



Mindful Moments:

An Introduction

We have created the following scripted mindfulness exercises for your Circle group. You can use the ones we've provided, or find your own if you're feeling adventurous!

Setting the tone for your meeting will allow you to be open to new ideas without having your mind stuck on worries of the day, or your to-do list when you get home. Take this time to be here, to be present, and to give yourself the gift of focus, through the support of your friends.

If you're not familiar with mindfulness, check out the information below as an easy way to get started. Even if you are a mindfulness guru, you could find a rekindled excitement learning the various benefits of mindfulness.

“It's not really about sitting in the full lotus, like pretending you're a statue in a British museum. It's about living your life as if it really mattered, moment by moment by moment by moment.”

– Jon Kabat-Zinn



Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way on purpose, in the present moment, without judgment. This isn't about trying to stop thoughts and feelings, but about shining a flashlight of focus, moment-by-moment, on our emotions, thoughts, body, and environment.

Although mindfulness has roots in ancient Buddhist meditation, it is quickly gaining momentum in today's scientific community as a proven way to enhance relationships and connection, reduce stress, boost the immune system, improve memory, and manage emotions, among other things.

We challenge you to not only start your Circles meetings with a mindful moment, but to take this opportunity in Circles to develop mindfulness as a daily practice. In our busy modern world, which can sometimes be filled with stress, sleep deprivation, multitasking, and digital distractions, what could be better?

And remember, mindfulness doesn't have to be only while sitting in a chair in a quiet eucalyptus-infused room. Bring mindfulness with you while you're out shopping, brushing your teeth, holding a baby, and even working at the computer!

Want to read more about mindfulness? Visit our content partners at UC Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center: <http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/mindfulness/>



Mindful Moments:

Mindful Breathing

Anchor your Circle to the here and now by using your breath. Lead this “balloon breath” exercise as a starting point to your mindfulness practice. These exercises are most powerful if someone guides it and everyone else follows along.

Instructions and script:

1. Read the script below aloud in a slow, gentle voice at a rhythmic pace with many pauses.
2. Have people sit or lie on the floor. If they prefer to stay on their chairs, that’s okay too.
3. **“Please get into your ‘mindful bodies’ – being as still as possible...as quiet as possible...spines straight, with your eyes gently closed. Let your hands and arms rest in a relaxed position.”**
4. **“Inhale slowly as if blowing up a balloon in your stomach.”**
5. **“Exhale slowly and notice the balloon fall.”**
6. “Inhale, noticing how your stomach moves out, away from the body. Exhale, noticing how your stomach moves closer to the body.”
7. **“Repeat this balloon breath 5-10 times. Observe how you feel as you inhale and as you exhale.”**
8. Ask your Circle about their first mindful experience. What did they feel?

Since breathing is something you all do all the time, it is one of the best tools you have to bring you into the present moment. No matter what situation you are in, you can always place your attention on breathing in and out – use your breath as an anchor.

As you focus on breath, living in the ‘now’ will feel more clear and peaceful, even when your environment is chaotic. It is not meant as a prescription for tuning out the world, but tuning in with open awareness.

Other Project Happiness picks:

Guided breathing: <http://www.freemindfulness.org/download>

Time’s breathing exercises: <http://healthland.time.com/2012/10/08/6-breathing-exercises-to-relax-in-10-minutes-or-less/>

Dr. Weil’s 3 breathing techniques: <http://www.drweil.com/health-wellness/body-mind-spirit/stress-anxiety/breathing-three-exercises/>



Mindful Moments:

Mindful Listening

Lead this “listening to the bell” exercise to encourage mindful listening. This is a simple practice and can be repeated daily, even when you’re not meeting with your Circle. You will need a “mindfulness bell,” or a rain stick – anything with a sustained sound. If you don’t have access to any of these, you can use this online recording: <http://www.onlinemeditationtimer.com>.

