



Mindfulness Session. A few takeaways...

3 Step Breathing Exercise

Imagine an hour glass. The '3 Steps' correspond to the top chamber, the narrow middle and the bottom chamber.

This only takes a couple of minutes. Sit comfortably, feet flat on the floor. Sitting upright but not 'to attention'. Lower your gaze, or let your eyes drift out of focus, or if appropriate for where you are just close your eyes. Then go through the three steps.

Step 1. What is happening for me right now? Gather your thoughts, sensations and emotions – observe them, with curiosity. But don't let them carry you away into other thoughts and intentions.

Step 2. Now narrow your attention down to your breathing. Focus on where you can feel your breathing happening. Follow it – allowing it to happen at its own pace, letting go of any temptation to control or alter it. You are not judging your breathing or trying to make it 'slower', 'deeper' or 'more relaxed'. Just observe it, notice the pauses between breaths, and any changes in where or how you feel your breathing happening

Step 3. Slowly allow your awareness to expand out from your breathing, to the rest of your body, the room and sounds or activity around you, and then your thoughts and intentions. Notice anything that was different from when you started gathering in Step 1.

3 Steps – Gather. Narrow. Expand.

You can experiment with when and how you do this, it is your first introduction to what happens when you simply **pause, breathe, and acknowledge what's happening right now.** The version above might take a couple of minutes. But you could try simply stopping, even when standing, and going through those steps in as little as 3 successive breaths. But how do you remember to do this, how do you become more aware of the opportunities..... ?

A Random Appointment with Yourself

Mindfulness is about being aware of what you are experiencing, and about choosing how to respond to what is happening, rather than being driven by a series of 'auto-pilot' reactions. Formal Mindfulness practice cultivates a tendency for you to 'wake up' more often and notice what you are doing, and why, and how you are feeling. But even if you aren't practicing Mindfulness you can get a better understanding of this, and even benefit a little, simply by interrupting yourself randomly during the day.

Technology can help. All manner of devices and settings can be used to prompt you to stop for a moment, one or more times a day, at random. Use an alarm to prompt yourself to ask questions such as: "Where am I?" "What am I thinking, sensing or feeling?" "How aware of that was I when the alarm went off?". Two specific apps which do this are "**re-mindful**" for iOS, which you can find at www.re-mindful.com and, on Android, one in the Play Store called simply "**Random Alarm**".

You could also use your Random Appointment with Yourself as a prompt to do a **3 Step Breathing Exercise** for a moment, or a minute, or 3 minutes.

Links and Recommendations

Reading

One Second Ahead: Enhance your performance at work with mindfulness.

Rasmus Hougaard et al.

Mindfulness: A practical guide to finding peace in a frantic world.

Prof Mark Williams and Dr Danny Penman.

Mobile Apps

Headspace www.headspace.com/headspace-meditation-app

Buddhify www.buddhify.com

The Mindfulness App by MindApps. www.mindapps.se

Web

Oxford Mindfulness Centre www.oxfordmindfulness.org

Workplace Courses

Mindfulness at Work www.mindfulnessatwork.com