

MINDFULNESS EXERCISES: from Chapter 5 – exercise 1

Practise the following mindfulness exercises in order.

1. To get in touch with your five senses, repeat the following sensory activities for a few minutes every day for a week. Once you have the hang of it, practise these mindfulness exercises when doing other things, such as housework or mowing the lawn.

Sight – pay closer attention to the world of nature, such as the wind in the trees or moving water. Observe animals interacting with their environment, including your pet, fish in a tank, birds or insects. Look at parts of your car, house or office that you haven't previously paid attention to; it may be the corner of a room, the edge of a table or the side of a bookshelf. When catching public transport or as a passenger in a car, pay attention to your surroundings and look for things you haven't noticed before.

Sound – close your eyes and notice all the things you can hear. Listen to annoying objects like a dripping tap or a barking dog, paying close attention to the actual sound. Is it the same sound throughout or does it vary? When studied in the present moment, such sounds may no longer annoy you.

Taste – eat slowly, noticing how food tastes on your tongue and as it's being chewed. When drinking coffee or tea, sip it slowly, savouring the taste. Try new foods, especially if they are sweet, sour or bitter, and instead of judging the food as good or bad, simply notice how your tastebuds respond. Biting into a small piece of lemon works well for this exercise.

Smell – pick up a flower or a piece of fruit or vegetable and smell it. Notice how the smell affects you. Smell something less favourable, such as your wet towel or dirty socks. Notice the difference between the smells and how you react to them.

Feeling through your body – run your fingertips gently up the inside of your arm, or use the breathing exercise from page 22 [chapter 1]. Notice how it makes your body feel. Can you detect tension in your body or not? While having a shower, turn the hot water off for a short period of time and notice how the cold water feels on your skin. Walk barefooted on grass or sand or in water, noticing how your feet feel. As you're pegging clothes on the line, sweeping the floor, ironing or folding clothes, notice how the action feels and which muscles you need to use to perform the task.