



The Switch Up

HEALTHY ALTERNATIVES FOR THE MIND & BODY

“The human body has been designed to resist an infinite number of changes and attacks brought about by its environment. The secret of good health lies in successful adjustment to changing stresses on the body.”

Harry J. Johnson

By Lisa Marie Guilfoyle, Assistant Superintendent at Oakville Golf Club.

How many times a day do you check in on yourself? Think about it ... when it comes to your golf course, the first thing you do when you arrive is check in on it; what is the weather going to be like today? What are my moisture levels at? Is it time to put down more fertilizer? What are the trends from my data collection? How am I doing with my fungicide protection? The list goes on and on ... As Superintendents and Turf Managers we put in the work daily, even minute by minute, to find the balance in providing and maintaining a healthy golf course. But are we doing the same when it comes to our own body and mind? It is just as, if not more, important to monitor our own health the same as we would our golf course. The two go hand and hand ... and our golf courses (as a whole) will be healthier because of it!

My intention here is to pass along helpful suggestions, friendly reminders and alternative ways to manifest a peaceful state of mind that will transpire into your body allowing you to be your most

optimal self. The truth of the matter is: the mind and the body are not separate. What affects one, affects the other. Here are some alternative ways to switch things up.

BREATHWORK

Breathing, something we do day in and day out, naturally. Have you ever taken the time to notice how you breathe or even where your breath lies? When stressors like budgets, expectation and disease pressure arise, your breathing pattern may land in the chest. This causes short and quick breaths triggered by our flight or fight response (sympathetic state) which ultimately sends less oxygen to the brain. Fortunately, we have the power to deliberately change our own breathing, allowing for stress response management - especially in stress related situations. When mindfully taking full breaths into the abdomen and expanding the diaphragm, your brain communicates to the body that you are safe and can remain in its rest and digest (parasympathetic) state. Abdominal breathing helps to control the nervous system and encourages the body to relax, bringing about a range of health benefits such as lowered blood

pressure, reduced levels of lactic acid in your muscles, improved immune functioning and increased energy. Present findings indicate that breathwork changes brain activity and mood and induces mystical experiences. These results are promising and suggest that such techniques are useful to improve your The Switch Up ... Healthy Alternatives for the Mind & Body overall mental well-being. It is recommended to spend 10-15 minutes a day just simply breathing. With intention, consciously and deeply.

There are many approaches when it comes to breathwork. Each a little different than the other but all carry the same intention. I have been practicing the Wim Hof Method and have developed my own practice within retention and recovery breath techniques. You can find an array of videos on YouTube that will help you get started. For the readers out there, I highly recommend picking up a copy of 'Breath' by James Nester for some insight behind the science of our breath.

COLD WATER THERAPY

For those who know me well, know that I have been practicing this for nearly four years. In the twenty plus years I have worked in this industry, I have always gone home after a hot summer's day to a cold shower with little to no education on the benefits behind exposing your body to the cold. Now that my practice has evolved, you can find me sitting in an ice bath, or better yet, walking into Lake Ontario all winter long. Frequent exposure to the cold is associated with



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By implementing even some of these practices, you will start to notice a change in your body as well as a shift in your perspective.

multiple health benefits such as inflammation reduction, improved quality of sleep, improved immune response and metabolism, higher energy levels and heightened mood. With inflammation being one of the biggest contributors to disease, this practice has also been linked to minimizing your chances and the management of some auto-immune diseases.

Check out this quick read at [healthline.com/health/cold-water-therapy](https://www.healthline.com/health/cold-water-therapy) for more information, or feel free to reach out with any questions you may have.

MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is the practice of purposely focusing your attention on the present moment and accepting it without judgement. It is being closely examined scientifically and has been found to be a key element in stress reduction and overall happiness. There are three pillars to mindfulness; Intention (choosing to cultivate your awareness), Attention (to the present moment, sensations, and thoughts) and Attitude (being kind, curious, and non-judgmental). Adapting these pillars can light up parts of our brain that are not normally activated when we're mindlessly running on autopilot, which can be the case for a lot of us. Remember, you are not your thoughts. You have all the control when it comes to how you allow those thoughts to infiltrate. Choose to untether yourself from that voice inside (even though it sounds a lot like someone you know very well) and embrace the joy that will surely follow.

