**Mindfulness Exercises**

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**MINDFUL BREATHING**

* Draw your attention to your breath
* Notice the sensation as it enters and leaves your nostrils. Follow your breath through your throat, into your chest, and through your abdomen. Follow the rise and fall of your belly. Notice whether your breath fills one area more than another. Notice whether your breaths are short or extended. Simply notice, without any goal of changing it.
* If you feel your mind wandering, gently redirect it to the path of your breath.
* Now focus solely on the sensations of your breath in your nose. Observe it as it enters and leaves. Note the temperature of the air, feeling cool as it enters, warm when it leaves.
* Follow your breath down to your chest, noticing the sensations as it fills your lungs after warming or cooling your throat. Become aware of your ribs, expanding as your lungs fill, and then returning. Notice if you feel any strain, or if your breaths feel easy and relaxed.
* Follow your breath to your abdomen. Feel it rise and fall in sync with your chest. Note whether you can feel the temperature of the air in your belly.
* Now simply follow your breath on this trail through your nose, throat, chest, and stomach, and back out. You may visualize your breath as a stream of wind traveling through you, or simply experience it without picturing it.
* Slowly return your focus to the room as you are ready.

A MINDFUL EATING SCRIPT

Begin by connecting to your breath and body, feel your feet on the ground and notice your experience in this moment. With your awareness in this moment, notice any thoughts, sensations or emotions you are experiencing. (Pause)

Tune into the awareness or sensation that you have in your body of feeling hungry, thirsty or maybe even feeling full. If you were going to eat or drink something right now, what is your body hungry for? What is it thirsty for? Just pay attention and notice with awareness the sensations that give you this information. (Pause)

Now, bring your attention to the item in your hand and imagine that you are seeing it for the first time. Observe with curiosity as you pay attention and notice the color, shape, texture, and size. Is there anything else that you notice, sense or feel? (Pause)

Imagine what it took for this item to get to your hands: sunshine, water, time, processing, and shipping. You may choose to be aware of gratitude for everyone involved in the cultivation and preparation of this item of food. You may choose to bring in your own gratitude or spiritual blessing. (Pause)

Now place the item between your fingers and feel the texture, temperature and ridges. You may notice smoothness or stickiness. Again, notice if you have any thoughts, sensations or emotions at this time. Continue to breathe and be fully present in this moment. (Pause)

Take the piece of food and bring it toward your nose and smell with your full awareness. Notice if you have any memories, sensations or reactions in your body. Even before you eat it, you may notice that you begin to have a digestive response in your body just by noticing and smelling. (Pause)

With full awareness of your hand moving toward your mouth, place the object (fruit or chocolate) into your mouth without chewing or swallowing it. Just allow it to be in your mouth, roll it around to different parts of your mouth and tongue. Notice the flavor and texture. Notice the physical sensations within your body, especially your mouth and your gut. Continue to breathe as you explore the sensation of having this item in your mouth. (Pause)

Next take just one bite and notice the flavor, notice the change of texture. Then very slowly begin to chew this piece of food, and notice the parts of your mouth that are involved in chewing. Notice the sound and movement of chewing, as you continue to notice the sensations and flavor. (Pause)

When you are ready, swallow this item and notice the path that it follows from your mouth and throat into your stomach. Notice the sensation and taste that may linger in your mouth. Connect again to your body and your breath and notice your experience in this moment. (Pause)

Next, I invite you to pick up another food item, and choose to eat it however you wish. Noticing your choice and your experience. Notice how it is similar or different. (Pause for 30-60 seconds, and then return to large group discussion about the experience).

**MINDFULNESS OF THOUGHTS AS BUBBLES**

* Breathe deeply through the abdomen 3-4 times and visualize a calm pond in front of you.
* You imagine yourself at the bottom of a crystal clear blue pond. Imagine that you are able to breathe very consciously and unrestricted under water. The water is nice and warm. It's a nice sunny summer day with only a slight breeze rippling the surface of the pond. There are no fish around. Visualize every aspect of the pond, the clear blue water, the lily pads, and the reeds waving in the breeze. You close your eyes and just let any thought come to mind.
* Your breathing is so much easier here. Relaxed and flowing.
* As you breathe, visualize bubbles arising from your breath that float to the surface.
* When a thought arises, put it into a bubble, and watch it slowly float to the surface and disappear. When another thought comes, you put it also into a bubble and let it float away. When you can think of nothing, put nothing into a bubble and let it float away.
* Allow the bubble to float to the surface slowly until it reaches the surface, breaks open and floats away into the air.
* Every thought that arises must go into a bubble. Even if you are saying to yourself, "Why am I doing this?" "How will this help?" " I can't seem to imagine the bubbles." Etc. Each of those thoughts goes into a bubble.
* Once you have achieved placing each thought in a bubble so it can float away, begin to slow the rate of the bubbles' ascent to the surface by imagining that you are slowing them down. Watch them float and take the thoughts with them. Slow your breathing down to slow the speed of the bubbles. Keep doing this until you have one or two bubbles that contain no thoughts.

