Longevity in action  
Wherever you are…be there

# Facilitator Preparation (What You’ll Need)

* Wherever You Are worksheet
* Writing utensils
* A copy of Dr. Roger Landry’s *Live Long, Die Short: A Guide to Authentic Health and Successful Aging* (optional)

# Session Content:

Please read this aloud:

A few reminders before we begin …

* Please be respectful to one another. Everyone in this room comes from a different background that has formulated who they are as a person and contributed to their unique opinions. As a group, we will observe *respect* as a guiding principle as we interact with one another. It is our goal that all participants feel valued, respected, and heard.
* Share without imposing your beliefs on others. Please refrain from convincing others to adopt your opinions.
* Keep an open mind. Our discussions will be thought-provoking and insightful. You may not agree with everything you hear, but please be willing to consider opinions that may be different from your own.

# Today’s Objectives:

Please share these objectives with participants.

* To understand the mental, emotional, and physical health benefits of mindful pursuits.
* To begin or enhance our mindfulness practice.
* To learn how to effectively de-stress.

# Opening Passage: Seek Out the Now

Read this excerpt from *Live Long, Die Short* aloud: Pages 155.

And so we should seek presence; wherever we are, we can find it. Like the painter, we must seek a “place” where we can quiet our chattering, judging mind and experience *this moment*, this sacred moment, the only place our lives can be truly lived, free of the incessant mind noise that diverts us from finding spiritual health and fulfillment. Even if only for a moment, this liberation of our spirits breaks the spell of our uncontrolled thoughts and the pain, suffering, and stress they bring as their traveling mates.

To get there, we can paint, take a walk and be with nature, listen to Beethoven, spend time with a child, make furniture, or just sit and feel our bodies as we sit—the possibilities are many. Many find peace in practicing their faith. These people find spirituality in religion. Many others find spirituality in non-religious places. It matters not. What does matter is that we find these places with quiet minds, places where we are completely in this magnificent moment life has given us. Whatever it is, this moment is what it is, and in this acceptance lie peace and joy. This doesn’t mean we “roll over” and not attempt to deal with things, only that whatever we do, we begin with the total acceptance that this “thing” exists, and then fix it, leave it, or accept it.

Meditation is a powerful and ancient tool for orienting ourselves in this present moment. So simple yet with profound effects, meditation is the object of renewed interest, yet it still remains misunderstood by most of us in the West. Simply bringing our awareness to the present moment so completely as to nudge our ever-present thoughts into the background, meditation is a foreign concept to those of us who inhabit a frenetic, achievement-oriented world. Awareness without thought—sim- ple and difficult.

Most meditation leaders advise sitting quietly and bringing awareness to the breath: not assessing how much or how fast, but just observing breathing in and out. Although to our get-things-done world this seems useless, frivolous, or even ridiculous, the result of spending time in a present, quiet place, even just seconds, will shock the most suspicious and skeptical of us. Brain research on meditation has documented its stimulus of the prefrontal cortex, which is associated with positive emotions, self-control, and even temperament.10 Additionally, it is associated with “taming” the amygdala, which is the hub of fear memory, resulting in less likelihood of anger, frustration, shock, and even surprise.11

It appears, then, that quieting our chattering mind is not only associated with better health and aging but also, from an evolutionary stand- point, a more natural human state. In fact, as Eckhart Tolle tells us, we have never lived a moment that was not the present. We may have allowed our thoughts to remove us from that moment, but all life is lived in the present. The trick, then, is to spend more time there—i.e., to *be there.*

# Group Discussion

(If necessary, please remind participants to be respectful by limiting answers to about a minute so that more people have time to share.)

# Question: What mindful practices do you participate in? What activities bring you a sense of peace?

# Question: What are some moments in your life where you could see the benefit of stopping and taking a mindful moment before reacting?

# Group Activity: Kindness Meditation (Option 1)

Please read this aloud:

Visualization is a great way to practice being in the present moment and easing stress. As a continuation of this session’s *Live Long, Die Short* topic on mindfulness, we’d like to share a Kindness Visualization taken from Masterpiece Living’s INSPIRE.

*(Note to Facilitator: Another option is the Mindful Eating activity in* Nourish*. You might also choose to play the Master-PEACE Circle meditation instead:* [*https://bit.ly/2WIvu1A*](https://bit.ly/2WIvu1A)*)*

This Kindness Visualization is based on Buddhist Metta meditations. These types of guided visualizations are used to encourage loving-kindness to ourselves, to those we care about, to those we don’t know and even to people with whom we may have a personal conflict. Today, we are sending a positive intention to all beings equally and without exception.

To begin, I invite you to sit comfortably in your chair with feet planted on the floor and hands resting on the tops of your thighs. If you feel more comfortable sitting cross-legged in your chair or on the floor, you are welcome to do so.

