

Mindfulness of Emotions

We often start to learn mindfulness skills by focusing our attention on our breath, our bodies, the environment or activities. Being mindful of emotions helps us to stand back from the emotion, understand it, not to fear it or struggle against it, and it can have the added benefit of reducing discomfort.

Set aside a few minutes when you can be quiet and alone. Turn off your phone and make sure that you won't be disturbed. Start by bringing your attention to your breath. Notice your breathing as you slowly breathe in and out. Notice the sensations of your breath as it moves through your nose and into your belly.

As you sit, you will begin to notice thoughts and feelings popping up. **Allow the feelings to come. Notice** the feelings.

Identify the emotion:

- What word best describes what you are feeling?
- Angry, sad, anxious, irritated, scared, frustrated...



Accept the emotion.

Whatever you are feeling is okay. Consider where this feeling might come from; what may have triggered it. Don't judge the emotion – it is not "good" or "bad". Simply let it move through you without resisting it, struggling against it, or encouraging it.

Investigate the emotion.

- How intense is it?
- How are you breathing? Deep and slow or fast and uneven?
- What are you feeling in your body? Where do you feel it?
- Has your posture changed or shifted?
- Where do you notice muscle tension?
- What does your face feel like?
- Is anything changing? (intensity, breathing, nature of the feeling)

What thoughts or judgments do you notice? Just notice those thoughts. Allow them to come into your mind, and allow them to pass. Any time you find that you're engaging with the thoughts – judging them or yourself for having them, believing them, struggling against them, just notice, and bring your attention back to your breathing, and to the physical sensations of the emotion.

If any other emotions come up, if anything changes, simply notice and repeat the steps above. Just notice that the feelings change over time.

Try to begin practicing this exercise when you are feeling calm and relaxed. As you gain experience, start to incorporate it into times when you feel more intense or uncomfortable emotions.