Walking Meditation Instructions

~ by Tara Brach, PhD

Meditation is a practice of presence that you can bring alive in all settings and activities. The formal training in walking meditation can be particularly valuable for helping you to cultivate an awareness of your embodied experience in each moment, allowing you to bring your body, heart, and mind together as you move through life.

Begin by choosing a place - an indoor or outside walking path about 10-30 paces long. Start by standing still and sensing the weight of your body at your feet, feeling your muscles supporting and stabilizing you. Your hands can be in whatever position is most comfortable - resting easily at your sides, folded gently in front of you, or at your back. In the stillness, remain relaxed and alert.

As you begin walking, start at a slower pace than usual, paying particular attention to the sensations in your feet and legs: heaviness, lightness, pressure, tingling, energy, even pain if it’s present. For the walking practice, this play of sensations - rather than the breath or another anchor - is often the home base for our attention.

Be mindful of the sensations of lifting your feet and of placing them back down on the floor or earth. Sense each step fully as you walk in a relaxed and natural way to the end of your chosen path. When you arrive, stop and pause for a moment. Feel your whole body standing, allowing all your senses be awake, then slowly and mindfully – with intention - turn to face in the other direction. Before you begin walking, pause again to collect and center yourself. If it helps, you can even close your eyes during these standing pauses, often called “standing meditation.”

As you’re walking, it’s quite natural for your mind to wander. Whenever it does, you might mentally pause, perhaps noting inwardly the fact of thinking, or even where your mind went: planning, worrying, fantasizing, judging. Then, gently return your attention to the sensations of the next step. No matter how long you’ve spent lost in thought, you can always arrive right here, bringing presence and care to the moment-to-moment sensations of walking.

During the walking period you might alter your pace, seeking a speed that allows you to be most mindful of your experience. In this way, you’ll move back and forth on your pathway, discovering that you are not really going anywhere, but are arriving again and again in the aliveness that is right here. As Thich Nhat Hanh teaches, “The miracle is not to walk on water. It is to walk on this earth with awareness.”

**LEAVES ON A STREAM**

**Harris (2009)**

* Sit in a comfortable position and either close your eyes or rest them gently on a fixed spot in the room. Take three slow deep breaths [in and out x3]. As you continue to breath, notice your feet firmly planted on the ground; breath into the base of your feet… and back out. Now bring your attention to your legs, how the rest on the chair*.* Notice your stomach, and how it moves as you breath *[pause],* your chest, rising and falling, *[pause],* your back, feel it pressed against the chair, *[pause].* Bring your attention to your shoulders, and allow them to relax.
* Now visualize you are sitting on a grassy bank, overlooking a stream flowing gently in front of you. Notice the sound of the running water, if there are any trees along the bank. As you watch the water, notice leaves of different colors flowing gently across the surface of the water, floating downstream. *Pause 10 seconds.*
* For the next few minutes, take each thought that enters your mind, be aware of the thought, then place the thought on a leaf... and let it float by. Do this with each thought – pleasurable, painful, or neutral. Even if you have joyous thoughts, place them on a leaf and *watch them gently float downstream.*.. *[pause 15 seconds]*
* *Do not go down the stream with the leaves, rather stay on the grassy bank and let the leaves drift off...*If a leaf gets stuck, allow it to hang around until it’s ready to float by... If the thought comes up again, place it on another leaf, and watch it float by once more. *Pause 20 seconds*
* If your thoughts momentarily stop, continue to watch the stream. Sooner or later, your thoughts will start up again. *Pause 20 seconds.*
* Allow the stream to flow at its own pace. Don’t try to speed it up and rush your thoughts along. You’re not trying to rush the leaves along or “get rid” of your thoughts. You are allowing them to come and float away at their own pace.
* If your mind says “I’m bored,” or “I’m not doing this right” place *those thoughts* on leaves, too, and let them pass. *Pause 20 seconds.*
* If a difficult or painful feeling arises, simply acknowledge it. Say to yourself, “I notice myself having a feeling of boredom/impatience/frustration.” Place those thoughts on leaves and allow them float along.
* From time to time, your thoughts may hook you and distract you from being fully present in this exercise. This is *normal.* As soon as you realize that you have become sidetracked, gently bring your attention back to the stream. [20 seconds]
* When you are ready, slowly bring your focus back to the room. Feel yourself sitting on the chair, listen to any sounds in the room… and slowly in your own time begin to open your eyes.

