



Mindfulness Exercise: HANDOUT 7c

TACTICAL COMPOSURE BOOSTER CHALLENGE

In the Mindfulness Challenge we invite you to practice daily formal Mindfulness (meditation) Exercises for a few weeks. The facilitator will explain how to access audio materials available on the internet, websites and smartphone Apps.

Go to the YES Psychology & Consulting website for quick links, tips and clips.

- URL: <http://www.yespsychology.com.au/116/mindfulness-practice>.
- There are also many audio/video clips on the internet and via smartphone apps (such as Calm, SmilingMind and Headspace).
- Also, we have posted short clips on this Tactical Composure Website under the Mindfulness Exercise Introductory Program

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is about "paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, without making judgments". Put simply, it's about being aware of what's happening, as it's happening.

The techniques (exercises) involve directing our attention to our experience of the present moment, without changing anything, and to keep bringing our attention back each time it wanders. Over time we build up our 'mindfulness muscle' and the ability to create space between us and our thoughts, so that we can choose what we react to.

Mindfulness meditation can improve our composure, wellbeing, productivity and personal effectiveness. Practice also cultivates four **attitudes of mindfulness**: Openness; Curiosity; Acceptance; and Compassion.

What are the Benefits of Mindfulness?

- Increased self-awareness, clarity and self-insight (wisdom)
- Improved sense of wellbeing (including calm and serenity)
- Reducing stress and worry
- Increasing health and immune function
- Boosts working memory and concentration
- Increased focus and information processing speed
- Less emotional reactivity, more frustration tolerance
- More mental flexibility
- Increased compassion, empathy and relationship satisfaction

Some forms of mindfulness practices (techniques, exercises):

- Grounding (the 5 senses)
- Breathing
- Body Scan
- Noticing thoughts & letting go
- Mindful attention on everyday actions (walking, eating, sitting, exercising, daily chores)

The neurological benefits of mindfulness have been linked to an increase in emotional intelligence, specifically empathy and self-regulation. **Attention regulation** has three aspects:

- 1) to know where our attention is,
- 2) to prioritise where the attention needs to be and
- 3) for the attention to go there and stay there.

It's the development of these areas that contributes to our ability to manage conflict and communicate more effectively. With practice, we change our relationship to our thoughts and emotions, becoming less reactive.

How do I practice Mindfulness?

You can practice mindfulness meditation every day and regularly using simple techniques (exercises), such as those outlined below, and just using your surroundings and inner experience at the time.

Once familiar with the techniques, you can even practice in noisy and busy environments, at home, play or work – and no one will notice you're practicing. The following 'scripts' are exercises you can take yourself through to learn the practice of Mindfulness.

Explanation and Tips for Beginners

Mindfulness 'meditation', as an exercise for health and productivity, shares some aspects of other meditations, but is also quite distinct. The definition of Meditation is "the act of giving your attention to only one thing; of remaining in a silent and calm state for a period of time."

Even very brief mindfulness interventions (e.g., 5-10 minute guided inductions, 3-4 session mindfulness meditation training) can buffer emotional reactivity and reduce impulsive behaviours immediately following training. By contrast, larger doses of mindfulness training, such as the 8-week Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) program, produce moderate to large overall effects/benefits.

There is a wide range of "recommended" daily practice advice, ranging from 10 to 60 minutes per day. There is no one-size-fits-all recommendation for how one should dose their mindfulness practice.

Try a number of techniques to see what works best for you and consider using a coach or guided scripts.

