

Observe feelings

Transcript

Start this exercise by sitting comfortably in a chair, with your feet squarely on the floor and your posture firm, but not rigid. Make sure your head feels centered over your shoulders, and place your arms in a comfortable position at your sides or on your lap.

Now gently close your eyes, or locate a place in front of you where you can let your eyes rest, like the floor or a wall.

Take a few moments to get in touch with the physical sensations in your body - especially the sensations of touch or pressure where your body makes contact with the chair or floor.

Notice the rising and falling of your breath in your chest and belly. There's no need to control your breathing in any way, simply allow yourself to breathe naturally.

As best you can, bring this gentle attitude of allowing to all of your experience. There's nothing to be fixed. Simply let your experience be your experience, without needing it to be anything other than what it is.

Now allow yourself to become aware of what you are afraid of, or uncomfortable about. Notice any doubts, frustrations, fears, upsets and worries. Just notice them — and acknowledge their presence. Don't try to work on, resolve, or address them.

As you simply notice your concerns, also allow yourself to be present with your values and commitments. Ask yourself: "What matters to me? What's important to me?"

When you're ready, gently shift your focus to a single thought or situation that has been difficult for you. It could be a troubling thought, worry, image, or body sensation. Gently and firmly shift your attention towards that discomfort, no matter how bad it seems.

Notice any desire or urge to avoid it. Notice any strong feelings that arise in your body. Allow those feelings to be as they are. Simply hold them in awareness, as you stay with your discomfort and breathe with it.

See if you can gently open up to it, and make space for it. Accept, and allow it to be as it is, while bringing compassionate and focused attention to the discomfort.

If you notice yourself tensing up and resisting, pushing away from the experience, just acknowledge that. And see if you can make some space for whatever you're experiencing.

Must this feeling or thought be your enemy? Or can you have it, notice it, and let it be? Can you make room for the discomfort, for the tension? What does it really feel like, moment to moment, to have all of this experience?

Is this something you must struggle with? Or can you invite the discomfort in, saying to yourself: "Let me feel what there is to be felt, because it is my experience right now."

If the sensations or discomfort grow stronger, acknowledge that, and stay with them, breathing with them and accepting them.

Can you bring openness to it, make space for it? Is there room inside you to feel that, with compassion and kindness towards yourself and your experience?

As you open up and embrace your experience, you may notice your thoughts. When that happens, invite them in too, opening to them as you become aware of them.

You may also notice your mind coming up with judgmental labels, such as "dangerous" or "getting worse." If that happens, you can simply thank your mind for the label, and return to the present experience as it actually is, not as your mind says it is -- noticing thoughts as thoughts; physical sensations as physical sensations; feelings as feelings; nothing more, nothing less.

Stay with your discomfort for as long as it pulls on your attention. If and when you sense that the discomfort is no longer pulling for your attention, let it go.

As you feel the time for practice coming to a close, you can gradually widen your attention to take in the sounds around you. Then slowly open, or refocus your eyes.

Take your time before you go on with your day.

