Guided Meditation Script

Mindfulness: A 10-Minute Sitting Practice

This guided meditation script walks you through a 10-minute mindfulness meditation, one step at a time. It follows the shape of the sitting meditation in Jon Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course. Your attention moves from the breath to the body, then to sounds and thoughts, and finally rests on whatever is here. You can read it slowly to yourself, record it in your own voice, or read it aloud to a client or a group.

1 How to use this script

- Read slowly, in a calm and even voice. Where you see *(pause)*, stop for 10 to 20 seconds.
- The times are a guide. Shorten or stretch any step to fit the time you have.
- Sit upright in a chair or on a cushion, or lie down if sitting is uncomfortable. Close your eyes, or rest your gaze on a spot on the floor.
- If the meditation brings up strong distress, open your eyes, look around the room, and come back to it another day.

Why does this work? *Each time you notice that your mind has wandered and bring it back, you are training your attention, a little like lifting a weight. Mindfulness meditation programs built on this kind of practice have been tested in many trials. A large 2014 review found moderate evidence that they bring small improvements in anxiety, depression and pain.*

2 The script: settling, breath and body

1. Settle in (about 1 minute). *Find a position that feels steady and comfortable, and let your hands rest. Close your eyes, or let your gaze soften on the floor in front of you. (pause) Take a moment to notice that you have chosen to spend this time on yourself. (pause)*

2. The breath (about 3 minutes). *Bring your attention to your breathing. There is no need to change it. Notice where you feel it most clearly: the air at your nostrils, your chest rising and falling, or your belly moving. (pause) Rest your attention there, one breath at a time. (pause) At some point your mind will wander off. That is normal, and it is part of the practice. When you notice it, gently note where it went, perhaps saying "thinking" or "planning" to yourself, and bring your attention back to the breath. (pause) Again and again, as often as you need to. (pause)*

3. The whole body (about 2 minutes). *Now let your attention widen to take in your whole body, sitting here. Notice the places where your body touches the chair or the floor. (pause) Notice any warmth or coolness, tightness or ease. If something is uncomfortable, see if you can notice it with curiosity. You can also choose to shift your position, slowly and with attention. (pause)*

**This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.*

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3 The script: sounds, thoughts and closing

4. Sounds (about 1 minute). *Let your body fade into the background, and open your attention to sounds. Let them come and go, near and far, loud and soft. There is no need to name them or go looking for them. (pause)*

5. Thoughts (about 2 minutes). *Now notice your thoughts in the same way you noticed sounds, as events that come and go in the mind. You might picture them as clouds moving across the sky. (pause) When you find yourself carried away by a thought, gently step back and watch again. (pause)*

6. Open awareness and closing (about 1 minute). *Let go of any focus, and simply sit with whatever is here: breath, body, sounds and thoughts. (pause) Then come back to the breath for a few moments. Wiggle your fingers and toes, and when you are ready, open your eyes.*

Short on time? Steps 1, 2 and 6 make a practice of about five minutes.

4 After you practice

What did I notice during the meditation?

Where did my mind tend to wander, and how did it feel to come back?

When and where will I practice next?

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