**MINDFULNESS OF MUSIC**

* Today we are going to play two different songs. As you listen to the songs, do so mindfully. Notice what sounds you hear. Notice, non-judgmentally, your own reactions to the pieces. Notice the differences between them, and how each makes you feel.

*(Play songs)*

* Allow yourself to return to your breath. Take note of where these songs left you. What feelings, physical or emotional, did they leave you with? Where are you now as compared to where you were before?
* Continue to focus on your breath for a few moments.
* As you are ready, slowly return your awareness to the room.

BODY SCAN SCRIPT

Begin by making yourself comfortable. Sit in a chair and allow your back to be straight, but not stiff, with your feet on the ground. You could also do this practice standing or if you prefer, you can lie down and have your head supported. Your hands could be resting gently in your lap or at your side. Allow your eyes to close, or to remain open with a soft gaze.

Take several long, slow, deep breaths. Breathing in fully and exhaling slowly. Breathe in through your nose and out through your nose or mouth. Feel your stomach expand on an inhale and relax and let go as you exhale.

Begin to let go of noises around you. Begin to shift your attention from outside to inside yourself. If you are distracted by sounds in the room, simply notice this and bring your focus back to your breathing.

Now slowly bring your attention down to your feet. Begin observing sensations in your feet. You might want to wiggle your toes a little, feeling your toes against your socks or shoes. Just notice, without judgment. You might imagine sending your breath down to your feet, as if the breath is traveling through the nose to the lungs and through the abdomen all the way down to your feet. And then back up again out through your nose and lungs. Perhaps you don't feel anything at all. That is fine, too. Just allow yourself to feel the sensation of not feeling anything.

When you are ready, allow your feet to dissolve in your mind’s eye and move your attention up to your ankles, calves, knees and thighs. Observe the sensations you are experiencing throughout your legs. Breathe into and breathe out of the legs. If your mind begins to wander during this exercise, gently notice this without judgment and bring your mind back to noticing the sensations in your legs. If you notice any discomfort, pain or stiffness, don't judge this. Just simply notice it. Observe how all sensations rise and fall, shift and change moment to moment. Notice how no sensation is permanent. Just observe and allow the sensations to be in the moment, just as they are. Breathe into and out from the legs.

Then on the next out breath, allow the legs to dissolve in your mind. And move to the sensations in your lower back and pelvis. Softening and releasing as you breathe in and out. Slowly move your attention up to your mid back and upper back. Become curious about the sensations here. You may become aware of sensations in the muscle, temperature or points of contact with furniture or the bed. With each outbreath, you may let go of tension you are carrying. And then very gently shift your focus to your stomach and all the internal organs here. Perhaps you notice the feeling of clothing, the process of digestion or the belly rising or falling with each breath. If you notice opinions arising about these areas, gently let these go and return to noticing sensations.

As you continue to breathe, bring your awareness to the chest and heart region and just notice your heartbeat. Observe how the chest rises during the inhale and how the chest falls during the exhale. Let go of any judgments that may arise. On the next outbreath, shift the focus to your hands and fingertips. See if you can channel your breathing into and out of this area as if you are breathing into and out from your hands. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to the sensations in your hands.

VHA / Office of Patient Centered Care & Cultural Transformation September 1, 2016 1

Whole Health for Pain and Suffering: An Integrative Approach

And then, on the next outbreath, shift the focus and bring your awareness up into your arms. Observe the sensations or lack of sensations that may be occurring there. You might notice some difference between the left arm and the right arm – no need to judge this. As you exhale, you may experience the arm soften and release tensions. Continue to breathe and shift focus to the neck, shoulder and throat region. This is an area where we often have tension. Be with the sensations here. It could be tightness, rigidity or holding. You may notice the shoulders moving along with the breath. Let go of any thoughts or stories you are telling about this area. As you breathe, you may feel tension rolling off your shoulders.