Many of you may be familiar with Paul MacCormack - The Mindful Superintendent. His blog is accessible via [turfnet.com/blogs](https://www.turfnet.com/blogs) and deserves the read. He covers many topics while speaking from personal experience, wisdom and a fresh perspective.

PRACTICING GRATITUDE AND GIVING THANKS

We have all been trained to do a job and to do it well, applying what we have been taught, constantly perfecting and learning new ways - ever evolving! How great is that? We all have it in us to find a solution, make the changes and rely on our colleagues for advice. But let's be honest here, our jobs can be stressful and not everything comes that simply. The key to all of this is keeping an open mind and not giving too much energy away toward the things that are out of our control. This can be obtained just by switching your focus. Encouraging a new perspective. Instead of dwelling on what may be lacking, find gratitude in the abundance of your surroundings and remember to give it thanks. It is all about the choices you make. You are in the driver's seat. 'Quality is not an act; it is a habit' - Aristotle

Three Ways to Practice Gratitude from [calm.com](https://www.calm.com)

1. Notice good things, look for them, appreciate them
2. Savour, absorb, and really pay attention to those good things
3. Express your gratitude to yourself, write it down, or thank someone.

SPENDING TIME IN NATURE & SHINRIN-YOKU

Nature is a marvellous healing space. As much as we are exposed to it every day, it is possible to become immune or desensitised to the beauty that surrounds you. As I scrolled through social media the other day, I came across a reel featuring Douglas James Sr. of the Lummi Nation. His message resonated. "Let nature have its way with you, because all you're going to find is beauty, peace and harmony. Be still and know what the birds are trying to tell you. They're not worried about tomorrow. They're not worried about yesterday. They are right here, right now, rejoicing!"

Translated as "forest bathing" or most literally, "being in the atmosphere of the forest", Shinrin-Yoku has deep roots in Japanese culture. The concept of forest bathing is as such; spend intentional time surrounded by trees, slow down and let your senses experience what is happening all around you. Take the time to sit down, feel the earth beneath you. Find a place to be still and observe. In the last couple years there have been new studies conducted to support this holistic way of healing in managing mental health as well as certain auto-immune diseases.

Want to dive deeper into this theory? Read *Forest Bathing: How Trees Can Help You Find Health and Happiness* By Dr. Qing Li.

SENSORY DEPRIVATION TANKS A.K.A FLOATING

This style of therapy has been around since the 1950's and developed to monitor how the nervous system would respond to being in an environment devoid of all external stimulation. While floating, one lies in water about a foot deep set to 95.5 degrees Fahrenheit (35.2 degrees Celsius) containing approximately 25 percent concentration of Epsom Salts (Magnesium Sulfate) allowing optimal buoyancy. All senses are eliminated. No light, no sound, and floating weightlessly at the body's natural temperature. Benefits from floating are similar to those gained from breathwork and meditation. Reducing anxiety, amplifying relaxation, improving sleep quality, lowering blood pressure and assisting in pain relief. Look for the closest float centre near you and give this experience a go!

By implementing even some of these practices, you will start to notice a change in your body as well as a shift in your perspective. You will experience a response to things as opposed to a reaction, your mind will feel less clouded allowing your focus to be sharp. Think of it as topping up your soils with fertilizer, what is the turfs response? Vigorous growth, rich colour and strength to withstand added stress. For those of you that attended the 2024 Ontario Golf Course Management Conference and sat in on Pat Jones' session, Double-Edge Sword of Superintendent Culture, you may recall him touching base on the topic of work/life balance. He shared an inspiring perspective. He suggests looking at a work/health balance yet not even balancing them but intertwining the two to be cohesive. The takeaway from this session was clear. It is important to reinvent your way of thinking (and doing) for longevity of the greater good in oneself as well as finding ways to become proactive and eliminate the reactive. ■