

West Virginia Extension
Stress Less with Mindfulness
Lesson 1
Begin with a Breath
Handout Packet

Stress Less with Mindfulness

Personal Stress Barometer

	Circle the cues you have noticed	Add your own personal signals
My Body	Change in appetite, headaches, muscle pains, tired feeling, sleeplessness, colds, upset stomach, rashes or hives, pounding heart	
My Thoughts	Forgetful, confused, can't concentrate, mind races, bored, spaced out, negative thoughts	
My Feelings	Anxious, edgy, sad, frustrated, mood swings, irritable, worrying, discouraged, cry easily	
My Relationships	Want to be left alone, lonely, resentful, nagging, distrust, clammings up, lowered sex drive, anger outbursts	
My Spirituality	Feel empty, loss of meaning, feel unworthy, doubtful, feel used, uncaring	
My Behaviors	Smoking more, increased use of medicines, drinking more alcohol, tics, yelling, slamming doors, having accidents	

Developed by Jane Riffe, Ed.D., LICSW
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 Stress Less with Mindfulness is a program of West Virginia University Extension Service Families and Health Programs

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Exercise : Mindful Breathing

Start by getting yourself comfortable in a place where you'll be undisturbed for five to ten minutes or so. You may sit on the floor or in a chair. Sit upright with your palms up or down on your lap. Keep your back straight and let your shoulders drop.

Take a deep breath and close your eyes if you wish.

Gently guide your attention to the natural rhythm of your breath in your chest and belly. Simply notice the breath as you breathe in...and out...in...and out. There's no need to make the breath faster or slower, deeper or shallower. Just allow your breath to do its thing. Focus on the sensation of air moving in and out of your lungs as you breathe in ...and out.

Continue to notice your breathing with a sense of kindness and gentle allowing. There's nothing to do except notice your breath. Sink into its natural rhythm: the rising and gentle falling of your chest and belly as you breathe in and out...in and out.



As thoughts come into your mind and distract you from your breathing, just kindly notice that, and return to focusing on your breathing each time. Notice the rhythm of your breath, the rising and falling of your chest and belly, the sensation of air moving in and out of your lungs.

Don't judge yourself or try to ignore distractions. Your job is simply to notice that your mind has wandered and to gently bring your attention back to your breathing.

When you're ready, gradually widen your attention, and gently open your eyes with the intention of bringing this skill of kind observing to your experiences throughout the day.

Start by doing this 8-10 minutes a day for a week. The more you meditate regularly, the easier it will be to keep your attention where you want it.

Check out WVU Extension's Mindful Breathing Resources for audio files and resources.

<http://live.wv.wvu.edu/challenges/2013-challenges/week-14-just-breathe>
Adapted from John Kabat-Zinn (2013) Full Catastrophe Living.

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Mindful Moments – Thích Nhất Hạnh

Here's how to use it: Note: information for instructors only (Session 1 and any other week you want to use as a warm-up)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWerJwf3-3I>

Taught to Monks Plum Village, France for more than 10 years.

- Mindfulness – Noticing the quality for the movement, do these slowly, keep following your breath
- Enjoy movement, pay attention gently
- Smile

Demo begins at 3:13 on video

Repeat each movement 4 times.

1. Begin with arms straight in front and down (palms facing down). Keeping palms down, inhale as you move your arms up to shoulder height. Exhale as you move your arms back down (keeping palms down). Be aware of breath, enjoy movement.

2. Begin with arms straight down and palms together. Inhale as you lift up arms reaching as high as possible over your head. Exhale as you lower arms to the beginning position.

3. Bloom like a flower: Start with your fingertips on shoulders with elbows to the side. Breathe in as you unfold your arms straight out to each side. Breathe out as you refold your arms in and bring your fingertips back to your shoulders.

4. Make a circle. Begin with arms straight down with palms together, inhale as you bring your arms above your head. Exhale as you break hands apart, moving arms down each side. Bring hands to rest at hips. Then reverse the circle.

5. (Like a full bow). Exhale while slowly bending forward and down, hands facing the ground. Inhale, while slowly rising and bringing hands over your head. Repeat.

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Stress Less with Mindfulness

Building Your Stress Resilience

For each statement, please place an "X" in the box to show how often it is true for you.

