

## **A Mindfulness Meditation Session (10-15 minutes)**

### **By Dr. Catherine Crooks**

*Mindfulness is about being fully awake in our lives. It is about perceiving the exquisite vividness of each moment. We feel more alive. We also gain immediate access to our own powerful inner resources for insight, transformation, and healing (Jon Kabat-Zinn).*

#### **1. Preparing to meditate**

Find a space that is relatively quiet and that you can make *your* "spot" for formal meditation practice (your bedroom, your living room, closet, etc.). If you commit to a length of time beforehand, you might consider keeping a timer so you don't have to worry about looking at the clock. Or, just commit to meditating and being present for as long as you can (that may be only 5 minutes at first). Keep the space simple; buying lots of stuff from your neighborhood meditation store will not make you a better meditator. Only a personal relationship to the practice can do that.

#### **2. Meditation Posture**

You may sit on the floor, on a meditation cushion (zafu), or in a chair. You can also sit on a folded towel or blanket or on cushions from your couch. If you are on the floor or cushion(s), make sure your knees are lower than the hip joints, and the pelvis is tilted slightly down and forward. It helps if your ankles are padded by a blanket or mat (and the knees too if the knees are on the floor), which will ease the tendency of the feet to fall asleep. If you're in a chair, place the feet flat on the floor.

Most people meditate with their eyes closed, but if you prefer, or are more comfortable doing so, you can keep them partially open. If you choose to keep them open, lower the gaze and focus on an area a few feet in front of you.

If sleepiness is an issue, you could meditate while standing or keeping your eyes open. Or perhaps the answer is to take a nap (maybe you really need it!) and then come back to the practice when you are more rested. Have compassion for yourself and listen deeply to what you need.

#### **3. The Object of Meditation – Working with the Breath**

Begin to bring your awareness to your breath wherever you feel it most prominently in the body. As you breathe in normally and naturally, be aware of breathing in and breathing out. Move in close to the sense of the breath in the belly, the chest, the throat, the nose, the mouth. Simply

place your attention on the full cycle of each natural breath as it moves in the body, then let it go and place your attention on the next breath. Each breath is an anchor we can rely on to connect with the present moment. The breath is the definition of NOW, and we connect by feeling it, literally and physically.

Thinking is not bad; it is human nature! The moment we notice our mind is wandering, just acknowledge that and gently guide the attention back to the breath. If you become aware of any sensations of discomfort, tension, or resistance, zero in on them by breathing into them on each in breath and breathing out from them on each out breath as you soften and open. As you continue to focus on the breath, just let things come and go without judgment. Pay attention to the thoughts that really take you away from the breath, the moments you go astray from the present - those are the ones we need to acknowledge and gently guide ourselves back from.

#### **4. Post Meditation**

Congratulate yourself for taking the time to be present. Every experience is precious because our experience is what we actually have. This is the true mind of meditation (which is not always going to be calm and peaceful!). Whatever your experience, try to accept it just as it is. Offer lots of joy and compassion to yourself while on this meditation journey.

#### **5. Additional Resources:**

<https://insighttimer.com/> (free app)

<https://www.stopbreathethink.com/> (free app)

<https://www.uclahealth.org/ucla-mindful> (free app)

<https://www.headspace.com/> (subscription app but free trial period)

*Guided Mindfulness Meditation* (Sounds True) by Jon Kabat-Zinn,  
<https://www.soundstrue.com/store/guided-mindfulness-meditation-3947.html>

*The Practice of Mindfulness: Six Guided Practices* (Sounds True):  
<https://www.soundstrue.com/store/practicemindfulness>

<https://www.tarabrach.com/guided-meditations/>

<http://www.mindful.org/resources> (guided meditations)