



ZAR Wellness Counselling
Empowering Minds, Inspiring Change

MINDFULNESS EXERCISES

Worry and anxiety affect all of us, especially during times of stress and pressure. Mindfulness exercises offer a wide range of physical, mental, and emotional benefits. These practices are rooted in ancient meditation techniques but have gained popularity in recent years due to their proven positive effects on overall well-being.

It's important to note that the benefits of mindfulness exercises may vary from person to person, and the effectiveness of these practices often depends on consistent engagement and dedication to the process. Benefits of Mindfulness Exercises include: stress reduction, emotional regulation, enhanced self-awareness, reduced symptoms of anxiety and improved overall wellbeing.

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Mindful Breathing - the body is always breathing

Mindful breathing is a gentle and nurturing technique that invites us to become fully aware of our breath, using it as an anchor to ground ourselves in the here and now. This meditation involves focusing on your breath to help settle your mind.

By learning to steady our attention on the breath, we can use this focused awareness to become mindful of our thoughts, feelings, and sensations, and of our interactions with others.

Begin by breathing normally and observe your breathing. It's helpful to focus on a physical cue, like the rise and fall of your belly. When your mind naturally wanders (and it will—that's inevitable), make a note of it, then simply return to focus on your breathing of each inhale and exhale.

Breathing in this way, even for a minute or two, helps eliminate distraction, release negative thoughts, improve self awareness, and quiet a racing mind.



10 BENEFITS OF GRATITUDE

Increase your happiness



1 REDUCES DEPRESSION



2 STRENGTHENS RESILIENCY



3 LESS CHRONIC PAIN



4 INCREASES SELF-ESTEEM



5 MORE LIKELY TO HELP OTHERS



6 IMPROVES SLEEP



7 RETAIN MORE POSITIVE EXPERIENCES



8 INCREASES ENERGY LEVELS



9 REDUCES FEELINGS OF JEALOUSY



10 IMPROVES PHYSICAL HEALTH

Gratitude Practice

Take a few moments each day to reflect on things you are grateful for. It could be as simple as the warmth of the sun, a delicious meal, or the company of a loved one. Cultivating gratitude can shift your focus from what's lacking to what's already present in your life.

Gratitude practice is a mindfulness exercise that involves focusing on and expressing gratitude for the positive aspects of one's life and reflect on the things you are grateful for.

The concept behind gratitude practice is to shift one's attention away from negative or stressful thoughts and instead concentrate on the things we have to be grateful for. By doing so, individuals can foster a more positive outlook, reduce feelings of stress and anxiety, and improve overall well-being.

Body Scan

The aim of this exercise is to bring awareness to the physical sensations in different parts of your body. For this exercise, see if you are able to just notice what you feel without judgment - for example, do you notice tingling, warmth, tightness or other sensations. This exercise is not about whether these sensations are good or bad, it's just about noticing them.

Lie down or sit in a comfortable position. Slowly scan your body from head to toe, paying attention to each part. Notice any sensations, tension, or areas of relaxation. This meditation helps bring you more fully into the present moment, by simply noticing and allowing whatever physical sensations are present in your body.

Body Scan Script

INTRODUCTION: Welcome to the Body Scan Meditation Exercise. This practice is designed to help you develop awareness and connection with your physical sensations, promoting relaxation and mindfulness. Find a comfortable and quiet space to begin. You can either sit in a chair with your feet on the ground or lie down on a mat or bed. Let's begin:

SCRIPT:

[1. Settling In]

- Take a few moments to settle into a comfortable position.
- Close your eyes gently, if you feel comfortable doing so.
- Allow your body to relax and your mind to let go of any tension or distractions.

[2. Deep Breathing]

- Take a deep breath in through your nose, feeling your abdomen expand.
- Hold the breath for a moment.
- Slowly exhale through your mouth, releasing any tension or stress.
- Repeat this process two more times, focusing solely on your breath.

[3. Bringing Attention to Your Feet]

- Begin by bringing your attention to your feet.
- Feel the sensations in your toes, the arches of your feet, and your heels.
- Notice any warmth or coolness, tingling, or pulsing in your feet.
- Let go of any judgment or expectations, simply observe the sensations.

[4. Moving to Your Lower Legs]