What does practice involve

- There are numerous types of mindfulness practices, with variations to instructions, pace and use of metaphors and visualization. However, you'll soon come to recognize the common elements that are used due to their effectiveness and research evidence-base.
- After trying out a number of techniques you may start with a particular guide, coach or app and then practice regularly (even 5 mins at a time, each day will help) and build up the length of practice time (towards 30 mins) and using variation of techniques. Eventually you'll use the techniques, un-guided, during your day and when you need
- Because Mindfulness ***is paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, without making judgements...*** the practice of mindfulness will incorporate actions that build on this desired mental task and state.
- You will be asked to sit or lie down and take some deep breaths or notice your body posture, to help ground you in the here and now and create an anchor point for practice. There are other ways to do this also.
- You will be asked to pay attention to various aspects of your experience, sometimes spending more time on a particular area to zoom in more and notice the detail – including your 5 senses, your sensations, thoughts and emotions/feelings. You will also be asked to shift your attention from aspect to aspect and bring your awareness back to the practice when your mind drifts off.
- While you may experience some immediate effects, the aim is longer term mental and emotional stability through regular practice. Some coaches will say to treat every practice like your first.
- Because mindfulness also builds on the attitudes of openness, curiosity, compassion and acceptance (attitudes that reduce judgement, struggle and stress), some practices (meditations) will include instructions, such as
 - Letting go of certain things and being open to whatever is present
 - Compassionate language and thoughts
 - Being curious as if it's the first time you've noticed this aspect of your experience
 - Allow room for this, not trying to fix it right now, just notice it as it comes and goes
- Sitting up in a chair will help keep you alert and closing your eyes can help you focus, however it's completely fine to sit on the floor or lie down in a comfortable position and to open or half-close your eyes (with a soft gaze).

Expectations of Mindfulness Practice

- The first few times can be a bit difficult for some and easier for others.
- This is a new skill that you're learning, so at this stage it's really just about increasing your sense of familiarity and rhythm with the practice. The mind is always changing, so the exercise will always feel a bit different.
- Mindfulness is about **learning to "see things and people how they really are at this time, not how you expect or hope them to be"**. So that means your experience of the practice, however it is, is still valid for helping you to learn, whether your experience be **comfortable, easy and relaxing** or **uncomfortable, difficult or frustrating**.
- Even if your mind wanders a lot or you experience periods of inner criticism, frustration or boredom, the exercise is still working if you can pay attention to what's happening – even if you don't produce a calming effect. It's quite normal for many people to wonder 'will I ever get this, my mind is too busy'... so just be patient with yourself and the exercises, as in time, for those who persist, it will reach a point where you sense that you're 'getting it'. Because mindfulness involves being able to observe things as they are, without reacting, it stands to reason that experiencing impatience or mind wandering serves a natural handy purpose of helping us to 'just notice, allow and let it be' and observing that even those thoughts and feelings pass in time too.
- So these thoughts might help put the perfectionist thoughts or the inner critic at bay:
 - It's okay to experience awkwardness or self-consciousness
 - It's okay to not do it smoothly
 - It's okay for the mind to wander, just notice it and bring it back
 - It's still okay if you don't feel relaxed during or afterward – however if your need to shift your posture to feel more physically comfortable, please do so.

Following instructions

- As you follow the instructions from the coach, therapist or audio/video technique that is guiding you, **your mind will inevitably be distracted or will wander away** from the 'task of following instructions and practicing mindfulness'. This is completely normal. Every time this happened, notice without getting bothered and gently return your attention back to next incoming instruction. The mind is a thought-machine, its job is to think, plan, calculate, imagine future scenarios, judge events as safe or dangerous and more – so it can't and shouldn't be stopped, just noticed and allowed. However, we can shift our attention on purpose to present moments – what is real and happening now (this is a neutral/default state).
- Don't try too hard, just follow the instructions as best you can.
- Allow yourself to experience whatever it is you experience. Allow the process of the practice to just unfold.

Just before you start the practice

- *For the next little while there is nothing that you have to do, and nowhere you have to be.*
- *Take a minute to let go of everything you were doing before, and just rest here in this moment*
- *Let go of any expectation of how you might feel and notice how you actually feel instead.*
- *As you practice and observe, allow whatever is there to be there, because it's already there.*
- *Don't try to fix or change anything, simply observe it and allow it to be there, and to come and go as it pleases.*
- *Accept distractions as normal and gently return your attention back to paying attention.*
- *Follow the instructions as best you can, without pressure on how well you stay on track or perform, and however you make sense of the instruction at the time*

and

- *Remind yourself of the intention of this practice. Its aim is not to feel any different, relaxed, or calm; this may happen or it may not. Instead, the intention of the practice is, as best you can, to bring awareness to any sensations, sounds, thoughts or feelings you detect, as you focus your attention on selected parts of your inner (eg sensations and thoughts) or outer (eg sounds around you) experience.*

Appendix B: Instructions for Basic Mindfulness Practices.

Exercise 1. Notice Five Things (by Russ Harris)

This is a simple exercise to center yourself and connect with your environment. Practice it throughout the day, especially any time you find yourself getting caught up in your thoughts and feelings.

