

# Mindful Breathing

One of the main goals of mindful breathing is simply a calm, non-judging awareness, allowing thoughts and feelings to come and go without getting caught up in them. Sit comfortably, with your feet flat on the floor and your spine reasonably straight so you are comfortable in your chair. If you are comfortable to do so close your eyes or focus your eyes on a plain object such as a wall.

- ❖ Bring your attention to your breathing
- ❖ Imagine that you have a balloon in your tummy. Every time you breathe in, the balloon inflates and every time you breathe out, the balloon deflates. Notice the sensations in your stomach as the balloon inflates and deflates. Your stomach rises with the in-breath, and falls with the out breath (pause)
- ❖ Thoughts will pop into your mind, and that's okay, that's just what the human mind does. Simply notice those thoughts then bring your attention back to your breathing (pause)
- ❖ Your attention may also wander to sounds, physical feelings, and emotions, just acknowledge what caught your attention and bring your attention back to your breathing (pause)
- ❖ You don't have to follow those thoughts or feelings, don't judge yourself for having them, or analyse them in any way. It's okay for the thoughts to be there. Just acknowledge those thoughts and bring your attention back to your breathing, you may think this is silly, that's ok too just acknowledge the thought and gently bring your attention back to your breath (pause)

Whenever you notice that your attention has drifted off and is becoming caught up in thoughts or feelings, just acknowledge whatever caught your attention and then gently bring your attention back to your breathing (pause)

It's okay and natural for thoughts to enter into your awareness, and for your attention to follow them. No matter how many times this happens, just gently bring your attention back to your breathing. (pause) Now release your attention from your breathing and imagine us sitting in this room and you sitting on the chair and when you are ready gently open your eyes and bring your attention back to the room.

## Leaves on a Stream

This exercise is about allowing thoughts to come and go without grabbing hold of them and struggling with them.

- ❖ Get into a comfortable position in your chair.
- ❖ Sit upright with your feet flat on the floor, your arms and legs uncrossed, and your hands resting in your lap, palms up or down, whichever is comfortable.
- ❖ Allow your eyes to close gently or focus on a blank wall [pause 10 seconds].
- ❖ Take a few moments to get in touch with the physical sensations in your body, especially the sensations of touch or pressure where your body makes contact with the chair or floor [pause 10 seconds].
- ❖ Spend a few moments focusing on your breath, watching your breath come into your body and then leaving your body.
- ❖ It is ok for your mind to wander away to thoughts, worries, images, bodily sensations, or feelings. Notice these thoughts and feelings and acknowledge their presence. Just observe passively the flow of your thoughts, one after another, without trying to figure out their meaning or their relationship to one another. As best you can bring an attitude of allowing and gentle acceptance to your experience. There is nothing to be fixed, simply allow your experience to be your experience, without needing it to be anything other than what it is [pause 15 seconds].
- ❖ Now in your mind imagine sitting next to a stream [pause 10 seconds]. As you gaze at the stream, you notice a number of leaves on the surface of the water. Keep looking at the leaves and watch them slowly drift down stream past you [pause 15 seconds].
- ❖ Now when thoughts pop into your mind, put each thought on a leaf and observe the leaf as it comes closer to you. Then watch the leaf slowly moving away from you eventually drifting out of sight. Return to gazing at the stream, waiting for the next leaf to float by with a new thought [pause 10 seconds]. If one comes along again watch it come closer to you and then let it drift out of sight. Think whatever thoughts you think and allow them to float freely on each leaf, one by one. Imagine your thoughts floating by like leaves down the stream [pause 15 seconds].
- ❖ You can also allow yourself to take the perspective of the stream bed. Being the stream bed, you hold each of the leaves and notice the thought that each leaf carries as it sails by. You need not interfere with them – just let them flow and do what they do [pause 15 seconds].

Then when you are ready, let go of those thoughts and gradually widen your attention to take in the sounds around you in this room [pause 10 seconds]. Take a moment to make the intention to bring this sense of gentle allowing and self-acceptance into the present moment, and when you are ready, slowly open your eyes.

