

MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

STUDENT WORKBOOK

SESSION 8



MINDFULNESS
for Anxiety

Anxiety comes to people in many forms and frequencies. While mindfulness is not a clinical treatment for anxiety, it does offer practices aimed at relieving or preventing anxiety. Spend the week after Session 8 deeply examining the root causes of anxiety in your life and building up any needed strategies to alleviate the physical or emotional effects of anxiety.

The following exercises, meditations, and journal topics will give you something to focus on each day between sessions. Feel free to complete them in any order you like, and even to repeat any exercise you find helpful or interesting. Let yourself be led by your needs and interests this week.

Session 8 Contents:

- Journal Topics
- Breathe Away Anxious Thoughts
- Rating Anxiety in the Body
- Relieving Anxiety
- Relieving Low Amounts of Stress
- Dealing with Busy Schedules
- What is Most Nurturing and Stressful for You?
- Recurring Thoughts
- Transforming Anxiety
- Scheduling Worry Time
- How to Untie Mental Knots
- Squeezing and Releasing Stress

Session 8 Journal Topics:

1. Keep an anxiety journal for the week. Notice when and where you feel anxious, and about what. Review your week and look for any patterns, surprises, or insights into your triggers.
2. Looking back on different eras of your life, what have been the major sources of anxiety?
3. What were they when you were a child? A teenager? A young adult? Notice how your anxiety has changed or not changed and reflect on the nature, topic, and recurrence of any of your worries.
4. Reflect on all the ways you respond to your anxiety. What do you do, eat, say, or avoid when you feel anxious? Tease out which responses are effective and which are not. Where did you learn these responses? How do each make you feel? Which would you like to intentionally develop going forward?

Breathe Away Anxious Thoughts

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

☐

Thoughts?

☐

Heart?

☐

Body?

☐

None

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
- the fact that many others are feeling similarly about this topic as you
- how you might feel with increased awareness around this topic
- when you can apply increased mindfulness to this topic in your day-to-day life



Hello, and welcome to this meditation to relieve depression and anxious thoughts....

Make sure you are in a comfortable position and you will not be disturbed for the duration of this session.

Bring your focus to your breath, and really pay attention to how your lungs expand and contract when you inhale and exhale.

Let your breath flow how ever it wants to right now.

Notice your jaw, and if you feel any tension here, just notice it, don't try to change anything.

Now breathe into the sensations in your jaw, and as you exhale, allow it to release a little.

Inhale again, imagine that you are breathing in new life, and when you exhale, let all fear completely fade.

Take another breath in, and when you exhale, feel yourself let go of any worries.

Notice how relaxed you are becoming right now.

Breathe Away Anxious Thoughts

Let another breath come in naturally imagining a bright future, and as you let it go, notice how depression eases and fades.

A gentle wave of relaxation sweeps over you as you breathe in and out.

Allow your breath to flow naturally now, let yourself feel calm and peaceful.

You deserve this wonderful feeling of serenity.

You are open now to receive new thoughts, and you open up even more with each breath you take to new and fresh energy.

Notice how new ideas begin to present themselves to you.

Bring up feelings of abundance, as if you have so much that your cup pours over for others to enjoy the abundance you have created.

Imagine that you are energized and have a zeal for life.

Even if this is not true of your present self, imagine it vividly, and with as much detail as you can.

See yourself full of energy and optimism.

You can imagine it as if you are watching a movie of yourself if this helps, but see the colors brightly, and watch yourself full of ambition, taking steps towards achievement.

Stay with your breath and allow your intentions to remain positive.

Even if you don't feel positive in this moment, you can imagine what being joyful is like.

So, breathe into this joy you are creating, and notice how you are consciously shifting any depressed or anxious thoughts right now, into peaceful feelings instead, by following your breath.

Breathe deeply and let your exhale completely relax you.

Breathe Away Anxious Thoughts

Any thoughts that previously held you back become smaller and smaller.

Watch negative thoughts diminish, little by little, as if you are riding away in a car and these negative thoughts are sitting along the roadside, shrinking into the distance as you ride away with ease.

As you see them go, you are freed from their grip.

If you have any more negative thoughts rise, drop them off on the side of the road, by any creative means that arises, and ride away, watching them grow smaller until they are consumed by the horizon.

Allow yourself a few moments to simply be.

Notice and feel changes from this moment right now, and the difference between how you felt before you began this meditation.

Your new thoughts find a new home within your inner being.

Return your focus to your breath for a few moments.

In your own time, whenever you are ready, slowly open your eyes.

Good.

Commend yourself for making these steps towards a better life.

Accept this wonderful change to your new life.

