stiff or stuck, see if you can hold pressure in those areas and take deep breaths. Lastly, create some friction, quickly rolling the ball back and forth on the bottom of the foot, creating warmth and softness.



TIPS

Be gentle! In order to release the stress and trauma held in our tissues, we must feel safe.

Never roll over the spine.

Signs that you may need to use less pressure: inability to breathe smoothly, sharp pain

Signs that you may need to take a break: you feel nauseous or emotionally overwhelmed (both of these things are completely normal and signs that you are releasing trapped emotions but only keep going if it feels right)

Memories or even emotions without memories may arise. This is normal and beautiful!

Take deep breaths, exhale, cry, move in anyway that feels organic, interesting, beneficial. This is different for every person. Challenge yourself to let go of the societal pressures to "bottle it up"

Check in with the jaw, your eyes, your hands. Can you let them be slack and at ease?

Come up with some mantras or messages for yourself to use as you practice. "I am enough." "I am worthy of love." "I deserve rest." "I am open to healing." "I am resilient."

Drink lots of water during and after any session.

If you feel nauseous, a tiny bit of baking soda in water can help.

Even without a ball you can connect the mind and body through breath and stretching;

SHOULDER SHRUGS

Inhale raise shoulders to ears
Exhale out the mouth as you let shoulders soften down
Repeat 3-5 times

BELLY BREATHING

Rest on your back with knees bent or find a comfortable seat
Place hands on belly
Take 3 deep breaths
Feel the belly rise and fall as you breathe
Let the breath flow naturally, staying connected to the feeling of your belly and hands moving together
Take 10-15 breaths

EVEN BREATHING

Try to make your inhales and exhales equal in length
No need to deepen the breath or elongate anything, just even out both sides of the breath cycle
You can try counting the length of the inhale and exhale

OUTER HIP STRETCH

Rest on your back with knees bent
Cross right ankle over the left knee, creating the number 4 with your legs
Stay here if you feel a nice stretch or pull legs into chest, holding onto the the left hamstring or shin with both arms
Take 5 slow breaths into the belly
Release and change sides

The body always keeps score

We do have the ability to move past the traumas we've experienced and to successfully regulate the stress of our lives as students, as workers, as family members, and activists. We all have the innate power to heal ourselves, increase our resiliency, to be able to bounce back and to trust ourselves that we can handle what life may challenge us with. By recovering, by healing, by continuing to exist.

You are an act of beautiful resistance

We are taught from the very beginning of our lives to find our worth in our productivity, that we are valued by the means that our bodies produce, by the money that we can generate, the weight we can lift. We are not encouraged to rest, to heal, to slow down, take time, to notice the sensations in our bodies, as markers of memories that need more care, love and attention. That has to change now. It is imperative for our survival and resiliency that we acknowledge to ourselves and each other that we are just as worthy and just as valuable when we are at rest, when we are moving through the sensations in our bodies through self-massage, when we sit in silence repeating over and over in our heads,

"I am enough"

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