

Build Your Social Confidence

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Techniques

UWT Student Counseling Center

Mindfulness Meditation

1. Close your eyes or allow your gaze to rest softly on a spot on the floor in front of you.
2. Notice where you feel the breath in your body and allow your attention to rest in this spot. It may be in your belly, the back of your throat, or your nostrils.
3. Keep your focus on your breath, “being with” each in breath for its full duration and with each out breath for its full duration. Imagine you are riding the waves of your own breathing.
4. Each time you notice that your mind has wandered off the breath, gently bring your attention back to the place you feel your breath and the feeling of each in breath and out breath.
5. Each time your mind wanders, all you need to do is gently bring it back to your breath, again and again and again.
6. If you notice thoughts that you aren’t doing this right or you aren’t good at it, just notice them and again gently bring your attention back to your breath, again and again. These are just thoughts; they don’t mean you aren’t doing it right.

Body Scan

During the body scan exercise you will pay close attention to physical sensations throughout your body. The goal isn’t to change or relax your body, but instead to notice and become more aware of it. Don’t worry too much about how long you practice, but do move slowly.

Begin by paying attention to the sensations in your feet. Notice any sensations such as warmth, coolness, pressure, pain, or a breeze moving over your skin. Slowly move up your body – to your calves, thighs, pelvis, stomach, chest, back, shoulders, arms, hands, fingers, neck, and finally your head. Spend some time on each of these body parts, just noticing the sensations.

After you travel up your body, begin to move back down, through each body part, until you reach your feet again. Remember: move slowly, and just pay attention.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This technique involves first tensing then relaxing different muscles in your body. Physiologically, muscles actually relax more if they are first tensed. The technique is very similar to the body scan exercise above, but instead of just noticing sensations in each part of your body, you pay attention to any tension in each part of the body and then purposefully tense and then relax that part.

If you experience tension in certain parts of your body when you are anxious (e.g., your neck, back, shoulders, forehead, arms), relax those muscle groups one by one: tense the muscle group and hold for a slow count of ten, then relax to a slow count of ten and feel the tension flowing out.

Grounding with Your Senses

Use this exercise to quickly ground yourself in the present when you only have a moment. The goal is to notice something(s) that you are currently experiencing throughout different senses.

What are 5 things you can see? Look around you and notice 5 things you hadn't noticed before. Maybe a pattern on a wall, light reflecting from a surface, or an object in the corner of the room. It can also be helpful to identify what colors each object is, repeating them to yourself, such as thinking "grey chair, green plant, brown door."

What are 4 things you can feel? Maybe you can feel the pressure of your feet on the floor, your shirt resting on your shoulders, or the temperature on your skin? Can you feel yourself sitting in the chair? Pick up an object and notice its texture.

What are 3 things you can hear? Notice all the background sounds you had been filtering out, such as air-conditioning, birds chirping, or cars on the street.

Is there anything you can smell? Is there anything you can taste?

Guided Visualization

There are two kinds of visualization that can be helpful: Mental rehearsal, and relaxing imagery.

Mental Rehearsal: This is helpful if you are nervous about doing something, such as speaking to a group. Close your eyes and imagine yourself successfully doing the task. For example, imagine yourself speaking confidently and smoothly, imagine your body language, imagine what it would feel like to be doing this. The key is in the details: try to focus on this mental rehearsal for a few minutes, imagining yourself at each part of the task, what it would look like, feel like, sound like.

Relaxing Imagery: Imagine a scene that is calming and soothing (e.g., a mountain, lying on the beach or any place that you find relaxing). This can be a memory of yours in which you felt totally relaxed, or it can be a fantasy scene. Again, the key is in the details. Make this scene as vivid as possible by paying attention to all of your senses. What do you see? What do you hear, smell, or feel? Practice relaxing with this mental picture. The more you visualize this place in detail, the faster that bringing it back to mind will relax you.