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Working Therapeutically Between Sessions: Journaling Exercise

Neuroplasticity—Part 1

“Neuroplasticity” is a neurobiological term which refers to the ability of the human brain to “rewire” itself into more positive and adaptive ways of responding to whatever life brings. Research from the field of neurobiology has shown that the following elements are helpful to our brains in this creative and regenerative process. Write out a brief answer to each question in the domains below:

- Relationships:** Below, list 2-3 relationships you experience as stressful or emotionally draining. Then list 2-3 relationships you find to be enjoyable, affirming to you, or enriching in some way.

Draining Relationships

Enriching Relationships

- Sleep:** How do you feel about the *amount* and *quality* of your sleep? Is this something that you could improve in some way?

- Nutrition: In modern North American society, many of us eat recreationally. While that can be soothing in the moment, it may or may not be healthy in the longer term. Think about your diet over a typical week.

- a. What foods are you consuming that are nutritional and helpful that you want to keep?

- b. What foods are lacking in your diet that may be useful to add?

- c. Think about portion size and number of helpings for each main meal. Are you consuming the right amount of food for your activity level?

- d. Few are the people who don't enjoy a snack at some point, or many points, during the day. Do you snack? If not, would you benefit from a snack at some point? If you do, are your snacks nutritionally helpful or harmful?

- ❑ **Aerobic Exercise:** “Aerobic” exercise is defined as “exercise which improves the efficiency of the body’s cardiovascular system in transporting and absorbing oxygen.” That is, exercise that elevates your heart rate and respiration rate versus exercise that only targets increasing muscle tone or strength (e.g. weightlifting). As our economy has moved from agrarian to manufacturing to service to information the amount of physical activity required of the general population has dropped dramatically in the last 100 years. Of course, this does not apply if your work is in agriculture, construction, trades of various sorts, or more generalized labor.

Nevertheless, it might be useful to reflect on some questions:

- a. How do I feel about my overall physical fitness and muscle tone?

- b. What do I notice about my stamina in walking?

- c. Would it feel better to me to have my body in better physical condition? If so, what would be required of me to accomplish that?

- d. What else comes to mind as you consider this area of activity, movement, and exercise?