

HOUSMAN PSYCHOLOGY ACCEPTANCE & COMMITMENT THERAPY

Mindfulness: Designing Mindfulness Interventions,
Mindfulness of Breath, Body, Sound and Thought,
Acceptance of Thoughts and Feelings Exercise,
Mountain Meditation & Mindful S.T.O.P.

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SOURCE: ACT: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy / Training. Adopted from: <http://www.actmindfully.com.au/>, Russ Harris 2009 www.actmadesimple.com, Google Images. Escaping the traps of language. The Happiness Trap Newsletter, July 201. Value Sheet: Adapted from Eifert & Forsyth, New Harbinger Publications 2005. A CBT practitioner's guide to ACT. Bach, Moran, & Hayes, (2008). Rossouw, P.J. (2014). Neuropsychotherapy: Theoretical Underpinnings and Clinical Applications. St Lucia: Medirox Pty Ltd.

Mindfulness (1)

Designing Mindfulness Interventions

1. *To design a mindfulness intervention is simple. There are three basic steps:*
 - a. *pause for a moment.*
 - b. *fix attention on breath, body posture, or some other “anchor”*
 - c. *observe- with openness, curiosity, flexibility - whatever is present: thoughts, feelings, other private experiences, what you see, hear, touch, taste, smell etc.*
2. *Most impulsive, self-defeating, or self-destructive behaviours are attempts to escape, avoid, or get rid of unwanted thoughts and feelings. Mindfulness exercises can be designed to enhance client self-awareness of what they are trying to avoid. E.g., notice thoughts and feelings before they actually start doing the problem behaviour - such as drinking, binge-eating, self-harming, gambling etc. E.g., “Next time you’re about to start (doing the problem behaviour), stop for a moment, take ten deep breaths, and notice your thoughts/ feelings/ sensations. See if you can identify the thoughts or feelings you’re trying to push away/ escape from/ get rid of.*
3. *Mindfulness exercises can also disrupt problematic behaviours. Mindfully observe the way they do the problematic behaviour, to notice every aspect of it in great detail, and in particular, to notice what thoughts and feelings are present while they are doing so. Often, simply bringing full awareness to the behaviour disrupts it.*
4. *If you are prone to worry and rumination, you may need a narrower focus: engage in some valued activity and focus attention primarily on that activity. Let thoughts come and go in peripheral awareness, whilst repeatedly bringing your attention back to the activity itself.*
5. *In contrast, if the problem is chronic pain, you may want a broader focus. Whilst pain is acknowledged and accepted, awareness is broadened to encompass the five senses, the surrounding environment, and the current activity. Thus, pain becomes only one aspect of a much broader experience.*

Mindfulness (2)

Mindfulness of Breath, Body, Sound and Thought

(Adapted from Segal et al., 2002, p.196-7)

1. *Settling into a comfortable sitting position....*
2. *Bringing your awareness to the level of physical sensation by focusing your attention on the sensations of touch and pressure where your body makes contact with the chair. Spending a minute or two focusing on these sensations.*
3. *Now bringing awareness to the changing pattern of physical sensations in the lower abdomen as the breath moves in and out of your body.*
4. *Noticing the sensations of slight stretching as the abdominal wall rises with each in-breath, and of gentle deflation as it falls with each out-breath. As best you can, following with your awareness the changing physical sensations in the lower abdomen all the way through as the breath enters your body on the in-breath and all the way through as the breath leaves your body on the out-breath. Perhaps noticing the slight pauses between one in-breath and the following out-breath, and between one out-breath and the next in-breath.*
5. *There is no need to control breathing in any way – simply let the breath breathe itself. As best you can simply allowing your experience to be your experience without trying to change it.*
6. *Sooner or later, your mind will wander away from the focus on the breath in the lower abdomen to thoughts, planning, daydreaming, whatever. This is ok. It is simply what minds do. It is not a mistake or failure. When you notice your awareness is no longer on the breath, gently acknowledge where it has gone, and gently escort your awareness back to the changing pattern of physical sensations in the lower abdomen.*
7. *Now shifting your awareness to the sensations of the breath coming in and out of the body at the back of the throat. Bringing your awareness to the back of the throat and as best you can paying attention to the changing physical sensations when the breath enters the body on the in-breath and leaves the body on the out-breath.*
8. *Now shifting your awareness to the nostrils. Paying attention to the breath as it comes in through the nostrils and as it leaves the nostrils.*
9. *However often you notice your mind has wandered, as best you can, gently acknowledge where the mind has gone, and bring your attention back to the breath.*
10. *Now allowing your awareness to expand around the breath to include, as well, as sense of physical sensations throughout the whole body. While still aware of the movements of the breath, changing your primary focus so that you become aware of a sense of the body as a whole and of the changing pattern of sensations throughout the body. You may get a sense as though the whole body were breathing.*
11. *Along with the breath and the sense of the body as a whole, include awareness of the physical sensations in the parts of the body that are making contact with the chair, feet with the floor. As best you can, hold all of these sensations together with the sense of the breath and with the sense of the body as a whole.*
12. *The mind will wander repeatedly, this is expected, natural. Whenever you notice this, congratulate yourself for noticing, gently note where the mind has gone and refocus your attention to your breathing and the sense of the body as a whole.*

