Go to Your Heart / Go-to-Neutral

Here are some basics to help you “go to your heart” and Go-to-Neutral in order to build the 3-Cs of hardiness (commitment, control, challenge).

Go to Your Heart

_Become aware of your heart._ It may help to place your hand over your heart (like the Pledge of Allegiance) and imagine that you can visualize your heart.

_“Breathe through your heart”._ Take a deep breath in and visualize your heart filling with good clean air, like a balloon. When you breathe out imagine that you’re breathing out through an area in the center of your body just below your breast bone, called the solar plexus. Breathe slowly, deeply, in through your heart (“heart fills with good clean air”) and out through your solar plexus. Repeat this six or seven times.

_Generate appreciation._ Stressful, annoying or angry thoughts and feelings cannot persist where genuine appreciation is generated for someone you know, a beautiful place in nature, or a peak experience you’ve had.

Picture one of these in your mind’s eye right now. If stressful feelings intrude, gently push them aside. If you can’t focus on the picture of appreciation just return to picturing your heart and “breathing through the heart.” Then, when you are quieted again, picture who or what you appreciate.

Let yourself concentrate on your appreciation of this person, place, or event so that genuine feelings of operation are generated. If you find your mind wandering gently, return your focus to appreciation. Practice holding appreciation in your heart for as long as you can.

You may have to practice generating appreciation a dozen times or more before you can achieve it. If at first you find that you can’t find feelings of appreciation just use a mental attitude of appreciation for the person, place, or event. Research has found that generating appreciation “opens up” a type of broad perspective called intuition. The more you practice the more you move toward intuitive insight. This is foundational to being able to build the commitment, healthy control, and sense of challenge (versus threat) that make up hardiness. Also, whether or not you’ve noticed, your decision to keep practicing breathing through your heart and generating appreciation is a commitment to keeping on. This is a hardy attitude!

Go-to-Neutral

_Take a time-out_ so that you can temporarily disengage from your thoughts and feelings, especially stressful ones. When emotional triggers come up, recognize that you are triggering. As soon as you feel the trigger, tell yourself “time-out!” and step back from the reaction.
**Shift your focus** to the area around your heart. Now feel your breath coming in through your heart and going out through your solar plexus. Practice breathing this way a few times to ease into a time-out in the heart.

**Tell yourself, “Go to Neutral,”** then don’t go one way or the other in your thoughts or feelings about the issue. Hold onto a place of being neutral in the heart until your emotions ease up and your perception relaxes.

Combine going to neutral to reduce waves of stressful emotions with going to your heart to promote intuitive insight. If you pray using prayer (e.g. The Lord’s Prayer) can quiet and deepen intuitive insight even more and you’ll become aware of the “still, small voice” in the heart that offers both strength to go on, and intuitive answers as to what to do.

**References**