

Five Senses Mindfulness Exercise

Stressed out? Can't stop worrying or thinking about something? Can't focus? Feeling upset? Sometimes we feel like we're caught up in a tornado of thoughts and emotions. The exercise below is a quick and easy method for feeling more centered on a tough day. It's also great to practice at times when you're not as stressed so you know exactly how to use it when you need it the most.

If begin to notice thoughts coming into your mind, that is **COMPLETELY** normal. Our brains are designed to think but we can learn to refocus our attention. Take this as an opportunity to be kind to yourself and not judge. Just notice that you are having thoughts, then, redirect your attention back to the present moment.

1. **Sit in a comfortable upright position** with your feet planted flat on the ground. Rest your hands on your thighs or on your desk.
2. **Notice your breathe.** No need to breathe in any particular way. Just bring attention to each part of the breath- the inhale, exhale, and space in between.
3. **Bring awareness to each of your 5 senses.** One at a time, for about one minute each. The point here is to focus on the present moment and how each sense is being activated in that moment. The order in which you pay attention to each sense does not matter.

Hear: Begin to notice all of the sounds around you. Try not to judge the sounds- just notice them. They are not good or bad, they just are. Sounds might be internal, like breathing or digestion. Sounds might be close by or more distant like the sound of traffic. Are you now hearing more than you were before you started? You may begin to notice subtle sounds you did not hear before. Can you hear them now?

Smell: Now shift your attention to notice the smells of your environment. Maybe you smell food. You might become aware of the smell of trees or plants if you are outside. You might notice the smell of books or paper. Sometimes closing your eyes can help sharpen your attention.

See: Observe your surrounding and notice the colors, shapes and textures. If you really look, you may notice things that have gone unnoticed.

Taste: You can do this one even if you have food in your mouth. You may notice an aftertaste of a previous drink or meal. You can just notice your tongue in your mouth, your saliva, and your breath as you exhale. We have tastes in our mouth that often go unnoticed. You can run your tongue over your teeth and cheeks to help you become more aware.

Touch: Last one. Bring your attention to the sensations of skin contact with your chair, clothing, and feet on the floor. You can notice the pressure between your feet and the floor or your body and the chair. You can observe temperature like the warmth or coolness of your hands or feet. You might take time to feel the textures that you noticed by sight a moment ago. You can feel several objects on your desk to fully focus your attention on the present.

When finished, pause to notice how your body feels in this moment. Compare how you feel now with how you felt 5 minutes ago- what has changed? Try this exercise next time you're feeling overwhelmed. This can be useful to use before a test or speech, too!