## Finding Your Centre

This exercise is about grounding ourselves in the present moment. Use this when you start to notice yourself getting agitated or anxious. I would like to start this mindfulness exercise just as we've started the others, making your posture alert while getting comfortable in your chair and putting your feet flat on the floor.

- ❖ Gently close your eyes and begin by focusing your attention on your breathing.
- ❖ Spend the next few moments being aware of your breathing ... Follow each breath as you draw it in and out [allow a minute or two to focus on breathing with some prompting].
- ❖ Now I'd like you to shift your attention to the area of your body that ranges from your hips to your shoulders.
- ❖ Focus on the area of your chest and belly. Narrow that attention further to find a place where you feel centred.
- ❖ Some of you might find it near your heart, and some of you might find it a little lower, closer to your belly or abdomen.
- ❖ Search for that place where you feel a sense of stability or a sense of slight heaviness - a place where your centre of gravity seems to be located. If you are not sure about which place to pick just choose one.
- ❖ As you focus on this place, see if you can allow yourself to just rest there. Spend time gently breathing into this centre ... just being aware of this alive and stable place [Pause and allow time for clients to practice].
- ❖ If you find your mind drifting away, gently bring it back to this centred place, allowing yourself to rest there.
- ❖ Now gently release your attention from this centre and focus your attention on your body as you sit in your chair in this room.
- ❖ Picture the room in your mind's eye, and when you are ready, rejoin the room by opening your eyes.

## Place of Peace or Calmness

This exercise is about taking time out to just be in a calm place within you.

- ❖ I would like everyone to start this exercise by placing your feet squarely on the ground and sitting up in your chair so that your back is strait but not rigid.
- ❖ Make sure that your head feels square to your shoulders and place your arms in a comfortable position at your sides.
- ❖ Gently close your eyes. [Have clients focus on breathing for a few minutes as they have done in the past mindfulness exercises]
- ❖ Now I would like you to turn your attention to your imagination. Picture in your mind a place that you enjoy going to, a place in nature that you consider beautiful, and peaceful. It can be a mountain, or next to a stream or lake, or in a park or back yard area.
- ❖ See if you can allow your imagination to make this place come alive. Notice all the colours and sounds that might be there. Think of this as your place of peace. [Allow time for clients to formulate this image in their mind]
- ❖ Now you can see this place. I would like you to hold this image while also attending to your breath. Imagine that you are sitting in this place and just breathing.
- ❖ Allow yourself to experience this place being full of breathing and noticing, observing all that you see. [Have clients stay with this image and experience for a few minutes, letting them focus on both the image and their breath.]
- ❖ Now releasing your attention from your breathing and this place, I would like you to gently place your attention on the image of this room and this group of people, and when you are ready open your eyes.

## Talking and listening exercise

This exercise is about noticing the observing self within us. For the next 30 secs silently listen in to what your mind is saying. If your thoughts stop, just keep listening ..... So there is a part of your mind that talks – the thinking self – and a part of your mind that listens – the observing self.

The continuous you exercise (observing self)

Complete a mindfulness exercise around the continuous you. Go through each X with the following 4 instructions.

- ❖ Notice X (breath, thoughts, body in chair, scan body head to toe, notice role you are playing at the moment) (client).
- ❖ There's X and there you are noticing X (If you can notice X, you cannot be X (your breath). Your breath changes continually... but the part of you noticing your breath does not change. When you were a child, your lungs were so much smaller... but the you who could notice your breathing as a child is the same you who can notice it as an adult. Your mind will be analysing and debating this, so take a step back and notice where are your thoughts... Where do they seem to be located, are they moving or still, picture or words etc.... As you notice your thoughts be aware that you are noticing them. If you can notice your thoughts, you cannot be your thoughts etc. I don't expect your mind will agree to this and it will debate this throughout the exercise, see if you can let those thoughts come and go like passing cars and engage in the exercise no matter how hard your mind tries to pull you away. Then do the same with body in chair etc (see above list).
- ❖ If you can notice X, you cannot be X.
- ❖ X changes continually, the you who notices X does not change. Notice the role you're playing at the moment (a client), but your roles change continuously, a mother, son, friend, enemy, neighbour etc. If you notice them you cannot be them and there are some roles you will not be again (baby, child etc). But the you who notices your roles does not change, its the same you that noticed them when you were young.
- ❖ We don't have a good name in everyday language for this part of you.. I'm going to call it the observing self, you can call it whatever you like.... and this observing self is like the sky (can finish with the Sky and Weather Metaphor).

