



CAP TIPs is a series of periodic messages to assist in the planning and implementation of NCVRW Community Awareness Projects. Please feel free to send your individual questions or requests for assistance to Anne Seymour at [annesey@atlantech.net](mailto:annesey@atlantech.net)

## CAP TIP #14

### *To Improve Public Awareness*

#### **Holistic Activities to Help Promote Strength and Resilience**

##### **Introduction**

This year's NCVRW theme – ***Strength. Resilience. Justice.*** – offers an excellent opportunity to sponsor activities that promote and demonstrate activities that are strengths-based and that focus on helping survivors recover in the aftermath of crime; and that help victim-serving professionals and volunteers cope with the stress and vicarious trauma that often result from victim assistance work. Many NCVRW CAP projects include wonderful examples of holistic activities that can help strengthen the mind, the body and the spirit, including six that are featured in this CAP TIP:

1. Mindfulness
2. Meditation
3. Yoga
4. Therapy dogs
5. Knitting/crocheting
6. Arts

##### **Seeking Volunteers**

A great resource to seek volunteers – such as meditation facilitators/leaders, yoga instructors and artists – (and to also find volunteer opportunities that you *enjoy* doing) is Volunteer Match ([www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org)). In the District of Columbia, for example, there are over 1,500 volunteer opportunities listed, including 350 related to health and over 200 related to arts and culture. For 2017 NCVRW and throughout the year, you can register to solicit volunteers for your special events and ongoing activities on this national website that provides volunteer opportunities at the community level.

##### **Mindfulness**

Increasingly, mindfulness-based interventions are being utilized with cognitive-based therapies and other modalities to address mental health challenges that many survivors endure following criminal victimization, such as depression and anxiety.

There are two good definitions of mindfulness to consider in planning holistic activities for NCVRW:

*Mindfulness* is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us. (*Foundation for a Mindful Society*)

*Mindfulness* is a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique. (*Google definition*)

The Foundation for a Mindful Society offers five “basics of mindfulness practice” that you can use during NCVRW and even copy onto a one-page handout with attribution to the Foundation:

1. Set aside some time.
2. Observe the present moment as it is.
3. Let your judgments roll by.
4. Return to observing the present moment as it is.
5. Be kind to your wandering mind. (handout available at [www.mindful.org](http://www.mindful.org))

With a general theme of mindfulness being “developing care towards ourselves,” NCVRW is the perfect time to reflect *its* themes of “strength” and “resilience” through mindful practice. A wonderful “loving kindness practice” created by meditation teacher and *New York Times* best-selling author Sharon Salzberg is described in an article at the end of this CAP TIP, with seven mindfulness “practices” adapted to use every day during NCVRW.

If any of your NCVRW activities involve or engage schools, Mindful Schools offers a free “Starter Lesson Curriculum for K-5 Elementary School Students” that can be accessed at <http://www.mindfulschools.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/starter-lesson.pdf>.

Mindfulness practices are being used by victim assistance professionals and are recognized as helpful in coping with the vicarious trauma and secondary stress that often accompany victim/survivor assistance work. At the 2013 National Center for Victims of Crime Annual Conference, Professor David M. Zlotnick of Rogers William University School of Law presented “Mindfulness Practices for Direct Service Providers to Victims of Crime;” his slide presentation offers current research and helpful tips about mindfulness for victim advocates: [http://victimsofcrime.org/docs/nat-conf-2013/mindfulness-practices-for-service-providers\\_zlotnick.pdf?sfvrsn=2](http://victimsofcrime.org/docs/nat-conf-2013/mindfulness-practices-for-service-providers_zlotnick.pdf?sfvrsn=2).

## **Meditation**

A brief summary of research about the benefits of meditation ([www.meditationmojo.com](http://www.meditationmojo.com)) cites improvement in physical health, emotional well-being and mental performance, as well as the physiological, psychological/emotional and spiritual well-being benefits for beginning, intermediate and advanced meditation practice. “20 Scientific Reasons to Start Meditating Today,” written by Emma M. Seppala and published in *Psychology Today* in September 2013, lists strong evidence of the benefits of meditation, with URL links to research about meditation.

For liability issues, a sample meditation waiver form from Meditation Mojo that can be easily adapted to your meditation event can be accessed at <http://www.meditationmojo.com/pages/disclaimer>.