*(Note to Facilitator: Read the following text slowly, softly, and calmly.)*

**Line 1:** Take a moment to breathe in slowly and exhale fully … If possible, breathe in and out through your nose throughout this visualization … Take a few more deep breaths, noticing the inhalation and exhalation. If you are comfortable doing so, close your eyes. Or, if you prefer, gaze softly at a space in front of you.

**Line 2:** In our Kindness visualization, we will begin by directing loving-kindness to ourselves, and we will do so by mentally repeating to ourselves the positive intentions of being safe, happy, healthy, and peaceful. Take a deep breath in and out. As you exhale, allow yourself to relax, feeling completely supported by your chair.

**Line 3:** Repeat to yourself, silently, “*May I be safe*.” This means safety from physical harm as well as feeling emotionally safe … “May I be safe.”

**Line 4:** Next, mentally say to yourself, “*May I be happy.”* Everyone deserves to be happy … “May I be happy.”

**Line 5:** Repeat to yourself, silently, “*May I be healthy*.” It is everyone’s desire to live a healthy and pain-free life … “May I be healthy.”

**Line 6:** Lastly, say to yourself, “*May I be peaceful.”* Give yourself permission to put aside outside concerns and stress for this moment … “May I be peaceful.”

**Line 7:** Now, I’d like you to think of a friend, or someone you care deeply for, and picture that person in your mind. You may also choose someone you know of who is ill or feeling a lot of stress in his or her life. Send loving-kindness to that person.

**Line 8:** Keeping this person’s picture in mind, say to yourself, silently, “*May \_\_\_ be safe.”* Take a deep breath in and out and repeat in your mind, “*May they be happy … May they be healthy … May they be peaceful.”*

**Line 9:** Next, take a moment to think of someone with whom you would like to communicate better or someone with whom you are in conflict. For this Kindness visualization, avoid choosing someone who has caused you a great deal of suffering. Choose someone who simply challenges you. It’s okay to admit it to yourself. We’ll never know. Recognize that this person, like you, wants to be happy.

**Line 10:** Include yourself when you send loving-kindness to this person. Repeat to yourself, “*May we be safe … May we be happy … May we be healthy … May we be peaceful.”*

**Line 11:** Lastly, we want to send an intention for loving-kindness to the world, including everything and everyone in nature. Now, that “we” includes ourselves and every living being … “*May we be safe … May we be happy … May we be healthy … May we be peaceful*.”

**Line 12:** Allow yourself to relax here, in this peaceful moment. Take several more deep breaths; and, when you are ready, slowly open your eyes and bring your awareness back to the room.

# Group Activity: Mindfulness Devotional (Option 2)

Please read this aloud:

Prayer – both individually and as a group – is a one way to practice being in the present moment, connecting to a higher power and easing stress. Today, we’re going to share a mindfulness devotional given to us by Reverend Ardean Brock-VanderWall, Chaplain of Holland Home.

Dear One,

There is a time for everything, and I have made everything beautiful in its time. Be mindful of the rewards of being in the present. Living in the moment is truly living, being mindful of my Presence in everything. Mindfulness is about trust—trust that putting aside anxious thoughts about the future, even the next moment, is receiving. Open your heart and mind to receive what is now there for you. When you let the thing you are unmindful of become full in your consciousness, you are blessed with its own beauty. Savor every moment, there’s no hurry. Even in the most hectic schedule, if you live mindful of each moment, there is confidence, there is accomplishment, there is joy. Everything has a place. Each moment builds on the next. Be in the moment and do it well; the next will become easier. Time and energy are limited. Use them wisely. Be mindful, for there is a time for everything. Be mindful, for everything is made beautiful in its time.

*Ecclesiastes 3:1, 11*

# Group Discussion About Your Activity

(If necessary, please remind participants to be respectful by limiting answers to about a minute so that more people have time to share.)

* Question: How do you feel? Did you observe anything unusual or interesting during your visualization?
* Question: If you experienced the Loving-Kindness meditation, what did you notice when you sent loving-kindness to someone you like vs. someone who challenges your patience?
* Question: What did you notice about how you felt before and after the activity? (e.g. calmer, less stressed, etc.)

# Wrapping Up Today’s Session

Please read this aloud:

Thank you, everyone, for being here to share your time and your thoughts with each other. We look forward to many more insightful opportunities and discussions from *Live Long, Die Short* about building resilience. As a reminder, our next session is scheduled for [Day – Date – Time – Location]. Our topic is [Topic Name]. You are welcome and encouraged to bring a friend, but please RSVP for both of you. The sign-up sheet is located [Location]. Additionally, if you would like to assist with facilitating next week’s session or a future session, please let me know.

Before you go, please take a few minutes to write down a brief journal entry about today’s session. It can be anything from notes you’d like to remember or a personal initiative you might like to take. Before each entry, you’ll notice a couple of questions to think about, and you’ll have the opportunity to sum up this session in a simple word or phrase. Your journal is for your eyes only. Remember, I am always available to help answer any additional questions you may have about this journey.