

Mindfulness in Daily Life

Welcome to Your Guide
On How to Look Within



Beginning Instruction

To Seated

Mindfulness Meditation

By Stephen Procter

www.meditationintheshire.com.au

- *Start noticing sensations in the breathing*
 - Pay attention to the sensations that ‘tell’ you that you are breathing
 - Breathing ‘in’ may be felt as: coolness, pressure (nose), rising (chest), expanding (belly)
 - Breathing ‘out’ may be felt as: contracting (belly), falling (chest), pressure, warmth (nose)
 - Notice the difference between the sensations of the ‘in breath’ ... ‘out breath’ ... ‘gap’.
 - If at any time you are distracted by a thought, acknowledge it with a simple label “thinking, thinking”.
- *At this stage remember to:*
 - Notice the changing sensations, the full length of each breath, without a break.
 - Notice when you are distracted, acknowledge it with a label and come back to the breathing.
 - Hold a general awareness of your body while observing the sensation of breathing within it.
 - Develop mindfulness and concentration by ‘remembering’ your object of meditation
 - Soften into any effort; allow the end of the out breath to relax you deeper.
 - If at any time you are distracted by a thought, acknowledge it with a simple label “thinking, thinking”.

This booklet is an introduction to the guide book:
How to Practice Mindfulness Meditation in Your Daily Life
Available at www.meditationintheshire.com.au

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My Wife Linda:

For your loyalty, gratitude and unconditional love.

My Students:

This is my gift to you, may it help you on your journey.

This is a support introduction booklet for the guide book:
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5. When you have fully relaxed mentally and physically allow the breathing to happen naturally, do not control it anymore. At this stage the natural breath will appear to you, do not control it in any way; just be aware of the full length of each breath. Use simple labels such as “in” with the in-breath and “out” with the out-breath to point your attention. Pay attention to the sensations associated with breathing in the beginning, middle and end of each breath.

- *As the concentration begins to grow, you may:*
 - Be less distracted by sounds around you.
 - Feel calmer, more centred, clear and experience a ‘spaciousness’ around you.
 - When your attention no longer wanders, thinking has stopped, move to the next stage.
 - If at any time you are distracted by a thought, acknowledge it with a simple label “thinking, thinking”.

- *Allow your breathing to happen naturally*
 - Stop controlling your breathing and allow it to happen naturally
 - As you do this your natural breathing will ‘appear’ to you.
 - Gently notice the full breath, from the tip of the nose into the belly and back out again
 - Use a mental label to point your attention saying “in” and “out” with each in & out breath.
 - If at any time you are distracted by a thought, acknowledge it with a simple label “thinking, thinking”.

3. Next widen your attention to feel the whole of your body, all the sensations within your body, start to notice any tension you are holding especially around the chest, belly and in your breathing.

Use long deep gentle breaths into your belly; relax into the sensations in your body every time you breathe out, softening into your experience.

- *Become aware of your whole body.*
 - Feel all the sensations within your body, the ‘feeling’ of your meditation posture.
 - Soften into these sensations using slow, deep breaths, sighing on the out-breath.

4. Next notice any mental tension that you are holding, behind your eyes, forehead, inside your head. Use long deep gentle breaths, relax into it.

Stay mindful of the feeling of “relaxing / softening into” that is produced with each breath as it goes out. Allow yourself to both physically and mentally sink into your posture with each breath out.

- *At this stage your mind will begin to settle.*
 - Allow yourself to physically and mentally ‘sink’.
 - Thinking will start to settle down, it may even stop.
 - If thinking continues do not follow the thinking ‘story’ ... just come back to ‘softening into’.
 - Do not chastise yourself if you have any difficulties; be gentle in everything you do.

Taking Your Meditation Posture

Mindfulness Meditation is a training of the mind not the body, the Buddha taught that you could meditate walking, standing, sitting or lying down, and everything in between.

While there is no magic posture, the way you hold your body does have an effect of the energy flow, comfort and alertness during your meditation practice.

Mindfulness practice can be done walking, standing, sitting or lying down so any posture as long as you are aware of it is good. I have also practiced it on a lounge chair, on a car seat and lying on a bed or floor with great success.

Sitting on The Floor

When sitting on the floor it is important to take a posture that keeps your back straight and that you can maintain for a period of time without moving.

The important point in any seated meditation posture is to have the top of the pelvis tilted forward. This allows your spine to sit straight, one vertebrae on top of the other and stops the rounding of your back

Sitting flat on the floor requires a lot of flexibility in the hips. You can test this by trying it now and sitting flat on the floor. If your knees have trouble touching the ground while your back is straight then you should consider using different props to help with your posture.

Props such as a firm cushion under your backside raise your hips off the ground, changing the angle of your legs. This lowers the flexibility needed in the hips to maintain the posture. When using a cushion do not sit flat on it, instead sit on the front edge so that it tilts your pelvis forward.

By raising yourself higher off the ground you change the angle of your body to your legs. The less flexible you are then the greater the angle needs to be to have a comfortable seated posture with a straight back. If you find that you are raised too high off the ground because of tightness in your hips, then I suggest you use a chair or lie down when you meditate.

Instead of crossing your legs one on top of the other, I recommend trying the Burmese meditation posture. The Burmese meditation posture places one leg in front of the other flat on the floor, this lowers the pressure on your hips and make it easier to attain good body posture.

To use this posture, sit on the floor or on a cushion and fold one leg into your body. Do this so that the sole of the foot is facing the inside thigh of the other leg. Next fold the other leg in front of it.

In this way the legs are folded next to each other but not on top of each other. This prevents the pain and numbness that comes from the pressure of one limb pushing against the other. If this is still difficult and you are determined to sit on the floor you can place a roll between your legs with your legs folded back under you.

