



The Art of Relaxation

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The Human Condition

- Stress and anxiety are an unavoidable fact of life
 - Rapid advances in communication
 - Tsunami of information-news, www, social media
 - Global/environmental change
 - Daily hassle of life
 - Even when change is good, it's stressful
 - New job
 - Move
 - Relationship

Stress and Health



- Embodied stress is directly linked to sympathetic activation: (increased heart rate, sweating, blood pressure) which results in:
 - Blood clot formation
 - Irregular heart beats
 - Fat deposits
 - Plaque formation, atherosclerosis
 - Immunosuppression
- Over time, this may result in CHD, kidney disease, infections...

Stress and Health



- When we have poor coping strategies to deal with the stressors that life throws at us, it can be indirectly linked to negative behaviors:
 - Increased alcohol intake
 - Deterioration in diet
 - Reduced exercise
 - Smoking
 - Increased accidents

Stress and Coping

- Adaptive/positive strategies for coping with stress include:
 - Seeking social support, laughter
 - Increasing aerobic exercise
 - Participation in communities of faith
 - Alternative medical practices (e.g. manipulative and body based therapy, energy therapy)
 - Guided relaxation, baths
 - Time in nature

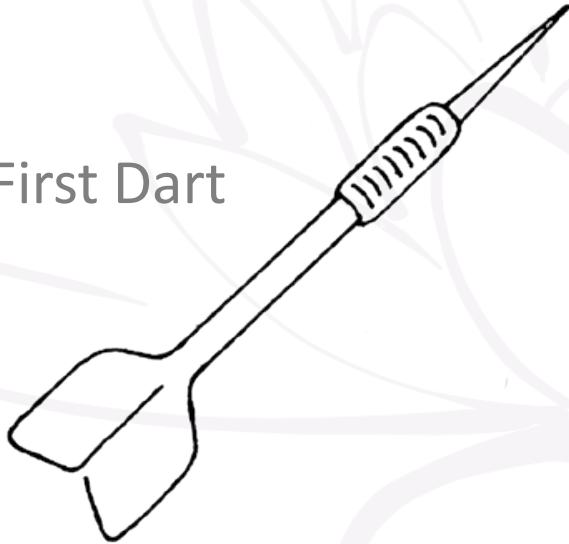
Stress and Coping



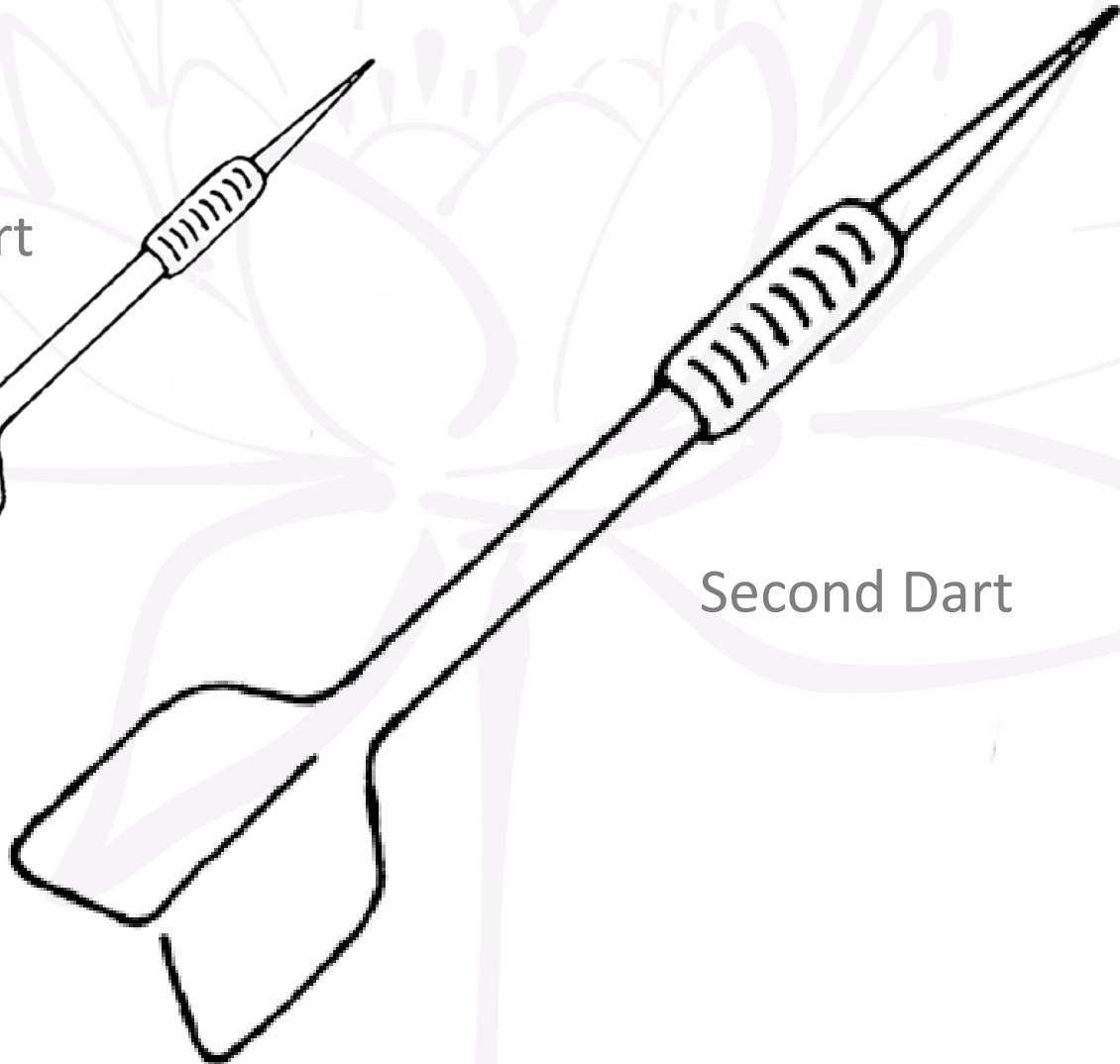
- Nirvana Sessions
 - T/H from 12-12:20pm in the chapel
- Massage Therapy
 - Wed from 4-6pm
- Exercise Programs
 - Mind/body classes (yoga, Alexander Technique)
 - Personal training and individual Pilates sessions
 - Group fitness classes

Darts of Suffering

First Dart