Mindfulness (3)

13. *As you sit, some sensations may be particularly intense, such as pain in the back or knees or shoulders and you may find that awareness is repeatedly drawn to these sensations, and away from the breath and body as a whole. You may want to use these times to experiment with intentionally bringing the focus of awareness into the region of intensity, and as best you can, explore with gentle and wise attention the detailed pattern of sensations there. What do the sensations feel like? Where exactly are they? Do they vary over time? Not so much thinking about it but feeling it. You may want to breathe into these regions of intensity.*
14. *Now leaving behind the sensations in the body and bringing your awareness to hearing. Bringing your attention to the ears and then allowing the awareness to open and expand, so that there is a receptiveness to sounds as they arise, wherever they arise.*
15. *There is no need to go searching for sounds or listening for particular sounds. Instead, as best you can, simply open your mind so that it is receptive to awareness of sounds from all directions as they arise – sounds that are close, sounds that are far away, inside the room, outside the room, outside the building, behind, to the side, in front.*
16. *As best you can, be aware of sounds as simply sensations. When you find that you are thinking about sounds, reconnect, as best you can, with direct awareness of their sensory qualities, patterns of pitch, loudness, the duration, rather than meaning.*
17. *Whenever you notice you are no longer paying attention to sound, gently acknowledge where the mind has gone and as best you can, bringing your awareness back to the sensations of sound.*
18. *Whenever you are ready, letting go of awareness of sound and paying attention to thoughts as events in the mind. Just as with sound, you focused your awareness on whatever sounds arose, noticing them arise, develop, and pass away, now, as best you can, bringing awareness to thoughts that arise in the mind in the same way – noticing when thoughts arise, focusing awareness on them as they pass through the space of the mind and eventually disappear. There is no need to make thoughts come or go. Just let them arise naturally, in the same way you related to sounds arising and passing away.*
19. *It may be helpful to picture your thoughts as written on leaves that are passing down a stream. Imagine you are sitting next to a slow-moving stream where water flows over rocks and leaves that have fallen from trees float down the stream. As a thought comes to mind, imagine the thought written on a leaf. Don't try to make the stream go faster or slower, and don't try to change what shows up on the leaves. Just let the thought appear on the leaf and naturally float down the stream. And, as you are doing this, if your mind wanders or if the stream stops flowing, notice this happened and return to the stream, watch a thought come to mind, appear on a leaf, and float down the stream.*

Mindfulness (4)