Take as much time as you'd like to just be in gratitude for several moments.

Thank you.



Rating Anxiety in the Body

Date / Time:

What have you brought mindful awareness to today? Check all that apply.

☐

Heart

☐

Mind

☐

Body

☐

Breath

☐

Environment

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
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Whether we're aware of it or not, our emotions tend to present themselves in the physical body in addition to being something of the mind.

Anxiety, for instance, might present itself as hot palms, swirling sensations in the stomach, tingling in the face, or any other number of sensations (numbness included). Getting to know anxiety as it manifests in the body can help us to be more aware when it arises and to shift our focus away from worried or fearful thoughts and into what is most tangible.

This practice is one you can explore anytime you first notice anxiety creeping up on you. Explore it with patience and compassion, using it so long as it grounds and nourishes you.

PRACTICE:

1. When you notice the first signs of anxiety appearing, take a moment to find a safe and comfortable space to step into if this is possible. In some cases when anxiety arises, it is not easy or convenient for us to step away from the situation.

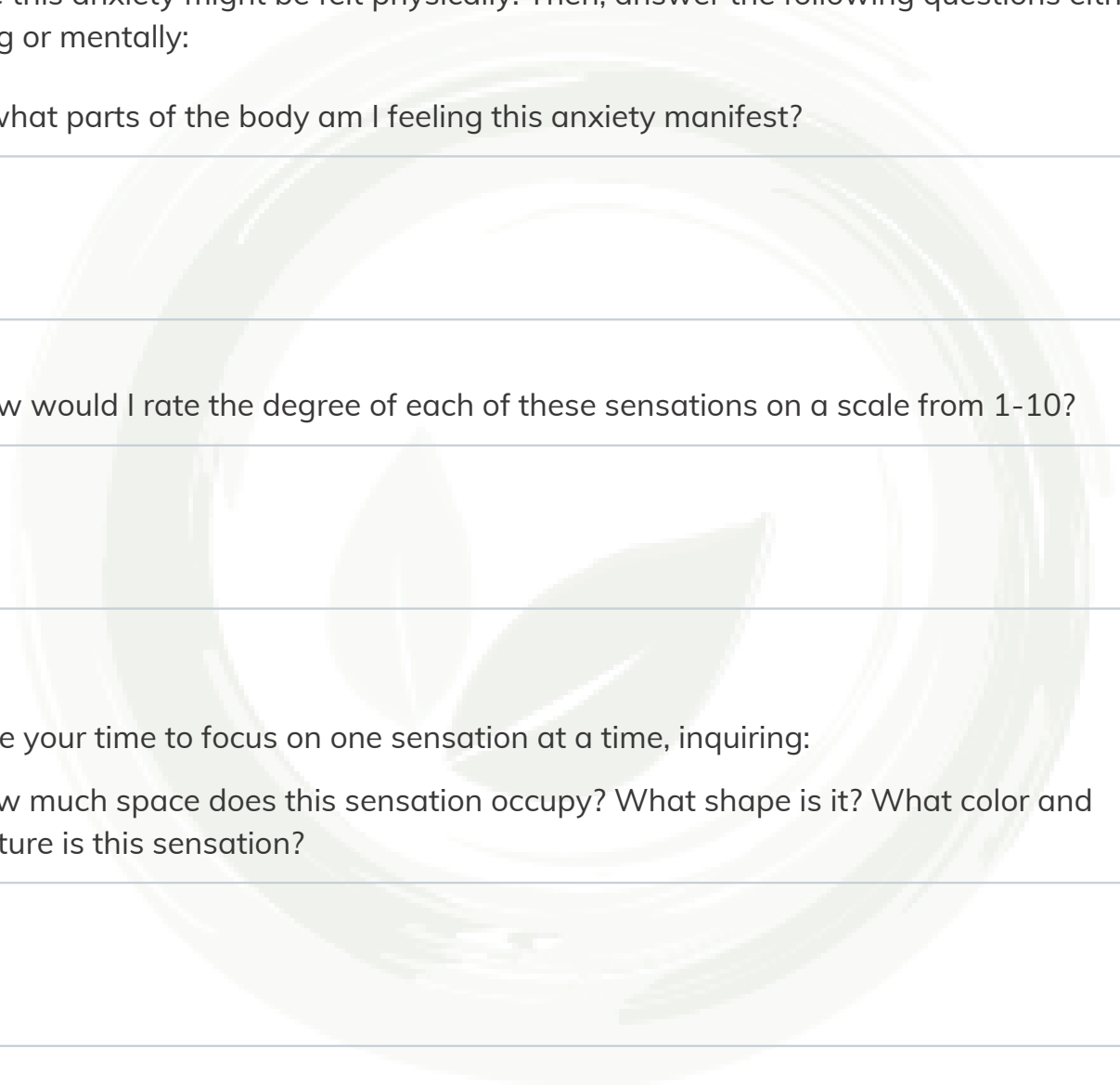
This exercise can be simplified in those cases, so make any adjustments to it as is required. For instance, rather than journal about it you might simply reflect upon it as soon as it occurs.