1. Pause for a moment
2. Look around, and notice five things you can see.
3. Listen carefully, and notice five things you can hear.
4. Notice five things you can feel in contact with your body. (E.g. your watch against your wrist, your trousers against your legs, the air upon your face, your feet upon the floor, back against the chair).
5. *Cycle through these senses (seeing, hearing, feeling), bringing your attention back each time your mind wanders.*

Exercise 2. Take Ten Breaths (by Russ Harris)

1. Throughout the day, pause for a moment and take ten slow, deep breaths. Focus on breathing out as slowly as possible, until the lungs are completely empty, and breathing in using your diaphragm.
2. Notice the sensations of your lungs emptying and your ribcage falling as you breathe out. Notice the rising and falling of your abdomen.
3. Notice what thoughts are passing through your mind. Notice what feelings are passing through your body.
4. Observe those thoughts and feelings without judging them as good or bad, and without trying to change them, avoid them, or hold onto them. Simply observe them.
5. Notice what it's like to observe those thoughts and feelings with an attitude of acceptance.

Exercise 4. Mindfulness of the Breath (by Russ Harris)

1. Bring your attention to your breathing
2. Follow the air as it comes in through your nostrils and goes down to the bottom of your lungs. Then follow it as it goes back out again.
3. Follow the air, as if you're riding the waves of your breathing
4. Notice the air moving in and out of your nostrils ... how it's slightly warmer as it comes out, and cooler as it goes in
5. Notice the gentle rise and fall of your rib cage. Notice the gentle rise & fall of your abdomen (belly)
6. Fix your attention on one of these areas, whichever you prefer: on the breath moving in and out of the nostrils, on the rising & falling of the ribcage, or the rising & falling of the abdomen (belly)
7. Keep your attention on this spot, noticing the movement - in and out - of the breath
8. Whatever feelings, urges or sensations arise, whether pleasant or unpleasant, gently acknowledge them - as if nodding your head at people passing by you on the street. Gently acknowledge their presence, and let them be. Allow them to come & go as they please, and keep your attention on the breath.
9. Whatever thoughts, images, or memories arise, whether comfortable or uncomfortable, simply acknowledge them and allow them to be. Let them come & go as they please, and keep your attention on the breath.
10. From time to time, your attention will become distracted by thoughts or feelings. Each time this happens, notice what distracted you, then bring your attention back to the breath. No matter how often your

attention “wanders off” - whether a hundred times, or a thousand - your aim is simply to note what distracted you, and bring your attention back to the breath.

11. There is no need to be frustrated or impatient or disappointed when you get carried off by your thoughts. It is the same for everyone. Our minds naturally distract us from what we are doing. So each time you realise your attention has wandered, gently acknowledge it, notice what distracted you, and return your attention to the breath.
12. If frustration, boredom, anxiety, impatience or other feelings arise, simply acknowledge them, and maintain your focus on the breath.
13. No matter how often your attention wanders, gently acknowledge it, note what distracted you, and gently bring your attention back to the breath.
14. When you are ready, bring yourself back to the room and open your eyes.

Exercise 5. Grounding Mindfulness (by Kash Thomson)

We are going to use a ‘grounding technique’ to focus on the here and now. We will use the senses to purposely pay attention to our surroundings and the moment, just noticing what we notice without judgement. Then we will focus our attention back to the task (whatever that may be). As you do this you can imagine that you’re finding your centre of gravity, noting the sensation of gravity connecting you to the ground.

- Finding a comfortable position, adopting an upright yet relaxed posture, dropping the shoulders
- Put your feet flat on the floor, perhaps wiggling your toes to ground yourself in the sensation
- Notice the feeling of your feet (in your shoes) connected to the floor
- Notice any sensations arising in the feet allowing them to be there
- Becoming aware of the sensation of pressure where your body makes contact with other objects
- Expand to notice your whole body in this moment,... the feeling of gravity, gently pulling you down
- Notice the position of your arms and legs, notice your posture and facial expression
- You may notice sensations arising in the body, let them come and go. Some may be pleasant, some unpleasant and there will be areas where you don’t feel any sensation.
- Allow your body to soften and settle into this position (on the chair, ground etc)
- Be aware of your breathing....the rise and fall of your chest..
- Notice the feeling of air going in and out of your nose or mouth
- Now zoom out and listen to the sounds around you, in the room and outside of the room
- Just allowing the sounds to come to you
- Your mind may wander off, which is completely normal, that’s what minds do. Acknowledge where it went and escort your attention back to this moment, coming back to your body in the chair, notice the feeling of gravity and sensations of contact that your feet make with the floor
- Notice the temperature of the air on your skin and the touch of your clothes
- Allow yourself to settle, breathe deeply and relax if that feels comfortable
- Again, notice the feeling of your feet on the floor, the points of contact and sensations of pressure
- Now open your eyes, look forward and notice your surroundings, what you see around you

