

## **COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING**

### **III. Cognitive Restructuring Techniques**

#### **C. Mindfulness**

- a) What is mindfulness?**
- b) Mindfulness Meditation**
- c) Mindfulness Exercises**
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# What is Mindfulness?

**Mindfulness:** a state of nonjudgmental awareness of what's happening in the present moment, including the awareness of one's own thoughts, feelings, and senses.

## Components of Mindfulness

**Awareness.** During a state of mindfulness, you will notice your thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations as they happen. The goal isn't to clear your mind or to stop thinking—it's to become aware of your thoughts and feelings, rather than getting lost in them.

**Acceptance.** The thoughts, feelings, and sensations that you notice should be observed in a nonjudgmental manner. For example, if you notice a feeling of nervousness, simply state to yourself: "I notice that I am feeling nervous". There's no need further judge or change the feeling.

## Benefits of Mindfulness

Reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety

Improved memory, focus, and mental processing speed

Improved ability to adapt to stressful situations

Greater satisfaction within relationships

Reduced rumination (repetitively going over a thought or problem)

Improved ability to manage emotions

## Mindfulness Practice

**Note:** Mindfulness is a state of mind, rather than a particular action or exercise. However, without practice, mindfulness is difficult to achieve. These techniques are designed to help you practice.

### Mindfulness Meditation

Sit in a comfortable place, and begin paying attention to your breathing. Notice the physical sensation of air filling your lungs, and then slowly leaving. When your mind wanders—which it will—simply notice your thoughts, and turn your attention back to breathing.

### Mindfulness Walk

While walking, make a point to practice mindfulness. Start by noticing how your body moves and feels with each step. Then, expand your awareness to your surroundings. What do you see? Hear? Smell? Feel? This technique can also be expanded to other daily activities.

### Body Scan

Pay close attention to the physical sensations throughout your body. Start with your feet, and move up through your legs, groin, abdomen, chest, back, shoulders, arms, hands, neck, and face. Spend anywhere from 15 seconds to 1 minute on each body part.

### Five Senses

Make a conscious effort to notice the present moment through each of your senses.

- 5 things you see
- 4 things you feel
- 3 things you hear
- 1 thing you taste
- 1 thing you smell

# Mindfulness Meditation

The goal of **mindfulness meditation** is simple: to pay attention to the present moment, without judgement. However, as you practice, you'll find that this is easier said than done.

During mindfulness meditation, you will focus on your breathing as a tool to ground yourself in the present moment. It's normal that your mind will wander. You'll simply bring yourself back into the moment by refocusing on your breathing, again and again.

**Follow the instructions below to begin practicing mindfulness meditation.**

## Time & Place

Aim to practice **daily** for **15-30 minutes**. More frequent, consistent, and longer-term practice leads to the best results. However, some practice is better than no practice.

Find a time and place where you are unlikely to be interrupted. Silence your phone and other devices, and set a timer for your desired practice length.

## Posture

- ❖ Sit in a chair, or on the floor with a cushion for support.
- ❖ Straighten your back, but not to the point of stiffness.
- ❖ Let your chin drop slightly, and gaze downward at a point in front of you.
- ❖ If in a chair, place the soles of your feet on the ground. If on the floor, cross your legs.
- ❖ Let your arms fall naturally to your sides, with your palms resting on your thighs.
- ❖ If your pose becomes too uncomfortable, feel free to take a break or adjust.

## Awareness of Breathing

Because the sensations of breathing are always present, they are useful as a tool to help you focus on the present moment. Whenever you become distracted during meditation, turn your focus back to breathing.

Notice the sensation of air as it passes through your nose or mouth, the rise and fall of your belly, and the feeling of air being exhaled, back into the world. Notice the sounds that accompany each inhalation and exhalation.

## Wandering Mind

It's normal that your thoughts will wander during mindfulness meditation. At times, it might feel like a constant battle to maintain focus on your breathing. Don't worry—that's normal. Instead of struggling against your thoughts, simply notice them, without judgment. Acknowledge that your mind has wandered, and return your attention to breathing. Expect to repeat this process again and again.

# Mindfulness Exercises

Now, pick up the food. Notice the weight, and how the food feels against your skin. Roll the object between your fingers, or roll it in your hand, and notice its texture. Notice if it's smooth, rough, slick, soft, firm or if it has any other properties. Hold the food to your nose, and pay attention to its smell.

Next, place the food in your mouth, on your tongue, but don't eat it. Notice how it feels in your mouth. Does the texture feel the same as on your hand? What do you taste? Roll the food around in your mouth and pay attention to the feeling.

Finally, begin to slowly chew your food. Notice how your teeth sink into it, and how the texture is different inside. Pay close attention to the flavor, and how it spreads across your tongue. Notice how your body changes—does your mouth fill with saliva? Does your tongue feel hot or cold? Continue to chew your food, paying close attention to the many sensations as you finish.

## Five Senses

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Use this exercise to quickly ground yourself in the present when you only have a moment. The goal is to notice something that you are currently experiencing through each of your senses.

**What are 5 things you can see?** Look around you and notice 5 things you hadn't noticed before. Maybe a pattern on a wall, light reflecting from a surface, or a knick-knack in the corner of a room.

