



Caregiver Support Line – Relaxation Activity Transcript

Theme: Mindfulness

In recognition for the vital investment made on behalf of our nation's Veterans by their dedicated Caregivers, we have set aside this time to explore the benefits of meditation. This is our gift to you. Caregivers give such tremendous attention to others' needs. It is our hope that this time will encourage you to see the need and value in bringing your attention back to you.

We will spend a bit of time practicing mindfulness. What is mindfulness? Mindfulness meditation is a practice of simply paying attention to what is, in the here and now present moment. It is a practice of not only paying attention to yourself but also not engaging in the frantic efforts of changing, controlling, planning, or altering anything.

We spend so much of our daily lives rushing, checking off to do lists, planning for the future, and fighting our current state, either our internal thoughts and feelings or our external environment or circumstances.

Mindfulness is a practice of focusing our attention in the present moment, not fighting, resisting or changing anything, but simply being present in the moment. Another important aspect of mindfulness is not only being present to what is, but also bringing an attitude of kindness, an attitude of loving kindness, for you.

When practicing mindfulness, you chose a focus of attention, such as your breath. Focusing on the breath is a good choice for practicing mindful attention because it is always with us. There is no need for any special props. We just follow the unique and constant cycle of our breathing. Today, we will use our breathing as a focus of attention to help bring our awareness back to ourselves and into the present moment.

To begin, I will ask that you are seated in a comfortable position with your body supported and your legs uncrossed.

Place your feet on the floor, and rest your hands in your laps or on your thighs. Whether you are seated or lying down, take a moment to notice the feeling of support for your body against the surface.

If you would like to remove visual distractions, and if it is safe to do so, you can close your eyes.



Keep your mouth gently closed, not clenched, and let your tongue lightly touch the roof of your mouth.

Breathe through your nose, unless for some reason you aren't able. When you are settled in, we will start by taking a few deep cleansing breaths, deep into your belly, and then exhale slowly. Breathe in deeply and exhale slowly.

Now, without trying to control your breath in any way, allow it to find its natural rhythm and depth. Bring your attention to the rising and falling of your belly as you breathe. You are just featuring your breath as a focus of attention. You are simply following your breath as you would a child, with watchful attention.

You don't have to do anything fancy. Just pay attention to your breath. Observe the natural movement, feeling the air coming into your nose, your lungs expanding, belly rising, the gentle pause, and then exhale.

It knows what to do all on its own. You don't have to force it or control it in anyway. Just follow your breath lovingly and with attention, in and out. As it rests in between breaths, relax, and trust that it will resume.

There are no expectations. There are no worries. You don't have to do it perfectly. We are just noticing and following our breath.

You may notice your mind wandering or find your thoughts may float through, distracting your attention from the focus on your breath. This will happen. This is what our thoughts will do. Maybe you are thinking of what you have to do next. Maybe you are restless. It's okay. Our thoughts, like the waves in the ocean, will rise and pass. No need to control your thoughts or make them go away. Just observe them.

Then guide your attention back, to featuring the awareness of your breath. No need to force anything. Simply pay attention. If thoughts float through like the waves in the ocean, gently notice them and let them pass. You can let go of planning and doing right now. There is nowhere to be and nothing to do. Just for this time, you can let go and follow the natural movement of your breath.

Drop into the place of calm and quiet that is there beneath the surface of the ocean waves. There is a place of rest and calm for you beneath the surface. Give yourself over to the quiet awareness of this moment that is found in focusing on your breath.



If there is heaviness or sadness in your heart, if there is anger or criticism, if there is worry or anxiety that comes to your awareness, observe these feelings with kindness and care. Observe these feelings with kindness and care.

No need to cling to any distress, or push anything away. Simply acknowledge the feelings that rise to the surface of your attention. Be aware of them and return your attention to the simple, peaceful comfort of the natural rise and fall of your breath.

There is a deep calm and wisdom that you invite with this kind and gentle attention to the present moment, to the focused attention to your natural breath.

You may return again and again if you wish, to this place of restoration. Your breath is always available for you as a touchstone for your attention to the present. You may return again and again, as a kind and gentle act of self-love.

Now, begin to slowly bring your attention back to your surroundings and as you are ready, you may open your eyes. We'll take a few moments for our minds and bodies to come back to our surroundings.

How did this feel for you? Was it difficult to keep the attention on your breath? This is natural. It is a practice to develop this attention. Did you become aware of thoughts, feelings, or physical sensations that you may have been unaware of? Did this focus on your breath bring some measure of calm?

In practice, mindfulness meditation has the capacity to bring greater clarity and compassion for ourselves and others as we develop our capacity to bring a non-judging kindness and acceptance to our present moment. Mindfulness can help to bring balance and perspective into our daily lives.

We hope that the gift you have given to yourself today, the gift of paying attention to you, will be a gift that you practice every day. In giving yourself this gift, you are not only caring for you, but you are also preserving the gift of yourself that you so generously give when caring for others. We honor you and encourage you to continue to attend with loving kindness to your most vital resource, you.