

## FORMAL MINDFULNESS PRACTICE

Practicing mindfulness on a regular basis will help you to increase your capacity for patience, acceptance, and trust – all of which relieve anxiety. Formal mindfulness practice can be done anywhere that you are comfortable. All that is required is your mind, your intention, and your attention.

**Allowing and Accepting.** Sit comfortably with your eyes closed and place your attention on the present moment. Notice the information that your senses bring to you. Pay attention to what you see, hear, feel, smell and taste *now*. Notice these things without judgment; simply allow and accept whatever you experience. As thoughts enter your mind, let them come and go, and recognize their impermanence. As you notice emotions, let them come and go as well and recognize their impermanence. Instead of grasping at thoughts and feelings, simply observe them. Change your relationship to them: practice observing them rather than giving them energy. Let the natural flow of life take over without you trying to judge or manipulate your existence. Sit with this focus for several minutes, or however long you are able.



**Mindful Walking.** Find a place where you can walk peacefully and fully concentrate on the steps you are taking. For some, this might require a natural setting. Others may be able to perform this exercise on a busy street or while walking their dog. Find what works best for you. As you begin to walk, count your first five steps. With the next step, begin at 1 again and count six steps. With the next step, begin at 1 again and count seven steps. Continue counting in this way, adding one more step each time until you reach ten. Then start over again, counting your steps from one to five. Repeat the entire sequence up to ten steps as many times as you like. If you lose track at any point – which most likely you will – begin the cycle again at the five-step count.

**Common Activity.** Choose a simple activity that you can do to practice mindfulness – for example, eating an apple, washing your hands, writing your name, etc. Take from five to ten minutes to perform this activity with mindfulness. Instead of thinking about other things as you do this activity, put your mind on the activity itself, focusing on how you move your body, what sensations you feel as you perform it, what you see as you watch yourself do this task, etc. Keep your mind focused only on the experience of the activity at hand.

**Reflection.** Discuss how trying these mindfulness exercises feels for you. What does it feel like to try to pay attention to the present moment? What happens to your anxiety level as you move through the exercise?