Do not analysis the exercise too much as there is a risk of intellectualising it. Can use the observing self to enhance defusion and acceptance anytime during an exercise (can you step back and look at this thought etc from the observing self).

## Making room for feelings

This exercise is useful when you are struggling with feelings (sadness, anxiety, anger, grief etc). Before you start this exercise over think a recent event which has prompted a struggle within yourself. Take a few slow deep breaths and really notice the breath flowing in and out. Quickly scan your body from head to toe, starting at your scalp. Notice the sensations in your head... throat ... neck ... shoulders .... chest ... abdomen .... arms .... hands .... legs ... and feet. Now zoom in on the part of your body where you're feeling this feeling most intensely. If you are not sure just pick a part of your body.

### *Observe*

- ❖ Observe the feeling closely, like a curious scientist who has never encountered anything like this before (5 secs). Observe the sensation carefully .... Let your thoughts come and go like passing cars, and keep your attention on the feeling .... Notice where it starts and where it stops .... Learn as much about it as you can .... If you drew an outline around it, what shape would it have? Is it on the surface of the body or inside you, or both ... How far inside you does it go? ..Where is it most intense or weakest? If you drift off into your thoughts, as soon as you realise it, come back and focus on the sensation ... Observe with curiosity ... How is it different in the center than the edges? Is there any pulsation or vibration? Is it light or heavy? Moving or still, temperature? Are there hot spots or cold spots? ... Notice the different elements within it ... it's not just one sensation ... Notice the different layers.

### *Breathe*

- ❖ As you are observing this feeling, breathe into it .... Imagine your breath flowing into and around this feeling ... Breathing into and around it ....

### *Expand*

- ❖ As you're breathing into it, it's as if, in some magical way, all this space opens up inside you .... You open up around this feeling ... Make space for it .... Expand around it ... However you make sense of that .... Breathing into it and opening up around it

### *Allow*

- ❖ See if you can allow this feeling to be there. You don't have to like it or want it .... Just allow it .... Just let it be .... Observe it, breathe into it, open up around it, and allow it to be as it is..... You may feel a strong urge to fight with it or push it away. If so, just acknowledge the urge is there without acting on it.
- ❖ Continue observing the sensation.. ... Don't try to get rid of it or alter it. If it changes by itself, that's okay. If it doesn't change, that's okay too. Changing or getting rid of it is not the goal. Your aim is simply to allow it ... to let it be.

### *Objectify*

- ❖ Imagine this feeling is an object .... As an object, what shape does it have? ... Is it liquid, solid or gaseous? Is it moving or still? ... What colour is it .... Transparent or opaque? If you could touch the surface, what would it feel like? Wet or dry? Rough or smooth, hot or cold? Soft or hard? ... Observe this object curiously, breathe into it and open up around it .... You don't have to like it or want it. Just allow it .... and notice that you are bigger than this object, no matter how big it gets, it can never get bigger than you.

### *Normalise*

- ❖ This feeling tells you some valuable information.... It tells you that you're a normal human being with a heart .... it tells you that you care .... that there are things in life that matter to you .... And this is what humans feel when there's a gap between what we want and what we've got ... The bigger the gap, the bigger the feeling.

### *Show self-compassion*

- ❖ Take one of your hands and place it on this part of your body (or imagine placing your hand on your body) .... imagine that this is a healing hand ... the hand of a loving friend or parent or nurse .... and feel the warmth flowing from your hand into your body .... not to get rid of the feeling but to make room for it .... to soften up and loosen up around it .... Hold it gently, as if it's a crying baby or a frightened puppy .... Let your hand fall, once again breathe into the feeling and expand around it.

