

HOW PAIN GETS INTO YOUR BRAIN

SESSION 4 OVERVIEW:

Stress that is both chronic and threatening in nature alters the nervous system and our emotional functioning in profound and enduring ways. This is largely different from transient stressful periods in our lives. Life events such as abuse, neglect, trauma, or prolonged instability can cause this enduring and chronic stress. The more stressful events a person experiences, the greater the risk of them developing chronic pain and illness. Stressed individuals do not respond well to normally effective medical interventions, take longer to recover, and are more likely to have complications. Additionally, chronic stress impacts many areas of the brain: particularly those associated with emotional regulation, memory, stress and pleasure responses, empathy, and bonding. We must address our stress and its related emotions, otherwise our pain will not change.

AT HOME PRACTICE:

Session 4 Assigned Exercises:

- Mindfulness Meditation (Stress Management)
- Breathe Awareness (Stress Management)



This week's practice is focused on stress management through mindfulness exercises, such as Mindfulness Meditation focusing on open attention. We are shifting from the left hemisphere thinking, to right. The right hemisphere allows you to feel love, beauty, serenity, and joy. It is also responsible for controlling the parasympathetic nervous system which is known to calm the body. This exercise harnesses the ability to stand back and view how you are feeling from an empathic and compassionate point. Breathe Awareness uses a combination of top-down and bottom-up processes. It uses focused attention and the natural tense-relax cycle of your breathing to release pain and tension while increasing relaxation and comfort. Immerse yourself in these exercises daily (you may choose one, the other, or both) using the Overcoming Pain App and your non-noise cancelling earbuds!