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~TIPS and TRICKS FOR LETTING GO OF THE PAST and FINDING YOUR JOY and PURPOSE IN LIFE and EVERYDAY MOMENTS~

SECRETS TIPS and TRICKS OF a THERAPIST

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WHY CAN'T I FIND JOY?

Are you finding yourself wondering where is the joy and purpose in my life? Have you been feeling lost? Overwhelmed? Haunted by your past? I have had these same thoughts and feelings myself as a human and therapist in my lifetime. Looking back I thank this struggle for giving me lessons and strength to move forward in life. As a result, I want to share with you my tips and tricks I utilize with my clients and in my personal life that will ensure you start connecting to your bliss, joy, and purpose on a daily basis.

MY AWAKENING OR AH HA MOMENT!

It was over ten years ago, when I experienced a huge shift in my thinking patterns and overall outlook on life. I had just started graduate school and was given the assignment to read, “Man’s Search for Meaning” by the Author, Victor Frankl. His book depicts his experience and survival as a prisoner of a concentration camp. He lost his family, friends, and inevitably realized that you cannot truly experience the joy of life without suffering. Instead of succumbing to death, he embraced his suffering. He went on to become a therapist and author. He is an inspiration to others and his three years as a prisoner he visualized his loving wife and envisioned his life after freeing himself from the concentration camp. I remember drinking alcohol, hating my body, and trying to control everything and everyone until I read this book. The following quote really freed me from my own pain:

“Everything can be taken from a man (or woman) but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any

given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”

— Viktor E. Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning

FINDING YOUR BLISS: TIPS AND TRICKS OF A THERAPIST

As a Licensed Professional Counselor, I have many tips and tricks that release people from emotional pain. I have tested these tips and tricks and know these strategies will work. Before I reveal my secrets here are a few disclaimers:

1. Practice, Practice, Practice
2. Do not judge yourself
3. Not all tips and tricks will work for each individual. Please, test these tips and tricks out over a course of a month and decide what you are going to add into your “Bliss Tool Box”.



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TIP #1: GROUNDING SKILLS

In order to stay in touch and acknowledge your suffering it is important to remain present in the here and now. I recommend being guided by a therapist if this becomes too overwhelming. You cannot truly find joy if your suffering is too intense. A grounding skills is a exercise with one or more of your 5 senses that keeps you in the present moment. Here are some of my favorite grounding skills:

Trick #1: ABC GAME (Cognitive Awareness)

~Pick a topic (i.e, food, cars, states, cities) and start naming items from this topic from in alphabetical order. This a a cognitive distraction that is helpful for painful memories or situations.

Trick #2: Sensory Awareness Exercise

~Take a shower/bath. Notice the sensations of the water. Imagine all your negative thoughts washing away.

Trick #3: 54321 Senses Game

~Name 5 things you can see in the room with you. • Name 4 things you can feel (“chair on my back” or “feet on floor”) • Name 3 things you can hear right now (“fingers tapping on keyboard” or “tv”) • Name 2 things you can smell right now (or, 2 things you like the smell of) • Name 1 good thing about yourself

Trick #4: Hand Visualization

~Whenever you get triggered, breathe deeply and slowly, and put your hand in front of your face and stare at your hand. Begin to look at each finger and try to do the 54321 game above from memory.

Trick #5: Name Game

~When you are feeling stressed, keep your eyes open, looking around the room and name objects you see. This is a great way to stay present.

Trick #6: Tree Visualization

~When you visualize a tree it can be a powerful way to ground yourself. Stand tall, take a few deep breaths, and visualize roots grounding your feet into the ground penetrating the earth. Imagine yourself swaying through the ebb and flow of life like a tree withstanding the wind and the elements.

Trick #7:Holding an Object

~Hold onto something comforting, such as a soft item or a stone.

Trick #8: Notice Your Breath

~The key to working through life’s most difficult challenges is breathing. I know this can be cliché, but breathing helps bring down our blood pressure and relax our muscles. The trick that works best for me is to scan my body from head to toe and relax my muscles that appear tense, then I go on to just notice my breath. For example, where am I breathing? My belly or chest? Chest breathing is a sign of stress. I imagine breathing into my whole torso. This takes practice, there is not right or wrong way to breath, just noticing your breathing can slow you inhales and exhales. The key is to an effective exhale is to slow it down as much as possible. A slower exhale will slow your heart rate. **(BONUS APPS for breathing: Headspace, Calm, and Breath)**

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SUGGESTIONS FOR CREATING YOUR GROUNDING SECTION OF YOUR "BLISS TOOL BOX"

I suggests picking 3-5 of these tricks and practice them over the course of a month on a daily basis. Do not give up! You did not give up as a child learning to walk, right? Take that same approach to learning these tricks. Grounding is key to withstanding emotional and physical pain that life can bring. I found it helps to imagine yourself as a curious child practicing grounding skills. As adults sometimes we can get very critical of ourselves. Would you be critical of a child during his or her imaginary play? I hope not, then give yourself room to explore these skills.

