

Hey Yolanda here. I'm so happy to be with you. And now, and let's get started with this workshop on how to use practical self-care tools to avoid chronic stress and. I'll begin by giving you my background on this topic. And that is, I personally lived for a long time in a state of chronic stress and burnout.

And during that time, my brain was just a dumpster fire of anxiety, tension and pressure while all the time pretending to be fine. And my nervous system was in a state of constant overstimulation. When I think back on those years, it felt like I was running back to back marathons where each marathon was a big project.

And at the finish line of each project, I would just collapse for weeks or months and then feel totally guilty about being lazy or worthless. And then after literally decades of living in chronic stress, I discovered a bunch of self-care practices that have made a massive difference in my stress level.

Without exaggeration. I can say that these self care tools changed my life. I don't want to suggest that I no longer feel stressed. I definitely do, but I can say with total honesty that my daily levels of stress are fraction of what they used to be at least 50% less, maybe more, and the stress levels continue to drop.

All the time. And that's why I'm here sharing these with you, because there's no reason that anybody needs to be suffering from chronic stress. I want to be clear when I say self care that I don't mean airy fairy kind of food, Fu unicorns and rainbows. Although there's nothing wrong with unicorns and rainbows at all, but the kind of self-care, I mean, it's very practice.

In a nutshell, the self care tools that I use involve calming down my nervous system and choosing better thoughts and asking better questions. So that's what we're going to focus on in this workshop and let's do it. First I'd like to look at some figures reported by the American Institute for stress.

In recent years, the report, they report that 83% of people feel stress at work. Americans aged 30 to 49 are their most stressed age group at 65% and 66% of people report trouble sleeping because of. And in 2018. So these were taken from 2018 and 2019 or so, so you can imagine how much worse it is now.

So the most disturbing part of how, of all this is how stress has become so completely and totally normalized in our lives because so many of us just swim in the waters of stress all the time. We sorta pretend that stress doesn't have real consequence. But of course it does. So we all know the common symptoms, like

muscle tension, fatigue, anxiety, and Somnia, appetite changes, stomach problems like indigestion, acid reflux, or upset stomach.

And those are just the more common ones. So there are a bunch of other ones, including sexual dysfunction, anger, depression. So just in case you're wondering, I just want to stop and say that anxiety and stress are closely linked and we often use them almost interchangeably, but anxiety can be defined as a persistent, excessive as persistent or excessive worries, even in the absence of a particular external source of stress and stress is usually linked to a specific trigger, like a deadline or losing a job.

And although the words are not exactly equivalent, I do use them. I will use them in this worship. Like they're commonly used like almost interchangeably, no matter what we call it, the consequences of chronic stress also include more serious health conditions like high blood pressure, formation of plaque in your arteries, diabetes addiction.

And so clearly the consequences are really bad and we all want to avoid. But here's the thing I don't know about you, but for most of my life, I didn't really feel like I had much option. I mean, I knew that meditation or yoga or walking in nature nature or whatever could help calm me down, but that just felt like another job.

And actually like another source of. Like, oh God, I should be meditating every day, but I'm not. So I'm a terrible person. The stress is all my fault, but the truth is it's not our fault because most American workplaces are stressed generators. Very few of us have been taught any simple tools that we can use in the moment to de-stress or lower our anxiety.

I want to, I want to give you a set of tools that you can use on the first set of tools I want to share are for calming down your nervous system. So here are three techniques that you can use quickly and easily in the moment that you realize that you're stressed or anxious. And I'll look at them one at a time and teach you quickly how to do them.

And they are first a type of bilateral stimulation. Technique. Second is a simple breathing exercise called Bronx breathing. And third is another kind of bilateral stimulation called yoga body. But don't worry if you're not a yoga person, it actually has nothing to do with your. So the first technique is a kind of technique called bilateral stimulation.

I learned this from Melissa tears who specializes in hypnosis and anti-anxiety techniques. And this one is from her book called the anti-anxiety toolkit and can be used in any high stress situation. So first I'll show you the technique and then we'll talk about the why behind it. So if you're willing, we can do it today.