On the next outbreath, shift your focus and direct your attention to the scalp, head and face. Observe all of the sensations occurring there. Notice the movement of the air as you breathe into or out of the nostrils or mouth. As you exhale, you might notice the softening of any tension you may be holding.

And now, let your attention to expand out to include the entire body as a whole. Bring into your awareness the top of your head down to the bottom of your toes. Feel the gentle rhythm of the breath as it moves through the body.

As you come to the end of this practice, take a full, deep breath, taking in all the energy of this practice. Exhale fully. And when you are ready, open your eyes and return your attention to the present moment. As you become fully alert and awake, consider setting the intention that this practice of building awareness will benefit everyone you come in contact with today.

Script written by Shilagh Mirgain, PhD, for UW Cultivating Well-Being: A Neuroscientific Approach

## SENDING THOUGHTS AWAY ON A CLOUD

* Start by finding a comfortable position in your chair, and gently soften your gaze or close your eyes.
* Now begin to observe your breathing.
* Don't try to change anything about your breathing, just notice the sensations of breathing air into and out of your body.
* Focus all of your attention on your breath.
* As you breathe, close your eyes and imagine that you are laying on a lawn of soft grass, looking up at a blue sky.
* Let your mind become as clear and empty as a perfect blue sky.
* If any thoughts drift into your mind, imagine yourself breathing them out so that each thought forms a cloud that you send blowing across the clear, blue sky.
* Allow your thoughts to drift away from you, like clouds across the sky, until your mind becomes empty again - only filled by the image of a clear, blue sky.
* When thoughts arise simply notice them, without judgement, and breathe them out into the sky.
* Notice any sensations of your body as you let go of the thoughts and then gently return to focusing on your breath.
* Continue to breathe in and out, staying in this moment, letting the thoughts float away as clouds in the sky.
* And when you’re ready, bring your attention back to the room and open your eyes.

**MINDFULNESS OF POSITIVITY AND NEGATIVITY**

* Begin by drawing your attention to your breath. Notice the breath as it enters and leaves your body, passing through your nose and filling your chest and stomach. Feel the rise and fall of your body with each inhalation and exhalation.
* Imagine that there are three baskets before you. To your left, there is a basket for thoughts you would consider negative or that carry with them negative emotions. To your right, there is a basket with thoughts considered positive or carry positive emotions. And in front of you, there is a basket for thoughts that are neutral.
* Allow your mind to go where it likes but stay mindful of where it leads you. Notice what thoughts enter, as if watching through a window. Become your own observer, holding your mind gently from beneath it.
* I am going to ring the bell throughout this time. Each time I ring the bell, simply notice your thought as a thought that is negative, positive, or neutral. If it is a thought about the something negative, place it in the basket to your left. If it is a positive thought, place it in the basket to your right. If it is a neutral thought, place it in the basket in front of you.

*(Ring bell several times at different intervals)*

* Notice where your thoughts led you today. Notice which basket you found the fullest.
* And as you are ready, return your focus to your breath.

**PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE THOUGHT SEPARATION**

* Begin by drawing your attention to your breath. Notice the breath as it enters and leaves your body, passing through your nose and filling your chest and stomach. [pause, breath] Feel the rise and fall of your body with each inhalation and exhalation. [pause, breath]

* Imagine that there are three baskets before you.  To your left, there is a basket for thoughts about the past.  In front of you, there is a basket for thoughts about the present. To your right, there is a basket for thoughts about the future.

* Allow your mind to go where it likes but stay mindful of where it leads you.  Notice what thoughts enter, as if watching through a window.  Become your own observer, stepping back and watching thoughts come and go in your mind. [pause, breath]

* Each time you recognize a thought, notice your thought as a thought relating to the past, to the present, or to the future.  If it is a thought about the **past**, place it in the basket to your left.  If it is a thought about the **present**, place it in the basket in front of you.  If it is a thought about the **future**, place it in the basket to your right.

(long pause)—2 min

* If your mind wanders from the exercise, simply notice this has occurred without judgment.  Gently return your attention to observing your thoughts, and placing them in the appropriate baskets.