Rating Anxiety in the Body

2. Take a moment to draw your attention to the base of your feet, rooting yourself firmly into the floor or earth beneath you. Take three full breaths, softening the belly as you breathe. This will help to ground you.

3. Now, with a curious and compassionate mind, begin to gently scan the body to see where this anxiety might be felt physically. Then, answer the following questions either in writing or mentally:

- In what parts of the body am I feeling this anxiety manifest?



- How would I rate the degree of each of these sensations on a scale from 1-10?

4. Take your time to focus on one sensation at a time, inquiring:

- How much space does this sensation occupy? What shape is it? What color and texture is this sensation?

5. Focusing on whatever sensation is most prominent for you, begin to breathe into this part of the body. Imagine that each inhalation sends nourishing energy to that manifestation of anxiety and that each exhalation allows it to soften. Spend as long as you'd like with this. If you'd like to repeat the same practice with another sensation, do so once you feel 'finished' with the first.

Rating Anxiety in the Body

6. Note if and how both body and mind shift as you practice this. Without forcing your experience to be anything other than what it is, simply be present with what this practice is like for you. When you feel ready, take a few more grounding breaths and slowly open your eyes.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. How did this practice feel for you today? Was it easy, difficult, or something in-between?



2. Did the sensations shift at all as you observed them and as you breathed into them?

Relieving Anxiety

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

☐ Thoughts? ☐ Heart? ☐ Body? ☐ None

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
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Hello and welcome to this healing session for anxiety....

Get into a comfortable and relaxed position and just let go of all your daily stresses.

Allow yourself to just be here and now, letting your body just be...

You don't have to do anything because our bodies naturally want to be calm and relaxed.

Sometimes thinking too much or being tense and being anxious doesn't allow for us to relax.

So naturally, we must let go of any need to control the present moment and future outcomes.

We feel anxious because we tend to overanalyze what we think will happen today, tomorrow or next week.

We do this out of habit because in the past, situations and outcomes that didn't happen the way we expected, and we tend to feel that we need to be in control and be worried.

In order to change this habit, we must change our self-image and create new beliefs.

That's what this session will teach you, but first, we need to get in a relaxed state and go within, calming our mind with some breathing.

Relieving Anxiety

I will count down and with it number I say I want to fully inhale with your belly out and exhale tightening your belly.

And with each breath, you will feel more and more relaxed, taking you into a deep state of peace.

I will count down now.

5...Take a full in breath and as you exhale feel the tension loosen a little bit.

4...Take a nice deep breath in and as you exhale you feel even more relaxed and tensions let go.

3...Full breath in...and out.

Your mind is becoming calm and clear.

2...Inhale deeply and when you exhale observe how the need to control subsides as you become extremely relaxed.

1...As you take your last breath and exhale slowly you feel any tension is gone, and you are in complete peace and tranquility.

Now you hear yourself saying...

"I've survived this before, I'll survive now.

I'm strong and I persevere through anything.

I know that I'm not my anxiety.

I can take things one step at a time.

I live only in this moment.

I approach this situation with openness and curiosity.

Relieving Anxiety

I'm in charge of my breathing, and I can slow it down when I need to.

I enjoy my feelings of inner calm.

I'm actively taking steps to reduce my anxiety.

I'm talented and have many things to offer.

I cultivate patience to overcome anxiety.

I'm courageous and can make it through everything.

I use my unique strengths to move beyond anxiety.

I know what I value and place my energy there.

Life wants what is best for me.

I am comfortable and connected with my environment.

I can find pleasure in my life right now.

I will only allow for healthy decisions in my life now.

I am a strong, independent person.

I am loved.

I am unique.

I am important.

I matter therefore I am worthy.

I can do this.

Relieving Anxiety

I love who I am, I am in control.

I control my mind it does not control me.

I have the power to stop this.

I succeed in what I do.

I am relaxed, I am calm.

I am successful.

I am free from my anxiety.

I am in control

I am above the stress of any kind.

All is well.

I am safe.

I am prepared for change.

I am strong.

I acknowledge when it is difficult and know I will rise above it."

Good

Now I will count down from 5, and with each number, I say you will gain more and more awareness of the present moment, and as you do, you bring with you all that you gained today.

