

# Soothing Stress To Enhance Healing

By David Rauzi

*“Mindfulness is about being fully awake in our lives. It is about perceiving the exquisite vividness of each moment. We also gain immediate access to our own powerful inner resources for insight, transformation and healing.”*

—Jon Kabat-Zinn

Deanna English started her career in traditional medicine, addressing the hurts and sicknesses of the suffering.

But her subsequent education in nontraditional methods of healing has fueled her passion for “proactive treatment,” placing responsibility—and the choice—for a person’s well-being in his or her own hands.

“Most of us live from the neck up,” says Deanna, a Grangeville resident since 1979. “I want to facilitate the whole person—what they think, their situation. I want to empower them to come up with their own plan on how they want to shift their life.”

Deanna’s credentials blend treatment styles. She is a registered nurse, a certified massage therapist, a registered yoga teacher/therapist and a teacher in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR).

Her medical career started as a nurse for Syringa General Hospital. Now she provides massage therapy with Dr. Leanne LeBlanc, and two yoga classes a week and eight-week sessions of MBSR retreats focusing on different meditative/life topics.

According to Deanna, Jon Kabat-Zinn—an educator, molecular biologist and Zen/yoga practitioner at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center—developed MBSR at the Stress Reduction Clinic he founded there in 1979.

He asked, “How can I take what I know to be true in this practice and bring them to people who are ill or suffering?” Deanna says.

His answer was MBSR.

He developed an eight-week program that instructs people to recognize and deal with stress through intensive self-awareness training.

Deanna says some stress and physiological responses—tightened mus-

cles and increased blood pressure, for example—are necessary for survival in “fight-or-flight” situations.

However, the stress that was necessary to ward off a saber-tooth tiger attack in prehistoric times is a recipe for health problems today.

Frustrations throughout the day—long lines, work issues and family problems—result in repeated spikes of physiological changes to the body.

Deanna says these either are not dealt with or are improperly handled through “maladaptive techniques,” such as drinking, overworking, eating or watching television.

Although not bad in themselves, often they are done without thinking, and they fail to address underlying issues, Deanna says.

“Most of us don’t live in the present moment,” she says, noting people dwell on the past or future, worrying about matters they cannot control. “Whatever is stressing them out is not happening at the moment. Worry is wishing for something we don’t want to happen.”

Through meditation, yoga and body scan, participants learn how they create stress, recognize when stressful situations begin, and the effects of stress to the body, accept what is, and intervene and stop stress by being aware about what is happening in the present, Deanna says.

In sitting meditation, the focus is on each breath. In walking meditation, it is on what happens in the act of moving your feet.





*Above, Deanna English leads a yoga class. Opposite page, Allison Elsberry stretches during a yoga pose.*

In body scan, a person “walks” through each part of the body.

Simply taking a deep cleansing breath in yoga creates a physiological change that reduces stress and prevents the body from moving into fight-or-flight mode, Deanna says.

Each piece of the MBSR program builds on the next, with awareness developed in gradual steps.

Eight weeks is not the end.

“Their feet are at the threshold,” Deanna tells her students at completion. “From there it is up to them to choose how they want to live.”

Deanna says the techniques are not difficult to learn, but the challenge comes in people taking responsibility for their thoughts and how they affect their body.

“As long as we lay blame on other people for our problems, we lose our power, which are our choices,” Deanna says.

Deanna studied MBSR at Omega and the University of Massachusetts

under Kabat-Zinn and others.

She spent two years as integrative medicine coordinator for Gritman Medical Center in Moscow, incorporating MBSR and other nontraditional techniques into its wellness program, then established a similar program at the Nimipu Health Center for the Nez Perce Tribe.

She also taught MBSR at Lewis-Clark State College in Lewiston.

“It was an interesting challenge” teaching the program on a graded basis, Deanna says. “I had to learn to let go of my expectations on whether they got it. My job was to teach them to the best of my ability, and it was their job to get it.”

She now earns a living offering her various services, mostly massage, and is exploring the possibility of taking nontraditional treatment techniques to medical facilities and corporations in cities accessible through flights out of Lewiston.

Deanna says it is not about get-

ting the “big job,” which she says she had at Gritman.

“It was fun, but also exhausting,” she notes.

Instead, Deanna says it is about using her skills and doing what she enjoys: being kind to people, facilitating awareness and helping people when they are ill.

One of her favorite quotes is from Thich Nhat Hahn, a Vietnamese Buddhist: “The way we eat, drink, walk and breathe affects the state of the world.”

“I really believe that I am helping create awareness, empowering people to shift paradigms, facilitating their thinking and empowering them to deal with life by choice rather than by happenstance,” Deanna says. ■

*For information on MBSR offered by Deanna, go online at [emergence-mindfulness.com](http://emergence-mindfulness.com), or contact her at [deanna@emergence-mindfulness.com](mailto:deanna@emergence-mindfulness.com) or at (208) 983-1505.*