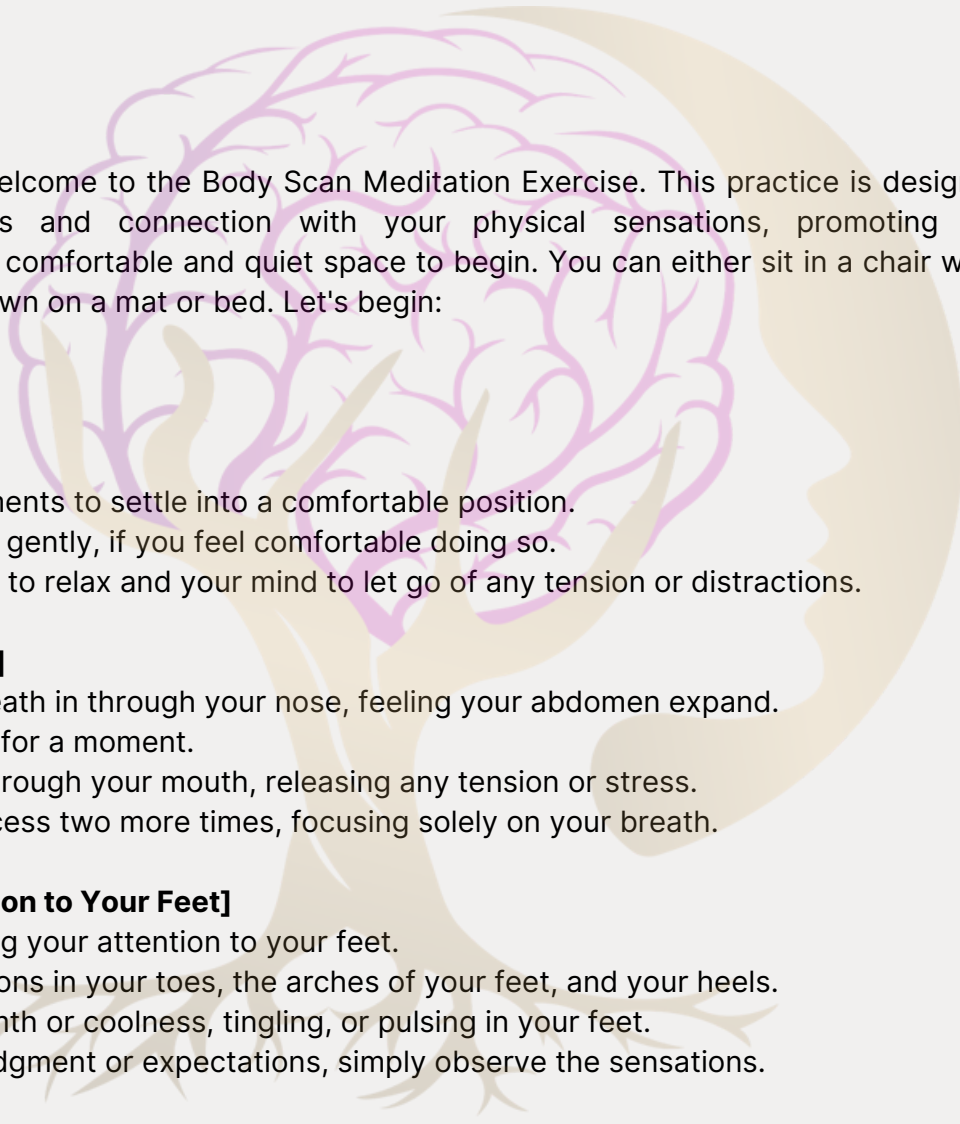
- Shift your awareness to your lower legs.
- Notice the weight of your calves and shins against the surface beneath you.
- Feel any areas of tightness or relaxation in this area.
- Allow yourself to be fully present in this moment.

[5. Focusing on Your Knees and Thighs]

- Now, direct your attention to your knees and thighs.
- Feel the shape and texture of your knees and the muscles in your thighs.
- If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to the sensations in your legs.

[6. Becoming Aware of Your Pelvis and Hips]

- Shift your focus to your pelvis and hips.
- Notice the sensations of sitting or lying down, grounding you to the earth.
- Feel the contact points between your body and the supporting surface.



Body Scan Script cont.

[7. Noticing Your Abdomen]

- Bring your attention to your abdomen.
- Feel the rise and fall of your breath in this area.
- Observe any sensations that arise, such as tension, softness, or movement.

[8. Becoming Aware of Your Chest and Upper Back]

- Shift your focus to your chest and upper back.
- Notice the gentle expansion and contraction with each breath.
- Be present with any feelings or sensations in this part of your body.

[9. Focusing on Your Shoulders, Arms, and Hands]

- Direct your attention to your shoulders, arms, and hands.
- Feel the weight of your arms, the position of your shoulders.
- Notice any sensations in your hands—warmth, coolness, tingling, or stillness.

[10. Bringing Awareness to Your Neck]

- Gently bring your awareness to your neck.
- Feel any tension or relaxation in this area.
- Imagine your breath flowing freely through your neck, releasing any tightness.

[11. Focusing on Your Face]

- Shift your attention to your face.
- Notice your forehead, eyes, cheeks, and jaw.
- Allow your facial muscles to soften and relax.

[12. Taking a Moment for Full-Body Awareness]

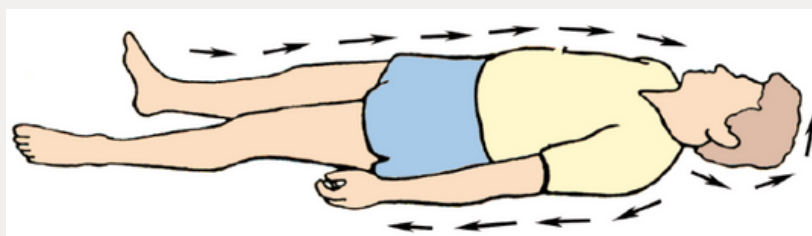
- Take a few moments to feel your entire body as a whole.
- Feel the interconnectedness of each body part and the unity of your being.
- Breathe in this sense of connection and presence.