TIP #2: STOP "OVERING" OR OVERDOING YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACTIVITIES

For years I struggled with obsessive thoughts, self hate, difficulty saying no to others, and perfectionism. So, how did I release myself from this? First, I had to discover the **source of my pain**. I recommend taking this journey with a licensed therapist. Where did it all start and when did you start to feel out of control? Mine was childhood. I never felt good enough. My father left abruptly when I was 11 years old without saying goodbye. This left an emotional wound on my heart. This "wound" needed healing. I tried alcohol, drugs, risky behavior. These substances and acts did not heal my wound. You know what did? Loving myself, telling my story of being a survivor, and seeking out therapy. Loving yourself is so healing, it feels good, and it is free. Psychology Today is a great resource if you want to find a therapist.

Second, I started to let go of things I was trying to control that really did not serve any purpose in my life or add value. For example, I obsessively cleaned my apartment and exercised in my early 20's. It got to the point where these activities were more important than friends, family, eating, or my wellbeing. In 2013, I ended up hospitalized for lactic acidosis and almost ended up in a coma. I was close to death and it was wake up a call. I had wake up calls prior to this, but nothing this scary. I looked at my lifestyle and asked myself what needs to change? I stopped overworking, overcleaning, and overexercising. I stopped **"OVERING"** and started finding **"BALANCE"** in my life. I looked at a sock on my floor one day and said to myself "nope I am not picking it up" and it felt amazing! I found a less stressful job, instead of exercising daily, I exercised every other day, and instead of restricting food, I ate a little bit of what I wanted. Instead of cleaning daily, I allocated a set day where I would clean. The following are some tricks to finding balance and the sources of your pain in your life:

Trick #1: Stop "OVERING" all your activities/responsibilities

~Allocate certain times of the day for certain activities or responsibilities. In addition, add variety in your life and do different things. What is an activity that is out of your comfort zone? Go and try it one day.

Trick #2: Ask for help

~The hardest thing to do sometimes is to ask for help. Why? It takes maturity and vulnerability. If you are feeling overwhelmed and overscheduled say, "No" or ask for help. Are there certain activities or responsibilities that are not really serving any purpose in your life? **LET THEM GO** and notice how it feels, you may find you have more time to just relax.

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Trick #3 Finding your negative beliefs?

~What negative thoughts or beliefs have followed you throughout your life? These thoughts can wreak havoc on your mental and physical wellbeing. Here is a list by Jamie Marich. Take a moment and circle or write down all your negative thoughts/cognitions, notice that the thoughts are separated into themes.

NEGATIVE COGNITIONS LIST (Marich)

Responsibility:

I should have known better
I should have done something
I did something wrong
I am to blame
I cannot be trusted
My best is not good enough

Safety:

I cannot trust myself
I cannot trust anyone
I am in danger
I am not safe
I cannot show my emotions

Choice:

I am not in control
I have to be perfect/please everyone
I am weak I am trapped
I have no options

Power:

I cannot get what I want
I cannot handle it/stand it
I cannot succeed
I cannot stand up for myself
I cannot let it out I am powerless/helpless

Value:

I am not good enough
I am a bad person/ I am terrible
I am permanently damaged
I am defective
I am worthless/inadequate
I am insignificant/I am not important

I deserve to die
I deserve only bad things
I am stupid
I do not belong
I am different
I am a failure
I am ugly/My body is ugly
I am alone

~Pick a negative cognition/thought that is most intense and present in your life. Ask yourself when is the first time or worst time you felt this way and journal on it. This is most likely what is causing you pain in your life and it needs addressed when you are ready. **Please, If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts or actions, then seek out professional help. You can call 911, go to the local Emergency Room, or call the National Suicide Hotline: 1-800-273-8255. YOU ARE NOT ALONE and there are other options besides suicide.**

Trick #4 Change your thoughts, change you life

~Once you are aware of your negative beliefs and themes in your life, then you can start thought stopping and reframing this negativity. Negative thoughts are like poison, they will spread into every facet of your life if you are not careful. Thought stopping is an easy technique and a pretty common skill that is taught in therapy. For example, if your negative belief is "I am ugly", then every time that thought comes up replace it with it with "I am beautiful". Or if that is too cheesy or cliché, watch that negative belief float away in your mind or imagine yourself smashing it to pieces! Repeat this process over and over. I personally use this trick and it works. Remember we have automatic thoughts and these thoughts did not just pop up over night so give yourself time to adjust to this exercise.

