

-- Speaker 1 00:00:27 Welcome to another episode of Dr. MCs self-care cabaret podcast. I'm Theresa Melito-Conners, a PhD level self-care expert in the greater Boston area with a passion for helping others recognize the importance of caring for themselves. For the next couple of episode releases, we are going to mix things up a bit. Instead of the usual format, we are going to share what we are calling bite size pods, which will be me. Dr. MC chatting with you about a particular topic. Episodes will continue to drop biweekly on Wednesdays. These will likely be on the shorter side, but with a new school year upon us shorter, maybe just what the doctor ordered. So today I want to talk to you about the importance of listening to your body.

Hmm. We tend to be so disconnected from our body. We don't even listen to the basic cues that it's giving us every day, every second of every day, your body is trying to tell you something.

Speaker 1 00:01:26 One of my favorite quotes, and I admit, I don't know who this is attributed to. I've looked it up before and cannot confirm, but I did not write this anyway. If you listen to your body, when it whispers, you won't have to hear it scream. I'm gonna say that again. If you listen to your body, when it whispers, you won't have to hear it scream. Yikes. That's powerful stuff. And it almost makes you take a step back and really start to think about what is your body telling you and what are you ignoring? Are you just powering through? Are you ignoring maybe your hunger cues and your fullness cues? Lots of things we tend to ignore. So let's take this back one step further and let's rethink about our definition of selfcare. So we know that selfcare is not just a Mandy petty or an occasional spa day, or maybe even when you have a day off self-care is your foundation.

Speaker 1 00:02:24 It is the foundational work required. So you show up as the best you possible. And you've heard me talk about the domains so much, but we know that when we want to be really healthy and practice wellness in a really routine way, we practice across the domains. And we really look at how we feed ourselves, how we hydrate, how we move our body, how we soothe, how we rest our relationships, our spiritual practices, our environment, our self-compassion et cetera, etcetera. There are 10 domains. You probably could recite them all. <laugh>. So we have to shift our thinking around this and remember that stress will kill you. So if you're not taking care of yourself and you are not figuring out what it is, your body's telling you and how important that is, you're running the risk of all sorts of unintended health consequences. And when I talk about stress and self-care, I'm not saying that, you know, practicing self-care is going to make stress, go away.

Speaker 1 00:03:30 It won't make it go away. But what happens is you get to change your reaction. You get to take the control back and you decide how you react and how your body is going to react. You set the boundaries you're in control. I really have a hard time with the word hustling now. And I want you, if you use that word, I want you to stop using the word hustling, because that means like running around crazy and not listening to your body. Instead, we need to take a step back and recalibrate with what is important to us, do things that are joyful, do things that prioritize your needs above everything else and know society. Won't give you a gold star for this, your boss. Isn't gonna pat you on the back and say, gee, nice job. Taking a mental health day earlier this week. I bet you feel great.

Speaker 1 00:04:26 <laugh> if you're waiting for that, then forget it. But it doesn't matter. You have to do this and make yourself the priority. Do you need to take a mental health day or use your paid time off, use your sick days, whatever it is you get use it. The statistics in this country for people taking their paid time off are terrible. Stop that we need to do it and take care of yourself. Don't make it harder than it has to be. Okay. So now let's get back to listening to the body. So when you don't take care of yourself and when you allow DISE to manifest in the body, it shows itself in a lot of different ways, usually through physical pain, how many people listening to this have ever felt any physical discomfort? Well, I know it's a podcast and I can't see you raising your hands, but I imagine that just about anybody here c --

-- an resonate with that.

Speaker 1 00:05:22 So when we think about intuitive eating or body scan meditations, these things are really to help us get back into our body. No one else is gonna do this for you. If you go to a medical professional, you know, one of the domains of self care is our physical and medical care and that domain. But if you go to a medical professional, chances are, they're going to treat the symptom. They're gonna give you some medication or recommendation, but it's just gonna get to this. It's just gonna treat the symptom. You're not going to get to the root cause, but if you are feeling or experiencing some dis disease, whatever it is, there's a root cause. And it's worth it to take the time to figure out what it is that you could be doing that is contributing to the dis disease. So if you're familiar at all with the work of Louise hay, she talks a lot about this and I highly recommend looking into her work.

Speaker 1 00:06:19 She actually has this whole really cool like dictionary where you can look up a, uh, ailment and kind of see how she thought that it related to the body and recommendations for healing and whatnot. It's pretty cool. But anyway, we're not gonna go into that too much, but I am gonna give you some personal examples of time times where I took the time to kind of just step back, see what was going on in my body to heal any dis disease. And these are some of 'em are kind of silly examples, but anyway, finger pain, okay. This was back a few years ago just before COVID actually I was noticing on my left hand, my pinky finger, I was experiencing a really intense pain that would radiate down from the pinky finger all the way down the side of my hand, down my forearm towards the elbow.

