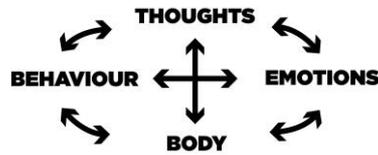


Take a breath

In previous weeks we have talked about each individual being like a 'system' –comprising of 'the body', 'thoughts', emotions' and 'behaviour'.

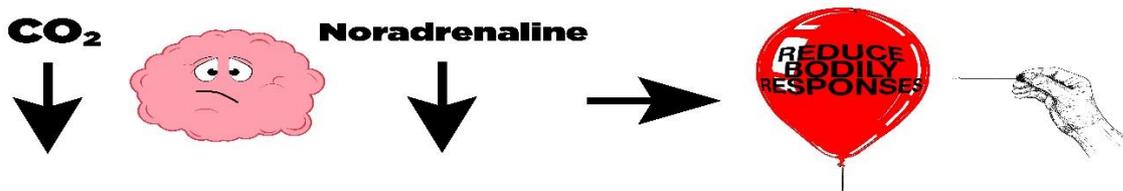


Minding our mental health fitness effectively, involves practicing different skills in each of these areas. A change in one area, facilitates a change in all areas, much like a chain reaction.

In recent Mental Health Notes, we have looked at the 'thoughts' part of our system and discussed ways we can challenge our thinking. This week we will look at 'the body' part of our system and explore how we can use our breathing to alter our brain chemistry.

Breathing is a simple but powerful tool we carry around with us all the time. You don't need special gear or special equipment and it is one of the best ways to deal with unpleasant emotional arousal that we sometimes experience in stressful situations.

When we experience something stressful, carbon dioxide levels increase in our blood, detected by an area of the brain called the Locus Coeruleus. This area triggers the release of greater amounts of noradrenaline into our body. Noradrenaline, produces bodily responses such as increased heartbeat, shallow breathing, sweaty palms, and flushed complexion. You can use breathing techniques to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in your blood.



Breathing exercises are like an antidote for the effects of noradrenaline. Focusing on your breath also helps to distract you from unhelpful thoughts. If we practice deep breathing, we can create a helpful habit and develop a useful skill. This means when we need to employ it as a tool to decrease unpleasant feelings it will work quicker and more effectively.

If you wish to practice a deep breathing exercise, please listen to the audio attached.

*If you have breathing problems or any concerns related to an illness you should consult your doctor before doing breathing exercises.