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Trick #5: Humor

~Laugh at yourself and joke around. I used to have horrible thoughts about myself, self loathing, painful memories would haunt me. One day, I started to mock the toxicity in my head and it really made me laugh. This technique is called **Externalizing**, meaning these thoughts are not you or your identity, but an entity outside of you. I even named this entity and it slowly released me from my pain.

TIP #3: LISTEN TO WHAT YOUR BODY IS TELLING YOU.

Your body sends you signals when you start to become too stressed. Our fight, flight, or freeze is an amazing tool that tells us “Chill”. Here are the signs and symptoms of **Fight, Flight or Freeze**:

Flight:

- Restless legs, feet /numbness in legs
- Anxiety/shallow breathing
- Big/darting eyes
- Leg/foot movement
- Reported or observed fidgety-ness, restlessness, feeling trapped, tense
- Sense of running in life- one activity-next
- Excessive exercise

Fight:

- Crying
- Hands in fists, desire to punch, rip
- Flexed/tight jaw, grinding teeth, snarl
- Fight in eyes, glaring, fight in voice
- Desire to stomp, kick, smash with legs, feet
- Feelings of anger/rage
- Homicidal/suicidal feelings
- Knotted stomach/nausea, burning stomach

- Metaphors like bombs, volcanoes erupting

Freeze:

- Feeling stuck in some part of body
- Feeling cold/frozen, numb, pale skin
- Sense of stiffness, heaviness
- Holding breath/restricted breathing
- Sense of dread, heart pounding
- Decreased heart rate (can sometimes increase)
- Orientation to threat

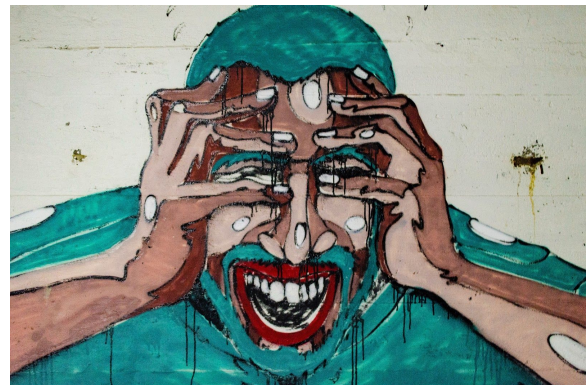


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TIP #4: PRESS THE “RESET BUTTON” DAILY BY FILLING YOUR “GIVE A F@!% CUP” BACK UP.

Everyday our relationships, careers, to-do list, and roles we play in life take from our energy and strength. I prefer to say our energy is housed in our “Give A F@!% CUP”. As the day goes on this energy supply gets depleted from all your responsibilities. So, how come you aren’t pressing the reset button and refilling your cup? You may be asking, well how do I do this? Easy, do something you love. Personally, I found yoga and meditation at age 18, but I really got into after my wake up call in 2013. Here is a list of activities that can will press the

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reset button on your energy supply and fill up your cup:

Trick #1: Find your reset button

~The easiest way to find a hobby that helps you press your reset button is reflecting on your past, especially activities you engaged in as a child, teen, or younger years. What do you look forward to? Here is a list of potential hobbies:

- Sports
- Yoga
- Movement Therapy
- Art
- Video games
- Puzzles
- Bubble baths
- Massages
- Journaling
- Cooking
- Crocheting or knitting
- Joining a support group
- Salt Rooms
- For a complete update list for 2019

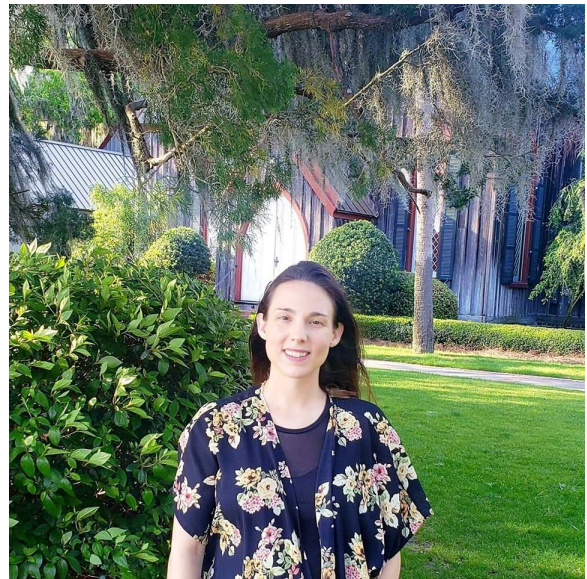
check out this website:

<https://localadventurer.com/types-of-hobbies/>



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BONUS TIP #5: ALLOW ME TO BE YOUR GUIDE.



**CALL me FOR a FREE
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