

Bonus Activity

5-4-3-2-1 Senses Grounding Practice

Jon Kabat-Zinn defines mindfulness as “*paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally*”. It is not a way of making your mind quiet, but a way of entering into the quiet that is already there (buried under the 6,200+ thoughts the average person thinks every day). Mindfulness is evidence-based with thousands of studies documenting the physical and mental health benefits such as improving sleep, attention, productivity, focus, mood, empathy etc.

Mindfulness is a quality you already have, you just have to learn how to cultivate it. There are many ways to practice it. The following technique uses your five senses to anchor you and ground you in the here and now. It is profoundly simple, yet powerful as it helps calm anxious thoughts, reorientates you to the present and enables you to feel safe and in control.



- Sit in a quiet space and set an intention to focus on you for five minutes (you can extend the time as you practice and become more comfortable and familiar with the process). Ideally, do this exercise barefooted.
- Place your feet flat on the floor. Really feel your connection to the ground. Focus on the sensation of the earth beneath your feet. Imagine the energy of your body flowing down into the solid, pure, reliable earth – like roots coming from a mighty tree trunk. Let your body feel and absorb the earth’s qualities that you need most in this moment e.g. calm, reliability, safety...
- Become mindful of your breath inviting your body back into the moment, slowing everything down. Breathe deeply and evenly, as you know how to do now – six seconds in, six seconds out (or whatever count feels right for you), feeling a positive emotion in the area surrounding your heart.

- Moving only your eyes, look around and describe out loud five things you can see e.g. a tall solid tree with large branches swaying in the wind, the faded white paint on the windowsill etc. Describe the characteristics of each thing you see – colour, shape, size, consistency, location etc.
- Focusing on your body, describe four things you can feel e.g. the ring on your finger, the ground beneath you, a gentle breeze, the warmth of the sun on your skin etc. Pay attention to the way it might feel against your hand, its texture, temperature, weight, pressure etc.
- As you continue to evenly breathe, describe three things you can hear (if necessary closing your eyes as you do this to amplify your awareness) e.g. birds chirping, children playing, your breath etc. Notice the qualities of the sounds e.g. pitch, tone, cadence, tempo, volume, rhythm etc.
- Notice if there is anything you can smell. Describe two things you can smell (if you can't smell anything name your two favourite smells) e.g. the chocolatey leftover smell from dessert, a fresh vase of flowers, fresh-baked bread etc. Describe its attributes e.g. nutty, floral, spicy, citrus, burnt etc.
- Notice one thing you can taste e.g. minty toothpaste, the sharp orange juice from breakfast etc. If you can't taste anything, then name something you'd love to taste right now and describe its qualities e.g. sweet, bitter, salty, sour, astringent etc.
- End this exercise with one deep six second inhale and exhale.

You can repeat this as many times as you like, so that over time it becomes a familiar way to quickly and easily ground/settle yourself into the present moment.

***“Mindfulness is about love and loving life.
When you cultivate this love, it gives you clarity and compassion,
and your actions happen in accordance with that”
~ Jon Kabat-Zinn***

Bonus Activity

Jar of Awesome

The Jar of Awesome was an idea created by Tim Ferris to celebrate the small wins that happen every day (that you often forget about) and keep you motivated when things get tough.



Find a big, clean glass jar and write 'Jar of Awesome' on it. Whenever something great happens (a success no matter how small), write it on a slip of paper e.g. tightened your belt buckle another notch, meditated three days in a row etc. Fold the paper into a small square and put your 'small win' into the Jar of Awesome. You can do this on your own, with a partner/wider family/friends/work colleagues.

The idea is to keep collecting these positive nuggets so when you find yourself feeling down/needing motivation, all you have to do is pull out a random note and read it to realise you do have things to celebrate. And as you continue to grow and accomplish more, you'll be able to periodically look back through your positive memories and reflect on all that you've learned and accomplished.

Why don't you try it out for the next week. Start on Monday and spend a minute writing some of your small wins and achievements. Then in one month from now, take the notes out and revisit them. As you read them and connect with them in your heart, you might like to write key ones in your Journal.

*Blow gently on your hands like you're blowing bubbles.
Feel your breath as it hits your hands. What are you grateful for?*