	Almost Always	Usually	Sometimes	Almost Never	Never
I eat at least one hot, balanced meal a day.					
I get 7 to 8 hours of sleep, at least 4 nights a week.					
I give and receive affection regularly.					
I have at least 1 relative within 50 miles on whom I can rely.					
I exercise to the point of perspiration at least twice a week.					
I smoke less than half a pack of cigarettes a day (no smokers = almost always)					
I drink fewer than 5 alcoholic drinks a week. (no drinkers = almost always).					
I am the appropriate weight for my height.					
I have an income adequate to meet my basic needs.					
I get strength from my religious/spiritual beliefs.					
I regularly attend club or social activities.					
I have a network of friends and acquaintances.					
I have at least 1 friend in whom I confide about personal matters.					
I am in good health (including eyesight, hearing, teeth, etc.).					
I am able to speak openly about my feelings when angry or worried.					
I have regular conversations with my housemates about domestic problems.					
I do something fun at least once a week.					
I am able to organize my time effectively.					
I drink fewer than 3 caffeinated drinks a day.					
I take quiet time for myself during the day.					
Calculate your score	0 points	1 point	2 points	3 points	4 points
Total score for each column					
Grand total					

Stress Less with Mindfulness What Your Score Means

0 - 10	indicates you have excellent resistance to the vulnerability of stress
11 - 29	little vulnerability to stress
30 - 49	some vulnerability to stress
50 - 74	serious vulnerability
75 - 80	extreme vulnerability

You can make yourself more stress resilient by improving your health behaviors, modifying your lifestyle, and building up your financial, social, personal, and spiritual resources for coping with stress.

Source: University of California, Berkeley Wellness Letter, August, 1985. Scale Developers: Lyle Miller, Ph.D. and Alma DeLl Smith, Ph.D. of Boston University Medical Center.

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Soul Care for Seniors

Jane Riffe, Extension Specialist, Family and Human Development

Educational Objectives

1. To understand how paying attention in a mindful way can reduce stress.
2. To learn why struggling against strong emotions or thoughts does not work.
3. To learn three easy mindfulness practices to increase life satisfaction.

“Soul care” means caring for our deep inner self, the thoughts and feelings we often keep to ourselves.

“Soul” does not refer to religious beliefs, but to a deep connection to life and ourselves. Our mental, emotional, and physical health suffers when we lose that connection while caring for others or being busy with projects and responsibilities.

Mindful acceptance, or mindfulness, offers a way to enjoy our lives more and reduce stress through simple daily practices.



What Is Mindfulness?

Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn of the University of Massachusetts Medical School identifies these key characteristics of Mindfulness:

- Paying purposeful attention to the present moment – “What’s happening right now?”
- Learning to notice current thoughts, feelings, or body sensations in a gentle, detached way.
- Accepting without judgment; refraining from judging whatever feeling, thought, or sensation is experienced.
- Is based on meditation practices and refined by 30 years of psychological and medical research.
- Requires no particular religious or cultural beliefs to practice these skills, which are easy to learn and improve with practice.
- Involves stepping out of the thinking and problem-solving mind into direct experience of the present moment.
- Represents a powerful way to reconnect with one’s center and maintain stability when dealing with stressful people or situations.

– continued –

Dealing with our Negative Experiences: What Doesn't Work

Struggling to control, avoid, or suppress thoughts and feelings:

When worries or fears arise, we might not realize that that these are only thoughts. We begin to use critical thinking skills to work out what's gone



wrong or what we think might be wrong with us (Judging) for feeling this way. We respond on "Autopilot" with patterns formed from years of habits. Although problem-solving and critical thinking are important skills, they do not work well to change our internal experience. We do not feel better, and sometimes we feel even worse. Focusing on our negative experiences actually makes us unhappier, taking us farther from where we want to be.

Attempting to avoid, control, or suppress unpleasant thoughts does not help reduce stress. Unpleasant thoughts and feelings tend to magnify as a result of efforts to control them. It is not possible to control our thoughts.

Exercise: Don't Think About a PINK ELEPHANT

Take a moment and DON'T think about a PINK ELEPHANT. It's okay to think about anything else you wish, but not an elephant and certainly not a PINK ELEPHANT.

How successful were you in avoiding thinking about the pink elephant?

Was it easy or difficult to work with your mind as you tried to do this?

Struggling against our emotions is a bit like trying to get out of a Chinese finger trap.

The harder you try to push away unwanted thoughts and feelings, the more your brain focuses on them. All of this effort takes us out of the present opportunity to experience our life and makes it harder to focus on pleasurable experiences. (Chinese finger traps are cheap if you want to use them as a learning experience. Sources include www.zymetrical.com and www.orientaltrading.com.)

