

Relaxation, Meditation and Mindfulness

Pretty Rami and Connie Pi
In Touch Hotline
The University of Illinois at Chicago
Chicago, Illinois
pi.connie@gmail.com
pramil@uic.edu

The presentation by the volunteers of the InTouch Crisis Hotline at the University of Illinois at Chicago will explore the benefits that relaxation and meditation has to offer in times of crisis. Our goal is to provide an overlooked, unique crisis intervention for immediate, short-term help to individuals who experience an event that produces emotional, mental, physical, and behavioral distress or problems. A crisis can refer to any situation in which the individual perceives a sudden loss of his or her ability to use effective problem-solving and coping skills.

We will present this topic in a workshop style. Individuals will learn relaxation and meditation techniques by engaging in the techniques discussed. Before discussing the two therapy techniques, we will first discuss the foundations to which individuals respond to crisis. Specifically the four responses we will discuss are cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral.

Then we will define the differences between relaxation and meditation therapy. Both therapies focus on various techniques to reduce stress and anxiety; however, are distinct in its principles. The therapies are applicable to any of the four responses individuals respond to crisis. Our discussion of the therapies will be drawn from empirical research from medical and psychological journals.

After discussing these responses we will delve into the world of relaxation, ranging from simple deep breathing exercises to yoga. We will focus on *Pranayama* which is a scientific method originating from India and intersects the foundation of yoga with breathing exercises. These practices have been used since the Vedic period and research has shown significant positive benefits to the practices in improving immunity from a range of body ailments, including the ability to acquire peace of mind in times of crisis.

We will then move onto meditation therapy using visual imagery. This involves individuals to close their eyes while listening to a 15-20 minute meditation exercise. Through the use of words and guided imagery, the exercise will take individuals onto a relaxing journey to free the mind of stress and re-energize the mind to a peaceful state. Individuals will use visual imagery, deep breathing exercises, and relaxing music in order to provide a meditating atmosphere. At the end of the exercise, individuals will have learned ways to re-focus their mind and be aware of how the body and muscles can react to relaxation.

Then we will conclude with a process group in discussing the effectiveness of previous coping skills and techniques learned from our presentation.