So, again, this is something you can do at any moment when you feel stressed or anxious. So first let's grab something like a ball or a pen or an apple, something not too large. You want to be able to pass it back and forth from one hand to another. So I'll just give you guys a minute to find yourself something.

Okay. So what we're gonna do is just pass it back and forth from one hand to the other, like this. And one tip is to always keep one hand in front of you have a, well, the hand with a thing in it just swings out to the side like this. You can be sitting, you will be standing up any kind of position. Still works.

You can do this for about 30 seconds or a minute or two. As long as you like until you feel yourself starting to come down. So just join me in doing this at some point while I'm doing this, I often feel like I want to take a deep breath so you can join me if you want to just a deep breath in out,

let's just keep going for a little bit and let's do a couple more breaths and out.

One more and out.

Okay, great. Thank you. I hope that you may feel yourself starting to calm down already with that. I usually do it like 30 seconds a minute. It doesn't matter just until you yourself. Start to. Now the idea behind this kind of technique, as I understand it is that when you have anxiety, there's an over-activation in one of your brains hemispheres.

And the point of this technique is to activate both hemispheres of your brain to stimulate both the left and the right brain to put blood flow and activity in both hemispheres. So as Melissa. So that what happened when it happens when you do this, is that the anxiety circuit that's in one hemisphere just can't hold itself together.

So clearly I'm not a neuroscientist and I'm just beginning to explore some of the science behind these techniques, but I'm sharing these techniques with you based on my experience and how it has helped me personally. And I invite you to try them as an experiment to see if they can help. So here's the second technique and that is box breathing.

So this technique was developed by a Navy seal trainer, apparently to help them stay calm in stressful situations. And this one is assemble breathing pattern. We'll do it together, but first here's the pattern. You're going to breathe in for a count of four hold for four, read out for four hold for four.

So then. So just a few more tips for this one. When you're breathing in and out, they recommend that you breathe through your nose with when you're going in and out. And when you breathe in deeply breathe deeply enough that you notice your stomach moving out, you can put your hand on your stomach to help you feel that if it helps and when you're holding the breath, you just do it with a light touch, like not intensely, just in a relaxed way.

And when you're breathing out, you can fill your stomach. Relax. So, again, both in and out or through the nose. So let's try this together. A couple of times get comfortable and invite you to close your eyes. If that feels comfortable and just taken a long, deep breath through your nose, feeling your stomach.

Move out. 1, 2, 3, 4, hold your breath. Lightly. 2, 3, 4, breathe it out slowly through your nose. Three four, pause 2, 3, 4. Let's do that. One more time. Long draft Lundy, breath through your nose. 1, 2, 3, 4, hold 2, 3, 4 out 2, 3, 4, hold two. 3 84. So for box breathing, there's a nervous system reason that this works because it's meant to stimulate the vagus nerve, which is the main part of your nervous system.

That's in charge of calming you down. So I like to use this when, when I'm really, really bent out of shape, that helps.

So let's look at the third technique, which is called yoga body. I'm not sure where they call it that, but anyway, so in my thinking, this is another kind of bilateral stimulation, although it wasn't taught to me that way, but you will see for yourself, this technique is very, very simple. And for me, it happens to be the single most effective de-stressing tool that I have.

So let me explain it briefly. And then if you'd like, we can join into it together. All you do is focus your mind on parts of your body. So you're going to focus

on your Palm, your elbow, and your shoulder on the right side. And then on the left side, the shoulder, elbow, and the Palm. And you're going to make a circuit a few times, and here's a simple way to learn it.

If you want to do it with me, you can sit anywhere. You're comfortable with your feet on the floor. Cross rest your hands on your knees with your palms up. And I'll just show you, make this.

Close your eyes. Now put your attention on your right Palm. Just focus there for a moment and move your attention to your right elbow. And then to your right shoulder, to your left shoulder, left elbow. Left Palm. We'll do it again. Your attention to your right palm, right. Elbow right shoulder left, shoulder left elbow left home pencils.