Instructions and script:

1. Read the script below aloud in a slow, gentle voice at a rhythmic pace with many pauses.
2. **“Today’s mindful moment is a practice in listening mindfully.”**
3. **“Please get into your ‘mindful bodies’ – last time we discussed that this means being still and quiet, sitting upright, with your eyes gently closed.”**
4. **“Now place all your attention on the sound you are about to hear. Listen until the sound is completely gone.”**
5. Ring the bell. As it begins to ring say, **“Please raise your hand when you can no longer hear the sound.”**
6. When most or all have raised their hands, you can say, **“Now slowly move your hand over your stomach or chest, and just feel your breathing, remembering the balloon breathing we did last week.”**
7. You can help your Circle stay focused during the breathing with reminders like, **“Just breathing in...breathing out...”**
8. Ring the bell again, and have your group raise their hands when they can no longer hear it.
9. Invite feedback on mindful listening. Ask: How does listening to the bell translate into listening to people and daily conversations?

In order to tune in to the very last sound of the bell, there couldn’t be any other noise or interruptions. Similarly, when we are tuning in to a conversation, mindfulness allows our thoughts to stay focused on who is speaking, and to remain open to their opinion. In listening intently, we can also stay aware of our emotional landscape and what is happening within, without judgment.

Other Project Happiness picks:

Guided sounds and thoughts: <http://franticworld.com/free-meditations-from-mindfulness/>

Guided mindful listening: <https://www.tarabrach.com/meditation-silence-listening/>



Mindful Moments:

Mindful Body Awareness

Guide this “body scan” exercise to encourage being fully present in your body, without trying to change it, which is sometimes referred to as a feeling of “bodyfullness.”

Instructions and script:

1. **“Today’s mindful moment is called a body scan. You learned how to do mindful breathing, how that can relax you and make you more calm. Now we’re going to scan around the whole body, and go through it like a spotlight, section by section, so you will know how to be mindful of your whole body.”**
2. Read the script below aloud in a slow, gentle voice at a rhythmic pace with many pauses. Have people sit in chairs for this exercise.
3. **“Please get into your ‘mindful bodies.’”**
4. **“First feel yourself on your chair, feel your feet on the floor, your toes, your heels. Are they heavy or light? Feel your seat on the chair, your back leaning on the back of the chair, or if you’re lying down feel your body melt onto where you are lying.”**
5. **“Where your body is touching the chair or floor, is it soft or hard? Let’s soften those edges.”**
6. **“Bring your hands together, and rest them in your lap. Notice how your hands feel. Are they heavy or light, warm or cool?”**
7. **“Notice these things about every part of the body we put our flashlight of attention on, starting with your feet.”**
8. **“What about your knees, your legs.”**
9. **“Put your attention on your belly. Breathe in and feel it fill up with air, then breathe out the air.”**
10. **“With your hands clasped in your lap, put your spotlight of attention on your fingertips.”**
11. **“Then your elbows...Your shoulders...Your back...Your neck.”**
12. **“Put your spotlight of attention on your face, your mouth, your eyes, your ears, the top of your head.”**
13. **Allow your group to breathe silently for a few moments.**
14. **“And when you’re ready, open your eyes.”**
15. Invite feedback from the group about their mindful experience. Questions to ask: What is one thing you noticed? Is there one part of your body that you wanted your flashlight of attention to stay on for longer? Did it make you feel more relaxed?

The body scan is a good mindful exercise to do before you go to sleep, before your busy day, or even sports. Being mindful of your body is like telling your body it is important to you – that you’re just checking in, and care about it. It is also a great way to relax.

Other Project Happiness picks:

Three-minute body scan video: <http://elishagoldstein.com/videos/3-minute-body-scan/>

Crash-course on the body scan: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7650123>



Mindful Moments:

Mindful Eating

Lead this “raisin meditation” exercise to encourage mindful eating. This script adapted from mindfulness expert Jon Kabat-Zinn*, who explains, “When we taste with attention, even the simplest foods provide a universe of sensory experience.”

