

MONDAY, MARCH 5, 2018

Newsday

exploreLI

STYLE
'HOW
TO SLAY'
B4

MINDFULNESS CLASSES
TEACH LIERS
TO DE-STRESS **B2**

ALL IN THE FAMILY 50 best places for families on LI newsday.com/family

EW



Doing a joyful stretch in a mindfulness class at The Stress Reduction Center at Long Island Behavioral Medicine in Islandia.

minds at ease

LI meditation classes aim to reduce stress and anxiety

TWO WINGS OF MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

WHEN | WHERE 7:30-9 p.m. Friday, March 23, at Welcome Mat Yoga, 560 Main St., Suite 3, Islip
INFO 631-446-4318, thewelcomematyoga.com
COST \$20

INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS

WHEN | WHERE 7-9 p.m. Wednesday and 9:30-11:30 a.m. Friday at The Stress Reduction Center at Long Island Behavioral Medicine, 1727 Veterans Memorial Highway, Suite 300, Islandia. The next 8-week programs run 7-9:30 Wednesdays March 14-May 2 and 9:30 a.m.-noon March 16-May 4.
INFO 631-656-0472, longislandstressreduction.com
COST Free Intro class (\$495 8-week course)

BY ARLENE GROSS
 Special to Newsday

Put down the phone, close your eyes and be totally still — and quiet — for an hour, maybe two. Sound like torture? That's how it was for Jim Goldfuss of Glen Cove when he first tried a form of meditation called mindfulness a few years ago to deal with stress and anxiety.

"You would close your eyes and you would sit there and within 30 seconds, there was the urge to move, the need to twitch, the pain. The discomfort was so intense for me, that I couldn't relax," says Goldfuss, 52.

During the fourth session, something clicked.

"For the first time in 48 years, I was able to still my mind. And it was the most amazing experience. Up until that point, I didn't realize just how bad my mind was running away with my thoughts, what I worried about, the obsession with things



The Islandia MBSR class meditating

that are going to go wrong in the future. My mind never stopped."

THE ART OF SLOWING DOWN

Mindfulness, says Gabrielle Chiaramonte, a clinical psychologist who runs an eight-week mindfulness program at The Stress Reduction Center in Islandia, "is intentionally paying attention to our experience, without judgment."



The MBSR class at the Islandia Stress Reduction Center.

It's about minimizing distraction, intentionally directing your attention to where you want it to be — right here, right now — says Karyn O'Beirne, who teaches mindfulness meditation classes at Welcome Mat Yoga in Islip.

"We can often direct our attention to the past, when we're trying to remember something, or on the future, when we're trying to plan something," she says. "But mindfulness is specifically putting our attention on purpose in the present moment."

The practice helps us respond — not react — to the challenges of daily life. Chiaramonte says such focused mental discipline is an innate ability that everyone can grow and

strengthen.

But it can be hard.

FINDING THE FOCUS

Although she was skeptical, Kathleen Trocagnoli tried The Stress Reduction Center's mindfulness program in 2016, still grieving from her husband's death four years earlier. Before long, Trocagnoli said she found benefits of the discipline's meditation, gentle movement and discussion.

"It helped me so much," says Trocagnoli, 60, of St. James, who's now working toward certification to teach classes herself.

Goldfuss, meanwhile, uses the mindfulness skills he's learned several times a day.

"You can still get caught up in your thoughts, but my ability to be able to stop them now and just catch myself before they start winding themselves up into bigger and bigger thoughts has been amazing," he says.

ON THE COVER Karina Gimenez-Rua in a meditation pose after a class in mindfulness at The Stress Reduction Center in Islandia.



Dr. Chiaramonte leads mindful movement at the Islandia MBSR class.