Sample guided meditation

Begin by finding a comfortable seated position with your eyes closed or gently resting on a spot in front of you.

Focus your attention on your breath. Breathing in . . . and breathing out . . .

Simply observe how the air feels as it comes into your body . . . and as it flows out of your body.

You may notice this in your nose . . . your mouth . . . your chest . . . or your belly. Wherever you notice the breath is just fine.

Observing how you are breathing naturally, without trying to change the breath in any way.

If your mind wanders, that is OK. Simply observe whatever thoughts, opinions, or judgement your mind may have produced, and then gently redirect your attention back to the breath. Doing this as often as needed.

Take these moments for yourself . . . to notice only what is happening in the present moment.

Notice any sounds in your environment. Simply observing whatever there is to hear and becoming aware of any thoughts that may arise in reaction to these sounds. Bringing your attention back to the sounds if your mind wanders.

(pause)

Notice any sensations in your body . . .

Observing how your body feels sitting in the chair or on the floor . . .

Observing any other bodily sensations that might arise . . . and simply noticing what it is like to pay attention to these sensations without judgement and without trying to change them in any way.

Perhaps the sensations in your body do change as you focus on them. Noticing this as well.

(pause)

And once again focussing your attention on your breath.

Breathing in . . . and breathing out . . .

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Recognising that you have taken the time to be fully present in the here and now.

When you are ready, begin to move your body slowly. Perhaps moving your head and neck. Moving your fingers and toes. Stretching your arms and legs. Remaining aware of how it feels to make each movement.

Tips:

- ✓ *It can be helpful, as patients are learning these skills, to audio record these exercises for at-home practice. Patients may reveal that they have more or less trouble engaging in these exercises at home. This is a place for problem-solving at the next visit.*
- ✓ *Normalising the tendency for the mind to wander is important as patients often feel that they are "doing it wrong" if they are not completely focussed on the exercise. Use this as a chance to review the goals of mindfulness training, as observing thoughts non-judgmentally is a specific skill that will improve with practise.*

This handout was written by Dr Anjali Pandit and Dr Sarah Ballou based upon their chapter entitled "Stress management and mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) approaches to gastrointestinal conditions" (Chapter 13) from Knowles, S.R., Keefer, L., & Mikocka-Walus, A. (2019). Psychogastroenterology with Adults: A Handbook for Mental Health Professionals. Oxon, UK: Routledge Press.

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