(long pause)—40 seconds

* Notice where your thoughts led you today.  Notice which basket you found the fullest, and which basket you found the least full. [pause, breath]

* Now bring your attention back to your breath, notice any sensations in your body, any sounds in the room. When you are ready, slowly open your eyes.

**Creating a Symbol of Relaxation**

When you are practicing relaxation, choose an image that conveys peace, comfort, or mental and physical letting go. This image can be anything you choose. You may think of the seashore, or a favorite spot in nature. It may be an image like the sun, a rope untwisting, ice melting, or a soothing color. It may be the face of a pet or of someone you love.

Every time you do relaxation, call up that image as you are becoming relaxed. Allow the symbol to grow and fill your awareness. Let all of the qualities of that symbol come to mind, and imagine them moving through your body on the rhythm of your breath. As you practice this more, you will be able to close your eyes anywhere and relax quickly by calling up your symbol and filling your awareness with it for a few minutes.

**Safe Space: (from Dr. Martin Rossman)**

Daydream yourself to a place that’s very beautiful to you, very peaceful, and very safe. Begin by paying attention to your breathing, and let yourself take a few nice, deep, full breaths. Let yourself breathe into your abdomen, bringing your breath all the way down into your belly, and allowing your out-breath to be a real letting-go kind of a breath. As if with that breath, you can begin to release any tension, or discomfort, or distraction that you don’t need to hold on to. You’re just using that breath to begin shifting your attention from the outer world to your inner world and to take a five-minute break and go to a place that’s peaceful and beautiful. And induce a state of peacefulness and relaxation centered within you. Let yourself imagine that when you breathe in, you’re breathing in fresh energy and oxygen that’s flowing through your whole body – because you are. And imagine that with every out-breath you just let go of a little bit of tension, a little bit of discomfort, a little distraction. So, you’re breathing in energy and relaxation, and you’re letting the out-breath be a real letting go of tension.

And you may want to allow your eyes to close because it’s easier to pay attention to your inner world that way. Let any outside sounds around you be in the background of your awareness. They’re not important to your purpose right now. If there ever is something you need to pay attention to, you’re able to open your eyes and do that.

But begin now to imagine yourself going to a place that’s very beautiful to you…very peaceful…very safe and secure — a place that you feel really good to be at. And this might be a place that you’ve actually been to in your life, or it may be a place you’ve visited before in your imagination. Or it can be a new place, some combination, or some place that you’ve never imagined yourself going to before. It doesn’t really matter. As long as the place you’re imagining is very beautiful to you…very peaceful…very safe. A nice place to be for a few minutes.

Allow yourself to imagine going there as best you can in your own way. And look around and notice what you imagine seeing in this special, quiet, peaceful place. Notice the colors and the shapes and the things that you see there. And by the way, if there’s more than one place that comes to mind, simply pick the one that interests you the most right now. You can visit others at another time.

And so as you notice what you see, notice if you imagine hearing any sounds in this special, peaceful, quiet place. Or whether it’s just very quiet. You may even imagine an aroma, an odor, or a fragrance in this place. And you may not. It doesn’t really matter. Just notice whether there’s an aroma or fragrance in the air. Notice the temperature and the time of day and the season of the year. Notice whether it’s very quiet or if there are things that are alive around you. And especially notice any feelings any peacefulness, or relaxation, or comfort that you feel. And allow them to be there. And allow yourself to relax into them and to feel that relaxation, that peacefulness. Nothing else to do right now and nowhere else to go. Simply enjoying a few quiet moments in this very beautiful and peaceful place. Find the spot where you feel most comfortable and allow yourself to get settled there. Simply enjoy a few quiet moments. Peaceful, relaxed, nothing to do, nowhere to go, enjoying the beauty and the safety. As you deeply relax in this place of beauty, peacefulness, and safety, you can allow your body to recharge and your mind as well – even your spirit. Just drawing from this sense of deep restfulness and comfort that’s here.