You take action with a new mindset, ready to tackle any challenges without getting anxious or worried.

Relieving Anxiety

5. Coming back slowly.

4. Feel how your body laying or sitting.

3. You're becoming more alert.

2. You're aware of your surroundings a bit more now.

1. You feel fully awake and refreshed.

Good Job today.



Relieving Low Amounts of Stress

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

☐

Thoughts?

☐

Heart?

☐

Body?

☐

None

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
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[“...” indicates a 3 second pause]

[“.....” indicates a 5 second pause]

[Speech at normal pace]

Hello and welcome to this session focusing on when we have low amounts of stress...

We all get stressed daily but sometimes we aren't even aware that we are stressed....

Stress doesn't have to be a thought or even a reaction... it could be sitting somewhere in your body, lingering as long as you are unaware of it.....

Think about a time when you were worried... did this worry also make you feel drained or tired?...

That's because every time we are worried we have a low level of stress present, and what causes stress is not worry but our reaction to worry.....

Did you know that each human has about 50,000 thoughts a day?

If we believed all of these thoughts, we would surely get ourselves into trouble...

So, instead, realize that thoughts simply come and go....

Relieving Low Amounts of Stress

That our thoughts are not truly who we are.

When we take a step back from all these thoughts, we can observe them better and see them for what they are....just passing moments of thinking.....

Attaching too much emotion to one stressful thought can disrupt our day, and our entire lives.
[pause for 7 seconds]...

Let's step away now from our thoughts and worries by just becoming aware of our body.....

Feel how the air around you hugs to the shape of your body.....

Notice how you can willingly activate all of your senses, hear all the sounds around you.....

Hear your own breath.....when you breathe a little bit deeper, can you smell anything?.....you can even imagine you smell something, and your mind can create the thought of it for you.....imagine the smell of vanilla.....can you remember how it smells?.....good.....now notice your fingertips and feel what are touching and feeling right now.....and become aware of your feet.....notice how the soles of your feet feel right now.....good.....and just become aware of your entire body right now.....

Feeling different areas.....

Becoming aware of your body through focusing takes you out of your thoughts, so use this technique when worry, or light stress rises in your mind.

[pause for 10 seconds]

We react to worry because we believe that the worry is real.

Did you know that 95% or more of our worries don't even end up happening?

[pause 5 seconds]

We think of worry as bad but actually worries are a very important part of our lives.....

Without worry you could make bad decisions.....

Relieving Low Amounts of Stress

Without worry we would walk off a cliff without taking precaution.

[pause for 5 seconds]

Our brain creates worry to keep us on guard and alert, but some of us let worries carry us away allowing them to take over, putting stress in full control of our mind and body.

[pause for 5 seconds]

Instead of letting doubts push us around and drain us, we can learn to use the worry to our advantage.

[pause 3 seconds]

Uneasiness can either become our greatest strength or our biggest weakness.

[pause 5 seconds]

So let's gain control over our fears that cause stress...

Instead of reacting to it we will learn and become stronger from each time it arises.

[pause 5 seconds]

To do this, we need to identify where this emotion is located and then bring awareness to it whenever it arises, purposefully creating space between it.

[pause 5 seconds]

Make sure you are sitting down in a comfortable position.

Your legs can be crossed or uncrossed, but make sure your spine straight...

You can keep your eyes closed or open...

If you keep your eyes open just look at one spot, fixing your gaze on just that one point without looking anywhere else.

[pause 5 seconds]

Take a few deep breaths to relax even more.

[pause 10 seconds]

Relieving Low Amounts of Stress

Bring into your mind a good emotion, like excitement. Noticing in your body where you feel changes happening, kind of like mapping it.

[pause 5 seconds]

Remember a time when you were really excited about something.....

Could be anything, no matter how small or big... just vividly remember how it felt, where you felt it in your body, and how did you move?.....what changes do you notice?.....

Find out where exactly this feeling of excitement is located.....Is it in your stomach?..... or in your chest? maybe it moves around and doesn't stay in one place.....

Get familiar with this feeling.

[pause 10 seconds]

You can change the way you are feeling in your body at any time, by remembering an experience of excitement or joy.

Your body creates the feeling as if it's happening right now.....

Good.

[pause 5 seconds]

Use this knowledge of how excitement makes your body feel and how easy it is to bring it back upon will.

[pause 10 seconds]

Now we are going to create a worrisome feeling consciously, no need to be afraid or to avoid this feeling...it's a natural human emotion that just happens...

Avoiding it is what creates discomfort and additional stress.

[pause 5 seconds]

So remember a time when you felt worried, some moment in life when stress took full control of you and locate this emotion....where do you feel it?.....

