**Homework in Preparation for Week 4**

**A*. Practice Mindful Listening Exercise***

**B. *Complete “Seeking Supports” Exercise in Preparation for the Next Group***

**C. *Complete Seizure and Doctor’s Appointment Log - Remember to Log Seizure Free When None Occur***

**A*. Mindful Listening Exercise***

Find a sitting position in which the spine can be self-supporting, with your back straight but not stiff.

1. Sit with your shoulders relaxed, head and neck balanced & chin tucked slightly in.

2. Bring your attention to the movements of the breath in the body for a few minutes, until you feel reasonably settled. Then expand your attention to take in the body as a whole, as if the whole body were breathing, helping you to be aware of all the sensations in the interior landscape of the body.

3. Spend a few minutes practicing mindfulness of the breath and body in this way, remembering you can always come back to the breath to anchor yourself if your mind becomes too distracted or overwhelmed.

4. Now, when you are ready, allow the focus of your attention to shift from sensations in the body to listening – being open to sounds as they arise.

5. There is no need to search for sounds or listen for particular sounds. Instead, if you can, simply remain open, so that you are receptive to sounds from all directions as they arise – sounds near, sounds far, sounds in front, behind, to the side, above or below. In this way, you are open to the whole space of sound around you: the ‘soundscape’. Perhaps notice how the obvious sounds can crowd out the more subtle ones; noticing any spaces between sounds – moments of relative quiet.

6. As best you can, be aware of sounds simply as sounds, as raw sensations. Notice the tendency we all have to label sounds as soon as they are received (car, train, voice, air conditioning, radio), and see if it is possible simply to notice this labelling and then refocus on the raw sensations of the sounds themselves

7. You may find that you are thinking about the sounds. See if it is possible to reconnect with direct awareness of their sensory qualities (patterns of pitch, timbre, loudness and duration), rather than their meanings, implications or stories about them.

8. Whenever you notice that your awareness is no longer focused on sounds, gently acknowledge where the mind has moved to and then retune the attention back to sounds as they arise and pass from moment to moment.

9. Then, after you have been focusing on sounds for four or five minutes, let go of your awareness of sounds.

**B. *Complete “Seeking Supports” Exercises in Preparation for the Next Group***

***Seeking Support***

What do we mean when we say, “seeking support”? Most people with NES who are actively working on recovery are attempting to find tools to help them reduce the consequences that non-epileptic seizures have in their lives. They also are often searching for support in learning new ways to overcome other difficulties that are affecting quality of life. You are already seeking support by participating in the NES clinic! Asking for the things which will help you build new ways to cope and respond to challenges will open the doors to understanding ***when*** you need help and knowing ***where*** to find that help.

Many individuals with NES have shared that they feel isolated as a result of their experiences with seizures. They share feelings of frustrations with transportation limitations, worries about experiencing seizures in public, and past experiences of being disregarded or disrespected by people who respond poorly to their seizures. As a result, many find themselves lonely, with limited social connections. Loneliness is a common human experience and although seizures may make this feeling worse for many, seizures are not the sole cause of loneliness. Unfortunately, limited social connections can lead to many challenges including boredom, feeling disconnected, and depression. While everyone has a different understanding of what support looks like and what an ideal social relationship would look like, there is no doubt that humans are designed as social beings. Connection is important, both in its effect on quality of life and in NES recovery.

Individuals with NES have shared that loneliness, depression, boredom, and being treated poorly during a seizure are very common triggers for non-epileptic seizures. We therefore find it very important to talk about isolation, trust, communicating feelings and needs, and understanding what support is, and where to find it. With this exercise you will be asked to reflect on these concepts and to share your thoughts and experiences in the upcoming group.

***Isolation***

Have you struggled with feelings of isolation? Many individual share that their seizures have made isolation more challenging however for others, feeling isolated may have occurred prior to seizures.

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***Trust***

Having trust is critical to establishing supportive relationships and enhancing the ones you may already have. How do you define trust?

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Do you have challenges trusting your needs and feelings with others in your life? If so, why do you think these challenges developed?

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***Needs***

Human beings have basic physical and emotional needs that are necessary in order to flourish! Some examples include:

* Basic human needs such as food, water, shelter
* Feeling safe which means free from emotional/physical harm
* Attention and emotional connection with other living beings
* Right to privacy and a right to a sense of a security
* To belong (to be accepted by those who are important in your life)
* Friendship and family connections
* Physical touch, intimacy, physical connection with others
* To feel empowered to set goals and to feel accomplished when you meet those goals

As difficult as it can be to understand, it is ***our*** responsibility to take control of our life and to take steps in order to achieve self-fulfillment despite any barriers and limitations that we face. Understanding our individual needs and evaluating whether these needs are being fulfilled is a large part of the recovery process.

Many individuals with and without NES struggle to understand their own needs and maybe even the needs of those around them. Learning to understand one’s needs is a journey that can start with self-reflection. Understanding our needs starts in infancy and childhood, where we depend on our caregivers to identify our needs and respond to them. This early human responsiveness to our needs builds a foundation of communication and trust. **Over the years if our needs are neglected or violated, especially if this occurs in childhood, the brain can begin to “tune out” signals of those needs, making it more difficult to identify them.** As with many of the skills we explore during your time in the clinic, the more they are practiced the more the brain will grow these connections and begin to “tune in” again.

**The more we understand our own needs and learn to effectively communicate needs with (ourselves) and others, the more opportunities we have to fulfill them.**

Using some of the above examples, and examples of your own, how would you describe your needs?

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What needs do you feel you have been able to fulfill?

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What needs are difficult for you to understand and to communicate with others?

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Why do you think it is difficult for you to express those needs?

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***What does support look like?***

Another important aspect of seeking support is being able to express emotions and feelings and be willing and able to hear the emotions and needs of the people in your life. Mutual support is part of building a supportive relationship. One of the challenges that people often face, is not necessarily understanding what support feels like. If you have not experienced opportunities where you felt supported, it can be hard to know what that feels like.

Can you describe what a supportive relationship might look like for you?

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What makes a person in your life a “support person”?

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Can you describe any unsupportive relationships in your life?

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Did you recognize that they were not supportive at the time?

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Lastly, it is important when exploring seeking supportive relationships to think about the barriers that can stand in the way. Many obstacles can be things such as:

* Feeling like a burden by asking for support
* Social anxiety
* Fear of rejection
* Blaming others in your life
* Not being able to ask for emotional support
* Passive or aggressive communication styles

Can you think of the obstacles you might be facing in seeking supports? Where did these obstacles originate?

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**C*. Complete Seizure and Doctor’s Appointment Log- Remember to Log No Seizures If This Occurs***