



Mind and Body Compassion

Take Time to Tune In

When's the last time you noticed your breath- not only to know cognitively that you're breathing, but pausing long enough to notice the quality of your breath- is it short and shallow, or natural and relaxed? Is your exhale longer than your inhale? If not, see if you can allow your exhale to be longer. Often times we hold and tense our bodies when we are in a stressed state. What we experience emotionally tends to manifest in our bodies. So in relation to our breath, sometimes we inhale and then hold things in without feeling the relief of a full exhale.

In addition to our breath, it might feel unfamiliar to try out the concept of coming into our bodies and noticing physiological sensations. For example- am I clenching my jaw? Is my tongue stuck at the roof of my mouth? Are my shoulders raised? Do I feel heat in my body? Even though our bodies go everywhere with us, we tend to not pay attention to the information they are giving us (are we hungry, thirsty, or tired? Do we need to set boundaries? Are we calm and at peace?). Doing a body scan like this can seem uncomfortable at first if it's new to you, but also helpful and relieving to notice ourselves in this intentional way (with as much curiosity as possible!)

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation is a way to recognize the difference between feeling stress and relaxation in the body. Notice what it's like to experience relaxation in your body. Here is the script as well as a guided version of a Progressive Muscle Relaxation- this is a great exercise to help reduce stress and anxiety in the body.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnZEdqcGVzo>

<https://www.uofmhealth.org/health-library/uz2225>

Grounding

Another way of connecting to your mind and body in the present moment is to “ground” yourself. This can be especially helpful if you experience high anxiety- this practice can assist with getting out of your thoughts and into your body and breath in the here and now.

Here are a few examples of how to do this:

-Sitting with your feet on the floor, do a body scan and notice the quality of your breath as you take several deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth. Go as slowly as possible, you deserve to pause and pay attention to yourself.

-Try going through each of your senses- what can you see, hear, smell, touch, and taste right now?

-Count tiles on the ceiling, pull out a book and read the title backwards

-Drink a cold glass of water, touch a soft blanket, or another object with a unique texture.

Self-Compassion

Often times we are a lot kinder to others than we are to ourselves. Or maybe you might be able to say supportive things to yourself when things are going well, but become more self-critical and harsh during times of stress. However, when you are going through challenging times is when you might need the most support. The concept of being self-compassionate is be as gentle with yourself as you might be to a loved one. Your words are powerful and you have the opportunity to help yourself as much as possible. Just like those around you, you are only human- you will make mistakes, things might not go as planned, and you are still worthy and deserving of kindness and compassion- especially from yourself.

Here is a short video discussing the concept of self-compassion in more detail:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11U0h0DPu7k>

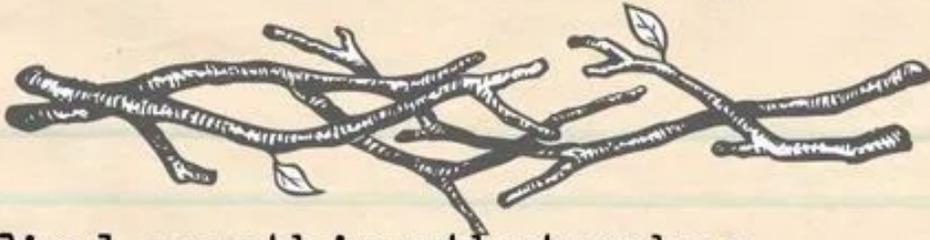
Gratitude

Gratitude allows us to experience pleasant sensations in our bodies and minds, which then allows us to connect with others in a meaningful way. Gratitude isn't an invitation to bypass stress or uncomfortable emotions, but something that can accompany them so we can experience ourselves and our world to the fullest. No expression of gratitude is too big or too small to notice- they can be traits within ourselves or external things that bring us a sense of calm, connection, and happiness.

Try it out: Take a few moments to pause and name some things that you feel grateful for. As you're doing this, see if you can notice what sensations you're experiencing in your body. Are you noticing less tension in your body? A smile on your face?

Here's an exercise to try that can cultivate a sense of gratitude:

Gratitude Scavenger Hunt



1. Find something that makes you happy.
2. Something to give someone else to make them smile.
3. Find one thing that you love to smell.
4. Find one thing you enjoy looking at.
5. Find something that's your favorite color.
6. Find something you are thankful for in nature.
7. Find something that you can use to make a gift for someone.
8. Find something that is useful for you.

