

International Death, Grief and Bereavement Conference 2018

Mindfulness with Andrew

MINDFULNESS EXERCISES

Mindfulness of Breath

Preparation

Sit or lie in a comfortable position. You may choose to close your eyes or keep them open, if you are feeling tired it may be useful to let just a little bit of light in to keep you alert.

The Breath

Begin by gently moving your attention onto the process of breathing. Notice the sensations of each breath as it happens, whether you focus on the rise and fall of your chest or abdomen, or on the feeling of the breath at the nostrils. Really feel what it is like to breath, just observing it as it happens.

As you engage in this exercise you may find that your mind wanders, caught by thoughts or by noises in the room, or bodily sensations. When you notice that this happens, know that this is okay, and simply notice the distraction but gently bring your attention back to the breath.

Ending the Exercise

Take a few moments to yourself, connecting with your experience in the present moment. Expand your awareness from the breath into the space around you, and as you feel comfortable to do so, opening your eyes and bring the exercise to a close.

Reflections

Take a few moments to think about what your experience was in this exercise, and how you feel in the present moment.

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A Meditation on Grief – Jack Kornfield

Taken from the book, *“The Art of Forgiveness, Lovingkindness, and Peace.”*

“When after heavy rain the storm clouds disperse, it is not that they’ve wept themselves clear to the end?” – Ghalib

Grief is one of the heart’s natural responses to loss. When we grieve we allow ourselves to feel the truth of our pain, the measure of betrayal or tragedy in our life. By our willingness to mourn, we slowly acknowledge, integrate, and accept the truth of our losses. Sometimes the best way to let go is to grieve.

It takes courage to grieve, to honor the pain we carry. We can grieve in tears or in meditative silence, in prayer or in song. In touching the pain of recent and long-held griefs, we come face to face with our genuine human vulnerability, with helplessness and hopelessness. These are the storm clouds of the heart.

Most traditional societies offer ritual and communal support to help people move through grief and loss. We need to respect our tears. Without a wise way to grieve, we can only soldier on, armored and unfeeling, but our hearts cannot learn and grow from the sorrows of the past.

To meditate on grief, let yourself sit, alone or with a comforting friend. Take the time to create an atmosphere of support. When you are ready, begin by sensing your breath. Feel your breathing in the area of your chest. This can help you become present to what is within you. Take one hand and hold it gently on your heart as if you were holding a vulnerable human being. You are.

As you continue to breathe, bring to mind the loss or pain you are grieving. Let the story, the images, the feelings come naturally. Hold them gently. Take your time. Let the feelings come layer by layer, a little at a time.

Keep breathing softly, compassionately. Let whatever feelings are there, pain and tears, anger and love, fear and sorrow, come as they will. Touch them gently. Let them unravel out of your body and mind. Make space for any images that arise. Allow the whole story. Breathe and hold it all with tenderness and compassion. Kindness for it all, for you and for others.

The grief we carry is part of the grief of the world. Hold it gently. Let it be honored. You do not have to keep it in anymore. You can let it go into the heart of compassion; you can weep.

Releasing the grief we carry is a long, tear-filled process. Yet it follows the natural intelligence of the body and heart. Trust it, trust the unfolding. Along with meditation, some of your grief will want to be written, to be cried out, to be sung, to be danced. Let the timeless wisdom within you carry you through grief to any open heart.

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A Meditation for Moving On – by Holly Rogers

November 27, 2017 MINDFUL magazine

Acceptance is not about liking something or agreeing with something – It's simply about acknowledging what is happening, what is true in this moment. The more we can accept each moment as it is, the less we suffer.

Sometimes there are things in our life that we're not crazy about, that are quite unpleasant, very distressing even – and yet there's nothing we can do about it. And in those moments acceptance, acknowledging what is true without adding on layers of "I don't want this to be true," "It's not fair," "I don't like this," "Why did this happen to me," can help us get through these difficult times with more ease. Importantly, when we settle into acceptance and see the truth of our circumstance in the moment – if there is an opportunity for change, if there is an opportunity to do something different – we have a better chance of seeing it. We have a better chance of developing wisdom about the possibilities in this moment when we see each moment with clarity.

- 1) **First, find a comfortable seat** in a chair or on a cushion. Let your back be tall but not stiff. Hold your head so your ears are above your shoulders with your chin slightly tucked. Drop your shoulders, rest your hands in your lap.
- 2) **Then, notice the feeling of breathing.** Become aware of your body breathing, settling your attention on the place in your body where you most easily experience the sensation of the breath flowing in and out. Let your breathing be normal and natural – no need to try and change it or shift it. See if you can let your awareness be open and relaxed. As you watch your breath, you create a sense of spaciousness, not a tight or clamped-down feeling. Spacious awareness: Allowing your breath to come and go.
- 3) **If you've noticed your mind has wandered, come back to the breath.** When you notice your attention has wandered, bring your attention back to your breath without criticizing yourself or your wandering mind. Accept in the moment that that's what our minds do: they wander and we can work with that by being willing, without judgment, to simply begin again.

As you sit in meditation, you will likely have some moments where you feel focused, or relaxed, or at ease. It's easy to accept those moments without trying to struggle with or change them. Other moments may seem unpleasant: you may feel restless, have some discomfort, an itch. See if you can hold those moments with some unpleasantness with the exact same quality of open curiosity as those moments that are more naturally easy. Just allowing each moment to be as it is, developing curiosity about it, watching the changing nature of your experience.

- 4) **Now, shift your attention to any thoughts you are having in this moment.** Notice what your thoughts are doing if you're having thoughts about not liking something, wanting it to be different. Maybe there's a conversation in your head where you're trying to convince somebody to think or do something different. See if you can just notice your tendency to try to judge and change these situations.
- 5) **Then, explore if you can let go of those thoughts.** See if you can summon the willingness to let it be as it is. Perhaps even saying to yourself: "It is what it is," and coming back to your breath, noticing that some of our discomfort is related to the way we struggle, the way we fight, and then maybe it's possible to let at least some small part of that be. Come back to your breath, relaxing into the spaciousness of your present moment experience without judgment, with curiosity, with acceptance.
- 6) **Once you feel ready, allow your eyes to open.**

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