Instructions and script:

1. Read the script below aloud in a slow, gentle voice at a rhythmic pace with many pauses.
2. **“Please get into your ‘mindful bodies’ – being still and quiet, sitting upright, eyes gently closed.”**
3. Distribute at least one raisin to each person. If you don’t like raisins, you can use another fruit or nut. As you begin to distribute the raisins, say: **“Now, imagine you are an alien who has just arrived on planet earth. I am going to give everyone an object. When you get your object, I want you , the alein, to examine it as if you have never seen anything like this strange thing in your entire life.”**
4. **“As you look at the object, notice the shape...the color...the size.”**
5. **“Turn it over in your hand. How does the object feel? Is it hard or soft? How small is it? Does it have an interesting texture?”**
6. **“And now smell the object. Holding it beneath your nose, carefully notice the smell of it with each breath.”**
7. **“Do you want to eat the object? Is it difficult not to just pop it in your mouth?”**
8. **“Now, in super slow motion, move the object closer and closer to your mouth, perhaps noticing your mouth watering with excitement...and finally, place the object inside your mouth.”**
9. **“Become aware of the object on your tongue.”**
10. **“Bite lightly into the object. Does it squish or crunch?”**
11. **“Chew three times. Then stop and describe the flavor of the object to yourself.”**
12. **“Now complete your chewing and swallow the object. As it goes down, see if you can sense it moving down to your stomach.”**
13. **“Sit quietly, breathing, aware of what you are sensing.”**
14. Ask your group for feedback.

When applied to eating, mindfulness gives you the attention necessary to notice how your food effects your body; It can even make it a much more enjoyable experience! Today, as you eat, be aware of what you are eating, how you are eating, and why you are eating.

Other Project Happiness picks:

Mindful Chocolate: <https://www.headspace.com/blog/2015/11/25/we-think-you-should-eat-some-chocolate/>

Get started with mindful eating: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/12/mindful-eating-tips_n_3941528.html

10-minute mindful eating exercise: <http://www.yogajournal.com/food-diet/meditation-mindful-eating/>

*Based on Kabat-Zinn. From Segal, Z.V. Williams, J.M.G., & Teasdale, J.D. (2002). Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Theory.



Mindful Moments:

Mindful Movement

Because Circles is supposed to be bonding, be ready to have fun and laugh at yourselves during this “walking like a turtle” exercise! You might even learn something new about your body as you move through the next 5 minutes as a turtle.

Instructions and script:

1. Read the script below aloud in a slow, gentle voice at a rhythmic pace with many pauses.
2. **“Please get into your ‘mindful body.’”**
3. **“Think of an animal that moves very slowly, like a turtle or an elephant.”**
4. **“You are going to pay very close attention and walk like this animal: slow, steady, and quiet as you can.”**
5. **“Stand up and slowly take a step forward, begin with your heel first, then toes. Slowly, mindfully, put your foot down in stages.”**
6. **“As you take one mindful step at a time, tune in to all your senses. Feel the ground beneath you and notice your connection to the earth.”**
7. **“We are going to walk like this for 5 minutes. Feel free to go outside or wherever your feet may take you.”**
8. **“As you mindfully move about, see what you would see, hear what you would hear, feel what you would feel as though you were moving around in a turtle’s ‘shoes.’ Have fun placing your attention in your movement.”**
9. At the end of the 5 minutes call your group back together.
10. Ask your Circle for feedback on the experience. Questions to ask: Check in with your bodies and see if you feel any different. Why do you think we move slowly when learning to be mindful? How do you think being present with how you move could benefit you in your life? How is movement different than the body scan?

Just like eating mindfully, moving mindfully is something we can be aware of and practice every day. Be more aware of your walking experience throughout the day, how you’re moving, noticing how fast or slowly you are walking, and in what situations.