Many guided practices for mindfulness and meditation, including audio- and video-guided practices, are available free online:

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### **FREE ONLINE GUIDED PRACTICES FOR MINDFULNESS & MEDITATION**

UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center  
<http://marc.ucla.edu/mindful-meditations>

Foundation for a Mindful Society  
<http://www.mindful.org/meditation/mindfulness-getting-started/>

Mindful Schools  
<http://www.mindfulschools.org/resources/explore-mindful-resources/>

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### **Yoga**

There is no question about the physical and mental health benefits of practicing yoga on a regular basis. The three sources below offer brief synopses of how yoga is a highly positive and beneficial health practice:

- Harvard Medical School Health Publications  
<http://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/yoga-benefits-beyond-the-mat>
- WebMD: <http://www.webmd.com/fitness-exercise/a-z/yoga-workouts>
- American Osteopathic Association  
<http://www.osteopathic.org/osteopathic-health/about-your-health/health-conditions-library/general-health/Pages/yoga.aspx>

In addition, if you enter “yoga and crime victims” into any Internet search engine, you’ll find numerous articles about how yoga is being integrated into victim/survivor recovery services, support groups and therapy.

Many NCVRW CAP activities include free yoga classes for survivors, victim assistance and allied professionals, and the public. NCVRW projects are partnering with local yoga studios to secure volunteer yoga instructors, and many are providing free yoga mats and water bottles imprinted with the NCVRW theme and artwork to the first people who enroll in classes.

For liability issues, a sample yoga class waiver form from Parallel Yoga that you can easily adapt to your yoga event can be accessed at <http://www.parallelyoga.ca/parallel.yoga.waiver.pdf>.

### **Therapy Dogs**

Therapy dogs are animals that go with their owners to bring comfort and solace in a variety of settings, including schools, hospitals, hospices, correctional settings and other sites.

Many courthouses now have certified therapy dogs that bring comfort and aid to victims and witnesses, particularly as they prepare to testify and actually testify in the courtroom. The American Bar

Association's newsletter described "Canines in the Courtroom" at [http://www.americanbar.org/content/newsletter/publications/gp\\_solo\\_magazine\\_home/gp\\_solo\\_magazine\\_index/caninesincourtroom.html](http://www.americanbar.org/content/newsletter/publications/gp_solo_magazine_home/gp_solo_magazine_index/caninesincourtroom.html); and BARk published "Dogs in the Courtroom" at <http://thebark.com/content/dogs-courtroom>. If your courthouse has a "canine in the court," that's a good place to start if you are seeking a certified therapy dog and handler to join your NCVRW events.

Another excellent resource to secure a therapy dog for your NCVRW special event is Therapy Dogs International (TDI), a non-profit organization that has approximately 2,500 certified therapy dogs and volunteer handlers in all 50 states. There is no charge for visitations. Extensive information about TDI and how to arrange a visitation is available at <http://www.tdi-dog.org/Default.aspx>; and the Therapy Dogs International brochure can be downloaded at <http://www.tdi-dog.org/images/GeneralBrochure.pdf>.

The American Kennel Club offers an online roster of therapy dog organizations nationwide that can be accessed at <http://www.akc.org/events/title-recognition-program/therapy/organizations/>.

## **Knitting/Crocheting**

Is it possible to "stitch away stress"?

According to "The Health Benefits of Knitting" published last year in the New York Times, it sure is! This article cites and offers URL links to research about a wide range of health benefits associated with knitting and crocheting:

[https://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/01/25/the-health-benefits-of-knitting/?\\_r=0](https://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/01/25/the-health-benefits-of-knitting/?_r=0).

Similarly, the Craft Yarn Council highlights the benefits of knitting and crocheting – including reduced stress, an improved ability to cope with mental and physical illness, and decreased risk of cognitive impairment as you age – on its website at <http://craftyarncouncil.org/health>.

By sponsoring #StitchAwayStress activities during NCVRW, you can promote the helpfulness of this popular hobby in preventing or reducing stress, AND commit to have your participants make items (in the NCVRW theme colors – blue, red and ivory) that can be donated to domestic violence or homeless shelters, such as hats or scarves.

