



Mindfulness

----- For Young Adults -----

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3- Minute Breathing Space

- With meditations and the body scan, thoughts often pop up, and keeping a quiet and clear head can be a challenge. This exercise can be the perfect technique for those with busy lives and minds. The exercise is broken into three sections, one per minute, and works as follows:
 1. The first minute is spent on answering the question “how am I doing right now?” while focusing on the feelings, thoughts, and sensations that arise, and trying to give these words and phrases.
 2. The second minute is spent on keeping awareness of the breath.
 3. The last minute is used for an expansion of attention outward from the breath, feeling the ways in which your breathing affects the rest of the body.
- Keeping a quiet mind can be rather challenging, and thoughts will often pop up. The idea is not to block them, but rather to let them come into your mind and then disappear again. Try to just observe them.



3-Step Mindfulness Exercise

Step 1: step out of “auto-pilot” to bring awareness to what you are doing, thinking, and sensing at this moment.

- Try to pause and take a comfortable but dignified posture. Notice the thoughts that come up and acknowledge your feelings, but let them pass. Attune yourself to who you are and your current state.

Step 2: bring awareness to the breathing for six breaths or a minute.

- The goal is to focus attention on one thing: your breath. Be aware of the movement of your body with each breath, of how your chest rises and falls, how your belly pushes in and out, and how your lungs expand and contract. Find the pattern of your breath and anchor yourself to the present with this awareness.





Step 3: expand awareness outward, first to the body then to the environment.

- Allow the awareness to expand out to your body. Notice the sensations you are experiencing, like tightness, aches, or perhaps a lightness in your face or shoulders. Keep in mind your body as a whole, as a complete vessel for your inner self;
- If you wish, you can then expand your awareness even further to the environment around you. Bring your attention to what is in front of you. Notice the colors, shapes, patterns, and textures of the objects you can see. Be present at this moment, in your awareness of your surroundings.

When you are ready to finish the exercise, open your eyes slowly and try to carry that mindfulness with you as you go about your day.

Mindful Seeing

For some, the absence of visual stimuli can feel stifling. After all, a healthy imagination does not come naturally to everyone. The activity of Mindful Seeing may be helpful to anyone who identifies with this.

It is a simple exercise, requiring only a window with some kind of a view. Ask a family member or friend to guide you by the following steps:

- *Step 1:* find a space at a window where there are sights to be seen outside;
- *Step 2:* look at everything there is to see. Avoid labeling and categorizing what you see outside the window; instead of thinking “bird” or “stop sign,” try to notice the colors, the patterns, or the textures;
- *Step 3:* pay attention to the movement of the grass or leaves in the breeze. Notice the many different shapes present in this small segment of the world you can see. Try to see the world outside the window from the perspective of someone unfamiliar with these sights;
- *Step 4:* be observant, but not critical. Be aware, but not fixated;
- *Step 5:* if you become distracted, gently pull your mind away from those thoughts and notice a color or shape again to put you back in the right frame of mind.



The Raisin Exercise

This is a great introductory exercise for beginners to start practicing mindfulness since it can be attempted by anyone with any kind of food (although one with an interesting or unusual texture, smell, or taste is best).

In this exercise, take a few raisins and pretend you have never seen a raisin before. Then pay careful attention to:

- The way the raisin looks;
- How it feels;
- How their skin responds to its manipulation;
- Its smell;
- Its taste.

Focusing on the single object of the raisin is meant to bring your mind to the present, to what is right in front of you. We may be used to raisins, and not used to taking time to actually *notice* them.

“By focusing on the raisin in their hand and making a point to notice everything about it, they are unlikely to be expending energy, time, and attention on worrying or ruminating about other parts of their lives.”

When you follow these instructions and take notice, it is much easier to focus on what is in front of you. If your mind does wander, that is natural too. Gently guide it back to the exercise.



Mindful Listening

Mindful listening is an important skill and can be a great group mindfulness exercise with your family or friends. In general, people thrive when they feel fully “heard” and “seen,” and mindful listening offers a break from focusing on the self or our own response.

Instead, this form of listening can create an inner stillness where both parties feel free of preconceptions or judgments, and the listener is not distracted by inner chatter whilst learning valuable positive communication skills.

The Mindful Listening exercise involves these steps:

- *Step 1:* invite your friends or family members to think of one thing they are stressed about and one thing they look forward to;
- *Step 2:* once everyone is finished, each participant takes their turn in sharing their story with the group about what they just mentioned;
- *Step 3:* encourage each participant to direct attention to how it feels to speak, how it feels to talk about something stressful as well as how it feels to share something positive;
- *Step 4:* Invite them to observe their own thoughts, feelings, and body sensations both when talking and when listening;
- *Step 5:* after each participant has shared, you can break into small groups and answer the questions below. Next, regroup and have a discussion and debrief.



- How did you feel when speaking during the exercise?
- How did you feel when listening during the exercise?
- Did you notice any mind-wandering?
 - If so, what was the distraction?
- What helped you to bring your attention back to the present?
- Did your mind judge while listening to others?
- If so, how did “judging” feel in the body?
- Were there times where you felt empathy?
- If so, how did this feel in the body?
- How did your body feel right before speaking?
- How did your body feel right after speaking?
- What are you feeling right now?
- What would happen if you practiced mindful listening with each person that you spoke with?
- Do you think mindful listening would change the way you interact and relate with others?
- How would it feel if you set the intention to pay attention with curiosity, kindness, and acceptance to everything you said and everything you listened to?