

# LIVING MY BEST

## HEALTHY LIVING WITH ARTHRITIS

### Three extra steps to help you overcome the day-to-day challenges of osteoarthritis

To deal with the challenge of osteoarthritis, you wisely take advantage of obvious resources such as putting yourself in the care of competent medical practitioners, eating well, getting adequate rest, and exercising.

But what more could you do? Current research provides fascinating answers to that question:

#### 1. Stay focused

Focused attention is defined as giving full attention to the task of the moment. Neuroscience tells us the focused mind is a quiet mind, and the quiet mind produces neurochemical responses that support physical and emotional well-being.

Using modern neuro-imaging technology, we know the brain and other key components of the body respond to the direction and focus of our attention. Thus as you focus on one task at a time, you'll feel better. Obsessing about the past, worrying about the future, monitoring pain, nursing grievances – these are just a few distractions you should avoid.



#### 2. Breathe deeply and evenly

Breathing significantly affects your autonomic nervous system – the control panel for so much that occurs in our body and mind. Gulping, shallow (chest) breathing causes high levels of cortisol (the stress hormone) which, over time, can increase the intensity of pain and compromise the healing process.

Optimal breathing, on the other hand, is characterized by an even rhythm of diaphragmatic (belly) breathing, and is best for your autonomic nervous system.



#### What happens when you take these 3 steps?

Within your body/mind system is a behavior-driven reward system. As you practice staying focused, breathing right, and releasing physical tension, you'll feel better physically and emotionally. As your body recognizes those good results, it will be easier to do those things in the future.

The components of optimal moment-by-moment functioning can be practiced anywhere, any time. With a little patience and discipline it will become second nature to you and your sense of well-being will improve.

For more information regarding optimal moment-by-moment functioning and other aspects of the behavioral and stress management training available at TOSH, contact U. Carlisle Hunsaker, MA at 801-541-0891 or uch37@hotmail.com.



#### 3. Release physical tension

Physical tension activates the physiology of stress as much as shallow breathing. Many of us have grown accustomed to high levels of physical tension and in doing so we make ourselves vulnerable to the ravages of stress. When you notice tension, try to relax to reduce your stress.

  
**Intermountain<sup>SM</sup>**  
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