Acceptance of Thoughts and Feelings Exercise

Adapted from Eifert and Forsyth, 2005, p.140-143

1. *So, getting in a comfortable position in your chair. Sit upright with your feet flat on the floor, your arms and legs uncrossed, and your hands resting in your lap (palms up or down, whichever is more comfortable). Allow your eyes to close gently [pause 10 seconds].*
2. *Take a few moments to get in touch with the movement of your breath and the sensations in the body [pause 10 seconds]. Bring your awareness to the physical sensations in your body, especially to the sensations of touch or pressure, where your body makes contact with the chair or floor [pause 10 seconds].*
3. *Now, slowly bring your attention to the gentle rising and falling of your breath in your chest and belly. Like ocean waves coming in and out, your breath is always there. Notice its rhythm in your body [pause 10 seconds]. Notice each breath. Focus on each inhale ... and exhale [pause 10 seconds]. Notice the changing patterns of sensations in your belly as you breathe in, and as you breathe out [pause 10 seconds]. Take a few moments to feel the physical sensations as you breathe in and as you breathe out [pause 10 seconds].*
4. *There is no need to try to control your breathing in any way—simply let the breath breathe itself [pause 10 seconds]. As best you can, also bring this attitude of generous allowing and gentle acceptance to the rest of your experience. There is nothing to be fixed, no particular state to be achieved. As best as you can, simply allow your experience to be your experience, without needing it to be other than what it is [pause 15 seconds].*
5. *Sooner or later, your mind will wander away from the breath to other concerns, thoughts, worries, images, bodily sensations, planning, or daydreams, or it may just drift along. This is what minds do much of the time. When you notice that your mind has wandered, gently congratulate yourself—you have come back and are once more aware of your experience! You may want to acknowledge briefly where your mind has been (Ah, there's thinking or there's feeling). Then, gently escort your attention back to the sensation of the breath coming in and going out [pause 10 seconds]. As best you can, bring a quality of kindness and compassion to your awareness, perhaps seeing the repeated wanderings of your mind as opportunities to bring patience and gentle curiosity to your experience [pause 15 seconds].*
6. *When you become aware of bodily sensations and feelings, tension, or other intense sensations in a particular part of your body, just notice them, acknowledge their presence, and see if you can make space for them [pause 10 seconds]. Do not try to hold on to them or make them go away [pause 10 seconds]. See if you can open your heart and make some room for the discomfort, for the tension, for the anxiety, just allowing them be there [pause 10 seconds]. Is there enough space in you to welcome in all of your experience? [pause 15 seconds]*
7. *Watch the sensations change from moment to moment. Sometimes they grow stronger [pause 10 seconds], sometimes they stay the same [pause 10 seconds], and sometimes they grow weaker—it does not matter [pause 10 seconds]. Breathe calmly in to and out from the sensations of discomfort, imagining the breath moving in to and out from that region of the body [pause 10 seconds]. Remember, your intention is not to make you feel better but to get better at feeling [pause 15 seconds].*
8. *If you ever notice that you are unable to focus on your breathing because of intense physical sensations of discomfort in your body, let go of your focus on the breath and shift your focus to the place of discomfort. Gently direct your attention on and into the discomfort and stay with it, no matter how bad it seems [pause 10 seconds]. Take a look at it. What does it really feel like? [pause 10 seconds] Again, see if you can make room for the discomfort and allow it to be there [pause 10 seconds]. Are you willing to be with whatever you have [pause 15 seconds].*
9. *Along with physical sensations in your body, you may also notice thoughts about the sensations and thoughts about the thoughts [pause 10 seconds]. You may notice your mind coming up with evaluative labels such as “dangerous” or “getting worse.” If that happens, you can thank your mind for the label [pause] and return to the present experience as it is, not as your mind says it is, noticing thoughts as thoughts, physical sensations as physical sensations, feelings as feelings—nothing more, nothing less [pause 15 seconds].*

Mindfulness (5)

10. *To help you experience the difference between yourself and your thoughts and feelings, you can name thoughts and feelings as you notice them. For instance, if you notice you are worrying, silently say to yourself, "Worry ... there is worry" just observing worry and not judging yourself for having these thoughts and feelings [pause 10 seconds]. If you find yourself judging, just notice that and call it "Judging ... there is judging" and observe that with a quality of kindness and compassion [pause 10 seconds]. You can do the same with other thoughts and feelings and just name them as planning, reminiscing, longing, or whatever you experience. Label the thought or emotion and move on [pause 10 seconds]. Thoughts and feelings come and go in your mind and body. You are not what those thoughts and feelings say, no matter how persistent or intense they may be [pause 15 seconds].*
11. *As this time for formal practice comes to an end, gradually widen your attention to take in the sounds around you ... notice your surroundings [pause] and slowly open your eyes with the intention to bring this awareness to the present moment and into the upcoming moments of the day.*

Mindfulness (6)

Mountain Meditation

Adapted from Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Guided Mindfulness Meditation, Series 2, Stress Reduction CDs and Tapes*, Lexington, MA., and Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p.135-140.

