Mountain Meditation Script

Mindfulness: Staying Steady While Feelings Pass

The mountain meditation is a guided exercise where you picture a mountain and let yourself take on its steady, grounded feeling. Jon Kabat-Zinn, who founded mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), wrote a well-known version of it. The weather and the seasons change around a mountain, and the mountain stays where it is. In the same way, your thoughts and feelings can pass through like weather while a steadier part of you stays in place. Read the script slowly, or record it in your own voice and play it back.

1 Before you start

- Allow 10 to 20 minutes. If you only have 5, spend less time on each step.
- Sit upright on a chair or a cushion, with your back tall but not stiff and your hands resting in your lap.
- Close your eyes, or rest your gaze softly on the floor in front of you.
- Your mind will wander. Each time you notice and come back, you are doing the practice.

Before you begin, how do you feel? A word or two is enough.

Why does this work? *Mindfulness practice trains you to notice thoughts and feelings without being swept along by them. The mountain gives you a picture to hold on to: the weather changes on the surface while the mountain stays steady. Studies of MBSR, which includes meditations like this one, have found that it can lower stress for many people.*

2 The script

1. Settle in (about 1 minute). Breathe naturally. Feel the chair or the floor holding you up. Let your spine rise tall, the way a mountain rises from the ground.

2. Picture your mountain (2 to 3 minutes). Bring to mind a mountain you have seen or one you imagine. Notice its shape: the wide base resting on the earth, the sloping sides, and the peak high in the sky. Notice any details, such as rock, trees, snow, or streams.

3. Become the mountain (2 to 3 minutes). Now let the mountain settle into your body. Your head is the peak. Your shoulders and arms are the slopes. Your seat and legs are the base, resting firmly on the ground. Feel how still and solid you are, and breathe as the mountain.

**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, continued

4. Let the weather pass (5 to 10 minutes). Picture the day turning into night and back into day. Sun, clouds, rain, and snow move across the mountain. The seasons change, and people come and go. Through all of it, the mountain stays where it is. Your thoughts and feelings are like this weather. A storm of worry or a cloud of sadness can move across you while you stay steady underneath.

5. When your mind wanders. Notice where it went, without scolding yourself. Then come back to the feeling of sitting still and solid, like the mountain.

6. Close (about 1 minute). Let the picture of the mountain fade, and keep the sense of steadiness with you. Notice your breath, the sounds in the room, and the chair under you. When you are ready, open your eyes.

4 After the meditation

How do you feel now, compared with before you started? What did your mountain look like?

What weather passed through today? Write any thoughts, feelings, or body sensations you noticed.

Example: A cloud of worry about tomorrow, and an itch I wanted to scratch

When could you call on the steadiness of the mountain this week?

If a meditation brings up strong distress or painful memories, stop, open your eyes, and notice the room around you. A therapist can help you find a way to practice that feels safe for you.

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