

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

*Mindfulness is...
the awareness that arises
from paying attention, on
purpose,
in the present moment,
non-judgementally*

~ Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Coming to Our Senses* (2005)

We will practice several brief meditations that you can use when sitting, walking, laying down, and during daily activities, to help bring calmness.

Here is a short video to introduce you to mindfulness:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_yXe_6mYTA

Learning and practicing mindfulness with meditation can help us:

- *boost positive feelings*
- *enjoy pleasant experiences in daily life*
- *reduce stress, anxiety, & depression*

Benefits from practicing mindfulness may include:

- *improved sleep*
- *coping with intense sensations*
- *mindfulness may help prevent premature birth*
- *may promote healthy infant development*

Mindfulness practice includes breath awareness and noticing thoughts.

Practicing mindfulness helps us notice what is happening inside us (thoughts, feelings, & sensations), and around us (sights, smells, touches, & sounds).

BREATH AWARENESS PRACTICE

Try listening to a free guided meditation to talk you through a breath awareness meditation:

<https://www.mindful.org/a-five-minute-breathing-meditation/>

<http://marc.ucla.edu/mindful-meditations>

If you want to try this with a friend or partner, ask them to read these instructions to you:

Start by allowing your body to become still

Sit up comfortably in a supported position with both feet on the floor

Pay attention to the fact that you are breathing.

Become aware of the movement of your breath as it comes into your body and as it leaves your body.

Simply notice how it feels to be breathing, right now, in this moment.

Pay attention to the sensation of the breath entering the nose and the rise and fall of the chest as the lungs expand.

Notice whether you can feel the breath deep down in your belly.

Feel your belly as it expands gently when you breathe in, and as it falls back towards your spine when you breathe out.

Follow the sensations of each breath. Not trying to do anything, not trying to change how you are breathing, simply being with each in-breath and each out-breath.

As you focus on the sensations of breathing, you will find that from time to time your mind will wander off into thoughts, daydreams, worries, memories, whatever.

When you notice that your attention is not focused on your breathing, without judging yourself, very gently bring your attention back to your breathing, noticing each breath from moment to moment.

Each time you find your mind wandering away from the breath, gently bring it back, back to observing how it feels to be breathing.

The mind can be in the future or in the past, but the breath is always happening right now, in the present moment.

Use your breath to help anchor you in the present moment.

Now as you observe your breathing, you may find from time to time that you are becoming aware of sensations in your body.

As you maintain awareness of your breathing, see if it is possible to expand your awareness so that it includes a sense of your body as a whole as you sit here.

Feel your body, from head to toe, and become aware of all the sensations in your body. Still breathing.

As the practice ends, you might thank yourself for having spent this time taking care of yourself by making time to simply be who you are.

As you move back into the world, allow the benefits of this practice to expand into every aspect of your life

WALKING MEDITATION

Find a place where you can walk 10 paces, or go outside for a walk

- Before you begin walking, take a deep breath and relax your body
- let your arms hang loosely at your sides or clasp your hands in front or behind you (whatever is most comfortable)
- Soften your gaze (not staring at any fixed point)
- Then begin to walk, slowly
- Bring your awareness first to your feet...

Ground

- Bring your awareness to the sensations of your feet and legs, starting with the soles of your feet, as each heel touches the ground, then the base of the foot, then the toes, and then they lift
- You can actually say to yourself, “heel, foot, toes, lift”
- This is a way to connect to the action of walking in the present moment

Come to Your Senses

- Walk slightly slower and begin to open your awareness to all your senses, one by one
- Sight, sound, taste, feeling, smell
- See what is around you, listen to the sounds, taste the air or whatever is in your mouth, feel the warmth, coolness, or breeze on your cheeks, smell the air
- Then stop for a moment and see if you can take in all of the senses

Say a Helpful Phrase

- Recite some sayings while taking a few steps
- For example, take a few steps and, during an in breath, say to yourself, “Breathing in, I have arrived, breathing out, I am home”
- Or “Breathing in, I calm my body, breathing out, I relax”
- Or *make up your own sayings*

SOUNDS AND THOUGHTS

Find a comfortable seated position with your spine straight and shoulders relaxed. You can let your eyes gently close if that is comfortable for you. If not, gaze at a spot nearby slightly in front of you, allowing the eyes to soften. Bring your attention to your breath for a few moments.