Mindful Acceptance as an Alternative

Mindfulness and acceptance approaches to stress management teach us to stop struggling with emotions by viewing thoughts and emotions as passing messages similar to something you see, hear, taste, or smell. Unpleasant thoughts, feelings, or body experiences become a signal to mindfully shift attention from these nonproductive thoughts to a gentle acceptance of the experience at the moment.

Some 17,000 people have been trained in Mindfulness-based Stress Management since 1979. Many studies show these techniques to be helpful in reducing depression and anxiety and in managing chronic pain, hypertension, diabetes, and insomnia.

Paying Mindful Attention (Skill #1)

Exercise: Eating One Raisin

Let's experience how Mindfulness teaches us to shift out of thinking and into noticing experiences directly through the senses by practicing mindful eating.

Note: Take plenty of time for each step as you guide participants through this activity.

Holding

Hold a raisin in the palm of your hand or between your finger and thumb. Imagine that you've just dropped in from Mars and have never seen an object like this before in your life.

Seeing

Gaze at the raisin with care and full attention. Let your eyes explore every part of it, examining the darker hollows, the folds and ridges, and any asymmetries or unique features.



Touching

Turn the raisin over between your fingers, exploring its texture, maybe with your eyes closed if that enhances your sense of touch.

Smelling

Holding the raisin beneath your nose, inhale and drink in any smell, aroma, or fragrance that may arise, noticing anything that may be happening in your mouth or stomach.

Placing

Slowly bring the raisin up to your lips. Notice how your hand and arm know exactly how and where to position it. Gently place the object in the mouth, without chewing, noticing how it gets into the mouth. Spend a few moments exploring the sensations of having it in your mouth, exploring it with your tongue.

Tasting

When you are ready, prepare to chew the raisin, noticing how and where it needs to be for chewing. Then, very consciously, take one or two bites and notice what happens, experiencing any waves of taste that emanate from it as you continue chewing. Without



swallowing yet, notice the bare sensations of taste and texture in the mouth and how these may change over time, moment by moment, as well as any changes in the raisin itself.

Swallowing

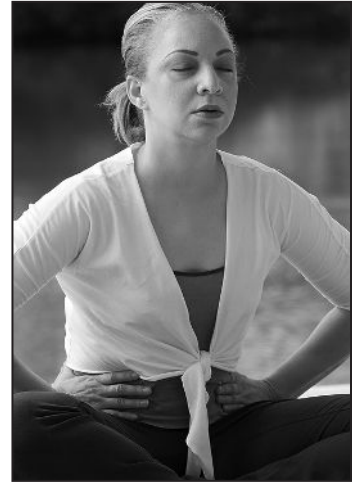
See if you can first detect the intention to swallow as it comes up, so that even this is experienced consciously before you actually swallow.

Following

Finally, see if you can feel what is left of the raisin moving down into your stomach, and sense how the body as a whole feels after completing this exercise in mindful eating.

Mindful Breathing (Skill #2)

Following the breath is an easy way to shift out of autopilot anytime we notice unwanted thoughts, feelings, or even physical pain. The breath is always with us, which makes this a convenient tool for reconnecting with ourselves.



This exercise is quite simple and involves following the breath with an easy, relaxed awareness.

Exercise: Mindful Breathing (5-8 minutes)

(Read the script from the WL 477 in a calm, steady voice. Practice to understand the experience. Speak slowly with pauses to allow participants to relax and focus their attention.)

Discuss: What was it like for you to take a little rest?

How could this gentle observing of your experiences make a difference throughout the day?

One teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, uses these words to gently focus the mind on the sensations of the breath. You can try them if you like. "Breathing in, I calm myself; breathing out, I smile."

Bringing Awareness to Routine Activities (Skill#3)

Exercise: Change to the Mindfulness Channel

CHOOSE to notice. **SHIFT** to gentle acceptance. **PRACTICE DAILY** tuning into mindful awareness.

- Use a bell or set an alarm on the half or quarter hour. When it chimes, bring your attention to the present moment and to your breath moving in and out.

- Choose a routine activity as an opportunity to practice mindful acceptance. Decide that each time you do it you will bring a quality of deliberate moment-to-moment awareness to the task. Think of this as like changing a radio station.