I know it seems crazy, but this technique has this particular technique has been a real game changer. For me, it works really, really stressed well for stress and anxiety. But I also find that when I'm having any kind of strong emotion, I can do this for a few rounds and it calms me down. I usually do three rounds.

You can do whatever works for you. So just a quick note that you can actually do this in any position you want with your legs, crossed your palms down, lying down. I just find it easier to do it at first and a more straightforward position. So the remarkable thing is that doing this tool, when you at the moment that you feel anxious also helps or has helped me bring down my general level of anxiety and stress.

So. As I understand that there's an underlying neuroscientific reason for that, but I'm still trying to understand that. So unfortunately I can't really speak to it, but all I know is that for me, it is 100% true that by using this at the particular moments, when I'm stressed, it's actually helped my general levels of anxiety calm down so that I don't know, I noticed that I used to feel quite anxious very often in the morning.

I don't feel that anxious. As often in the morning, So I use all three of these, but for me, the one I like best is that last one, the yoga body. And that's because I find it very effective. Calming me down. I can do it anytime, anywhere, and no one knows that I'm doing. So I can just start doing it anytime in my mind.

I think that's one of my favorite parts about it that you can just literally use it any time and you can do it privately and no one needs to know. So personally I

can be seriously jacked up and like intense, emotional distress and it will calm me down almost in.

So Melissa tears has a bunch of other techniques that you can look at in her. Anti-anxiety toolkit. If you're interested. I remember, I remember I recommend looking at it because what works for me may not be your top tool. So people think very differently for some people, more visual techniques are more helpful.

Like there are techniques in which you may kind of make a little movie in your head. Personally, I find those kinds of techniques more difficult, but you might really want. And then once you start looking, there are ton of other mind, body techniques out there too, that I find interesting, our vagus nerve activation techniques, which I'm fascinated by, but I haven't really done that.

Many of them and emotional freedom techniques. So also known as tapping. So, which is a form of kind of self occupant. Just a heads up heads up that tapping seems a little weird at first, but it, it looks like this, like you're saying a sequence of things while you're doing acupuncture on yourself, but that technique has actually been proven to give mental health benefits and a bunch of peer reviewed studies.

So that's just, if you're curious, you want to check out more of these more physical type techniques. There's another kind of technique. And these are all about choosing better thoughts and asking better questions. So doing these two things is essential for recovering from. Because if you're stressed in any way, I can pretty much guarantee you that your mind is cycling negative thoughts and questions.

So the great majority of us have visually think really crappy thoughts and ask really useless questions. And here's some of the examples of what I mean by that. I have too much to do. I should be more fit. I'm such a failure. Why is he such a jerk? I don't have enough time. Why am I so weird? My partner shouldn't argue with me.

Why did I say that? How come she is so much better than me? I never get enough sleep. The weather sucks. So just to be clear, I have a bunch of these all the time, and these come from some of my own greatest hits. So here's the thing. It's totally natural that we do this because there's a well-documented negativity bias of the human brain.

And that just means that we tend to focus on negative. And as humans, we tend to remember traumatic experiences, better than positive points. We tend to recall insults better than praise. We tend to react more strongly to negative stimuli. We tend to think about negative things more frequently than positive ones.

There's an interesting article in very well, mind.com about this. I'll include some links later. If you want to explore some of that. And all of this is likely a result of evolution where we needed to pay attention to threats and danger in order to survive. In any case, the negativity bias causes stress.

So Dr. Natalie Marchionda of the University College London says this on a biological level, negative thinking is associated with increased. In fact repetitive, negative thinking is seen as a behavioral marker of chronic stress by causing elevated blood pressure and higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol.

So it's worth looking more closely at our negative thoughts and seeing what remedies we have for them. You'll notice that there are a lot of negative thoughts that are rooted in scarcity. So like some of the major ones that are that there's not enough time, there's not enough money. There is not enough health.

There's not a left love. Unfortunately, there's also a huge tendency to focus on what we perceive as insufficiencies in ourselves. Like I'm not ex. So I'm not brilliant enough. I'm not appreciated enough. I'm not successful enough patient kind hardworking. The list goes on. I believe that it's very, very common for people to secretly feel like our faults are somehow worse than other people.

