

Interoceptive Awareness

by Shoshanna Katzman



Interoceptive awareness is a mindfulness technique that strengthens ability for listening to the body's inner cues. If increasing self-care is one of your New Year resolutions, becoming more aware of your internal body signals is an excellent place to begin. It is a surefire way to become more insightful about what you truly need. Defining and manifesting your ideas and ideals will become easier resulting in a higher level of authentic behavior and balanced emotional state. Partnering with self and others is also strengthened through enhanced ability for picking up subtle messages and delivering upon what is really needed to establish healthy relationships.

Interoceptive awareness provides a 'bodily felt sense' about the overall internal condition of the body or the functioning of a specific organ. Information gained is both conscious and unconscious derived from the brain's processing and integrating of signals relayed from the body. This includes being more aware of bodily functions such as growling of the stomach, beating of the heart or pacing of the breath. Becoming attuned to these sensations, rather than ignoring them, provides the opportunity to tend to the body's physical needs in a timely manner.

This mindfulness technique also includes getting in touch with emotional sensations related through the autonomic system which predominantly governs a person's unconscious actions. This enhances ability to identify and tend to bodily functions such as the sympathetic 'fight or flight' or parasympathetic 'rest and digest' responses. It also improves aptitude to feel underlying anxiety or anger.

Increased ability to tune into and process feelings empowers a person to be their true self and exhibit more authentic behavior. It allows them to come into a more centered, self-assured state of being filled. Enhanced interoceptive awareness, furthermore, enhances the

knack for reading the emotions of others thereby leading to more copacetic relationships. A greater sense of internal peace is fostered due to relating and tending to personal needs and those of others in more appropriate and heartfelt ways.

Chinese medicine providers have been guiding people toward cultivating interoceptive awareness for centuries through acupuncture, Taiji and Qigong. This is a process that begins with concentrating the mind on the lower belly and breathing into one's dantian – a place of highly rotating energy – located approximately three inches below the belly button. Doing so enacts the exact circumstance needed to feel one's feelings along with subtle sensations, cues or movements. It promotes a deeper understanding of what is transpiring within and around, thereby maximizing capacity for inner knowingness. As you lay on the acupuncture table going into a deep state of relaxation, images and feelings surface bringing you closer to knowing who you are at the core of your being. And as you practice the gentle movements of Taiji and Qigong, you breathe into and concentrate on your center and discover more and more about your life essence. This is precisely what draws people back for a repeat performance, the search for self and long-lasting health and well-being.

Making interoceptive awareness an essential part of daily life is a huge step toward establishing a true connection with self. Give yourself this gift for 2023 and beyond.

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