If this still isn't comfortable then go easy on yourself, get to know your body and what it can and can't do, accept it and then work with what you have. There are other postures just as good like a chair or lying down on the floor.

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Summary of Seated Meditation

1. Start your meditation by being aware of the feeling of “heaviness” throughout your body, hold your attention on this feeling until your attention no longer wanders.

- *Focus your attention on the ‘feeling’ of heaviness within your body.*
 - Remember the ‘feeling’ of heaviness, do not forget it.
 - Notice how the ‘feeling’ of heaviness becomes clearer to you as you continuously remember it.
 - When you can remember this experience continuously without forgetting, then it is time to move on to the next stage.
 - If at any time you are distracted by a thought, acknowledge it and bring your attention back to the feeling of heaviness.

2. Bring your attention to the sensations of “touch” that appear when your body touches the chair / floor, hold your attention on these sensations until your attention no longer wanders.

- *Focus attention on the ‘sensations’ of touch.*
 - The points where your body contacts the floor, chair (or whatever) contains sensations.
 - Touch may be felt as hardness, pressure, tingling, warmth, coolness, etc.
 - Notice that when you remember these sensations of touch continuously, your thinking starts to settle.
 - When you can remember these sensations continuously without forgetting them, then it is time to move on to the next stage.

17. Next notice the *'expanding / contracting'* feeling in *shoulders / upper back*

18. Then start to notice that you can feel the *'expanding / contracting'* feeling throughout your whole body, develop it until the whole body appears to breathe

19. Once the *'expanding / contracting'* of the breath becomes clear, start paying attention to only the out-breath – (contraction) following it to the very end

20. Notice the end of the out-breath and *sit 'in / relax in' the gap* between the in- breath and out-breaths

21. When the gap between the in-breath and out-breath becomes clear start to notice the end of the *out-breath > gap > beginning of in-breath*, allowing the gap between the breaths to clarify

22. If anything draws your attention from your breathing like an itch, thought or sound, place your attention on the distraction and see what it feels like.

Once its pull weakens, you can come back to placing your attention on the feeling of each breath as it comes in and out.

23. You can use mental labelling to hold your attention in the present such as *"in, out"* concurrent with your breathing or *"thinking, thinking"* *"hearing, hearing"* *"itching, itching"* or wherever your attention is sitting.

Be careful to focus on the experience itself rather than the content of the experience, an example of this is when observing thinking do not focus on what the thought is about but on the feeling of thinking itself.

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Lying on The Floor or Bed

When lying on the floor, make sure your body is flat, if you have back troubles you can slightly bend your knees and place a bolster under them to help with your backs arch.

To keep alertness so that you don't fall asleep have your arms loose by your sides and always have the palms facing upwards as this will help with the energy flow. Palms' facing upwards is an unusual posture for most of us and so helps to ward off the biggest enemy of this posture - falling asleep.

Your meditation can also be done lying on a bed; this is useful if you wish to use meditation to help you fall asleep. If this is not your intent then becoming over comfortable should be avoided when you first learn meditation otherwise 'asleep' is where you will spend most of your time; practicing snoring meditation.

Your posture should help instil alertness yet be comfortable enough to hold for the length of time you are meditating, without the need to change it.

Sitting on a Chair

When sitting in a chair do not lean back against the back rest, this will cause your back to slump and lead to discomfort and a drop in energy levels.

Instead see if you can sit towards the front of the chair, and slightly rotate your hip forward. Your forearms and hands can sit gently on your legs, make sure your head is not slumped but evenly balanced. Keep your spine balanced on your hips, chin tucked under lightly and avoid rounding your back.

Beginning Your Meditation

Settling the Mind Section

1. To begin this Mindfulness Meditation practice to train your attention, take a meditation posture.
2. Close your eyes over gently, take a deep breath and as you breathe out - relax.
3. Gently place your attention on the feeling of heaviness in your body, remember it continuously to help you start to develop some concentration.
4. Next turn your attention towards the point in which your body is touching the chair or the floor.
5. It may feel strange at first but try to feel the different sensations of touch that are present. You may experience them as 'hardness', softness or 'pressing', 'heat', maybe 'vibration' or 'aching'. Whatever you are experiencing is ok, your task is to gently be aware of them, holding them in mind.
6. If your attention wanders off to a thought, acknowledge it and silently say "thinking, thinking", when the thought dissolves come back to the feeling of touch.

Softening Into Section

7. Next turn your attention towards any tension within your body, take a deep gentle breath in – then with a gentle, slow breath out, relax the tension and soften into it.
8. Take another deep breath in then wherever you feel tension within; let that relax as well, as you breathe out.

9. Focus on nothing else except relaxing with every out breath; allow your body to become heavier, moment by moment.

10. Do not rush relaxing, forget about time, obligations and the world. This time is yours, enjoy it and let go. During this technique do not think but soundlessly watch, ignoring past and future or any external distractions.

11. Once your whole body is relaxed start focussing on mentally relaxing, relaxing with each breath and practice softening, allowing your body and mind to sink deeper and deeper.

Mindfulness of Breathing Section

12. Now allow your breathing to happen naturally, not controlling it in any way

13. Be aware of the full length of the in-breath from 'nose > chest > belly'

Be aware of the full length of the out-breath from 'belly > chest > nose'

14. Use a simple label such as 'in' and 'out' to point attention towards the breathing

15. Notice the sensations within the in-breath from:

'Nose (coolness) > chest (movement) > belly (rising)' Notice sensations within the out-breath from: 'belly (falling) > chest (movement) > nose (warmth)'

16. If your attention wanders to thinking or a sound, acknowledge it with a mental label such as "thinking, thinking" or "hearing, hearing" and return to the breathing