Like everybody thinks they're insufficient, but we think, no, I really am insufficient. God forbid, if other people find out what an imposter. The truth is that pretty much every dang person suffers a lot from living in negative thought loops. So the million dollar question is how to break the negative thought loops.

How do you actually do that? So, fortunately, they're incredibly simple tools that you can use on a daily basis that help break your negative thought loops. And the heart of it is simply that you need to choose better thoughts and better.

I want to look at three different ways to choose better thoughts. And the first one is almost weirdly easy and simple. It's expressing gratitude. I say weirdly because we know about it, but we don't do it. And of all the things that we can do to change your negative thoughts, gratitude is the easiest and arguably the most effective.

I know this to be true because I've seen the impact that it has on the people that I teach and coach. And then if you develop a gratitude practice and literally nothing else, your stress levels will decrease. I'm going to repeat that because I really want you to hear it. If you practice gratitude and literally use no other tools, your stress levels will begin to decrease.

So I would also argue that your mind and your life will begin to change for the better, but let's look at why that. People have known the benefits of gratitude for a long time. So Cicero said that gratitude is not only the greatest of all virtues, but the parent of all others. And one of the things I think is fascinating about gratitude is that when you're feeling gratitude, you are literally the happy and fulfilled kind of person that you wish to be.

It seems so simple by once you reflect on that. When you are expressing gratitude, you are experiencing in that moment, the kind of happiness and fulfillment that most of us want in our lives, but feel is missing. It's the opposite of scarcity thinking our negative thought loops. So we are constantly looking for it and we forget that it's available for us right now.

If we choose to practice being great. His holiness, the Dalai Lama often talks about how positive emotions like gratitude, have a demonstrably positive effect on our lives while negative thoughts and emotions have a demonstrably really negative impact on your life. You can find a ton of evidence for this just in your life.

For example, on the negative side, here are some of the consequences of negative thoughts and emotions. Anger could lead you to lose your job. Frustration and stress can harm your health. Jealousy can hurt your relationships. Fear and feelings of inadequacy can stop you from going after your dreams. On the other hand, positive thoughts and emotions have demonstrably positive effects on your life.

Love and compassion. Bring you closer connection with other people. Self-confidence motivates you to take action towards your dream. Enthusiasm makes you attractive to others, moves you forward. Gratitude is a huge example of the positive effects of a positive emotion. So here are the, some of the things that have been linked to a practice of gratitude beginning with less stress, but also including lower inflammation, less depression, lower blood pressure, reduce physical pain, stronger social relationships.



Greater life satisfaction that are asleep. These are the real world consequences of gratitude practice. By the way, if you want to learn more on your own, you can explore the work of Robert , who is a professor of psychology at UC Davis and an expert on the science of gratitude. Excuse me.

Now I'd like to look at how to actually practice gratitude. So it's not rocket science, but since most of us don't actually do it, it's kind of useful to look at how to make it a practice. So the simplest way I've found is to take one miracle minute a day to say, or write things that you're grateful for.

It doesn't matter how you do it. You can write it out on paper. You can say it out loud. You can just think it in your. For example, my husband and I saved three to five gratitudes every day after breakfast, we do it like this. I will say, what are you grateful for? And he'll say we are healthy. And then I'll say, I'm grateful that it's raining and we just keep going like that.

So usually we kind of holler them out with a lot of enthusiasm, which is silly, but it feels amazing. And if we miss that for any reason, I just say them to myself, just a list of things. I'll tell you that without veil doing this always puts a smile on me. And it often will bring tears of joy to my eyes.

So if you want to, you can set a timer to make sure you're getting a full minute. I used to set a timer, but these days we just say a list of gratitudes. I like to do it every day in the morning to set my mind on a positive path for the day.

And I just want to contrast this with the way I often used to think when I started doing that self-care I used to think a bunch of stuff like this, literally on the way. Crap. I didn't call my mom looks really crappy and cold out there. I have too much to do. I suck at my business. I'll never be able to retire from UCLA.

