Class 6

Skillfully Responding to Abreactions
Class 6 Agenda

• Defining Abreaction
• Kinds of Abreactions
• What is a Flashback?
• When an Abreaction Occurs, What Should I Do?
• Suicide Awareness and Response
• Working with Your Own Reactions
• Gems/Homework
Yoga is Provocative By it’s Nature
Defining Abreaction

• The purging of emotional tensions; release of tension by recalling trauma, to release unconscious psychological tension by talking about or reliving the events that caused it, in such a way that previously repressed emotions associated with it are released.

• *The word abreaction, to some, may sound intimidating or very dramatic.*

• *It is a release … a cleansing, a healing.*
Kinds of Abreactions

Abreactions can take any number of forms of expression and vary in intensity.

Abreactions may include:

- hard breathing
- startle reflex
- crying softly or loudly
- gasping
- rocking
- trembling
- jerking
- speaking in sleep
Keep in mind…

• Only a small percentage of people will have abreacts.

• Abreacts are a sign that yoga is working.

• Abreacts can be a sign that people feel safe enough to release.
What is a Flashback?

Flashbacks are personal experiences that pop into your awareness, without any conscious, premeditated attempt to search and retrieve this memory.
In Military Culture…

Having an abreaction can be particularly awkward, even shameful.

When you are in the seat of the teacher, you are in the role of an authority.

Be present in a way that helps to alleviate shame and welcome healing.
Honestly…
What concerns you most about a student having an abreaction in your class?
Remember... you have laid the groundwork from the start for this moment.
At the first sign of an abreaction…

Take a breath and welcome your own experience…

Thoughts

Feelings

Sensations
How might you respond to an abreaction?

• Just observe and assess whether you need to “do” anything at all.

• Walk over and stand by the person. Just be there.
Grounding Exercise
Grounding Exercise

• Ask the person to feel their feet, wiggle their toes
• Ask if you can squeeze their feet
• Ask them to look around and describe what they see…in detail
• Ask them to listen to the sounds at that moment and describe to you what they hear
• Ask them to notice sensations of touch and describe them to you
• Ask them what time it is
• Ask them what day it is
• Ask them to describe where they are right now
Things you might want to say...

- “I’m right here. Is there any way I can help?”

- “This experience is a natural part of the healing process. You have the resources and support to let it unfold completely.”

- “It takes time to heal and process all that has happened. This is natural.”

- “You are among friends. You are in a safe place now.”

- “What feelings (sensations, thoughts) are you having right now?”

- “Where in your body do you feel these emotions (sensations, thoughts, images)?”

- “If you feel overwhelmed by material that is emerging, come back to your Inner Resource, that place that you feel calm, safe and relaxed.”

- “Would you tell me about your Inner Resource? Describe it to me. What does it look like? What sounds are in it? Is there anyone there with you?” (After they are there, you can ask them to describe it to you in detail. This helps them disidentify from the upsetting feelings.)

- “Can you be aware of this experience without fighting it for a few moments?”
What if someone wants to leave the room?

We recommend you ask people to stay until the end of class so you can talk with him/her before they leave.
What about the rest of the class?

Incorporate the sounds and sights of the abreaction into the mindfulness practice of the other students…

“What do you notice these sounds bring up in you? What sensations? Thoughts? Feelings?”
Suicide Awareness and Response

• *It is not your job to assess whether someone is suicidal.*

• *However, if a student makes a comment about killing themselves, be prepared to take appropriate action.*
How to Respond to Suicidal Remarks

• Ask the person if he/she has plans for killing themselves.

• Call and/or accompany the person to the mental health professional on your backup plan.

• If they say they have a plan, but you cannot get locate a mental health professional, don’t let them leave alone. Contact a family member or friend to stay with them.

• Do not let the person, if you can help it, leave without placing them in the care of professional help. As a last resort, take them to the nearest emergency room.

• Afterwards, notify your supervisor or manager as soon as possible of what has transpired.
  • Email or call a member of your on-site team to let them know what happened
  • Tell your on-site supervisor or boss as soon as possible
  • Document (if appropriate in your setting)
Working with Your Own Responses
What if you get triggered during class?

Bracketing

Welcoming + Conscious Decision
To Process My Reaction at a Later Time
Write the ACW for this class here:

What were your gems from this class?
Class 6 Homework

Journaling Questions for Reflection

• What is your response to the word “abreaction?”

• Have you ever had what we are defining as an abreaction?

• Recall what that experience was like. What was/would have been helpful or supportive from others in that moment? What was/would not have been helpful or supportive?

• How do you respond when a good friend or family member is having an abreaction?

• What are your concerns about addressing an abreaction in your class?