Just sit with it for a moment.

Relieving Low Amounts of Stress

[pause 5 seconds]

Right now you are in complete control.....being aware of this feeling right now is what creates the space that you need.

[pause 5 seconds]

Just see this emotion as it is, a simple sensation in your body that has no power in itself...it lingers sometimes in one place or moves around.....

Now with this feeling of stress, bring back that feeling of excitement

[pause 10 seconds]

Notice how well we can change the way we feel when we focus on different feelings.

[pause 5 seconds]

As vividly as possible bring that feeling of excitement into your body..... remember when you were absolutely full of thrill that little mattered to you except for this joy..... Remember how it made you so excited that you couldn't stay still, and this strong energy was flowing all through your body...

[pause for 10 seconds]

Now notice all the different sensations in your body... notice any changes happening, put your awareness within you to see exactly what's happening.....

Good.....

[pause for 10 seconds]

you probably forgot about stress and feel no trace of that worry sensation, or maybe can still feel it, but you notice that it's just there.

[pause for 5 seconds]

It might even feel a little pleasant or strange, but it's not in control of you.....

[pause for 10 seconds]

See it for what it is- an emotion that's here to protect and care about you..... you can see that there is no need to escape it...

[pause for 5 seconds]

Relieving Low Amounts of Stress

No need to get stressed about it.....

This is the SPACE of peace.....

[pause for 10 seconds]

Keep practicing this space, at all times during your day, especially when you are really worried.....

[pause for 5 seconds]

Just remember a time of happiness, or passion or any other positive emotion, and let it rise in your body.....

[pause for 10 seconds]

Stress can leave as easily as it comes.....

[pause for 10 seconds]

It could stay for a short time or it could stay for a long time.....

[pause for 3 seconds]

It is up to you, and how you react to it.

[pause for 3 seconds]

So anytime you are faced with worries, remember these techniques, and implement them so that you can go about your day without the burden of stress....

You are doing amazing work, well done.



Dealing with Busy Schedules

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

☐ Thoughts? ☐ Heart? ☐ Body? ☐ None

To begin this Meditation on Dealing with Busy Schedules, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
- the fact that many others are feeling similarly about this topic as you
- how you might feel with increased awareness around this topic
- when you can apply increased mindfulness to this topic in your day-to-day life



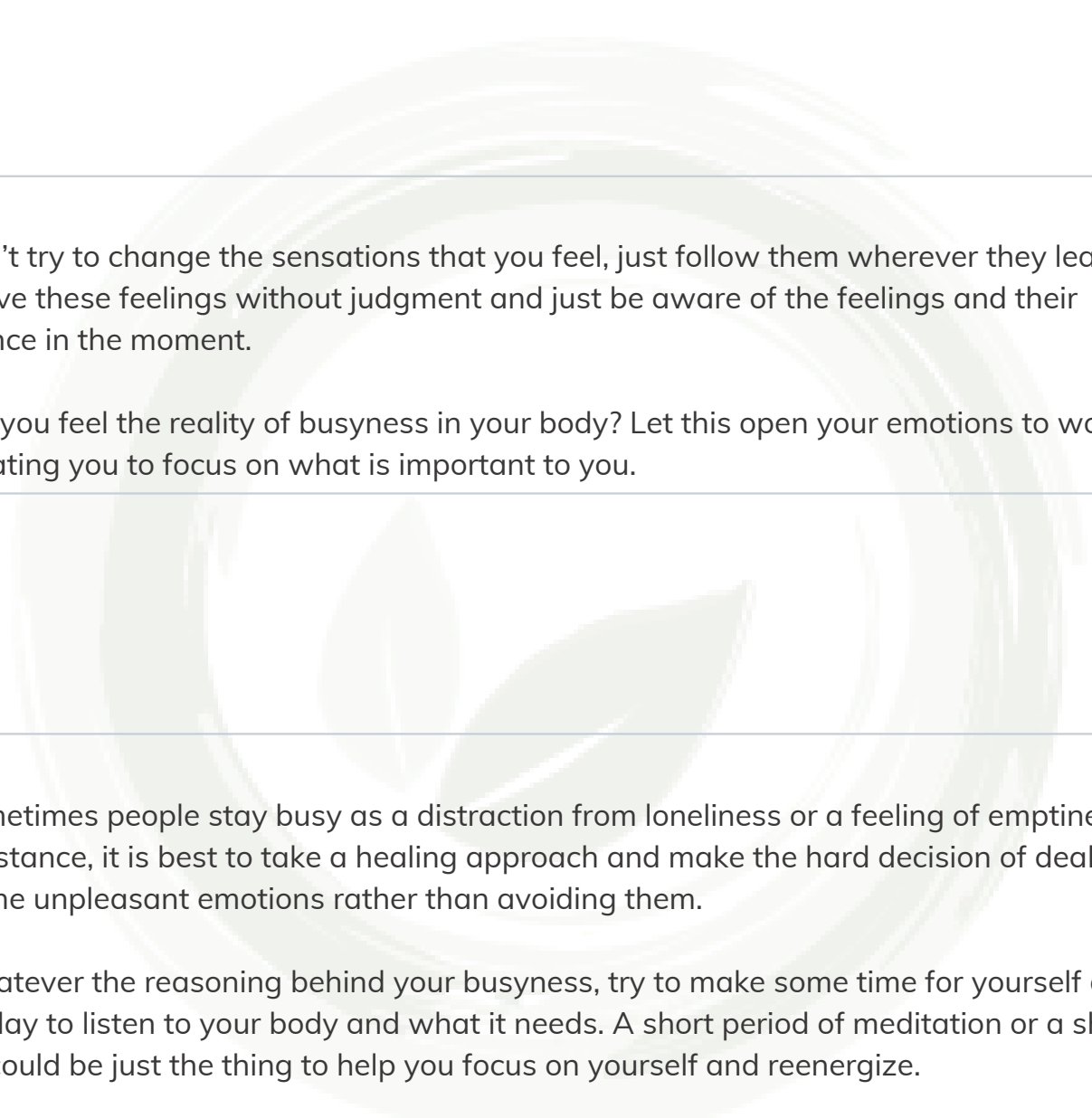
How do you take care of yourself when you are so busy juggling your job and caring for other people at home? You cannot give 100% to others if you don't have 100% to give. Knowing that you have to take care of yourself before you can adequately take care of others is easier said than done.