- You can notice objects without analysing them, there's nothing to fix or change
- Now, let them go now and come back to your body in the chair
- Notice the feeling of gravity and the contact your body is making to the surface beneath you
- You are here and now, becoming aware of your surroundings, sounds and sights.
- Move gently to awaken the body, perhaps stretching if you like
- Now focus back to the task at hand (whatever the physical or mental task is right now)

Set a timer for 5-10 minutes and follow these INSTRUCTIONS

Centering (focusing / anchoring) on the Feet:

- Adopt an upright and alert posture, standing comfortably, allowing your muscles to loosen
- Bring your awareness to the feeling of your feet touching the ground or floor below you
- Paying attention to all the sensations you notice, of touch, pressure, temperature
- Keep returning your attention to the feeling of your feet and the points of contact, the soles of the feet, the heels, the toes
- *Now, with your feet flat on the ground, shifting your centre of gravity, learning your body forward, noticing which muscles activate to support you... then coming back to centre, aware of how the body feels just being still*
- *Again, with your feet flat on the ground, learning your body backwards, noticing which muscles activate to support you... then coming back to centre aware of how the body feels just being still*
- *Now leaning forwards and backwards a few times, paying close and curious attention to the changing patterns of sensation on the soles of your feet... noticing if the changing sensations of pressure as you shift your centre of gravity, from heels to toes, toes to heels*
- Keep returning your attention to the feeling of your feet on the floor, here and now
- It is normal for the mind wonder, simply acknowledge where the mind went and bring your attention back to the sensations in the feet connected to the floor or ground
- To complete this exercise, broaden your awareness to take in the sensations in your whole body and noticing your surroundings.

Centering (focusing / anchoring) on the Breath:

- Adopt an upright and alert posture, either sitting or standing, allowing your muscles to loosen
- Taking a few slower, deeper breaths, then allowing your breath to just return to normal and breathe by itself. You don't have control the breath in anyway, just be aware of the sensation of breathing
- Notice the way you are breathing now, the rise and fall of your chest, the air going past your nostrils, all the way in to your lungs and into the belly and all the way out again
- Just paying attention to the changing sensations in your abdomen (tummy) as you breathe, paying attention to where you feel the working of the breath most easily
- Noticing the sensation of gentle inflation as you breathe in and abdominal walls expand, and the sensation of gentle deflation as you breathe out and the abdominal walls contract
- Keep returning your attention to the sensations of breathing
- Perhaps saying in your mind, I'm aware of just this breath.... this breath in.... and this breath out
- It is normal for the mind wonder, simply acknowledge where the mind went and bring your attention back to the sensations breathing, here and now
- To complete this exercise, broaden your awareness to take in the sensations in your whole body and noticing your surroundings.

Centering (focusing / anchoring) on Sounds:

- Adopt an upright and alert posture, either sitting or standing, allowing your muscles to loosen
- Taking a few slower, deeper breaths, then allowing your breath to just return to normal and breathe by itself.
- Open up to all the sounds you can hear around you, sounds in the room and outside the room
- Allowing the sounds to come to you, sounds from far away and sounds that close to you
- Listening to sound just as sound, allowing the sounds to just be there

- Listening to each sound
- Keep returning your attention to the being here and now, listening to all the sounds around you
- Each sound
- It is normal for the mind wonder, simply acknowledge where the mind went and bring your attention back to the sensations of sound, here and now
- If one particular sound is pulling for your attention, acknowledge this, allowing it to be there and when ready, returning your attention to being here and now, listening to all the sounds around you
- Listening to sounds near you and sounds far away
- To complete this exercise, broaden your awareness to take in the sensations in your whole body and noticing your surroundings.