Speaker 1 00:07:17 It was not pleasant. And it was persistent. Meaning, you know, something that like wouldn't happen, you know, every day or whatever, I was feeling this and I was getting really annoyed. Now I do sit at a computer. I was coming off of having just finished the doctorate. So I thought this must be something that is going to require surgery. I'm gonna need PT. I'm figuring my brain goes to the absolute worst case scenario. So I was a little hesitant to go to the doctor because I figured they're gonna gimme some medication. I'm gonna have to do all these ridiculous things and figure out what this is. Well, anyway, I decided to just kind of take a step back and maybe pay attention to what I was doing that could be causing this pain. Well, sure enough, after a day or so, I realized that's the hand I used to hold my phone and I would brace my iPhone with my pinky finger.

Speaker 1 00:08:15 Hmm. So I thought maybe I should get a pop socket. Maybe that's why everybody's using those on their phones. So sure enough, a quick little fix grabbed a pop socket. Guess what? The pain went away almost immediately. So again, a little bit of a silly example, but just gives you to the, get you to the idea of taking a step back and listening to your body. And we're gonna talk more about how to make this an actual practice that you do regularly. So let's see, I'm gonna give you another example, foot pain, a lot of people experience foot pain, and they never think to look at the shoes that they're wearing. I know that might sound silly, but it's not even just foot pain. It actually could be radiating up. If you're experiencing knee pain, hip pain, even lower back pain that could all just be related to an old pair of sneakers that really need to be replaced.

Speaker 1 00:09:12 So think about that also. And I remember one time my mom just reminded me of this recently, you know, I've, I've always had a bit of a shoe thing and I have always liked to wear, um, fancy shoes and have admittedly spent way too much money on fancy shoes had other times in my life. However, um, apparently my mom reminded me that I recently said to a one time, not recently said to her, I'm not wearing dance goes every day I wanna wear my Lutons or whatever. Yeah. Well guess who's wearing dance goes almost every day. Now me, because I don't experience the pain. There was a time several years ago when I would try to get up in the morning and my husband would tell me, I looked like a baby deer trying to take their first steps because I was experiencing intense heel pain and knee pain.

Speaker 1 00:10:04 And that was because of wearing shoes that were not properly supportive. I don't exper --

-- ience that anymore. Now that I finally decided, um, wear dance goes or rocks or other shoes that are more supportive. And when it comes to shoes like that, I highly recommend if you live near a, uh, marathon sports or city sports or any type of running store, actually go there and have them watch you walk because they can tell by the way you walk the best shoes and sneaker recommendations for you. So it's actually really helpful to do so don't just take a stab at what's gonna be the best sneaker for you. Definitely take the time to get professionally measured and get some recommendations and see what you can do there. So one of the best ways for us to make sure that we are in our body and just, you know, paying attention to what's going on and really listening is through mindfulness.

Speaker 1 00:11:05 And you may be familiar with mindfulness. You may, you may know what that is. You may, I'm sure you've heard the word, but it does get thrown around a lot. So I do want to share with you several actually mindfulness techniques that you can start to incorporate into your everyday routine thing about mindfulness is you can, you know, do it anytime it's free. And it doesn't generally take a long time. So you can start to incorporate some of these things into your everyday routines so that you are more in tune with yourself and the present moment. And we will end today's episode with a short body scan meditation, which will also help you in this journey. And again, I love to share things that are quick and easy, efficient, and free. Most of the time for you to do that, you can just add to your toolkit and use them when you need them.

Speaker 1 00:11:58 Okay. So back to mindfulness. So these are some of my favorite ways to practice mindfulness. The first one, when you start to feel that stress and that anxiety start to feel that heat rise something's going on in your, in your world. And you just wanna, I don't know, scream. <laugh> see if you can practice the stop method. So for us, you're gonna stop what you're doing. Tee. You're going to take a breath. So you're gonna take a nice, big, deep breath in through your nose and a long exhale, make the exhale longer than the inhale for O you're going to observe. So observe your inner and outer world just for a moment. And then P proceed. So all you're doing is just giving yourself that momentary pause, that intentional breath before proceeding can make a really big difference in just how you react to things, how you respond to different things, great practice.

Speaker 1 00:13:05 Another one, we tend to focus on negative, who focuses on negative? I know I do. And it's really hard when you get yourself stuck in that negative spiral. I want you to instead shift that thinking and ask yourself what went well, www what went well, focus your energy there. When you focus on negative, you actually attract more negative back into your life. Whew, we don't want that. So practice what went well instead. Okay. Next one. A rainbow walk, or you can actually do this. You don't have to do it outside. You can do it in the room. You're sitting in right now, wherever you are. Take a look around, see if you can spot something of every color of the rainbow. Really look at the beauty that is around you. So do you spot something red, orange, yellow, cetera. If you do this outside, take a look around and see what you can spot for colors outside in the world.