This exercise is to help bring awareness of how busyness feels inside. This is a non-judgmental exercise to elicit honest and open awareness of your feelings, there is no right or wrong response.

1. To begin this exercise, think of a typical busy day. Where are you, at work or at home? What are you doing? What time of day is it? Who is with you?

Dealing with Busy Schedules

2. Now tune in to your body. What do you feel? Are you happy, sad, anxious, calm, energized or tired? Do you have tension in your body, butterflies in your stomach or do you feel relaxed?



3. Don't try to change the sensations that you feel, just follow them wherever they lead you. Observe these feelings without judgment and just be aware of the feelings and their presence in the moment.

4. Did you feel the reality of busyness in your body? Let this open your emotions to work on motivating you to focus on what is important to you.

5. Sometimes people stay busy as a distraction from loneliness or a feeling of emptiness. In this instance, it is best to take a healing approach and make the hard decision of dealing with the unpleasant emotions rather than avoiding them.

6. Whatever the reasoning behind your busyness, try to make some time for yourself during each day to listen to your body and what it needs. A short period of meditation or a short walk could be just the thing to help you focus on yourself and reenergize.

7. How will you take what you learned from this forward into your life?

What is Most Nurturing and Stressful for You

Date / Time:

What have you brought mindful awareness to today? Check all that apply.

☐

Heart

☐

Mind

☐

Body

☐

Breath

☐

Environment

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
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1. Who/what nurtured you?

2. Who/what nurtured you?

What is Most Nurturing and Stressful for You

3. How did your reactions, thoughts or interpretations about other people and events nurture or stress you?



Additional Notes:

Recurring Thoughts

Date / Time:

What have you brought mindful awareness to today? Check all that apply.

☐

Heart

☐

Mind

☐

Body

☐

Breath

☐

Environment

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

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1. What recurring thoughts have you observed?

2. What worry or concern is associated with these recurring thoughts?

Recurring Thoughts

3. What feeling or emotion is associated with these recurring thoughts?



4. In what ways do these recurring thoughts affect your communications with people?

5. What action will you take from what you observed in this exercise?

Additional Notes:

Transforming Anxiety

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

☐ Thoughts? ☐ Heart? ☐ Body? ☐ None

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
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PURPOSE / EFFECTS

Anxiety may seem like a consequence of busy modern life, but it first evolved as a response to threats our ancestors experienced in the wild.

If we examine the six stereotypical reactions we have to anxious situations, we can see their evolutionary origins and then transform these natural responses into productive ways of dealing with stressful circumstances.

These six responses are fight, flight, freeze, appease, tend, and befriend. By mastering them, making them our tools, and using them to our advantage, we can conquer our anxiety.

METHOD

Summary

Figure out your natural anxiety response and transform it into something positive.