And if this is a pleasant experience, you should know that you can come back here and enjoy this anytime of your own choosing, simply by deciding to shift your attention to your inner world, allowing your breathing to get deep and comfortable, and imagining yourself coming to this very beautiful, very peaceful, very quiet place. If your mind should wander or get distracted, simply take another breath or two and refocus your mind back into this beautiful, peaceful, and quiet place and let this be your focus of attention for five minutes, or ten minutes, or twenty minutes – whatever period of time is right for you. And then when you decide to bring your attention back to the outer world, as I’ll invite you to do now, allow the images to fade but bring back with you any sense of relaxation, peacefulness, refreshment — a good feeling that comes from taking a little time to find that place of calm, quiet, and peacefulness within you. And know that you can come back and visit this place anytime you choose. Also know that this place is always within you, and that by even remembering it or thinking about it, you can touch into that feeling of calmness, peacefulness, and serenity and bring those qualities more and more into your daily life.

**MINDFULNESS OF SOUND**

* Begin by drawing your awareness to your breath. Notice the gentle rise and fall of your body, and the sensation of the air as it enters and leaves your nose.
* Begin to notice the sound of the breath as it travels in and out. Is your breath silent? Do you hear a faint whisper? Follow the sound of your breath, however light or strong.
* As you continue to breath, allow your awareness to travel to other sounds from inside and outside of the room. You may hear the fan, or people or doors out in the hallway, or the traffic as it passes by. You may hear your neighbors’ breath. Let yourself simply hear all the sounds around you.
* Now let your attention focus on one sound at a time, hearing that sound in its entirety. Switch the focus of your attention between sounds as you like, bouncing from one to another, becoming aware that your attention may go where you choose to place it.
* Notice whether you like the sounds you hear. Become aware of how different sounds make you feel—whether you find them soothing or stimulating. Whether they bring up a thought or emotion.
* Now allow yourself to hear all the sounds together, as though you are listening to a symphony.
* Return your attention to focus on the sound of your own breath. Notice your ability to place your attention again within yourself.
* Bring your awareness to your breathing and the feelings of the breath as it enters and leaves your body.
* As you are ready, return your focus to the room.

**ACCEPTANCE BY THE CHAIR**

Focus your attention on your body touching the chair you sit in… Consider how the chair accepts you totally, holds you up, supports your back, and keeps you from falling down on the floor. Notice how the chair does not throw you off, saying you are too fat or too thin or not just right… Notice how accepting the chair is of you.

Focus your attention on the floor holding up the chair… Consider the kindness of the floor holding you up, keeping your feet out of the dirt, providing a path for you to get to other things.

Notice the walls enclosing you in a room, so everyone going by does not hear everything you say… Consider the kindness of the walls.

Notice the ceiling keeping the rain and winter cold and hot summer sun from beating down on you… Consider the kindness of the ceiling.

Allow yourself to be held by the chair, held by the floor, and held by the walls and ceiling. Notice the kindness.

(From *DBT Skills Training Manual, 2nd ed.,* M. Linehan, pp. 198-199)

*You can also read the following poem by Pat Schneider:* The Patience of Ordinary Things

It is a kind of love, is it not?

How the cup holds the tea,

How the chair stands sturdy and foursquare,

How the floor receives the bottoms of shoes

Or toes. How soles of feet know

Where they’re supposed to be.

I’ve been thinking about the patience

Of ordinary things, how clothes

Wait respectfully in closets

And soap dries quietly in the dish,

And towels drink the wet

From the skin of the back.

And the lovely repetition of stairs.

And what is more generous than a window?

*From Another River: New and Selected Poems (Amherst Writers and Artists Press, 2005).*

**MINDFULNESS OF EMOTION**

* Close your eyes
* Draw your attention to your breath, focus on inhaling and exhaling, notice the sensation as the air enters your nose, goes down your throat, fills up your lungs, and leaves
* Now bring your awareness to an emotion that you brought into group today, be it happiness, sadness, fear, anything you may be feeling
* Notice how the emotion feels physically, what body sensations it brings with it, notice any changes in your breath, in your heart rate, in your muscles, notice where you feel the emotion most in your body
* Now allow the emotion to take a shape, what does it look like? What size is it? Notice if it is moving or staying still, notice its color
* Imagine you can take this shape and place it in a box, package it up and put it aside, recognize it is still present but that you can put it aside in the moment
* Notice any differences you may feel with the emotion packaged yet present
* Slowly bring your awareness back to your breath
* Bring your awareness to the fact that you are in this room, open and ready for the discussions and lessons that will follow
* Return to the room as you are ready

***COMPASSIONATE FRIEND***

Please find a comfortable position, either sitting or lying down. Gently close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths to settle into your body. Put one or two hands over your heart or another soothing place to remind yourself to give yourself *loving* attention.

