

MINDFUL AWARENESS - THE PRACTICE OF AUTHENTIC PRESENCE
Presented by Joe Parent at the In2:InThinking Network's 2013 Forum
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MINDFUL AWARENESS PRACTICE

I. Setting Intention

1. **General Purpose:**

Make the World a Better Place

Authentic Presence – in tune with my experience as it is, in the here and now

Appropriate Responsiveness – in tune with others, beyond emotional reactivity

2. **Specific Purpose:** Working with thoughts and emotions related to my current situation, in regard to presence and responsiveness.

3. **Session Purpose:**

a. Isolate the focal object of attention (foreground/background) more clearly

b. Extend the presence with the focal object longer

c. Recognize wandering in elaborated thoughts sooner

d. Return to the practice more immediately

II. The Five Stages of Mindful Awareness

1. **Aligning the Body, Breath and Mind (a minute or two)**

a. Aligning the body with posture and sensation: balanced on seat; legs gently crossed; hands on thighs so that shoulders are centered and relaxed; jaw gently moves slightly up and back tongue rests lightly on upper palette; eye gaze diffuse and slightly downward; breathing through nostrils.

Feel sit-bones descending; feel spine, neck and back of head gently ascending, feel sternum extending slightly upward, feel mid-back extending slightly backward.

b. Align the body energy with three deep breaths: feel breath/energy coming down all through the body; feel it fill the torso from the bottom up; feel any stagnant energy cleared with full exhalations. Then let breath flow naturally.

c. Align the mind to the here and now: let go of replaying the past; let go of “pre-playing” the future, and letting go of your *version* of the present situation. Let the mind fall into ease, clarity, and openness.

Image: Body like the mountain, breath like the wind, mind like the sky.

2. **Settling the Body, Breath and Mind (a few minutes)**

a. Do a body scan, dissolving tension as awareness touches each area. Let any muscles not necessary for holding your posture relax.

b. As you inhale, let the lumbar and lower abdomen arch forward a little; as you exhale, let the lower back and abdomen return to upright position. As the breath slows, let the arching become more and more subtle.

c. Let attention rest on area of the torso below the navel.

3. Close Placement (most of session)

Three Focal Objects: Attend to the sensation of the inhalation, exhalation, and your posture. Focus on the sensation at the nostrils or the lower torso. When you *recognize* that thoughts or emotions have taken your mind away, acknowledge this without judgment. You can lightly label the thoughts or emotions. As crisply as you can, *return* attention to the focal objects.

Seven Focal Objects: You can intensify the practice by attending to the beginning, middle, and end of the inhalation, to the beginning, middle, and end of the exhalation, and to your posture.

4. Mixing Mind and Space on the Medium of the Breath (several minutes)

This practice focuses more on the environment than the body. There is still some focus, but not as much, on the posture and bodily sensations. As for the breath, as you exhale and the breath mixes with the atmosphere in front of you, let the mind become one with the breath, going out and releasing into the space in front. Let your awareness expand to the sights, sounds, and, if present, smells around you. Let thoughts come and go. On the inhalation, instead of focusing on the breath, practice letting the mind fall into openness until the next exhalation. When you *recognize* that thoughts or emotions have taken your mind away, acknowledge this without judgment. You can lightly label the thoughts or emotions. As crisply as you can, *return* attention to the next exhalation.

5. Opening to Expansive Awareness (a minute or so)

Drop the techniques, and with each exhalation let your awareness open further, imagining that you are open to the space all around you, then out to the horizon, then out to the sky, and then beyond the sky to the infinity of space. Rest in that infinite openness for as long as it lasts.

III. Dedication of Benefit

As a conclusion, reflect on our interdependence with others, and include them in the practice by dedicating the benefit that comes from the practice to them. Say whatever expresses that intention for yourself, along the lines of: “May whatever good comes from the practice I have just done, may it benefit others even more than it benefits myself.”

Reflect on the your intentions for the session, and establish your intention for mindful awareness practice in action through the rest of the day or evening.