### *Expand Awareness*

- ❖ Life is like a stage show ... and on that stage are all your thoughts, and all your feelings, and everything that you can see, hear, touch, taste, and smell .... and for the last few minutes, we dimmed the lights on the stage and we shined a spotlight on this feeling .... and now it's time to bring up the rest of the lights.... So bring up the lights on your body .... notice your arms and legs and head and neck and notice that you're in control of your arms and legs, regardless of what you're feeling .... Just move them around a little to check that out for yourself and now take a stretch, and notice yourself stretching ... and bring up the lights on the room around you .... Open your eyes, look around, and notice what you can see ... and notice what you can hear .... and notice that there's not just a feeling here .... there's a feeling inside a body, inside a room, inside a world full of opportunity .... and welcome back.

## Mindfully eating a sultana

Throughout this exercise, all sorts of thoughts and feelings will arise. Let them come and go and keep your attention on the exercise.

If you realise that your attention has wandered, briefly note what distracted you. Then bring your attention back to the sultana.

- ❖ Take hold of the sultana.
- ❖ First look at it as if you are a curious scientist who has never seen such a thing before. Notice the shape, the colour, the different shades of colour, the part where light bounces off the surface, the contours, the pit where the stalk was attached.
- ❖ Notice the weight of it in your hand and feel of the skin against your fingers: its texture and temperature.
- ❖ Raise it to your nose and smell it. Notice the aroma.
- ❖ Raise it to your mouth and pause for a moment before biting into it. Bring your attention to what is happening inside your mouth: notice the salivation around your tongue and the urge to bite into it.
- ❖ Now slowly bite it in half, noticing your teeth breaking through the skin and sinking into the flesh and the sounds that makes, the sensation of sweetness on your tongue.
- ❖ Notice your teeth meeting, and the feel of the sultana falling onto your tongue, and the urge to chew it and swallow it.
- ❖ Chew it slowly, noticing the taste and texture. Notice the movement of your jaws, the sound that chewing makes, the sensation of the flesh breaking down. Notice how your tongue shapes the food.
- ❖ Notice your urge to swallow – and as you do swallow, notice the movement in your throat and the sound it makes.
- ❖ And after you've swallowed, pause and notice the way the taste gradually disappears from your tongue. Notice your growing urge to eat the remaining half.
- ❖ Now eat the rest of the sultana in the same way.

## Accepting emotions

When you are feeling an uncomfortable emotion, the first step is to take a few slow, deep breaths, and quickly scan your body from head to tow.

- ❖ You will probably notice several uncomfortable sensations. Look for the strongest sensation – the one that bothers you the most. For example, it might be a lump in your throat, or a knot in your stomach, or an ache in your chest. Focus your attention on that sensation. Observe it curiously, as if you are a friendly scientist, discovering some interesting new phenomenon.
- ❖ Observe the sensation carefully. Notice where it starts and where it ends. Learn as much about it as you can. If you have to draw a line around the sensation, what would the outline look like? Is it in the surface of the body, or inside you, or both? How far inside you does it go? Where is the sensation most intense? Where is it weakest? How is it different in the centre than around the edges? Is there any pulsation or vibrations with in it? Is it light or heavy? Moving or still? What is the temperature?
- ❖ Take a few more deep breaths, and let go of the struggle with that sensation. Breathe into it. Imagine your breath flowing in an around it.
- ❖ Make room for it. Loosen up around it. Allow it to be there. You don't have to like it or want it. Simply let it be.
- ❖ The idea is to observe the sensation – not to think about it. So when your mind starts commenting on what's happening just say "Thanks mind!" and come back to observing.
- ❖ You may find this is difficult. You may feel a strong urge to fight with it or push it away. If so, just acknowledge this urge, without giving into it. [Acknowledging is rather like nodding your head in recognition, as if to say "There you are. I see you".] Once you have acknowledged that urge, bring the attention back to the sensation itself. Don't try to get rid of the sensation or alter it. If it changes by itself, that's okay. If it doesn't change that is okay too. Changing it or getting rid of it is not the goal.
- ❖ You may need to focus on this sensation for anything from a few seconds, to a few minutes, until you completely give up the struggle with it. Be patient. Take as long as you need. You are learning a valuable skill.

