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# Mindfulness Meditation Exercise From “Integrating Mindfulness into Clinical Practice”

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To begin, let's first discuss how I'd like you to sit during meditation. When you are new to practicing, it is important to remain upright. In general, there's nothing wrong with meditating while you're lying down. It's simply that when you're new to this, you are likely to become sleepy, and sleepiness will be an additional distraction. As you'll soon learn, you won't need any help becoming distracted. Thus, sitting upright will aid in alertness and paying attention.

I want you to start by sitting in either a chair with your feet firmly on the ground, or you're welcome to sit with your legs crossed on a meditation pillow. Some people like to sit cross legged against a wall to support their back, which may also be helpful. Choose the sitting position that feels most comfortable for you.

Now that you're sitting upright, we are going to focus on practicing mindful body posture, which is how I would like you to remain during the meditation. Go ahead and roll your shoulders back, then imagine that there's a string coming out of the top of your head gently pulling you towards the ceilings. This creates a gentle lift and an openness. You can now place your hands palms down in your lap, which is considered a grounding position, or you can place them palms up, which is considered an open position. If you always meditate with your palms down, try it palms up sometimes. If you always meditate with your palms up, try it palms down sometimes. For today, place your hands in the position that feels most accessible or most comfortable to you.

Now, if you feel comfortable, I'd like to invite you to close your eyes. If you do not feel comfortable closing your eyes, that's completely ok. You're welcome to meditate with your eyes open. To do so, pick a spot on the floor about a foot or so in front of you, and rest a soft gaze on this spot (like a drishti in yoga). The gaze is not intense, and it's not sleepy. It's soft and steady. Otherwise, please go ahead and close your eyes.

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To begin our meditation practice, I'd like you to bring your attention to the sound of your breathing. Just noticing the way the air sounds as you inhale, and then noticing the way the air sounds as you exhale. Not trying to change your breath in any way. You're not trying to slow it down, you're not trying to speed it up. You're not trying to make it louder or quieter, or deeper or more shallow. You're just watching the breath, however it happens to sound in this moment.

### **Pause**

And then just beginning to notice the sensation of the breath. Go ahead and bring your awareness to the tip of your nose. You might notice how the air is a little cooler as you inhale, and maybe a little warmer as you exhale. And then noticing the sensation of the air as it's passing through your nostrils and over your throat. And then noticing the sensation of your chest as it's rising and falling with each breath.

### **Pause**

As you're paying attention to the sounds and sensations of your breathing, you're going to notice that your mind is wandering or becoming distracted by things. It might be wandering or getting distracted by things that are happening outside of your body. This might be sounds that you're hearing that are happening in the room, or even the sound of my voice.

Or your mind might wander and get distracted by things happening inside of your body. These could be thoughts that you're having right now. They could be thoughts about this exercise like, "Am I doing this right?" or "How long is this going to last?" or "This exercise feels good" or "This feels really hard." Your mind might wander to totally unrelated things, like "What am I doing later in the day?" or "I have to finish up that project at work." It could wander to thoughts about something that happened earlier in the week...

Your mind might wander to emotions you're experiencing right now, and those could be either unpleasant or pleasant emotions. For example, you might be feeling anxious right now, or you might be feeling sleepy. You might be feeling relaxed, or you might be feeling joyful. Your mind might wander and get distracted by physical sensations you're experiencing right now, and similarly, those could be comfortable or uncomfortable. You might notice a pain or an itch somewhere. Maybe you notice a pleasant sensation on the couch that you're sitting on, maybe your hands are touching a certain fabric that you like.

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Your mind might wander and get distracted by urges you're experiencing. If your eyes are closed, you might notice an urge to open your eyes. Or you might notice an urge to move your body around and fidget whether your eyes are open or closed.

If your mind wanders to any of these things, I want you to know that's completely okay. In fact, your mind is supposed to do that. It's how it's wired, it's how it's designed. It's meant to get off track. It's meant to wander. It's meant to get distracted. Whenever your mind has gone to one of these things, just notice that it wandered. And then gently, and purposefully, turn your mind back to this moment and back to watching your breath.

### **Pause**

If you get distracted 1,000 times, then 1,000 times gently pull your awareness back to your breath, back to watching your breathing.

### **Pause**

Each time your mind gets pulled away, each time it goes somewhere else, just notice that it went somewhere else. And then, once again, gently and purposefully pull your attention back to this moment.

### **Pause**

If you find yourself using this time to try to think of other things or if you find that you're willfully protesting what is happening right now (maybe you're saying, "I don't want to do this" or "I don't want to feel uncomfortable" or "I want to think about something else"), that's okay, that's normal. Just notice that that's happening and without judging yourself, see if you can gently let that behavior go, and then once more, bring your awareness back to this moment. Back to watching your breath.

### **Pause**

There's nothing else to do in this moment other than to pay attention to your breathing.

### **Pause**

You are right here, right now, practicing mindfulness, and that's all there is to do.

### **Pause**

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Now keeping your eyes closed or keeping your attention focused on the spot on the floor, I want you to go ahead and bring your awareness back into your physical body once again.

**Pause**

First becoming aware of where your body is making contact with the seat that you're sitting in.

**Pause**

Then noticing where either your palms or the backs of your hands are making contact with your legs.

**Pause**

And then noticing where your feet are making contact with the floor.

**Pause**

And then with your eyes still closed or focused on that spot, go ahead and let the next 2 to 3 breaths come in a little slower, and a little deeper.

**Pause**

Whenever you're finished with those, you can open your eyes and come back.

What was that like?