

A MINI MODULE IN

Mindfulness and Meditation

FOR COMPLETE
BEGINNERS

ROOTED
REINVENTION

MINI MINDFULNESS EXERCISES

We've all heard about the 'hype' of meditation and mindfulness, but the idea of trying to 'stop thinking' or 'quiet our mind' can be daunting!

However, there are many different ways to distract that monkey-mind. I'll outline a couple below, and ask you take 3 minutes a day to complete one of them. Feel free to 'mix them up' a little - try them all or just stick with one.

Find a timer, or an instrumental piece of music, and put it on for 2-4 minutes in a quiet space.

Let's get started.

OPTION #1 :: VISUAL

Choose a natural object from your environment: a plant, your cat, a pebble or seashell, a fly or spider, or maybe even a leaf from outside.

Feel free to go outside if that's easier: the clouds or moon are great options.

Rest in a comfortable position, noticing the object. Look at the shape, the contrast between it and the background. If you'd never seen one, what could it be?

Visually explore every aspect of its formation.

OPTION #2 :: AWARENESS

Choose an action you do multiple times a day, that doesn't require any thought.

Opening a door, walking, pouring the kettle or taking a sip of your drink. When you make contact (foot to floor, or hand to mug/handle), top for a moment.

Check in with yourself: how do you feel? Where are you? What is the next step in your action?

OPTION #3 :: IMMERSION

Choose a routine action you either dislike or find neutral, such as washing up or the vacuuming. Rather than treating it as a chore or another mindless part of the day, really focus on each action within it.

Smell the washing up liquid or watch the carpet change colour as you sweep the unit across it. Experience it fully, and watch you feel throughout the action.

Feel your muscles move with you, look at the patterns you make in the carpet or soap bubbles.



OPTION #4 :: NOTICE

Notice 5 things in your day that you don't always notice.

Objects or people both count, and try to pick a different 5 each day or time.

If you're struggling, think about some of the basic things: electricity to power the kettle, your eyes let you see the pretty flowers, and your friend wrote you a lovely birthday card. Notice the details, and think about how these things made you feel when they occurred or affected you.

OPTION #5 :: DISTRACTION

This is a great one for travelling: when we often might find our minds wandering.

Pick an object you are likely to see, and then count each one as you move. If you're walking to work, count the pigeons, feathers in the grass, daisies, or even 'people wearing brown shoes'.

This can be a great 'active' mindfulness exercise, if sitting and focusing on one thing feels unnatural for you.

OPTION #6 :: METTA

Metta means "loving-kindness" or "compassion." It's my favourite practise, and is particularly useful for managing feelings of anger or jealousy.

First, relax your shoulders. Let yourself breathe.

Then think of a friend, or someone you love. Picture them in your mind's eye. And say to them (in your mind) "May you be well" or "I hope you are well."

Try replacing the 'well' aspect with things you are glad they have: a roof over their head, a loving community or enough food to eat.

Next, visualise a 'neutral' person: someone you can picture, but have no particular regard for. People who take the same bus as you to work, a friend's friend, or if you can see a stranger right now (if you're on a train reading this, for example), then picture them, and wish them well. Again, think of 2-3 things you're glad they have.

Finally, focus on yourself. Wish yourself well (sounds odd, but moving through these motions isn't as awkward as it sounds!)

Most versions of this focus on someone we have a difficult relationship with as the third person, but starting this habit is the main thing we're aiming to do here, so I find skipping that step useful for building the feel-good motivation of this practise.



OPTION #7 :: THE RAISIN (FOUR SENSES)

This is a great exercise for beginners to mindfulness.

Take an edible item (*I've used sultanas or raspberries when I lead it, but jelly sweets, most bite-size fruits or chocolate works if it's not too hot!*) and let your eyes really look it over. See the shapes, shadows, and grooves.

Then lean forward and sniff it. Does it smell sweet? **Does it even have a scent?**
Does the environment around you change its smell?

Then, touch it. Squish it between your finger and thumb, or let it roll from your fingers into your palm. Is it rough or smooth, soft or solid? Are there grooves?