Once you've done this scan your body again, and see if there is another strong sensation that's bothering you. If so, repeat the procedure with that one.

You can do this with as many different sensations as you want to. Keep going until you have a sense of no longer struggling with your feelings.

As you do this exercise one or two things will happen: either your feelings will change or they won't. It doesn't matter either way. This exercise is not about changing your feelings. It's about accepting them.

#### **4 Quick steps to Emotional Acceptance**

- ❖ **OBSERVE** Bring awareness to the feelings in your body
- ❖ **BREATH** Take a few deep breaths. Breathe into and around them.
- ❖ **EXPAND** Make a room for these feelings. Create some space for them.
- ❖ **ALLOW** Allow them to be there. Make peace with them.

Some people find it helpful to say silently to themselves "I don't like this feeling, but I have room for it, or It's unpleasant, but I can accept it".

## **Practising Awareness of your Experience**

Often the buzz of mental activity (thoughts, feelings, sensations) draws us in, and we become thoroughly caught up in it. Sometimes this is so strong that we are not aware of our own moment to moment experience. The following mindfulness allows us to practice observing the buzz of mental activity without doing anything about it.

- ❖ Place your feet flat on the floor and sit straight with your shoulders are relaxed and arms resting gently in your lap. Either close your eyes or look at something non-distracting, like a blank wall.
- ❖ *Centre yourself* by focusing your attention on you in this room, in this space and time with us. Visualize your physical location: in your chair, in this room, in this building and in the hospital. Become aware of your body, of the physical position of your arms and legs, and your feet and hands. Notice the feeling of your body pressing against the chair, notice the muscles around your eyes and jaw; notice the feelings of your skin.
- ❖ *Become aware of your breathing.* Follow a breath as it comes in through your nose, travels into your lungs, moves your belly in and out, and leaves in the opposite direction. Ride the waves of your breathing without attempting to alter it: just notice it and pay attention as it happens.
- ❖ Now do nothing but observe what comes up. Practice awareness. As sensations emerge in your body, just watch them. Watch them come and watch them go. Don't grab at anything and don't push anything away.

- ❖ If your mind wanders or you find yourself getting angry or sad or you may want to say something to someone or you may have slipped into fantasy, just notice that you have wandered off and bring yourself back in touch. Notice how you get hooked into the content of your thoughts and start to struggle with them; notice your analytical, judgemental mind. Just notice yourself getting stuck, and bring yourself back again, gently and without judgement. If you have judgements about how well or how poorly you are doing, just notice these too. Your job is simply to practice awareness. This means that if your mind wanders 100 times, then your job is to gently bring it back to this moment 100 times, starting with the present moment.
- ❖ Allow yourself to deeply experience the present moment. Be deeply present with yourself. Even if you are having thoughts or feelings that you don't like, try not to push them away. Adopt an attitude of acceptance towards all parts of your experience: treat every experience gently, even if the experience (the thought or feeling) itself is undesirable. Gently be present with yourself.
- ❖ Now bring your attention back to your breathing and notice yourself sitting in the chair and notice where your body makes contact with the chair and visualise the room in your mind's eye then gently open your eyes and bring yourself back into the room.

## Butterfly Exercise

This exercise is about working with our thoughts and allowing our thoughts to come and go without grabbing hold of them and struggling. Begin with a short period of mindful breathing (eyes closed).

Picture yourself sitting in a field on a warm summer day. There is a slight breeze and you can feel the warmth of the sun on your face." (Allow them a few moments to connect with the scene). As you relax into your experience, your thoughts start to wander and a steady stream of butterflies begin to fly past you. There are a wide variety of butterflies in the stream...Some are familiar, comforting and attractive, while others are unappealing and make you feel uneasy. You feel compelled to reach out and hold onto the familiar butterflies, while pushing away the ugly and unappealing ones." Instruct the client(s) to take their right hand and hold it to them tightly as if they are embracing the comforting butterflies. Also instruct them to take their left hand and begin swatting away the unappealing ones. Allow them to do this for a few moments and notice how this feels. Notice your thoughts and sensations in your body as you do this.

(Allow 1-2 minutes or longer if appropriate, to engage in this struggle).