Speaker 1 00:14:17 That one you can call a rainbow walk and really be there in the present moment. Seeing the beauty that is around you. Okay, next one. We're gonna give the world a hug. Okay? Sit up in your chair. If you're seated, or if you can take a seated position, I want you to really feel your body supported by the chair. You can close your eyes or lower your gaze. I want you to take a big deep breath in through your nose pause. And when you do open your arms wide, like you're going to give the whole world a hug. And I think the whole world could really use a hug on the exhale. Nice long exhale through the mouth. You're going to bring your arms in and give yourself a hug and really give yourself a hug. Feel that therapeutic touch, that compassionate pressure on your body.

Speaker 1 00:15:06 Give yourself a little squeeze, repeat as necessary. So that's a nice self-compassion and mindfulness activity. So those are just a few ways that you can begin to invite more mindfulness into your life and into --

-- your daily routines. And remember when you listen to your body, when it whispers, you won't have to hear it scream. So with that, we're going to end on a little body scan meditation. This is somewhat of a variation on a body scan because that you can do much longer ones. This is a pretty quick one, but you can do this anytime, any place anywhere, doesn't take a long time, do it. While you're sitting at your desk on a break, go to the bathroom, do it there wherever, and really try to get into a habit of doing this regularly. So you can really begin to see and feel what's going on in your body. Okay? Ready? I want you to get into a comfortable position. Again. I want you to feel your body supported by whatever it is you are sitting on. I want you to feel your feet firmly planted into the ground beneath you all four corners of your feet, pressing firmly into the ground.

Speaker 1 00:16:26 I want you to sit up in your chair, can close your eyes or lower your gains and just be here for a moment. And now I want you to take you our hands and I want you to make fists. And I want you to make really, really, really tight fists. And then I want you to release it and now add the breath. I want you to breathe in through your nose, fill the belly all the way, squeeze your hand, squeeze your fists and exhale through the mouth and release. Let me just do that a couple of times, we can just feel some tension going in your body, and now we're gonna check in with ourselves. So what's going on? What do you need right now? What does your body need? Do you feel tension anywhere? Can you let it go? Are you tired? How's your energy? Are you hungry? Do you need to use the bathroom? Are you thirsty? How's your stomach feel? Are there decisions that you've made recently or things you're stressed out about and you're feeling them in your gut. What's going on there and can you let them go? Can you let it go?

Speaker 1 00:18:03 Are you feeling pain or dis-ease anywhere in the body? Just make note of it. We're not here to judge. Just make note of what's going on. If you want, if you feel so inclined to maybe roll your shoulders a little or tilt your head from side to side or front to back, try to release some pressure and some tension feel free to do so. Also notice your facial muscles and you loosen your jaw, release your eyes and your forehead. Make sure you're letting go of that tension. And let's end with a couple of big, deep breaths. So let's breathe in through the nose, fill your belly, fill all the way in a long exhale. You make those exhales longer because it helps activate our rest and digest response, which helps bring a sense of calm that much faster. Let's do that again in through the nose. Really feel your belly, fill all the way with air brief pause and a long exhale

Speaker 0 00:19:25 Through

Speaker 1 00:19:26 The mouth. Nice. Let's do that one last time in through the nose and a long exhale.

Speaker 1 00:19:45 See if you can get to a place where you can just have those periodic check-ins with yourself regularly, set a note on your phone or calendar, invite something to remind you to do that. Whatever's gonna work for you. A sticky note on your mirror in the morning, whatever it takes to remind you to slow down and take the time to listen to your body and what it's telling you, you may be surprised what you learn. Thank you so much for listening to this episode. Remember to subscribe and rate this podcast on your preferred player. The ratings really do help us grow and share the message of self-care. If you have comments or suggestions or questions, please reach out by emailing podcast at Dr. MC self-care dot com and be sure to join me on social media at Dr. MC selfcare very active on Facebook and Instagram or my website, Dr. MC selfcare.com. Be sure to like subscribe and love me across all my social media platforms for the most UpToDate information on self-care see you next time. Stay well and do good. Are you looking for exciting, engaging, and useful professional development and workshops for your school business or organization? Well, look, no further. Dr. MC offers a variety of options and topics related to self-care and renewal trauma, recovery, building resilience, developing a growth mindset, stress management, and more completely customizable to fit every need. And coming soon is a new program to help high school students manage the challenges they are facing today, and the inc --

-- reasing concerns around mental health visit Dr. MC selfcare.com to learn more and request a session.

--