**What are 4 things you can feel?** Maybe you can feel the pressure of your feet on the floor, your shirt resting on your shoulders, or the temperature on your skin. Pick up an object and notice its texture.

**What are 3 things you can hear?** Notice all the background sounds you had been filtering out, such as an air-conditioning, birds chirping, or cars on a distant street.

**What are 2 things you can smell?** Maybe you can smell flowers, coffee, or freshly cut grass. It doesn't have to be a nice smell either: maybe there's an overflowing trash can or sewer.

**What is 1 thing you can taste?** Pop a piece of gum in your mouth, sip a drink, eat a snack if you have one, or simply notice how your mouth tastes. "Taste" the air to see how it feels on your tongue.

The numbers for each sense are only a guideline. Feel free to do more or less of each. Also, try this exercise while doing an activity like washing dishes, listening to music, or going for a walk.

# Mindfulness Exercises



## Mindfulness Meditation

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Find a place where you can sit quietly and undisturbed for a few moments. To begin, you might want to set a timer for about 10 minutes, but after some experience you should not be too concerned about the length of time you spend meditating.

Begin by bringing your attention to the present moment by noticing your breathing. Pay attention to your breath as it enters and then leaves your body. Before long, your mind will begin to wander, pulling you out of the present moment. That's ok. Notice your thoughts and feelings as if you are an outside observer watching what's happening in your brain. Take note, and allow yourself to return to your breathing.

Sometimes you might feel frustrated or bored. That's fine—these are just a few more feelings to notice. Your mind might start to plan an upcoming weekend, or worry about a responsibility. Notice where your thoughts are going, and accept what's happening.

Whenever you are able to, return your concentration to your breathing. Continue this process until your timer rings, or until you are ready to be done.



## Body Scan

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During the body scan exercise you will pay close attention to physical sensations throughout your body. The goal isn't to change or relax your body, but instead to notice and become more aware of it. Don't worry too much about how long you practice, but do move slowly.

Begin by paying attention to the sensations in your feet. Notice any sensations such as warmth, coolness, pressure, pain, or a breeze moving over your skin. Slowly move up your body—to your calves, thighs, pelvis, stomach, chest, back, shoulders, arms, hands, fingers, neck, and finally your head. Spend some time on each of these body parts, just noticing the sensations.

After you travel up your body, begin to move back down, through each body part, until you reach your feet again. Remember: move slowly, and just pay attention.



## Mindful Eating

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Choose a food you would like to practice with (preferably something you can hold in your hand without getting messy). Something as simple as a single raisin will work well. Move slowly through these steps, taking a moment to focus on each one.

Before you pick up your food, notice how it looks on the table in front of you. Notice its color, how the light reflects from its surface, and its size.

# Mindful Journaling

## **What is Mindful Journaling?**

Mindful Journaling is the practice of paying attention to the present moment and to your thought-stream as you write from a free, non-judgmental place.

*Mindful* refers to a practice that helps you slow down and gain awareness of yourself and your surroundings.

The benefits of mindfulness practices are well documented, and include higher emotional functioning, mental clarity, and lower stress.

# The 7 Key Attitudes of Mindfulness, by Jon Kabat-Zinn

1. **Non-judging.** Be an impartial witness to your own experience. Become aware of the constant stream of judging and reacting to inner and outer experience
2. **Patience.** A form of wisdom, patience demonstrates that we accept the fact that things sometimes unfold in their own time. Allow for this.
3. **Beginner's Mind.** Remaining open and curious allows us to be receptive to new possibilities and prevents us from getting stuck in the rut of our own expertise.
4. **Trust.** Develop a basic trust with yourself and your feelings. Know it's OK to make mistakes.
5. **Non-Striving.** The goal is to be with yourself right here, right now. Pay attention to what is unfolding without trying to change anything.
6. **Acceptance.** See things as they are. This sets the stage for acting appropriately in your life no matter what is happening.
7. **Letting Go.** When we pay attention to our inner experience, we discover there are certain thoughts, emotions and situations the mind wants to hold onto. Let your experience be what it is right now.



## Prompt for focusing on the positive/gratitude

- Listen to the prompt
- Before you respond, breathe deeply, in and out, 10 times. Carry a curious/playful awareness of your breath as you write.

## Care to Share?

- What were your experiences with the 7 *Attitudes of Mindfulness* as you wrote?
  - ★ Non-judging
  - ★ Patience
  - ★ Beginner's Mind
  - ★ Trust
  - ★ Non-Striving
  - ★ Acceptance
  - ★ Letting Go

## Concluding Thoughts!

- Breathe deeply in and out ten times as you reflect on this final prompt: Is there one thing you would like to reinforce, i.e. “carry forward” into your life outside this workshop?

## Fare Thee Well!

- Thank you very much for participating and attending this workshop!
- We encourage you to think about how you can incorporate mindful journaling or other mindfulness practices into your daily life.
- Please don't hesitate to contact Oak Creek Relational Counseling to enlist our services!

(888) 637-7404

[info@oakcreekcounseling.org](mailto:info@oakcreekcounseling.org)