

Linda Lentini  
5 Betsy Road  
Plainville CT 06062

My name is Linda Lentini and I am the Director of Healing From Within (HFW) through Toivo. Toivo, [www.toivocenter.org](http://www.toivocenter.org) is a mind-body center located in the Parkville section of Hartford. We offer virtual and in-person yoga, qigong, meditation, breath practices and other workshops. Toivo means “Hope” in the Finnish language and that is what we try to offer individuals when they attend our classes. At Toivo, we encourage people to come as they are, not worry about costs associated with the workshop, and we strive to provide a safe environment where everyone feels welcomed.

HFW is a program that was designed to integrate mind-body practices into restrictive settings especially psychiatric facilities. It started off as a federally funded program and was sustained by state funding after the initial funding ended as a result of the positive impact the practices have made in patient and staff's lives. We have been offering HFW groups for over 4 years throughout the state of CT. The primary goal of this program is to support patients and staff with their healing and stress resiliency.

HFW groups have been held at Connecticut Valley Hospital and Blue Hills since July 2019. A group usually last around 45 minutes and starts with a grounding practices such as the 5-sense meditation to allow patients and staff an opportunity to step away from the activity on the unit. After the grounding practice the group can pick one of the practices and the HFW instructor will lead that practice. We end the group with a loving kindness meditation or other form of meditation with the hope of giving everyone an opportunity to de-stress and relax during the group. We offer surveys to determine the level of stress at the beginning of the group and the level of stress at the end and 99% of the time everyone's stress level is lowered.

These groups were created to introduce the practices to individuals that could not come to Toivo because of being on an inpatient unit or working. Many patients leave the hospital and come to Toivo to attend classes while in the community. Also, some of the inpatient staff also attend groups on their days off or before their shifts. When we first started the surveys, we noticed that the stress level for staff was just as high as the stress level for patients so Toivo offered a staff self-care training to offer an opportunity for staff to take care of themselves.

One of the aspects of this group is presenting Breath-Body-Mind, [breath-body-mind.com](http://breath-body-mind.com), practices to patients and staff. These practices were developed by Dr. Brown and Dr. Gerbarg, two psychiatrist who have done research about how these practices balance a person's stress response system. All of the practices are easy to learn and empower a person to strengthen their own healing.

HFW groups would be a great and inexpensive addition to the Whiting Forensic milieu and would benefit patients and staff. The HFW staff at Toivo have been holding the groups for 4 years on inpatient units and have a great deal of experience and success with these groups. Stress is one of the leading causes of illness and burnout and HFW groups are a great way to introduce self-care techniques to patients and staff.

Here is a testimonial from one of the psychologists who retired from Greater Bridgeport:

“The Healing From Within project has been a unique and positive experience for me. This project has introduced new alternatives for treatment in a traditional inpatient setting, making it truly a person-centered approach to recovery as clients have the option to choose what types of treatments work best for them. The Healing from Within group has a significant calming effect on the milieu, allowing clients and staff to be more focused and relaxed. Personally, I have experienced a greater feeling of gratitude and acceptance for myself and this allows me to be more empathically connected with all the people I interact with - people in recovery, staff members, my friends and my family.”

Dr. Scott Somerville  
Psychologist  
Greater Bridgeport Community Mental Health Center

Sincerely,

Linda Lentini