**Safe Place**

Imagine yourself in a place that is safe and comfortable—it might be a cozy room with the fireplace burning, or a peaceful beach with warm sun and a cool breeze, or a forest glade. It could also be an imaginary place, like floating on clouds...anywhere you might feel peaceful and safe. Let yourself linger with and enjoy the feeling of comfort in this place. (pause).

**Compassionate Friend**

* Soon you’ll receive a visitor, a warm and compassionate presence—a compassionate friend—an *ideal* figure who embodies the qualities of wisdom, strength, and unconditional love.
* This being may be a spiritual figure; a wise, compassionate teacher; someone from your past who *fully* embodies the qualities of love and wisdom (perhaps a loving grandparent); or this being might arise for the first time, right now, in your imagination.
* Furthermore, your compassionate friend might not have any particular form, but be more like a warm presence, or radiant light.
* Your compassionate friend cares deeply about you and would like you to be happy and live with ease.
* Allow such a being to arise in your mind, imagining this being—this presence—in as much detail as you

like. (long pause)

**Arrival**

* + You have a choice to go out from your safe place and meet your compassionate friend, or to invite him or her in. (pause) Please take that opportunity now, if you like.
  + Placing yourself in just the right way in relation to your compassionate friend—whatever feels right— perhaps close, or perhaps at a respectful distance.
  + Then allowing yourself to *feel* what it’s like to be in the company of this being. There is nothing you need to do except to experience the moment. (pause).
  + Allowing yourself to fully receive the unconditional love and compassion that this being has for you, to soak it in. If you can't fully let it in, that's okay too...this being feels it anyway.

-from Chris Germer, Center for Minded Self-Compassion

**MINDFULNESS – OPPOSITE ACTION (LOVING KINDNESS)**

* Start out by finding a comfortable position where your back is straight and your shoulders are relaxed.
* Draw your attention to your breath. Notice the sensation as the breath enters and leaves your body. Feel the rise and fall of your body with each inhalation and exhalation.
* Now bring to mind a friend or loved one for whom you care deeply. Focus on this person as the recipient of the following thoughts of loving kindness:

May this person be free from suffering May this person experience kindness and compassion.

May this person experience joy and love. May this person be at peace.

* Observe the emotions that arise with these thoughts. Notice any physical sensations within your body. Be aware of your experience in this moment as you think of this individual.
* Now direct your attention to a person with whom you have experienced difficultly in the past few weeks. They may be a partner, relative, coworker, friend, stranger, or other acquaintance. Envision this person in your mind.
* Identify what emotion you feel as you think of this person. It may be frustration, annoyance, anger, disgust, disappointment, envy, or another emotion. Sit with this emotion and observe any thoughts or physical sensations you experience.
* Focus on a difficult interaction you have had with this person in the recent past. Observe if any urges arise in your body to behave a certain way. Do you want to say something or do something in particular? Simply notice these action urges without judgment.
* As you continue to breathe, turn your attention toward cultivating compassion for this person. Contemplate how this individual may experience suffering or pain in their life. Examine the motivation, thoughts, reasoning, or beliefs that may guide the actions of this person. Consider whether this individual’s behaviors may be influenced by any prejudices, past learning experiences, or painful emotions. Consider any positive qualities about this person. Focus on these aspects until you feel compassion for this person rising within you.
* Focus on this individual as the recipient of the following thoughts of loving kindness:

May this person be free from suffering May this person experience kindness and compassion.

May this person experience joy and love. May this person be at peace.

* What does it feels like to think of this person and send them these thoughts? Label the emotions you feel. Notice any shifts in your emotions and physical sensations and where these occur in your body. Continue to sit with this experience of focusing on loving-kindness for this individual, maintaining a nonjudgmental awareness of your experience in the here and now.
* Now bring your attention to yourself. Gently hold an image of yourself in your mind.
* Allow yourself to receive of the following thoughts of loving kindness:

May I be free from suffering May I experience kindness and compassion.

May I experience joy and love. May I be at peace.

* Notice the emotions and physical sensations that arise as you express loving kindness to yourself. Observe your experience in this moment without judgment.
* Now gently bring this image to a close and return to focusing on your breath. Notice the sensation as the breath enters and leaves your body. Feel the rise and fall of your body with each inhalation and exhalation.
* And when you are ready, return your attention to the room.

