

# Mindfulness Exercises

The complexity of a movement disorder can leave you feeling scattered. Your thoughts and emotions may leave you feeling stressed and anxious. Mindfulness practice is about bringing your awareness to the here-and-now, observing whatever presents itself.

Negative past experiences and fears of the future can influence your emotions. You can use mindfulness exercises to root your mind in the present moment and deal with life's challenges in a calm and clear mind.

To better help you cope with challenging thoughts and emotions you can practice cultivating a moment-by-moment awareness of your surroundings.

Here is a chance to take a few minutes each day to cultivate mental spaciousness, working towards a positive mind-body balance.

This handout covers exercises that take minimal effort and can be done anywhere.

- Mindful breathing
- Mindful observation
- Mindful awareness
- Mindful listening
- Mindful immersion
- Mindful appreciation
- Body scan



Not all of these exercises may be meaningful to you, try them all to find which one(s) work for you.

# Mindfulness Exercises

## 1. Mindful Breathing

This exercise can be done standing up or sitting down, anytime or anywhere.

➤ You will need to be still and focus on your breath for approximately 1 minute.



1. Start by slowly breathing in and out, the breath cycle takes about 6 seconds, in through the nose and out through the mouth.

2. As you let your breath flow effortlessly in and out, let go of your thoughts.

3. By staying present with your breath, allow your thoughts to come and go.

4. Notice when you find your thoughts have left your breath and are on pending tasks or other worries. Gently bring your thoughts back to your breath.

5. Be purposeful in focusing on the sense of awareness on your breath - entering through your nose, moving to fill your lungs. Keep your awareness as your breath leaves your body - through the mouth, taking away stress and anxiety.

➤ If you found 1 minute of this exercise beneficial, why not try increasing to 2 or 3 minutes?

# Mindfulness Exercises

## 2. Mindful Observation

This is an incredibly powerful exercise to help you notice your environment, appreciating the simple things. As you are busy with many life activities, you can sometimes disconnect from the beauty of the natural environment.

Mindful observation can be particularly useful when the symptoms of your disorder dominate most of your waking moments.

1. First, choose a natural object in your environment and focus on watching it for a minute or two. It can be anything from the clouds in the sky to a rock on the ground.
  2. Simply relax and watch for as long as your concentration will allow, doing nothing but noticing the object.
  3. Look at the object as if you are seeing it for the first time. Allow yourself to be consumed by the object as you explore every aspect of its formation.
- You may find yourself connecting to the energy of the object, allow this to happen.



# Mindfulness Exercises



Happiness is found  
in the simplest of things

## 3. Mindful Awareness

This mindful awareness exercise brings an appreciation for the simple everyday tasks.

There is so much you do on auto-pilot, multiple times a day. Auto-pilot activities can be physical actions such as opening a door, or they can be a negative or intrusive thought, or a smell you enjoy.

- When you touch the doorknob to open the door, take a moment and be mindful. Where are you, what are you feeling in the moment, and where is this door leading?
- Bring awareness to the process leading to this action. Slow down the process. Slow down the thought that is leading the brain to send the message to parts of the body, leading to the action of opening the door.

Another example: each time you have a negative thought, choose to stop and take a moment. Identify the thought as not helpful and let go of it as negativity.

Take occasional moments to stop and cultivate purposeful awareness of what you are doing. Interrupt daily tasks from auto-pilot, create a pause for mindful awareness.



Mind Full, or Mindful?

# Mindfulness Exercises

## 4. Mindful Listening

This exercise trains the mind to stay in the moment and not be drained by past experiences and preconceptions. Mindful listening is a non-judgemental way to listen to the sounds around you.



What we feel is directly influenced by what we experience in our past. A song or a sound from a particularly upsetting experience is an example.

1. Choose a piece of music from a neutral standpoint, where there are no preconceptions attached. It could be a piece of music you have not heard before or a radio station that catches your attention.
2. With your eyes closed, maybe with the use of headphones, get drawn into the music. Ignore the urge to judge the music by the genre, title or artist. Instead, allow for a neutral journey of the sound for the duration of the song.
3. Take the chance to explore every aspect of the song, giving your awareness permission to 'dance' with the sound waves.
  - Your exploration of the song may include separating each instrument or sound in your mind. You may even find yourself analyzing the vocals and instruments - the voice, tone, range or dynamics.
  - With this exercise, listen intently, permitting yourself to become entwined with the composition without preconception or judgement. Don't think, hear.

# Mindfulness Exercises

## 5. Mindful Immersion

The days can often become routine, where you move through tasks from one to the other. *Mindful immersion* is an exercise in cultivating contentment in the moment, breaking the cycle of the day.

Rather than anxiously wanting to get through the everyday routine tasks, take the opportunity to experience it like never before.

For example: if you are going for a walk, pay attention to every detail of the activity.

Create an entirely new experience by noticing every aspect of the activity and your actions.

Pay attention to your stride, sensing the muscles you are using, possibly change the way you are making your stride.

The idea is to get creative and discover new experiences with a familiar routine task.

Become fully immersed in every step of your task instead of focusing on finishing it by just labouring through. Here you are taking the task beyond routine, aligning yourself with it physically, mentally and spiritually.

Who knows, you might even come to enjoy going for a walk or cleaning your house.



STOP, BREATHE & THINK

# Mindfulness Exercises

## 6. Mindful Appreciation

When several things are going wrong, it is challenging to see and appreciate some of the good stuff in your day. Here is an exercise to help with noticing 5 things in your day to appreciate.

Choose 5 things to appreciate by the end of the day, use a notepad to list these and check it at the end of the day.

In this exercise, you express gratitude for the seemingly insignificant things in life, the things necessary to your life, but rarely get a second thought.

For example: the brain sends parts of your body messages to get it to move, and your clothes provide you warmth, but:

- Do you know how these things/processes work?
- Have you ever acknowledged how these things benefit your life and the lives of others?
- Have you ever stopped to notice the finer, more intricate details?
- Have you sat down and thought about the relationships between these things and how interconnected they are?

For the 5 things you have chosen, find out more about them and truly appreciate how they support your life.



This material has been adopted from Alfred James ([www.pocketmindfulness.com](http://www.pocketmindfulness.com))

# Mindfulness Exercises

---

## 7. Body Scan

The goal of the body scan exercise is to bring awareness to your physical self without judgement. You are reconnecting with your body to notice sensations - with the intent to notice and relax.

As you scan your body observe different areas of your body and describe the sensations.

This exercise can be done while sitting or lying down, with your eyes open or closed, whichever is comfortable.

1. Begin at the feet. Take a few deep breaths, bringing your awareness to your body in its position.
2. Notice your feet, feeling any support by the floor, any sensation, temperature.
3. Bring awareness to your legs, what areas are touching or feel supported?
4. Notice your abdomen area, is it tense or relaxed? Was there any change happening when you brought your awareness to this area? Allow tension in this area to soften.
5. Notice your arms and any sensations. Allow your shoulders and arms to relax, releasing tension.

*continued on next page..*



# Mindfulness Exercises

## **Body Scan** *continued...*

6. Soften the area of the neck, throat, and jaw, noticing your breath's sensation going in and out of the lungs.
7. Let the face and facial muscles relax and soften, taking a couple of deep breaths.
8. Now noticing your whole body, take another few deep breaths.
9. When you are ready, open your eyes if they have been closed for the exercise.