Second Dart



Attachment



- We run toward what we desire and away from what we dislike.
- According to Buddhist philosophy, this is the essence of suffering.
- When we have something we want, we:
 - Want more of it
 - Cling
 - Fear its loss
- In order to escape what we dislike, we:
 - Numb
 - Sublimate and repress
 - Busy ourselves so that we don't feel

Emotional Reactivity



“Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is the power to choose our response. And in our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

-Viktor Frankl

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction



- Moment-to-moment, non-judgmental awareness of what is happening at the present time in both your mind and body
- As you open yourself to what is imbalanced in your unconscious habitual tendencies, you can begin to make new choices that promote well-being and balance

Formal vs. Informal Practice



- Formal
 - Taking time each day to sit, stand or lie down and focus on the breath, bodily sensations, sounds, other senses, thoughts or emotions.
- Informal
 - Bringing mindful awareness to daily activities such as eating, exercising, chores, and relating to others.

Formal Practice: Meditation

- Increases activity in the left frontal lobe of the brain-area responsible for positive affect and emotional regulation
- Increases in thickness in prefrontal cortex which is responsible for decision making
- Decreased activation in the amygdala (responsible for processing fear and aggression)

MBSR Resources



- 8-week course in MBSR with Micki Fine (www.livingmindfully.org)
- Retreat Centers located nationally and internationally
- Books and journal articles