From Tara Brach:

Letting Go - 9 Magic Breaths

Take a pause from all activity, and either sit or stand in a way that allows you to be comfortable yet alert. It’s ideal, if possible, to gently close your eyes.

With each of the following conscious breaths, inhale fully, extending your natural in-breath so your lungs are filled with air. Exhale very slowly, so that you can feel the actual sensation of releasing the breath and letting go.

With the first set of three breaths, as you exhale, imagine letting go of all thoughts. You might picture thoughts as clouds, appearing and then passing out of sight, leaving a wide open sky.

With the second set of three breaths, as you exhale, imagine letting go of all physical tension. In areas of tightness, you might sense a softening and then dissolving, as if ice is melting to water. (Alternately, “...you might sense dense dark clouds thinning and then breaking apart, revealing a bright, clear sky.”)

With the third set of three breaths, as you exhale, imagine letting go of all that burdens your heart. You might sense a loosening and releasing, as if water is disappearing into vapor. (Alternately, “...you might sense a heavy fog lifting, allowing the warmth and light of sun to fill your being.”

Then allow the breath to resume its natural rhythm, and sense the possibility of simply relaxing open with the in-breath - like a gently expanding balloon - and letting go with the out-breath, relaxing and settling into greater and greater ease and well- being. Continue as long as you’d like, and when you’re ready, explore re-entering activity with a relaxed and open attention.

**MINDFUL HALF-SMILING**

Begin by closing your eyes and drawing your attention to your breath. Notice the rise of your body with each inhalation and the fall with each exhalation. If you find your mind wandering, simply notice this and bring your attention back to your breath.

Bring your attention to a person you have trouble with. Take a moment to form an image of that person in your mind… what their face looks like, what they usually wear, how their voice sounds, where you see them. Think about the problem you are experiencing with this person. Observe your thoughts about the problem. Think about how you feel and what you think when you are around them.

Now relax your face muscles…. your forehead, eyes, cheeks, mouth and jaw…. and smile a half-smile by slightly turning up your lips. If you begin to feel tension in your face, again relax your face muscles and slightly turn up your lips. Remember that a half-smile can be a very subtle expression.

Continue to half-smile while contemplating this person, considering the problems that have arisen in your relationship with this person. Again, notice any thoughts, feelings, sensations that arise while doing so. If you find your mind wandering, simply bring it back to thinking about this person while half-smiling.

Allowing the image of the person to fade, bring your attention back to your breath. And as you are ready return your attention to the room.

**SELF-COMPASSION BREAK**

*Adapted from:*Dr. Kristen Neff, [www.self-compassion.org](http://www.self-compassion.org)

Close the eyes and begin to focus on the breath.

Think of a situation in your life that is difficult, not the most difficult situation you are dealing with, but one that is causing you stress. Call the situation to mind, and see if you can actually feel the stress and emotional discomfort in your body.

Now, say to yourself:

“**This is a moment of suffering**.” This acknowledgment is a form of mindfulness—of simply noticing what is going on for you emotionally in the present moment, without judging that experience as good or bad. You can also say to yourself, “This hurts,” or, “This is stress.” Use whatever statement feels most natural to you.

Next, say to yourself, “**Suffering is a part of life**.” This is a recognition of your common humanity with others—that all people have trying experiences, and these experiences give you something in common with the rest of humanity rather than mark you as abnormal or deficient. Other options for this statement include “Other people feel this way,” “I’m not alone,” or “We all struggle in our lives.”

Now, if your eyes are closed, keep them closed, and rub both of your hands together to create some warmth. Place the hands on either the chest or the belly, whatever feels most comforting or soothing to you in this moment.

Feel the warmth of the hands and say to yourself:

“May I be kind to myself.” This is a way to express self-kindness. You can also consider whether there is another specific phrase that speaks to you. For example, “May I give myself the compassion that I need,” “May I accept myself as I am,” “May I forgive myself,” “May I be strong,” and “May I be patient.”

Repeat these phrases silently to yourself once more. **This is a moment of suffering. Suffering is a part of life. May I be kind to myself. May I be patient.**

This practice can be used any time of day or night. If you practice it in moments of relative calm, it might become easier for you to experience the three parts of self-compassion—**mindfulness, common humanity, and self-kindness**—when you need them most.

Now gently, bring your awareness back into the room and open the eyes.