Transforming Anxiety

Long Version

- 1. FIGHT:** The fight response is fairly obvious; it's what gets us into scuffles. If anxious situations make you feel aggressive and feisty, you may be able to channel your energy into vocalizing your complaints (speaking up for what's right); just saying no; negotiating boundaries, conditions, and ground rules to avoid altercation; and doing battle with the anxiety-provoking beliefs and worries inside yourself. The fighter has to engage the situation to overcome his or her anxiety.
- 2. FLIGHT:** Flight makes us want to run away from our problems. If anxious situations make you want to run in the opposite direction, you're a fleer. That doesn't make you a coward; you can and should leave situations if they're not working and can't be fixed; look elsewhere for better situations rather than suffering in the one you're in; step back and disengage, especially when a situation starts to look hopeless. The fleer can also completely abandon and run away from anxious thoughts inside him or herself.
- 3. FREEZE:** Freezing is stopping all movement (mental or physical) until a problem goes away. If anxious situations tend to paralyze you, you may do best by calling time-outs; observing negative situations quietly; buying yourself or others time by waiting; being patient and restrained and letting things come and change naturally; and creating space for new, better possibilities. The freezer's patience and measured personality helps him or her to make it out of a stressful situation with minimal added stress.
- 4. APPEASE:** The appease response makes us supplicate; when we bow to our "betters." If you tend to take the blame yourself when in an anxious situation, you're an appeaser. You may find your anxiety lessened when you take maximum personal responsibility without overdoing it; when you offer genuine apologies; when you makes agreements and promises toward the future and amends for the past; when you give gifts, and when you acknowledge the grievances and anxieties of others and work to solve them.
- 5. TEND:** The tend response invites us to nurture in order to balance out our stress. If anxious situations make you want to curl up and be taken care of, you would do well to build up your personal resources for dealing with situations: taking meditative time for yourself, relaxing, and building alliances and to take care of yourself, making sure that you work on your own anxiety-inducing tendencies gently while allowing your kindness and caring for others work on their own anxious tendencies.

Transforming Anxiety

6. BEFRIEND: Befriending is the tendency to defuse anxious situations with levity and charm. If anxious situations make you want to crack jokes and find common ground with others, you're a befriender. The befriender can use his or her skills by making friends with his or her enemies (to a point, of course), recognizing and being kind to the inner goodness inside every anxiety-inducing person or thing, befriending him or herself (meaning being one's own best ally), and bringing a sense of humor to a difficult situation.

7. Keeping the right hemisphere of the brain busy helps to alleviate anxiety because it evolved to scan for threats, while the left hemisphere in part works to control negative emotion. By keeping the "worrier" half busy and letting the "emoter" do its business without interference, you can reduce anxious reactions.

HISTORY

As far back as the ancient Greeks, people were dealing with anxiety openly. As a response to stress, anxiety is as old as we are, but we are only just now beginning to understand it.

It is completely normal to experience anxiety from time to time; however, the anxiety disorders (generalized anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and social anxiety disorder) have become part of psychological discussion as ways to describe unusually high levels of anxiety.

CAUTIONS

If your anxiety problems are severe enough to keep you from living the life you wish to lead, consult with a trained psychologist about your options.

Scheduling Worry Time

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

☐ Thoughts? ☐ Heart? ☐ Body? ☐ None

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
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PURPOSE / EFFECTS

For many chronic worriers an endless stream of worries can consume the entire day, causing both mental and physical exhaustion. In this method, designating a daily worry time can actually help decrease the amount of time spent worrying. It can also help reduce the pull of your worries and increase your control over where you direct your attention.

METHOD

Summary

Set a specific time each day that you will allow yourself to worry as much as you want for a certain amount of time. Afterwards, postpone all future worrying until your next designated worry time.

Long Version

1. Choose a specific time each day to be your daily worry time.
2. It is best to pick a time that works with your schedule when you have at least 30 minutes.

Scheduling Worry Time

3. Throughout the day identify when you are worrying. If you notice you are worrying before your designated worry time, gently but firmly postpone your worrying and return to the task at hand.
 - It can be helpful to keep a sense of humor during the practice and perhaps say to your worry something along the lines of, “Thank you for your concern but I will see you later at (certain time) today.”
4. When your worry time arrives, designate 30 minutes to dive deeply into your worries and let yourself think and worry as much as you can.
 - Try to worry about one topic at a time and when you have exhausted all thoughts and concerns about it you can choose another topic.
 - If you wish you can write your worries down, say them out loud, or record them.
 - Try not to distract yourself from worrying. If you get bored, notice that and ask yourself if there is anything else you would like to worry about. Getting bored during worry time can loosen the grip and seriousness of your worries.
5. After your 30 minutes is done bring yourself back to the next task in your day.
 - You can thank your worries for sharing and tell them that you will see them tomorrow.
6. After your worry time, if worries arise tell yourself that you have already had your worry time for the day and will see to that thought tomorrow.
 - If you find yourself gripped by a particularly scary thought, you can write it down to remind yourself of it during your next worry time.
7. Try to practice every day for at least one week without skipping your worry time. This will make it easier for you to detach from worrying when it is not your worry time.