1. *So getting into a comfortable position in your chair. Sitting upright with feet flat on the floor, arms and legs uncrossed, and hands resting in the lap (palms up or down, whichever is more comfortable). Allowing the eyes to close gently [pause 10 seconds].*
2. *Now taking a few moments to get in touch with the physical sensations in the body, especially the sensations of touch or pressure where the body makes contact with the chair or floor. Noticing the gentle rising and falling of the breath in the chest and belly. No need to control the breathing in any way— simply letting the breath breathe itself [pause 10 seconds]. As best you can, also bringing this attitude of allowing and gentle acceptance to the rest of your experience.*
3. *Now, picturing in your mind's eye, as best you can, the most beautiful mountain that you know, or have seen, or can imagine, just holding the image and the feeling of this mountain in your mind's eye, letting it gradually come into greater focus, observing its overall shape, its lofty peak, the large base, rooted in the rock of the earth's crust, its steep or gently sloping sides.*
4. *Noticing how massive it is, how solid, how unmoving. Perhaps your mountain has snow at the top and trees on the lower slopes. However, it appears, just sitting and breathing with the image of this mountain, observing it, noting its qualities. And when you feel ready, seeing if you can bring the mountain into your own body, so that your body sitting here, and the mountain of the mind's eye become one.*
5. *Sitting here you share in the massiveness, and the stillness of the mountain, you become the mountain, rooted in the sitting posture. Your head becomes the lofty peak, supported by the rest of the body, your shoulders and arms become the sides of the mountain. Your buttocks and legs become the solid base rooted to your chair. And with each breath as you continue sitting, becoming a little more a breathing mountain, unwavering in your stillness, completely what you are- beyond words and thought, a centred, rooted, unmoving presence.*
6. *Now as you sit here, becoming aware of the fact that as the sun travels across the sky, and day becomes night, and night is followed again by day, the mountain just sits, experiencing the changing of light in each moment, constantly changing, yet always just being itself. And it remains still as the seasons flow into one another, as the leaves turn colour in the fall, and snow and ice blanket the mountain in the winter.*
7. *Spring comes, the birds sing in the trees once again and the streams overflow with the waters of melting snow. Through it all, the mountain continues to sit, unmoved by the weather, by what happens on the surface, by the world of appearances.*
8. *People may come to see the mountain and comment on how beautiful it is, or how it's not a good day to see the mountain, that it's too cloudy, or rainy, or foggy, or dark. None of this matters to the mountain which remains at all times its essential self.*
9. *Clouds may come, and clouds may go. Tourists may like it or not, but the mountain's magnificence and beauty are not changed one bit by whether people see it or not, or by the weather.*
10. *Perhaps in the face of everything that changes in our own lives over seconds, over hours, over years, we can become the mountain, embodying the same unwavering stillness and rootedness.*
11. *We all experience our own periods of light and darkness, storms of varying intensity in the outer world and in our own minds and bodies. We endure periods of darkness and pain and savour moments of joy and uplift. Even our appearance changes constantly, experiencing a weather of its own.*
12. *By becoming the mountain, we can link up with its strength and stability, and adopt them for our own. We can use its energies to support our willingness to encounter each moment with mindfulness, and equanimity, and clarity. It may help us to see that our thoughts and feelings and sensations are very much like the weather on the mountain.*

Mindfulness (7)

13. *The weather of our own lives is not to be ignored or denied. It is to be encountered, felt, known for what it is, and held in awareness. And in holding it in this way, we come to know a deeper silence and stillness and wisdom. Mountains have this to teach us, and much more, if we can come to listen. And so, in the time that remains, continuing to sustain the mountain meditation on your own, in silence, moment by moment.*

Mindfulness (8)

Mindful S.T.O.P.

A useful, ultra-brief, and very simple mindfulness practice, that you can easily incorporate into your busy daily routine, no matter how pressed for time you are is called the:

MINDFUL S.T.O.P.

Here's how it goes:

- S -** *Slow down (slow down your breathing; or slowly press your feet into the floor; or slowly stretch your arms; or slowly press your fingertips together)*
- T -** *Take note (with a sense of curiosity, notice your thoughts & feelings; notice what you can see and hear and touch and taste and smell; notice where you are and what you are doing)*
- O -** *Open up (open up and make room for your thoughts & feelings, and allow them to freely flow through you; use any defusion or expansion skill you like)*
- P -** *Pursue values (reconnect with your values, and let them guide whatever you do next)*

*When we **Slow down** this immediately "anchors" us in the present moment. This may involve slow breathing, slow stretching, or pushing your feet down firmly into the floor.*

*Then to increase that contact with the present moment, we then **Take note**: that is, to notice, with curiosity, what is happening both inside your skin - your thoughts, feelings, sensations - and outside your skin - what you can see, hear, touch, taste and smell. This is basically doing "expansive awareness" which is the first step in both defusion and acceptance.*

*Next, we **Open up**. This can involve any defusion or acceptance technique (or combination thereof) that helps you to open up and make room for your thoughts and feelings; to give them plenty of space and allow them to freely flow through you.*

*And finally **Pursue values**: to get in touch with 2 or 3 core values and use them to set a goal or decide on an action that is likely to be life-enhancing.*

*The lovely thing about a mindful **STOP** is you can make it as short or as long as you like. You can zip through this in under thirty seconds - e.g., while you're waiting at a red traffic light, or stuck in a supermarket queue - or you can stretch it out into a thirty-minute formal meditation practice.*

I encourage you to try it out for yourself - not just once, but over and over and over again:

Slow down; Take note; Open up; and Pursue your values.

*A regular mindful **STOP** works wonders.*