

MEDITATION & MINDFULNESS-BASED STRESS REDUCTION (MBSR)

Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) is just a big name for another form of mindfulness. Mindfulness and meditation are words that are often used to refer to the same concept:

Being aware of, and accepting, the present moment without judgement.

Practicing meditation and/or mindfulness is a proven way to reduce stress. Research shows more benefits when you practice more often and over time. There are several different types of meditation and mindfulness. MBSR is one type that has been studied a lot, and there are many different ways to practice it. When practicing these, it is best to find a quiet, safe and comfortable place where you will not be disturbed. If this isn't an option, then the safest place you can go is the best option.

Here are a few of these practices you may find useful, or may be curious to try:

a. **Focus Mindfulness (also known as “Single Point Awareness”)**

How: Practicing mindfulness with a focus involves looking inside ourselves to watch what is happening in your mind and brain. To keep your focus, it can be helpful to use something simple to keep yourself grounded in the moment. Follow **Breath Regulation** strategy, but add a point-of-focus, such as watching your breath or as small object you can hold, to help you gently bring your awareness back to the present moment.

b. **Awareness Mindfulness**

How: Unlike Focus Mindfulness, when we practice Awareness Mindfulness, we focus on the outside and what is around us. In other words, we use an “outside perspective”. When trying Awareness Mindfulness, try to notice or watch your mental activity as if it belonged to someone else.

In general, Awareness Mindfulness can be described as looking at your thoughts and feelings from outside of your usual experience. Instead, you watch or observe your mind as a stream of thoughts, feelings, emotions, and sensations, without judging any of it.

Here is a sample of Awareness Mindfulness. You can follow the script by yourself at home, if you want to. Use **Breath Regulation** for this practice as well.

Awareness Mindfulness – A Sample Practice Script

Start by taking your mind inwards for a moment by focusing on the breath. Take a few gentle deep breaths, from the belly. In and out. Re—lease your muscles if you find that useful...Continue to breathe in and out for as long as you wish.

Now take your mind outwards. See your thoughts, feelings, moods, and sensations as experiences. Let your body and brain feel like a field of experience...where they come and go, or

change or repeat. ...Simply watch without judgment or analysis. Just watch them pass. Take a few moments or as long as you want...

Now pick one experience (thought, feeling, mood, sensation). Let the other sensations and thoughts go by in the background. Note any new thoughts or feelings that arise from observing this experience. Sit with these thoughts and feelings and this experience for a moment.

Whenever you're ready to leave this experience behind, think again of your brain and body as a vast field of experience. Simply let this experience pass through. Take one, or a few, deep breaths...and maybe just notice how you feel.

c. Walking Mindfulness

You may practice Walking Mindfulness inside or outside. Walking mindfulness is just another tool for us to give our body some time and space. All it involves is giving your focus to your body as you walk, and noticing different sensations or feelings. You may wear shoes or not. It's your choice!

Inside: If there isn't much room, pick an area where you can walk back and forth a few times.

Outside: Pick your favorite spot. Or, maybe it's right outside your front door. Just find an area that you find beautiful or useful for this practice.

How to Practice Walking Mindfulness:

- Try to walk slowly OR walk at a normal leisurely pace for you (if you don't have much room inside, walking very slowly may be more useful).
- Try to match your breath to your steps.
- Notice the sensations you feel as your foot moves from heel to toe, when you take a step.
- What does the ground or floor feel like?
- Maybe observe *how* you walk. Do you feel movement in your hips or arms? Somewhere else?
- Is it difficult to walk slow, or it is easy?
- How do your shoulders feel (tight? Loose?)?
- Do your feet feel different when they are on the ground, versus mid-step when the foot is in the air?
- What else do you notice about your body or breath as you walk?

- Whenever you feel done, try to take one big (but gentle!) breath in, and then breathe all the air out.
- Maybe take a moment to notice how you feel now compared to before your practice. Maybe it's different, and maybe it's not! Either way is perfect.