

Mindful Listening



If possible, have someone read out the following guided instructions as you try this practice. You can take it in turns to read out and lead the practice if you like.

- **Begin by sitting comfortably – upright but also relaxed... Feeling the sensations of your feet on the floor and the weight of your body on the seat... Allowing your eyes gently to close...**
- **Now turn your attention first to the sounds that are coming and going. You may notice the mind wanting to label them, but try exploring what it's like to direct your attention just to each sound:**
 - Noticing how sounds arise – maybe they fizz, vibrate, flicker and then pass away.
 - Perhaps notice their volume [whether they're loud or soft].
 - Their pitch [whether they're high or low].
 - Whether they're continuous or come and go. Are there spaces between the sounds?
- **Now try playing with directing your attention to sounds coming from further away. What sounds can you hear? Just allow these sounds to arrive in your ears without going out to find them.**
- **Then, when you're ready, draw your focus closer in to sounds from around you in this nearer space...in this garden. Maybe some sounds are being made by the plants themselves as the wind moves through them.**
- **How about drawing the focus of attention even closer? Can you notice any sounds inside your own body, perhaps sounds you've never listened to before?**
 - The sound of your normal, quiet breathing?
 - ... your heart beating, or pulsing softly in your ears?
 - ... any sense of a high-pitched back-ground sound, sometimes called "the sound of silence", that's often in our ears...
 - If you can't hear any of these sounds, don't worry. Just notice as best you can sounds from inside and outside the room, coming and going.
- **When you're ready, bring your attention back to a sense of your body sitting in this space, just breathing.**
- **How was that? What did you notice? How did that feel?**

Why do this practice?

Developing the skill of mindful listening can support us in a number of ways:

Just as with mindful eating, looking or moving, being fully present when listening can be an important way to step out of autopilot and really notice what is happening right now.

On average, we can remember only 25% of what someone has said, just a few minutes after a conversation. This is usually because our minds are elsewhere – planning what we are going to say, or thinking about something else entirely. Mindful listening can help us to silence the internal noise of our own thoughts, so that you can hear the whole message, and so that the speaker feels understood.

'Mindfulness is being alive and knowing it.'

Jon Kabat-Zinn

5 Minute Mindfulness

If possible, have someone read out the following guided instructions as you try this practice. You can take it in turns to read out and lead the practice if you like.



- Find a comfortable position, with a relaxed but upright posture.
- Begin by tuning in to the sensations of feet in contact with the floor, and your body in contact with whatever you are sitting on. You can move a little to really connect with the contact.
- It can be helpful to take a few deep breaths to begin with, and then allow the breath to find its own rhythm – no need to control it.
- Notice where in your body this sensation of breathing is felt most vividly – maybe in the nostrils, chest, stomach or somewhere else. You can place a hand where this sensation is felt to help focus on this area if you like.
- See if you can continue to follow the sensations of breathing, following the entirety of an in-breath and out-breath as best you can. If your mind wanders, simply begin again.
- You will almost certainly notice your mind wandering. This is not a problem - it's totally normal. If this happens, just notice where it has gone and then gently guide your attention back to your breathing. You may have to do this many times!
- You can do this for as long as you wish, but try to make sure that you finish by extending your awareness to a sense of the whole body sitting in the space, just breathing.
- Try to end the practice by gently opening the eyes, allowing yourself to stretch and re-engage the muscles. Listen to what your body needs in terms of gently continuing with your day.

Why do this practice?

Becoming aware of the breath is a very simple tool to help you simply pause during a busy day.

It also helps you manage moments of stress, anxiety, and reactivity, as well as sharpening attention and concentration.

Practise settling your attention on the sensations of breathing. This gives you a place to anchor your attention, and when you find the mind wandering, you have a place to bring it back to.

You may have to do this many times when doing this practice, and that's OK. Every time just gently guide your attention back to the breath.

We are training the 'muscle' of our attention, it's therefore helpful to bring a little bit of kind, patient repetition when doing this practice.