

Mindfulness Exercises

These mindfulness exercises will strengthen your ability to practice mindfulness and access “Wise Mind.” Remember to engage each of your senses and to take your time. During your practice, when judgments, other thoughts, or any other distractions occur, do not fuss over them, but gently turn your attention back to the exercise.



1. **Explore a fruit.** Use “Observe and Describe” to explore an orange. What are the visual features, what does it feel like, and what does it smell like? Now, slowly start to peel the orange and continue to tune in to each sense. Notice any emotions, thoughts, or other experiences that you have during this process, but cling to nothing – instead staying engaged in the activity. Ultimately, you may choose to mindfully eat the orange.

2. **Connect with a sound:** Put on music; listen to the sounds of waves, nature, or another soothing sound; or pick up on the naturally occurring sounds around you. Close your eyes and tune in to your chosen sound. Stay with the sound, returning to it when a distraction happens, and perhaps notice how you breathe along with it.

3. **Guided imagery:** Use imagery from a website, CD, or other recording. Visualize that you are in the place that is being described, hearing the sounds, and feeling the other sensations. Lose yourself in this experience, and, when the exercise is over, bring its benefits back to the present moment.

4. **Create a safe place:** Similar to guided imagery, create a place that is safe and comfortable. It may be a room, a cabin in the woods, or an imaginary land where you are protected by fire-breathing dragons! Use your senses to fully enter the safe place. Notice how it looks, paying attention to even the smallest details. Notice the sounds, or the silence. How does it feel? Stay in this place for a while and go there whenever you need to soothe and calm yourself.

5. **Mindful eating:** Strive to eat mindfully each time you sit down to eat. Notice your food, seeing the shapes, colors, and textures. Smell the aromas. Take it all in before experiencing your first small bite. Our taste buds register tastes more vividly during the first few bites. Eat these bites slowly, experiencing the tastes, smells, temperature, and textures of each bite. Chew slowly, noticing the release of flavors and the sensations associated with eating. Continue thoughtfully, deliberately, until you notice feeling satisfied, and then stop and reflect.

6. **Mindfulness of smell:** Gather a variety of scented candles or essential oils and spend some time exploring the smell of each one. Notice the differences and any reactions you have to each kind of smell. Alternatively, disguise the labels on your candles or oils and see if you can guess each scent.



7. **5,4,3,2,1 senses:** To increase awareness and ground yourself in the present moment, list 5 things you see, 4 things you hear, 3 things you feel, 2 things you smell, and 1 thing you taste.

8. **Rigid body/ relaxed body:** Stand and tighten your body, assuming a rigid and stiff stance. Hold that pose for 10 seconds or more. Then, relax your body and assume a loose, flexible and comfortable stance. Identify the different emotions and sensations that came up with each pose.

9. **Body scan:** Use Observe and Describe to scan your body from top to bottom, noting areas of tension and discomfort. Gently dismiss judgments that arise and take a deep breath into each area of the body where this discomfort exists. Do not have an agenda about changing how these areas feel but do notice differences that happen as you continue to breathe and connect. Also, notice areas of your body that feel relaxed and comfortable. Breathe into these areas too.



10. **Half-smile (or full smile):** Sit in a chair and take a couple of deep breaths. As you continue to breathe, slowly start to turn the sides of your lips upward to make a small smile. Relax your face and take on this more serene look. Notice whether your emotions begin to change, as your face communicates acceptance to your brain. Alternatively, look in a mirror, make a peace sign with your first and third fingers and use these fingers to push up the sides of your mouth into a goofy smile. This moment need not be so serious, even if your life sometimes is!

11. **Your favorite song (or album):** Listen to your favorite song or album with your full attention. Listen closely to the lyrics and their meaning. Be mindful of each word and phrase. Listen to the sounds of the different instruments. Pay attention to the guitar, bass, drums, vocals, or any other instrument that is central to the music. Be mindful of things you have never noticed in music you have listened to many times.

12. **One chore/ one task:** Do one chore or one task, such as washing the dishes or folding laundry, with all your attention and care. Be One-Mindful with the experience without adding or subtracting.

13. **Find your center:** Before engaging in thoughts and behavior spend a moment to breathe and find your center. Know that finding your center helps you to access your Wise Mind. Practice the directive of the mantra: Pause, breath, center Enter.

14. **Practice compassion for yourself and others:** Sit or lie down in a comfortable spot, and turn your attention to your breathing. As you breathe say to yourself over and over, “May I experience peace and happiness.” Once you have settled into meditating on this mantra, change the mantra to focus on another person, replacing “I” with the name of the person. Continue to breathe as you meditate on this thought from your heart.

15. **Look through a new window:** Pick a window in your home, school, or office that you never (or almost never) look through. Sit down and spend 5 or more minutes gazing through the window observing what is outside. Notice the scenery and whether anything is happening outside the window. Describe the scene and/or action to yourself and connect with it.