Now allow your attention to shift to hearing whatever sounds are around you – sounds that are near, sounds that are far away, sounds in front of you, behind you, on each side of you, above, or below. Notice when sounds arise and when they pass away. Notice any spaces of quiet in between sounds. Just listening.



See if you can hear sounds within sounds.



If you find yourself distracted, gently bring your attention back to noticing sounds as they arise and pass away from moment to moment.

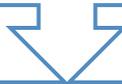
Now shift your attention away from sounds and allow yourself to focus on whatever thoughts come and go in your mind. Just as you did with sounds, try to notice when a thought arises, how long it lingers, and when it passes away.



There is no need to try to make thoughts come or go. If any thoughts bring intense emotions with them—pleasant or unpleasant—try to notice that without clinging to the thought. You can think of your thoughts as clouds moving across a huge sky – sometimes there are many, sometimes just a few.



If you find yourself distracted, gently bring your attention back to noticing thoughts as they arise and pass away from moment to moment.



Now gently bring your attention back to the present moment.

LEAVES ON A STREAM



Find a comfortable seated position with your spine straight and shoulders relaxed. You can let your eyes gently close if that is comfortable for you. If not, gaze at a spot nearby slightly in front of you.

Imagine you are sitting near a stream. The water is flowing by you. There is a big tree next to the stream. Now see leaves floating down the stream. They can be any shape, color, or size.

As thoughts come into your mind, notice each one and then place it on a leaf and watch it float away. It doesn't matter if the thought is happy, painful, or neutral. Place it on a leaf and let it float by. You do not need to hold on to any of the thoughts, and you can let the leaves float at their own pace.

If your mind says, "This is dumb," "I'm bored," or "I'm not doing this right," place those thoughts on leaves too, and let them pass, knowing that there is no right way to do this. Simply noticing what arises in the mind and noticing that it also passes by.

If you notice yourself becoming distracted, gently bring your attention back to the stream.

When you are ready, gently bring your attention back to the room.



LOVINGKINDNESS PRACTICE

Allow yourself to sit comfortably.

Take a few long slow deep breaths, and allow your breathing to return to normal.

As your body becomes still, bring your attention to your breathing.

And become aware of your breath as it comes into your body and leaves your body.

Now bring to mind someone you love (your baby, a relative, a friend, a pet). Sensing this loved one, notice the feelings that arise in your body. It may be simply a smile that spreads across your face or your chest becoming warm.

Now letting go of this person in your imagination but staying aware of the feelings they brought up.

Bring yourself to mind now.

And offer lovingkindness to yourself with these words:

Now offer lovingkindness to someone who supports you, who has "always been on your side."

Bringing this person to mind, imagine them across from you, imagine saying these words to them:

Notice the feelings you have and let them be.

May I be safe and protected.
May I be healthy,
May I live in peace,
No matter what I face.
May I be happy.

May you be safe and protected.

May you be healthy,
May you live in peace,
No matter what you face.

May you be happy.

Now try expanding lovingkindness outward to your family and friends, acquaintances, neighbors, everyone in your city or town, eventually expanding to the world:

May you all be safe and protected.
May you all be healthy,
May you all live in peace,
No matter what you face.
May you all be happy.

BODY SCAN PRACTICE

Begin by bringing your attention into your body

You can close your eyes if that's comfortable to you

You can notice your body, seated, wherever you're seated

Feeling the weight of your body, on the chair, on the floor

And take a few deep breaths

And as you take a deep breath

Bring in more oxygen and livening the body

And as you exhale

Have a sense of relaxing more deeply

You can notice your feet on the floor

Notice the sensation of your feet touching the floor

The weight and pressure, vibration, heat

You can notice your legs against the chair

Pressure, pulsing, heaviness, lightness

Notice your back against the chair

Bring your attention into your stomach area

If your stomach is tense or tight, let it soften

Take a breath

Notice your hands

Are your hands tense or tight?

See if you can allow them to soften

Notice your arms

Feel any sensation in your arms

Let your shoulders be soft

Notice your neck and throat

Let them be soft, relaxed

Soften your jaw

Let your face and facial muscles be soft

Then notice your whole body present

Take one more breath

Be aware of your whole body, as best you can

Take a breath

And then when you're ready

you can open your eyes