[13. Concluding the Exercise]

- Gently start to wiggle your fingers and toes.
- Slowly bring your awareness back to the room and your surroundings.
- When you're ready, open your eyes.

CONCLUSION:

Congratulations on completing the Body Scan Meditation Exercise! By practicing this exercise regularly, you can enhance your ability to be present and attentive to your body's sensations, fostering relaxation and mindfulness in your daily life. Remember, it's perfectly okay if your mind wandered during the exercise; simply gently redirect your attention to the present moment whenever you notice it straying. Enjoy the benefits of this practice and the improved connection with your body. Have a peaceful and mindful day ahead!



Leaves on a Stream

"Leaves on a Stream" is a meditative and mindfulness exercise that is used in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) to help cope with uncomfortable thoughts and feelings. This technique is based on cognitive defusion, which works by creating distance from thoughts and feelings as a way to reduce the power they have over you.

In this exercise, you'll be encouraged to release your worries, fears, and negative thoughts onto the imaginary leaves. As each thought lands on a leaf, watch it drift away, carried downstream, leaving your mind clear and unburdened."

Script

(1) Sit in a comfortable position and either close your eyes or rest them gently on a fixed spot in the room.

(2) Visualize yourself sitting beside a gently flowing stream with leaves floating along the surface of the water. Pause 10 seconds.

(3) For the next few minutes, take each thought that enters your mind and place it on a leaf... let it float by. Do this with each thought – pleasurable, painful, or neutral. Even if you have joyous or enthusiastic thoughts, place them on a leaf and let them float by.

(4) If your thoughts momentarily stop, continue to watch the stream. Sooner or later, your thoughts will start up again. Pause 20 seconds.

(5) Allow the stream to flow at its own pace. Don't try to speed it up and rush your thoughts along. You're not trying to rush the leaves along or "get rid" of your thoughts. You are allowing them to come and go at their own pace.

(6) If your mind says "This is dumb," "I'm bored," or "I'm not doing this right" place those thoughts on leaves, too, and let them pass. Pause 20 seconds.

(7) If a leaf gets stuck, allow it to hang around until it's ready to float by. If the thought comes up again, watch it float by another time. Pause 20 seconds.

(8) If a difficult or painful feeling arises, simply acknowledge it. Say to yourself, "I notice myself having a feeling of boredom/impatience/frustration." Place those thoughts on leaves and allow them float along.

(9) From time to time, your thoughts may hook you and distract you from being fully present in this exercise. This is normal. As soon as you realize that you have become sidetracked, gently bring your attention back to the visualization exercise.

"Nothing can bring you peace but yourself." – Ralph Waldo Emerson



Pausing

Pausing is one of the most effective ways of working with anxiety. Pausing refers to taking a moment to stop and bring one's full attention to the present moment. We pause all the time in life. Between sentences, at stop lights, in conversations... But when it comes to stress and anxiety, pausing is extremely difficult. When emotion rushes through us, it can be all encompassing.

Pausing involves deliberately and non-judgmentally redirecting your focus away from distractions, thoughts, or emotions, and grounding yourself in the here and now. Pausing is an essential aspect of mindfulness practice and can be applied in various situations throughout daily life.

Here's a step-by-step explanation of how pausing works in mindfulness:

Recognizing the need to pause: Mindfulness involves being aware of your mental and emotional state. When you notice that you are feeling overwhelmed, stressed, anxious, or simply caught up in your thoughts, that's the moment to recognize the need to pause.

- **Stopping:** When you realize the need to pause, take a deliberate moment to stop whatever you are doing. If possible, find a quiet and comfortable space where you can have a few moments of uninterrupted time.
- **Grounding yourself in the present:** Once you've paused, bring your attention to your breath or your body. Feel the sensation of your breath going in and out, or focus on the feeling of your feet on the ground. This helps to anchor you to the present moment.
- **Observing without judgment:** As you pause and ground yourself, observe any thoughts, emotions, or bodily sensations that arise. The key here is to be non-judgmental and accepting of whatever you experience. It's normal for your mind to wander, but gently guide your attention back to your breath or body each time you notice it has drifted.
- **Regaining clarity and composure:** By pausing and observing without judgment, you create a space between your reactions and the external stimuli. This space allows you to respond to situations with greater clarity and composure, rather than reacting impulsively based on emotions or habitual patterns.
- **Proceeding mindfully:** After you've taken the time to pause, you can choose to continue with what you were doing, but now with a more mindful and present mindset. You can carry this state of mindfulness with you as you engage in daily activities, enhancing your overall awareness and well-being.

The practice of pausing in mindfulness helps break the cycle of automatic pilot mode and allows you to respond more skillfully to life's challenges. It cultivates greater self-awareness, emotional regulation, and the ability to make conscious choices, leading to a more balanced and mindful way of living.

I hope you have found this Mindfulness Resource Sheet helpful. If you are ready to start your counselling journey, please reach out.

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