"As you continue to struggle, you slowly begin to realize that those you had been trying to push away, now outnumber those you were fighting so hard to hold on to."

"Thoughts can be like the butterflies in this exercise. If you hold onto them too tightly or attempt to push them way, they will overwhelm you or remain lifeless in your hands. However, if you are willing to begin observing thoughts (regardless of how they make you feel) as if they are butterflies landing in the palm of your hand, they will eventually fly away, making room for other thoughts and experiences to present themselves."

# Three Minutes of Mindfulness

## First Minute:

- ❖ Sit in a comfortable position, close your eyes, and take a couple of deep breaths to relax. During the first minute try to simply notice your thoughts and feelings.
- ❖ Imagine a “bubble of awareness”, that is only the size of your head and heart. What are you thinking about? What are you feeling right now? Give yourself permission to focus on noticing your thoughts and feelings as they occur. Once you have noticed them, do your best not to engage them, but simply allow them to move on and leave your “bubble of awareness” on their own.
- ❖ Continue through the rest of this first minute by noticing whatever thought or feeling arises next.

## Second minute:

- ❖ During the second minute expand your bubble of awareness to include your physical sensations. As you do this maintain your awareness of thoughts and feelings.
- ❖ Add your physical self to your frame of awareness and simply notice. What does it feel to be in your body right now? What sensations do you notice? Again, just note them and then allow them to move on.
- ❖ Do your best to allow the sensations to move on just as easily as they first arose.

## Third minute:

- ❖ In the final minute, again expand your “bubble of awareness” this time to include the space around you. As you do maintain your awareness of thoughts and feeling as well as your physical sensations.
- ❖ Notice the room area around you. What do you hear? What do you smell? What do you feel? What is it like to exist right here in this space in this very moment?
- ❖ Notice the stimuli of your present space and then allow them to move from your focus.
- ❖ As the first minute comes to a close, bring your attention back to your breath and slowly open your eyes.

# Simple Ways to Get Present

## Take Ten Breaths

This is a simple exercise to centre yourself and connect with your environment. Practice it throughout the day, especially any time you find yourself getting caught up in your thoughts and feelings.

1. Take ten slow, deep breaths. Focus on breathing out as slowly as possible until the lungs are completely empty—and then allow them to refill by themselves.
2. Notice the sensations of your lungs emptying. Notice them refilling. Notice your rib cage rising and falling. Notice the gentle rise and fall of your shoulders.
3. See if you can let your thoughts come and go as if they're just passing cars, driving past outside your house.
4. Expand your awareness: simultaneously notice your breathing and your body. Then look around the room and notice what you can see, hear, smell, touch, and feel.

## Drop Anchor

This is another simple exercise to centre yourself and connect with the world around you. Practice it throughout the day, especially any time you find yourself getting caught up in your thoughts and feelings.

1. Plant your feet into the floor.
2. Push them down—notice the floor beneath you, supporting you.
3. Notice the muscle tension in your legs as you push your feet down.
4. Notice your entire body—and the feeling of gravity flowing down through your head, spine, and legs into your feet.
5. Now look around and notice what you can see and hear around you. Notice where you are and what you're doing.

## Notice Five Things

This is yet another simple exercise to centre yourself and engage with your environment. Practice it throughout the day, especially any time you find yourself getting caught up in your thoughts and feelings.

1. Pause for a moment
2. Look around and notice five things that you can see.
3. Listen carefully and notice five things that you can hear.
4. Notice five things that you can feel in contact with your body (for example, your watch against your wrist, your trousers against your legs, the air on your face, your feet upon the floor, your back against the chair).
5. Finally, do all of the above simultaneously