I wish I didn't have to go into work today. So can you see just intuitively how a person's day could go very differently. If you start off the day with these normal crappy thoughts compared to starting with gratitude, I invite you to try a gratitude practice every day for at least a week. And if it's working, you just keep going.

I've been doing it every day for about three years. It never gets old. You need to know that you can't do this wrong. You can't do too much or too little. You can spend one minute thinking deeply about one thing or you can, that you're grateful for, or say a bunch of different gratitudes in one minute.

It doesn't matter. I created a gratitude practice worksheet to help you get started with your practice. And I'll give that to you after, but here are a few of the ideas from the worksheet. One category is big things to be grateful for. Like I'm grateful for a roof over my head, the beauty of the night sky, basic mental health, clean running water, and then places to be grateful for the 70 fix Indian chat to that Starbucks.

Education or training to be grateful for. I'm grateful for meditation training. I'm grateful for my master's degree training, I'm grateful for his holiness, the Dalai Lama's teachings. I'm grateful for my life coaching teachers, stuff that we feel with our senses to be grateful for. I'm grateful for the smell of Jasmine, the color of fall leaves in the sun, a hot shower, the smell of coffee.

There are more in the worksheet. And once you get started, you realize that there was almost an infinite number of things to be grateful for. Once you start looking for them. And here's another way to practice gratitude. And that is to write a letter of gratitude to someone it's super simple. You just write a letter or email or text to someone expressing a few things that you're grateful to grateful for.

So the message can be just two or three short paragraphs, or even just a few sentences. You benefit, even if you don't send it just by writing it. And here are some ideas to spark your thoughts for the letter. I've been meaning to let you know that I admire how you are. I'm grateful that you. I remember that nice episode when you, I encourage you to try both these gratitude practices on your own.

So say a few daily gratitudes and try writing a gratitude letter or messenger text to someone. Now let us now we're going to move on to the next technique. This one is called fair is fair, and it's also an easy and effective way to choose better. This concept is based on the fact that we do a two-step process with our negative thoughts.

So first we cycle negative thoughts and questions, and then we also constantly feed evidence for them with more negative thoughts and questions. So we're out there every day, churning out a ton of negative thoughts and questions and looking around for evidence of how they're true. And this cycle of hell of course, contributes to us.

So hearing some examples of collecting evidence for a crappy thought first, you think I don't have enough times such a comment though. And then you go

around collecting evidence for this thought, like there are only two weeks left for the grant. I have 5,000 meetings I'm already behind on the other thing.

Cause it's like all is poop that I don't have time. And we do the exact same thing for crappy questions. Like, why am I such a loser? And you go around collecting all this evidence that you're such a loser or didn't succeed at this, or so-and-so hates me. So even though these thoughts, stress you out, like crazy and make you totally miserable, it's like you are totally and completely addicted to them.

It's like we can't help ourselves from collecting more of them and proving that they are. And that there are like essential to us. There's another option that is better in every way. And that is you can give equal airtime to better, more useful thoughts. Basically. You can be fair to the other side. So even though your brains are predisposed to the negative thoughts, you can always choose to collect contrary evidence.

For example. Here's a better thing to say to yourself. And I don't have time. You could say, I can figure this out. I figured out how to deal with deadlines before I'm totally capable of reasoning out a way to get the most important things done. I may be able to postpone some of the meetings. So when you're doing this, you're consciously collecting thoughts that show that something else could be true besides the crappy.

And in addition to choosing better thoughts, you can ask better questions, for example. Here's some examples, how can I make it more pleasant and meaningful for myself? What have I chose two of the most important things and maybe solve the other eight things didn't matter as much as I think, how can I balance work and rest during this?

Here's some more good questions. What if I have just enough time to do everything that's actually important to do? What if this isn't anyone's fault and there's nothing. Why would I actually want to make time for this? What reasons do I have to make time for this? And then your answers to these questions, collect evidence for more positive things that are actually true.

Now, a super critical thing to understand here is that we're not doing some kind of fake, positive thinking. We are doing positive thinking, but it's not. So as my favorite live coach says, this is not about gaslighting yourself and trying to

believe that you have a ton of time when your nervous system is all jagged up, believing the exact opposite.

