



## **Strengthen your body and mind**

Guest contributor Liina Douglas from the Everyday Counts program

*I must control my emotions...*

Is often what I hear from individuals coming to see me at the Every Day Counts Program, the psychosocial care portion of the Palliative Program. This statement, however, could not be further from the truth. Our emotions are a normal part of us; some emotions are pleasant and some unpleasant, but they are all a part of us. Of course many things affect what we feel, like our culture or ethnicity, our gender norms, etc. that all tell us what is safe and what is unsafe to feel. Irrespective of all these, human beings are built to have a full range of emotions. The statement in the title would best serve us, if it reads, I must support my nervous system to experience my emotions as normal, whatever they may be. If there is a medical condition, normal still applies, as your normal will never be anyone else's normal. Your body and mind and experience all together create your normal. The point of life is to support your body and mind and create experiences that help you function at your best. There are many strategies that help us learn to support our nervous systems, such as:

- relaxation techniques (e.g. body scan)
- grounding skills (e.g. deep/belly breathing),
- balanced lifestyle (e.g. focus on all the dimensions of self: physical, mental/emotional, social and spiritual)
- mindfulness practice (e.g. daily gratitude practice).

Oh, but you don't have room to add anything else....you are right- how about taking something away?

**Strategies:**

- Instead of taking the elevator in a rush, committing to taking the stairs and paying attention to how the body moves up the stairs without any judgment of the experience?
- Or how about instead of reaching for chocolate or something salty when stressed, reaching for a piece of cheese or spoonful of peanut butter?
- Or another small change of when in the powder room, making a commitment not to think about anything to do with the day; this room is a bubble of mental silence. Even if you make many many many trips there in a day, keeping it a place where you let the rest of the world be what it is and bring none of it with you.

These strategies are a part of living mindfully and on a small scale effect every aspect of you, if you let them. Small changes have large effects.

Enjoy exploring how you can invite space into your day so that you can help support your body/mind to do what it naturally does; instead of shocking you every time with what it does.

Come join us for Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, an 8 week workshop at the Every Day Counts Program and learn more about supporting your nervous system to support you! The Every Day Counts Program was created to support individuals living with a life limiting illness, and their loved ones, to add quality of life into every day. The Program supports individuals from diagnosis to bereavement. Call Liina at 604-363-0961 to register.