## Acceptance of Thoughts and Feelings Exercise Instructions

- ❖ First, I would like to ask your permission to do another experiential exercise. Are you willing to do that? [Get clients' permission and then move on.]
- ❖ Go ahead and get in a comfortable position in your chair. Sit upright with your feet flat on the floor, your arms and legs uncrossed, and your hands resting in your lap (palms up or down, whichever is more comfortable). Allow your eyes to close gently [pause 10 seconds].
- ❖ Take a few moments to get in touch with the movement of your breath and the sensations in the body [pause 10 seconds].
- ❖ Bring your awareness to the physical sensations in your body, especially to the sensations of touch or pressure, where your body makes contact with the chair or floor [pause 10 seconds].
- ❖ Now, slowly bring your attention to the gentle rising and falling of your breath in your chest and belly. Like ocean waves coming in and out, your breath is always there. Notice its rhythm in your body [pause 10 seconds].
- ❖ Notice each breath. Focus on each inhale ... and exhale [pause 10 seconds]. Notice the changing patterns of sensations in your belly as you breathe in, and as you breathe out [pause 10 seconds].
- ❖ Take a few moments to feel the physical sensations as you breathe in and as you breathe out [pause 10 seconds].
- ❖ There is no need to try to control your breathing in any way—simply let the breath breathe itself [pause 10 seconds]. As best you can, also bring this attitude of generous allowing and gentle acceptance to the rest of your experience. There is nothing to be fixed, no particular state to be achieved. As best as you can, simply allow your experience to be your experience, without needing it to be other than what it is [pause 15 seconds].
- ❖ Sooner or later, your mind will wander away from the breath to other concerns, thoughts, worries, images, bodily sensations, planning, or daydreams, or it may just drift along. This is what minds do much of the time. When you notice that your mind has wandered,

gently congratulate yourself—you have come back and are once more aware of your experience! You may want to acknowledge briefly where your mind has been (Ah, there's thinking or there's feeling). Then, gently escort your attention back to the sensation of the breath coming in and going out [pause 10 seconds]. As best you can, bring a quality of kindness and compassion to your awareness, perhaps seeing the repeated wanderings of your mind as opportunities to bring patience and gentle curiosity to your experience [pause 15 seconds].

- ❖ When you become aware of bodily sensations and feelings, tension, or other intense sensations in a particular part of your body, just notice them, acknowledge their presence, and see if you can make space for them [pause 10 seconds]. Do not try to hold on to them or make them go away [pause 10 seconds].
- ❖ See if you can open your heart and make some room for the discomfort, for the tension, for the anxiety, just allowing them be there [pause 10 seconds]. Is there enough space in you to welcome in all of your experience? [pause 15 seconds]
- ❖ Watch the sensations change from moment to moment. Sometimes they grow stronger [pause 10 seconds], sometimes they stay the same [pause 10 seconds], and sometimes they grow weaker—it does not matter [pause 10 seconds]. Breathe calmly in to and out from the sensations of discomfort, imagining the breath moving in to and out from that region of the body [pause 10 seconds]. Remember, your intention is not to make you feel better but to get better at feeling [pause 15 seconds].
- ❖ If you ever notice that you are unable to focus on your breathing because of intense physical sensations of discomfort in your body, let go of your focus on the breath and shift your focus to the place of discomfort. Gently direct your attention on and into the discomfort and stay with it, no matter how bad it seems [pause 10 seconds]. Take a look at it. What does it really feel like? [pause 10 seconds] Again, see if you can make room for the discomfort and allow it to be there [pause 10 seconds]. Are you willing to be with whatever you have? [pause 15 seconds]
- ❖ Along with physical sensations in your body, you may also notice thoughts about the sensations and thoughts about the thoughts [pause 10 seconds]. You may notice your mind coming up with evaluative labels such as “dangerous” or “getting worse.” If that happens, you can thank your mind for the label [pause] and return to the present experience as it is, not as your mind says it is, noticing thoughts as thoughts, physical

sensations as physical sensations, feelings as feelings—nothing more, nothing less [pause 15 seconds].

- ❖ To help you experience the difference between yourself and your thoughts and feelings, you can name thoughts and feelings as you notice them. For instance, if you notice you are worrying, silently say to yourself, “Worry ... there is worry” just observing worry and not judging yourself for having these thoughts and feelings [pause 10 seconds].
- ❖ If you find yourself judging, just notice that and call it “Judging ... there is judging” and observe that with a quality of kindness and compassion [pause 10 seconds]. You can do the same with other thoughts and feelings and just name them as planning, reminiscing, longing, or whatever you experience. Label the thought or emotion and move on [pause 10 seconds]. Thoughts and feelings come and go in your mind and body. You are not what those thoughts and feelings say, no matter how persistent or intense they may be [pause 15 seconds].
- ❖ As this time for formal practice comes to an end, gradually widen your attention to take in the sounds around you ... notice your surroundings [pause] and slowly open your eyes with the intention to bring this awareness to the present moment and into the upcoming moments of the day.