Then, when you feel you've memorised the shape of your item, put it in your mouth. Let it sit on your tongue and breathe through your nose. Then press it to the roof of your mouth. **What do you notice?**

Finally, chew it, and really notice the taste.
Is it as you expected? Sweeter? Softer?

Finally, swallow it and see if the after-taste is any different.

At the end of the exercise, keep a pad of paper handy, should the space bring out new spurts of creativity, or reflections.

PAUSE OVERTHINKING IN UNDER A MINUTE

This is an “extended” version of #4-Notice

We all get overwhelmed, panicked, exhausted, yet breaking free of that state sometimes feels impossible. In that state, how many of us know how to gain some mental space?

Many years ago, I read a post by [Havi Brooks about some ways she manages being triggered](#). This is my version of her “name everything you see” exercise explained in that post.

The Five-Things Tool to Pause Overthinking

Look around you; wherever you are right now.

Can you see anything with a bit of blue on it?

Currently, I can see a blue plastic basket, the board game Mouse Trap (blue box), a magazine with a blue stripe over it. That’s three...

We’re looking for five items.

Now I have to look a bit harder. A book cover in that bookcase is navy blue. Finally, I settle on the curtains: something I barely register any more.

Count them out “1. 2. 3... 4... 5.”

Feel any different?

Sometimes this works, and sometimes it doesn’t. There is no ‘right’ way or ‘wrong’ way to pause: find what works for you. Sometimes I find 5 things that are red or yellow.

Other times, I name 10 things of those three primary colours, and 5 things that are secondary colours: green, purple and orange.

Sometimes, I let myself count something with 2 colours in both colour lists.

Equally, I often set the intention of finding separate things for each list. The key to this technique, is to create a space between all the ruminations, worries and ‘overthinking thoughts’, even if only for a few moments.

Sometimes I look for numbers:

- This crisp packet says “2017” in the corner
- That box says “100 board games collection.”
- The video on youtube I’m watching has 34,000 views and 898 likes...
- That chocolate box says “8 famous brands” in the subtitle [If you allow the ‘words’ of numbers, then ‘After Eights’ count too]

Sometimes, I focus on sounds instead:

- I hear a bird singing.
- My cat is scratching the carpet post.
- I’m listening to a youtube video.
- I’m humming a song from Moana
- The wind is battering the window

What Does This Do?

When we feel overwhelmed or panicked, the result is often because we’re thinking about things too deeply, or without the facts.

Counting things in our environment has multiple functions. It:

1. Distracts our mind for a few moments, creating a breathing space
2. Tends to calm our emotions a tad: this is, for most people, a ‘neutral’ activity
3. Uses different parts of our brain -> thus distracting more than one ‘part’ [visual, counting, hearing, language]
4. Is a ‘mindful’ activity: focused on this very moment, not the past or future.

This is not a therapy tool or the be-all-and-end-all of ‘fixing overwhelm’, but it’s a simple, accessible tool, as long as you have a sense to use and an association to ‘label’ that experience “bird song” or even “magpie noise” if you’re good with your bird songs.

It won’t make the problems go away, or change any situations, but this technique can shift that habit from overthinking to breathing. At the end of the day, give it a go, and if it works for you, add it to your list of techniques that helps you. If it doesn’t, no harm done.

You need no extra tools, and it can be done without anyone else noticing.

WHAT NEXT?

In the end, making a change is hard work, and can take weeks for some people or months for others. Set your expectations 'realistically', at least when you're getting started. You can always ramp it up later.

It's one thing to have a quick-fix checklist for managing worries, but there are many small changes we can make each day to lessen the chance it will get so big in the first place.

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She believes we humans are more capable than we realise, and is on a mission to reinvent how personal development, wellbeing and human resilience are defined, particularly for those of us who feel broken.

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When she's not cuddling her feline business partners, she stargazes, writes stories, and plays video games. Find the roots of your true self at **RootedReinvention.com**, because being yourself doesn't need to feel so damn hard™.