Scheduling Worry Time

HISTORY

Setting up a worry time is a practice used in cognitive behavioral therapy to treat various anxiety disorders.

CAUTIONS

During your worry time it is not recommended to delve into traumatic events or relive extremely stressful situations. If you find yourself becoming highly anxious, fearful, or uncomfortable please discontinue the practice.

NOTES

In general, and especially if you have trouble falling asleep, do not schedule your worry time right before bedtime.

Also, some people prefer to have two shorter worry times instead of one long worry time. The duration of your worry time can also be adjusted. Some prefer to only take 10-15 minutes each day for their worry time.

How to Untie Mental Knots

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

☐ Thoughts? ☐ Heart? ☐ Body? ☐ None

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
- the fact that many others are feeling similarly about this topic as you
- how you might feel with increased awareness around this topic
- when you can apply increased mindfulness to this topic in your day-to-day life



POINTS

- Our thinking wrings us out emotionally and energetically.
- We think ourselves into dead-ends — no possibility for resolution.
- We think ourselves out of relationship and into isolation.

SKILLFUL MEANS

- Testing our assumptions by asking.
- Grounding our assessments on observation.
- Learning (by self-observation) how we fill in the unseen.
- Remembering always that thinking is always only partial and will never be complete (see history of science and philosophy).

EXERCISE

1. Pick a partner. Say who will go first.
2. Partner one, select a topic of confusion and give enough background so your partner can understand it.

How to Untie Mental Knots

3. Partner Two, listen for (and report to your partner):

- The untested assumptions.
- The grounding for assessments — or its absences.
- How the person filled in the unseen.
- Rules, beliefs, generalizations, e.g., “everyone knows...,” etc.
- The avoidance of responsibility — bad faith and blame.
- How inaction and self-imposed suffering is justified.



4. How will you take what you learned from this forward into your life?

Squeezing and Releasing Stress

Date / Time:

What have you brought mindful awareness to today? Check all that apply.

☐

Heart

☐

Mind

☐

Body

☐

Breath

☐

Environment

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
- the fact that many others are feeling similarly about this topic as you
- how you might feel with increased awareness around this topic
- when you can apply increased mindfulness to this topic in your day-to-day life



Similar to progressive muscle relaxation, squeezing and releasing stress is a practice that invites us to consciously tense up so that we might relax more completely.

This exercise is a technique you might use to release any stress you are experiencing in mind or body (typically, our stress is held in both).

PRACTICE:

1. Begin by finding a comfortable place where you can rest on your back for about ten to fifteen minutes. Let your arms rest by your sides and your feet to fall outwards as is natural. Take a few deep breaths to ground yourself.
2. Begin by drawing your attention to the soles of your feet. On your next inhalation, Clench your toes as if they were reaching for your heels, inviting any stress in this region to collect in the bottom of your feet. Let that inhalation be slow and steady.
3. As you exhale, slowly release all physical tension, inviting the mind to soften, too. Take a few mindful breaths to center yourself, noticing how it feels to let your feet rest completely.

Squeezing and Releasing Stress

4. Shift your attention to the calves or thighs next, and in the same way, squeeze them in tightly on your next inhalation as if you are gathering knots of tension or stress here. Exhale slowly as you soften the legs completely, feeling into the experience deep relaxation. Take a few mindful breaths before moving on.

5. Repeat in the same way with any other body parts that you would like to consciously squeeze for a full inhalation. You might do this with the arms, the shoulders, the mouth, and the face in its entirety. Each time you breathe out, envision a deep release taking place, and make sure to take a few mindful breaths in-between each contraction.

**Note: If you have any health concerns in a particular area or any present discomfort or pain, avoid squeezing these areas. Mindfully breathe into them for a few cycles instead as you imagine the same release taking place but without the squeezing of them.*

6. When you are finished, imagine each part of your body surrendering into the surface beneath you for a final few moments of full release. If you'd like, you might invite an intention to release any residual thoughts that might be present for you.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. What was this practice like for you? Were any areas of the body particularly pleasing to squeeze and release? Were there any areas that called for a gentler 'witness and release'?

2. How might you continue to release stress from the body as you move the day?