Other Project Happiness picks:

Go on a mindful walk: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/20/meditation-in-action-walking-meditation_n_3279958.html

Mindful movement by Lois Howland: <https://health.ucsd.edu/specialties/mindfulness/programs/mbsr/Documents/MP3/Mindful-Movement-Meditation.mp3>

Guided mindful movement by Tara Brach: <http://mindfulnessexercises.com/mindful-movement-guided-exercises/>



Mindful Moments:

Mindful Emotions

This “gratitude” exercise supports emotional awareness and life satisfaction. Emotional management is one of the most impactful applications of mindfulness, and this particular exercise will increase the positive emotions in your life.

Instructions and script:

1. Read the script below aloud in a slow, gentle voice at a rhythmic pace with many pauses.
2. **“Today’s mindful moment is meant to give you an easy way to increase the positive emotions in your life. One of the best ways to train your brain to focus on the positive is through practicing the state of appreciation.”**
3. **“Please get into your ‘mindful bodies.’”**
4. **“Take deep breaths in and relax as you breathe out. Breathe in slowly, and breathe out slowly.”**
5. **“We are now going to learn a good way to celebrate the gifts in our life.”**
6. **“Remember a time where you felt really grateful for a special moment in your life...it could be with your family, with friends, with a pet, or in nature.”**
7. **“Let your heart feel that feeling, like the warmth of the sun is shining on it.”**
8. **“Feel that warm sun moving from your heart to all over your body, through your arms and your legs, into your fingers and toes.”**
9. **“Enjoy this feeling of being surrounded, as through your entire body is being wrapped in a warm cozy blanket.”**
10. **“Continue to breathe in and out gently as you feel grateful and happy.”**
11. **“See how long you can keep this feeling for...Now slowly, open your eyes.”**
12. When they’re finished, invited feedback from the group about their mindful experience. Questions to ask: How was this gratitude meditation the same and different from gratitude practices in the past? When might this be a good exercise to do? (i.e. before bedtime, when they’re in a bad mood, etc.)

Being mindful of our thoughts and focusing on something more positive helps us feel better. One of the best ways to focus on the positive is to look at the world through the lens of gratitude and appreciation. Mindfulness of emotions also helps us turn towards all emotions, even the negative ones. They can often be powerful teachers and can help us find relief by being aware of our inner landscape.

Other Project Happiness picks:

Mindful gratitude: <https://www.pickthebrain.com/blog/10-ways-add-mindful-moments-day/>

Be curious about negative thoughts: <http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2014/05/25/10-small-ways-to-cultivate-mindful-moments/>

Difficult emotions: <http://www.mindful.org/how-meditation-helps-with-difficult-emotions/>

Sitting with stress: http://msdssearch.dow.com/PublishedLiteratureDOWCOM/dh_0916/0901b80380916223.pdf?filepath=familyhealth/pdfs/noreg/611-00324.pdf&fromPage=GetDoc



Mindful Moments:

Mindful Relationships

Lead this “secret friend” exercise to encourage empathic connection with others through mindfulness. This can be done any time – in traffic, on a plane, or right before you go to sleep.

Instructions and script:

1. Read the script below aloud in a slow, gentle voice at a rhythmic pace with many pauses.
2. **“Please get into your ‘mindful bodies.’”**
3. **“Put your hand on your heart and think of someone that you see regularly that makes you happy – it could be someone you know or someone you don’t know well, even a family pet.”**
4. **“As you imagine this someone, see them with a big smile on their face, hear them laughing about something funny, and feel their positive energy.”**
5. **“Now, as you keep your hand placed on your heart, let your heart fill up with kindness, until it’s so full it might burst.”**
6. **“Now send all this kindness to this person, allowing it to flow directly from your heart to their heart.”**
7. **“As you let this kindness continue to flow from heart to heart, repeat silently: May you be happy, May you be healthy, May you be peaceful, May you be strong, May your heart be filled with love and kindness.”**
8. **“Sit quietly for a few more moments, as you continue to send these kind thoughts.”**
9. When they’re finished, invite feedback from the group about their mindful experience. Questions to ask: How this made you feel? Consider how it might make you feel the next time you see that person – do you think it will change how you feel about them?