## Centring Exercise: Values and commitment

*This exercise will help us focus on where we are right now and why we are here.*

Get in a comfortable position in your chair.

- ❖ Sit upright with your feet flat on the floor, your arms and legs uncrossed, and your hands resting in your lap. Allow your eyes to close gently or gently focus on a wall [pause 10 seconds].
- ❖ Take a couple of gentle breaths: in...and out—in...and out. Notice the sound and feel of your own breath as you breathe in [pause] and out [pause 10 seconds].
- ❖ Now place your attention to being inside this room. Notice any sounds that may occur inside the room [pause] and outside [pause 10 seconds].
- ❖ Notice how you are sitting in your chair [pause 10 seconds].
- ❖ Focus on the place where your body touches the chair, what are the sensations there? How does it feel to sit where you sit? [pause 10 seconds]
- ❖ Next, notice the places where your body touches itself [pause 10 seconds].
- ❖ Notice the spot where your hands touch your legs. How do your feet feel in the position that they are in? [pause 10 seconds]
- ❖ What sensations can you notice in the rest of your body? If you feel any sensations in your body, just notice them and acknowledge their presence [pause 10 seconds].
- ❖ Also notice how they may, by themselves, change or shift from moment to moment. Do not try to change them [pause 10 seconds].
- ❖ Now let yourself be in this room. See if you can feel the investment of you, me and everyone else in this room—what we are here for [pause 10 seconds].
- ❖ If you are thinking this sounds weird, just notice that and come back to the sense of integrity in this room. Be aware of the value that you, me and everyone is serving by being here [pause 10 seconds].
- ❖ See if you can allow yourself to be present with what you are afraid of. Notice any doubts, reservations, fears, and worries [pause 10 seconds]. See if you can just notice them, acknowledge their presence, and make some space for them, imagine this in any way that works for you [pause 10 seconds].
- ❖ You don't need to make them go away or work on them [pause 10 seconds].
- ❖ Now see if for just a moment you can be present with your values and goals. Why are you here? Where do you want to go? What do you want to do? [pause 10 seconds]

Then, when you are ready, let go of those thoughts and gradually widen your attention to take in the sounds around you [pause 10 seconds] and slowly open your eyes with the intention to bring this awareness to the present moment and the rest of the day.

## Compassion Mindfulness (5-10 mins)

I would like you to start this exercise just as we have started the others, making your posture alert while getting comfortable in your chair..... Gently close your eyes and begin by focusing your attention on your breathing. Spend these next few moments being aware of your breathing .... Follow each breath, becoming your breathing. (allow 1-2 minutes to focus on breathing).

Now I would like you to shift your attention and spend a few moments thinking back on the struggle you have had with respect to your anxiety/sadness etc and other painful events in your life ..... notice how long you have been in a place of struggle .... Notice the emotional battles and the desires to have it all be different ..... As you look back, also think about how much you have needed to be understood, accepted, and loved during these difficult times (pause for 1-2 mins).

Now imagine that you are as large as the universe and that you have all of the capacity to hold these struggles, all the capacity to provide the warmth, acceptance, and love that was needed then and is needed now. Imagine that from this place of being as large as the universe, you could take a blanket of warmth and acceptance and wrap it around this struggle, letting it be what it is while holding it with compassion. Imagine this place for the next few moments ..... Imagine that you can hold this struggle and be 100 percent acceptable and lovable. For these next few moments you are whole. (pause and let the client practice for several minutes; you may want to remind them that they have the capacity to offer compassion any time).

Now, gently focus your attention on your body sitting in the chair, in this room.... Picture the room in your mind's eye, and when you are ready, rejoin the room by opening your eyes.

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