So this is about practicing, noticing and telling the truth about the rest of reality. That's easy to ignore when your brain is hyper-focused on. Not enough. I'm going to read that again because it's so important. This isn't about bullshitting or. Trying to believe that you have a ton of time when your nervous system is jacked up believing the exact opposite.

This is about practicing, noticing and telling the truth about the rest of reality. That is easy to ignore when your brain is hyper-focused on not enough. And the cool thing is. That when you choose better thoughts and you ask better questions, your brain becomes your ally in finding solutions instead of being your enemy.

So the few things more powerful than your brain, it's incredible power to help you instead of torturing you. Okay. I want to show you how to practice fair, how to practice this fair is fair exercise. First, you just choose one of your crappy thoughts. Like everything is so hard. Then you're going to come up with three better thoughts and three better questions.

So this can be a little challenging to do until you get some practice. So I want you to put yourself in the mindset that you're like a lawyer, who's going to prove that everything so hard right now is not the whole truth. So it's your job to prove that everything is not so hard right now. Here's some sentences starters that might help better thoughts actually.

I already have dah, dah, dah. I'm choosing to believe I have a ton of options for I'm smart. So I can, and better way to start a better question is what if and where can I find, how can I, and here is some examples of better thoughts that I used with these stories. Actually a lot of things are easy right now.

Like my health and my dog commute. I already have a lot of love and support to help me get through this. I'm choosing to do this project because of the results are results that I really want. And some examples of better questions. What is actually easy for me right now? Where are the opportunities in this situation?

What if there are a million things about my life that are great? What are those. So let's move to the last technique for reducing your stress. And that is a simple exercise that I call three good things.

This one is making a daily practice of looking for three good things about your day. They can be random, good things that happened, something that you accomplished. So the main point here is that you're training your brain to seek evidence of. It literally doesn't matter how big or small or significant or not, you're just creating some new neuropathways that actively look for good things in your world to counter the negative bias.

Here's some examples. The sunset was amazing today. That was a good orange I had at lunch. I finished part one of the thing, or I kept my mouth shut. I got good sleep. I called the bank. So to practice this on your own, you'll name three good things about the day. You can do this when you go to bed or in the morning, along with your gratitudes or any time of day, actually.

And that's the last of our success dates. And as a quick reminder here, they all are again you have your stress reduction hacks that are kind of body-based yoga body box breathing, bilateral stimulation. Which was the yoga body was the one you make a circuit. The box breathing was breeding for whole readout for the bilateral stimulation, Western, whenever you pass something back and forth.

We also have gratitudes. We have fairs fair where you're choosing better thoughts and asking better question. And then three good things. So I want to IX once you to experiment with doing one technique every day, this week, just choose one of these that you, that sounds interesting. It doesn't have to be the best one.

Just what would it, for whatever reason, if it seems interesting or you feel like you want to try it, try it. Maybe it's the easiest one. So just try it every day, this week and see if it helps relieve your stress. And if it does make it a part of your daily life. So I use the, I use at least three or four of these every day.

And I'm not joking that my life feels so much better than before I did this. So these practices lead to major real life changes in my life. I retired from a job that was good, but just wasn't using my talents and skills and interests. My health improved a lot. Last weight I'm less stressed. My cholesterol is normal without meds for the first like 20 or 30 years.

My relationships are better and more connected. And this has been a steady progression over the last several years and all of that, just because I started using a gratitude practice technique, which led me to more self-care techniques and more and more, more, there's a final thought. I'd like to leave you with this from his holiness, the Dalai Lama, just as we teach physical hygiene to stay

physically fit, we need to cultivate emotional hygiene learning to tackle our destructive emotions.

So as to better achieve peace of mind. Thank you. And I'll end by saying that I have a private coaching practice in which I help women stop suffering so much by helping them create personal self care habits. So if you or anyone, you know, could benefit from that, you can reach out to me through my website, Yolanda O'Bannon dot com.

Thank you so much. I really appreciate you spending the time with me today. Thank you.