This exercise is sometimes called “heartfulness” or “loving-kindness.” You can practice heartfulness at any time by sending kind thoughts to someone, including sending this kindness to yourself! It’s an instant happiness boost.

Other Project Happiness picks:

Greater Good Science Center’s 15-minute meditation: http://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/loving_kindness_meditation#

Loving-kindness script: <http://mindfulnesshamilton.ca/meditation-scripts>

Loving-kindness to boost compassion to yourself, others, humanity: <http://www.mindful.org/a-loving-kindness-meditation-to-boost-compassion/>



Mindful Moments:

Mindful Seeing

Mindfulness sharpens our sensory acuity, bringing heightened awareness to the present moment and training us to notice details. Awareness is the light, attention is the lens. Lead this “one-pointed focus” exercise to spark mindful seeing.

Instruction and script:

1. Have people find an objective to focus on. A pen or a pencil works, or maybe give them each a leaf or a flower if available. Have them hold it in their hand.
2. Read the script below aloud in a slow, gentle voice at a rhythmic pace with many pauses.
3. **“Please get into your ‘mindful bodies.’”**
4. **“Focus on the object in your hand. Today we are going to practice mindful seeing. Mindful seeing is also called ‘description mode’ because it describes the qualities of something without looking for an explanation for why it is the way it is.”**
5. **“Notice all the different colors in this object. Are these colors bright or dull? Colorful or shades of grey? Pick one of the colors, and notice all the shades of this color in the object and its surroundings.”**
6. **“Notice the texture of the object. Run your fingers over its entire surface. Is it smooth or rough?”**
7. **“Notice the size of the object. Is it bigger than your hand or smaller than your pink finger? Is it wide or thin?”**
8. **“Notice the shape of the object. Is it round or rectangular? 3-dimensional or 2-dimensional? Are the edges sharp or dull?”**
9. **“Finally, I want you to look even deeper at this object for the next for the next 20 seconds. Let thoughts of anything else in your life drop away as you fully concentrate and explore the object with your eyes. Are there any more details about this object that you might not have noticed the first time you looked at it?”**
10. Gather them back after 20 seconds have passed.
11. What did your group think about mindful seeing? Questions to ask: What did you notice as you stared at the object for the 20 seconds? Did you start to notice things you hadn’t seen when you’ve looked at this object in the past?

When you practice noticing the details of the world around you with all your senses, it can have a big impact on your life. The more you practice, the sharper your senses become and the more joy you begin to find in the details of your experiences.

Other Project Happiness picks:

Candle meditation (and 8 others): <http://www.spring.org.uk/2014/04/mindfulness-meditation-8-quick-exercises-that-easily-fit-into-your-day.php>



Mindful Moments: Mindful Challenge

Make this mindful moment a challenge to emphasize that mindfulness is a skill that can be learned. Like all skills, mindfulness requires a regular practice, even outside of Circles!

Instructions and script:

1. Read the script below aloud in a slow, gentle voice at a rhythmic pace with many pauses.
2. **“Please get into your ‘mindful bodies.’”**
3. **“You may notice that it’s growing easier to get into your mindful body now that we’ve had a chance to practice it for the past 8 mindful moments.”**
4. **“Mindfulness is a skill, the more you practice it the better you get at it. Today, in this mindful moment we’re going to test our mindfulness.”**
5. **“During this first mindful moment, we sat and breathed for one minute. Today we are going to do two minutes of silent breathing.”**
6. **“Starting now, begin to breathe in...and out...and in...and out...”**
7. **“I will let you know when two minutes have passed.”**
8. **After two minutes have passed, say, “And when you’re ready, please gently open your eyes.”**
9. Invite feedback from the group about this mindful experience. Questions to ask:
How was this different from the first time you tried mindful breathing during the first mindful moment? In what areas of your life have you been using mindfulness?
How does living mindfully make you feel?

Other Project Happiness picks:

Quick, guided mindful arrival: <https://www.tarabrach.com/brief-meditation-1-minute/>

General guided meditations in Spanish and English: <http://marc.ucla.edu/body.cfm?id=22>