Nationwide, there are hundreds of knitting and crocheting clubs, including many who engage in volunteer and community service activities. You can visit the following two websites and locate a club in your community by simply entering your city/zip code into the online locators:

- Knitting Guild Association: <https://tkga.org/>
- Crochet Guild of America: <http://www.crochet.org/>

## **Arts**

Many NCVRW CAP subgrantees' special events involve the arts – painting and drawing, children's art activities and performance arts, among others. There are countless creative ideas for victim awareness and public engagement involving the arts that you can review in the NCVRW CAP Subgrantee Directory at <http://navaa.org/cap/subs/Recipient%20Directory.pdf> that lists brief descriptions of each group's activities. You can also review CAP TIP 13, "Engaging Crime Victims & Survivors in Your NCVRW Activities," specifically the section on "Arts and Awareness Activities."

If you are seeking volunteers to help with NCVRW-related arts activities, the National Endowment for the Arts lists all regional and state Arts Councils available nationwide, many of which help develop arts awareness and volunteer programs: <https://www.arts.gov/partners/state-regional>.

### For More Information

Please contact National Crime Victims' Rights Week Community Awareness Project Consultant Anne Seymour via email at [annese@atlantech.net](mailto:annese@atlantech.net); or by telephone at 202.547.1732.

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## Be Kind to Yourself—Right Now

To be kind to others, you need to start with yourself.

By [Sharon Salzberg](#) | October 5, 2015

Illustration by Jason Lee



People often find some difficulty in caring for themselves, in receiving love, in believing they deserve to be happy.

Imagine for a moment the amount of energy you expend brooding over the future, ruminating about the past, comparing yourself to others, judging yourself, worrying about what might happen next.

That is a huge amount of energy. Now imagine all of that energy gathered in and returned to you. Underlying our usual patterns of self-preoccupation, stinging self-judgment, and fear is the universal, innate potential for love and awareness.

Loving kindness meditations point us back to a place within, where we can cultivate love and help it flourish. Developing care toward ourselves is the first objective, the foundation for later being able to include others in the sphere of kindness.

This loving kindness practice involves silently repeating phrases that offer good qualities to oneself and to others.

1. You can start by taking delight in your own goodness—calling to mind things you have done out of good-heartedness, and rejoicing in those memories to celebrate the potential for goodness we all share.
2. Silently recite phrases that reflect what we wish most deeply for ourselves in an enduring way. Traditional phrases are:

- May I live in safety.
- May I have mental happiness (peace, joy).

- May I have physical happiness (health, freedom from pain).
- May I live with ease.

3. Repeat the phrases with enough space and silence between so they fall into a rhythm that is pleasing to you. Direct your attention to one phrase at a time.

4. Each time you notice your attention has wandered, be kind to yourself and let go of the distraction. Come back to repeating the phrases without judging or disparaging yourself.

5. After some time, visualize yourself in the center of a circle composed of those who have been kind to you, or have inspired you because of their love. Perhaps you've met them, or read about them; perhaps they live now, or have existed historically or even mythically. That is the circle. As you visualize yourself in the center of it, experience yourself as the recipient of their love and attention. Keep gently repeating the phrases of loving kindness for yourself.

6. To close the session, let go of the visualization, and simply keep repeating the phrases for a few more minutes. Each time you do so, you are transforming your old, hurtful relationship to yourself, and are moving forward, sustained by the force of kindness.

This article also appeared in the June 2015 issue of *Mindful* magazine.

### **Sample Mindfulness Phrases for 2017 National Crime Victims' Rights Week**

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|----------------|--|
| <b>April 2</b> | May I live in safety.<br>May I find security in my home, my work, and my community.                          |
| <b>April 3</b> | May I have mental happiness<br>May I find joy and comfort in my life today.                                  |
| <b>April 4</b> | May I have physical happiness<br>May I be free from pain and practice healthy habits today.                  |
| <b>April 5</b> | May I look for kindness in other people.<br>May I reflect kindness in my thoughts and actions today.         |
| <b>April 6</b> | May I focus on my many positive strengths today.<br>May I recognize that I am strong because I am resilient. |
| <b>April 7</b> | May I find peace with myself.<br>May my peaceful feelings grow and shine in my life and upon the world.      |
| <b>April 8</b> | May I live with ease.<br>May I be positive about my life and my future.                                      |