Possible activities:

- Washing dishes
- Brushing your teeth
- Doing laundry
- Going upstairs or downstairs
- Leaving the house
- Making a phone call

Discuss with participants: What activities might you use as possibilities for mindful noticing?



Be Kind to Your Mind and Body

There is no way to stop unpleasant thoughts and feelings from showing up in our lives. The key is changing our position toward these natural, normal experiences. When you feel judgmental, irritable, or sad, congratulate yourself for noticing! Then, choose to shift to gentle soft awareness of what you are experiencing.

What About Taking Action?

A general rule of thumb:

When the source of stress is inside yourself (thoughts, feelings, body sensations), try mindfulness first to connect with your experience and your internal resources. Actions that you take after a mindfulness practice are likely to be more balanced, effective, and reflective of who you really are.

Like any skill, mindfulness improves with use. Pick one exercise that interests you and commit to practicing it 10 minutes a day. The ability to shift from automatic thoughts to gentle compassion is possible, one moment at a time.

Calls to Mindfulness:

These quotes could be cut out, laminated, and given to participants to use as cards or bookmarks.

Waking up in the morning, I smile. 24 brand new hours are before me.

As I clean this fresh, calm room, I focus on the good things in my life.

Peace exists only in the present moment. Right here, right now.

It's only a thought; I can simply notice it and breathe.

Breathing in, I calm myself. Breathing out, I smile.

Resources

www.umassmed.edu/content.aspx?id=41254 Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society, University of Massachusetts Medical School

www.mindfulnessstapes.com/ CDs of Dr. Kabat Zinn's teaching

Forsyth, J and Eifert, G. (2007). *The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Anxiety*. Oakland, CA, New Harbinger. Includes a skill-building CD with mindful acceptance exercises.

Williams, M, Teasdale, J, Segal, Z and Kabat-Zinn, J. (2007). *The Mindful Way through Depression* New York: Guilford Press. Includes a CD with guided meditation practices.

2009

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FH09-291



Stress Less with Mindfulness Resources

3 Minute Breathing Space (mp3)

http://www.umsystem.edu/media/3min_breathing_space.mp3

- Experience mindfulness, not judging.
- Let your attention relax gently on the breath.
- Use the breath as an anchor to bring you into the present moment.

Would you like to experience another mindful breathing break? Short Deep Breathing Relaxation YouTube Video 1:44 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQW4FO52UXo>

5 Minute Breathing Meditation

Free Guided Meditations from the UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center <http://marc.ucla.edu/body.cfm?id=22>

Mindful Movement by Thich Nhat Hanh

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWerJwf3-3I>

Book and DVD: ***Mindful Movement Ten Exercises for Well-Being***. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press (2008).

Easy Qi Gong Eight Pieces of Brocade – Larry Cammarata, Ph.D.

<http://www.mind-bodywellness.org/products.html> dr.cammarata@mac.com

Qi Gong Focus and Vitality apps (Free Lite versions available) Apple iTunes store

Meditation 3 from Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy

<http://rodalebooks.s3.amazonaws.com/mindfulness/index.html>

Mindfulness Bell – download program for your computer.

www.mindfulnessdc.org/mindfulclock.html

Insight Meditation Timer app for cell phones or iPad

Breath of Joy – Amy Weintraub, Ph.D. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQW4FO52UXo>

Yoga Nidra (Deep Relaxation)-downloads and research summaries Richard Miller, Ph.D.

www.irest.us

Jon Kabat-Zinn (2012). *Mindfulness for Beginners*. [Reclaiming the Present Moment--and Your Life](#).

Harris, Russell (2008). *The Happiness Trap*. Boston: Trumpeter Books

Kabat-Zinn, Jon (1994). *Wherever You Go, There You Are*. New York: Hyperion. Positive Psychology resources.

www.authentichappiness.com

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<http://fh.ext.wvu.edu/download/116892>

<http://fh.ext.wvu.edu/download/116895>

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(05/15/14)*



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WV SLM Lesson 1 Begin with a Breath Links to Videos

What is Mindfulness.

5:16 video of Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D. creator of the Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at the [University of Massachusetts Medical School](https://www.massgeneral.org/education/center-for-mindfulness-in-medicine-health-care-and-society).

Video link - <https://www.youtube.com/user/PsychAlive>

Mindfulness Meditation 3-minute breathing space by Prof. Mark Williams, Oxford Mindfulness Centre

<https://youtu.be/rOne1P0TKL8>

Tich Nhat Hanh Mindful Movements

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWerJwf3-3I>

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