

## MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is a very useful technique to calm the nervous system and to develop the skill to disengage from negative, repetitive thought patterns. It is a very allowing practice; there is no need to forcefully “empty” your mind. All thoughts are equally acceptable. We just gently bring our awareness to what the mind is doing, like a kind, neutral observer. We do not judge our thoughts or ourselves for having these thoughts, we just notice and then gently move away from our thoughts to our breath, when we feel ready.

There are various different ways of doing Mindfulness. Again, I would encourage you to try out what works best for you. Here is one technique which I introduce to my clients if they wish. Please feel free to adapt this to your own way of doing things if you like.

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### MINDFULNESS PRACTICE (You can do this for any length of time that feels right for you; I usually recommend a minimum of 10-15 minutes.)

Begin by finding a comfortable position. If you need to shuffle a little, that's ok. I usually sit up straight in a comfortable chair with a soft but firm backrest and my feet firmly planted on the floor, so I can feel it under my feet. This in itself is very grounding.

Close your eyes or softly focus on one spot in the room.

Relax your muscles; your body will continue to relax as you meditate.

Start by noticing sound from outside the room. You can name examples of the sounds you hear aloud or in your head.

Now, slowly bring your attention inwards, into the room that you are sitting in. Notice sounds, notice the temperature.....become aware of the seat that you are sitting on, aware of the way it is supporting you..... Be mindful of the floor and the feeling of your feet resting on it.

When you are ready, bring your attention in further still and notice your body. Are you comfortable sitting, if not, gently move so that you are.

I like to place one hand on my chest and the other on my stomach.

Observe your breathing. Notice how your breath flows in and out. Make no effort to change your breathing in any way, simply notice how your body breathes. Your body knows how much air it needs.

Sit quietly, seeing in your mind's eye your breath flowing gently in.... and out of your body.

When your attention wanders, as it will, just notice this like a neutral, non-judgmental observer. Stand a bit away from your thoughts so as not to merge with them, just notice and observe. Try not to dwell on them.

When you feel ready, gently focus your attention back on your breath. See how your breath continues to flow...deeply....calmly.

Notice the stages of a complete breath cycle...from the in-breath and the rising of your chest and pushing out of your stomach to the exhale with your chest and stomach going down....and the little pause that follows before taking another breath....

Feel the air entering through your nose...notice how it might feel cool when you breathe in.....and warm when you breathe out.

As thoughts come up, allow them to surface, witness them like a neutral observer and return your attention to your breathing when you can.

Sit quietly and practice this.

There is no rule how many times your attention should go back and forth; it is just a question of noticing what is happening, engaging the neural observer.

You might also notice some sensations in your body. You might notice tense muscles or an ache somewhere. You can breathe into this.

You might find that emotions are coming up. As with your thoughts, just gently allow this to happen, sit with the emotions and when you feel ready, turn your attention back to your breath.

Now, as you inhale, count silently...one.

As you exhale, count silently....one.

Wait for the next in breath, and count again....one.

Exhale...one

Inhale....one

Exhale....one

Inhale....one

Continue to count each inhalation and exhalation as “one”.

Notice how your body feels.

See how calm and gentle your breathing is, and how relaxed your body feels.

Keeping your eyes closed or softly focussed, once again, notice the sounds around you. Feel the seat beneath you. Feel your clothes against your body.

Slowly wiggle your fingers and toes and in your own time, open your eyes or focus them and return.