

What you can do to mind yourself & support a sense of wellness

Mindfulness Exercises : Challenging Thoughts : Relaxation Techniques

Mindfulness Meditation

When dealing with day-to-day stressors in life, it is important to have an outlet that allows you re-ground yourself in the present moment. It is easy to get carried away with thinking about your concerns, responsibilities, and other things that cause stress. That is why it is important to have mindfulness exercises ready to use when you are beginning to feel stressed, overwhelmed, or not at your best.

Consider trying the following mindful meditation exercises the next time you feel stressed or overwhelmed:

Walking Meditation

- Pick a route outside to take a walk. While you are on the walk, take in what's around you. Notice the different plants, buildings and people, the smells that you are surrounded by (the bakery, flowers, fresh cut grass, etc.), wave to or exchange a smile with your neighbors, etc.
- Do not allow your racing negative thoughts to take away from using your senses to be in the moment. Use this time to focus on the present. Remind yourself that right now, in this moment, when you are on your walk, nothing will be settled, so you can reflect on what you need to help yourself stay well.

Body Scan

A body scan is a great way to help you bring yourself to your present moment. A body scan is particularly helpful in situations in which you are feeling despondent or completely overwhelmed. To perform a body scan:

1. Find a comfortable seated position. Close your eyes.
2. Take notice of your body, what is your posture like? Notice where your hands and feet are placed.
3. Begin to flare and constrict your fingers and toes. Feel the flow of your fingers and toes and the stretch felt in your hands and feet.
4. Begin to slowly roll your head clockwise, feeling the weight of your head fall onto your spine and neck. Roll your head clockwise 3 times before switching direction for another three turns.
5. Imagine an electrical pulse through your body, beginning at your toes, traveling up to your knees, through your hips and up to the top of your head. Imagine that same impulse traveling back down, splintering at the shoulders to send a similar pulse through the arms, before returning to the spine to flow down through the legs and toes. Repeat 2 times.
6. Repeat step 4, then step 3, then step 2
7. Slowly open your eyes. How do you feel?

Object Meditation

If you tend to be a more logical, concrete, or visual person, it helps to incorporate things that will stimulate the senses when meditating. Use the following items to help ground yourself and stay present in the moment:

- **Visual Aid:** a moving or changing light (like a lava lamp), a soothing painting, or even staring at the wall (seriously, it works!)
- **Auditory Aid:** soft and soothing music, white noise, a track with natural sounds
- **Tangible Aid:** silly putty, a fidget spinner, rubber bands, yarn
- **Scented Aid:** scented candles, cooking foods, scented oils, fragrances

THOUGHTS are **NOT** FACTS PRACTICE

When you put some space between you and your reaction, it changes your relationship to your thoughts—you can watch them come and go instead of treating them as matter of fact.

If you're stuck on a negative thought, ask yourself:

1

Is it true?

Often the answer is, "Well, yes." This is the brain initially reacting—the autopilot you live with and believe is you.

2

Is it **absolutely true?**

Is this thought 100% accurate? Can you see the thought in a different way?

3

How does **this thought make me feel?**

Notice any storylines you're holding onto, and name your feelings: *sad, angry, jealous, hurt.*

4

What would **things be like if I didn't hold this belief?**

Imagine possible benefits to your relationships, energy levels, and motivation.

Relaxation Techniques

Grounding Exercise: Feet, Seat & Back

Focus on sensing your Feet against the floor, your Seat in your chair & your Back against the back of your seat and take 5 slow breaths while trying to hold your attention on your body in your seat – changing your posture to feel more comfortable if needs be.

Bringing your attention from Internal to External Awareness and repeat

Your breathing, heart rate, temperature, sounds from your stomach, your breath, the sense of your body resting against your chair, or on your bed. Alternate to your sense of your surroundings – smells, sounds, sights. – and alternate again to internal awareness.

The Relaxing Sigh

Breathe in deeply and deliberately let out a slow audible sigh and repeat 5 times

Body Scan

Bring your focus to how your body feels starting at your feet making your way, pausing on each part of the body until you make your way to your head. Once at your head then visualise a deep nourishing breath travelling all the way down through your body and back up to come out through your mouth. Repeat 3 breaths.

Breathing Exercises

5-2-7 Breathing

In through your nose for 5 seconds, hold the breath for 2 seconds, and exhale through your mouth for 7 seconds and repeat.

Letting go of tension:

- Sit comfortably in a chair with your feet on the floor
- Breathe in deeply into your abdomen and say to yourself “Breathe in relaxation”. Let yourself pause before you exhale.
- Breathe out from your abdomen and say to yourself “Breathe out tension”. Pause before you inhale
- Use each inhalation as a moment to become aware of any tension in your body.
- Use each exhalation as an opportunity to let go of tension

Alternative Breathing

- Sit comfortably with good posture
- Rest the index and second finger on your right hand on your forehead
- Close your right nostril with your thumb
- Inhale slowly and soundlessly through your left nostril
- Close your left nostril with your ring finger and simultaneously open your right nostril
- Exhale slowly and soundlessly and as thoroughly as possible through your right nostril
- Inhale through your right nostril
- Close your right nostril with your thumb and open your left nostril
- Exhale through your left nostril
- Inhale through your left nostril, beginning the next cycle

(Begin by doing 5, then slowly raise it to between 10 – 25 cycles)