

Mindfulness to Go

Mindfulness to Go: 100 Practices to Bring to Your Groups or Practice on Your Own

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Mindfulness Practice for Adults in Dialectical Behavioral Therapy
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1. Count beans or paperclips into a small cup with one hand and with the other write your name. Do this at the same time. Do the writing of your name with the hand that you usually don't write with. (Nice exercise to demonstrate one mindfulness and effectiveness...can you really multi-task and be effective?) from Lynn Chauvin-Bezinque ...DBT listserve
2. Breathe in one color and breathe out another color. (Based on PemaChodron's Tonglin practice) Pick a color that represents the current struggle and work to change the struggle into another form (color).
3. Read the quote:

Do you have the patience to wait
Til your mud settles and the water is clear?
Can you remain unmoving
Til the right action arises by itself? –Lao Tzu

And then inhale and exhale with the following phrases said out loud or to yourself:

Breathing in: Waiting Patiently
Breathing out: My Mind Settles
Breathing in: Remaining still
Breathing out: Wise mind arises

4. Breathing: (This could be one exercise or four, the choice is yours)

Breathe in and out from one's stomach. Focus awareness and energy to movement of stomach as you inhale and exhale. (put your hand on your belly while you do this) Follow your breath.

Breathe in 1, 2, and 3 and breathe out 4, 5, and 6
Breathe in COMFORT and breathe out TENSION

Breathe in a positive emotion and breathe out a negative emotion.

(If this is all one exercise, leader may want to guide throughout practice and use the singing bowl to signify next phase....)

5. Interactive exercise: ZIP ZAP ZOP One group member says ZIP, then points to another who says ZAP and then to another who says ZOP...speed it up and slow it down...

6. Pick an object...from inside the room or outside...and observe and describe...as a group....notice all there is to notice....this exercise also works well if each group member is given the same item to observe and describe....have a two minute time of silence in which group members observe, then end the silence and have individuals "PUT WORDS On" their experience...what they noticed about the object....in the instructions you might also encourage observation with each of the five senses...

7. Do jumping jacks as a group (Modify this by doing jumping jacks and chanting one word, an example might be "Jump" or "Happy"; notice if the jumping jack experience changes if chant "Sit" or "Sad"

8. Teach and practice one yoga pose...encourage the scanning of one's bodily sensations while trying the pose. Pay particular attention to changes in sensation as the pose is discovered or held.

9. Play a recording of a song with or without lyrics....have group members notice their experience while listening...could focus on bodily sensations, or emotions, or both...to mix it up you might instruct them to pay particular attention to any sensation in their thumb, for ex. Or their toe....remember, mindfulness is about learning how to direct attention, turn one's mind....etc.

10. Do a mindful eating exercise...pick one or two food items and have the group experience mindful eating..notice smell, texture, taste, etc....(check on food allergies in advance...)

11. Have each person carefully observe a piece of fruit and then put the fruit together in a bowl.....see if each person can "recognize" their original fruit

12. Take number 11 one step further. Use lemons and then make lemonade as a group. Then drink the lemonade and notice the experience.

13. Guided Imagery: Ask each group member to imagine walking into a clearing. what does the clearing look like, are there trees? How tall are they? What else is there? Wildlife? What do you hear? What do you see? What do you smell?

14. Breathe in: Breathe Out:

Burned Out ~~~~~~ Flower Fresh

Weak, Shaky ~~~~~ Mountain Solid
Flustered, Distorted ~~~~ Still Water Reflecting
Trapped Controlled ~~~~~ Space Free

15. In a dark room, have one person use a flashlight to highlight an object...have the group take the time to use full attention on each object that they are guided to...encourage individuals to gently “push aside” other objects that enter their attention
 16. Put objects in a paper bag. Have each group member put their hand in the bag and try to identify objects. Put the names of objects on paper with no identifying information and then, after everyone has had a chance, read all the pieces of paper and see how many of the objects were identified correctly...
 17. Toss a soft ball to a group member with the instructions to begin to play catch...then add another ball, and then another....
 18. Stand in a circle, pass a small ball of yarn around by unraveling it....pass it to each group member, and then once it’s unraveled, wind it up by passing it around again....
 19. Blow bubbles and watch them. Follow each one until they pop.
 20. Keep a balloon in the air.
 21. Draw a mandala....make a circle and color how you feel inside the lines of the circle. (#20-30 compiled by Maine Medical Center Adolescent DBT)
 22. Rub your upper lip...notice how long you feel a sensation.
 23. Pick a word you like the sound of and say it when it’s your turn. (“splash, gobble, purple”)
 24. Play emotion charades....
 25. Add food coloring to water...watch it spread....put dish soap in first.
 26. Push your hands together and then pull them apart. Focus on the sensation.
 27. Make a list of affirmations for the group. Then have each person pick one that they believe they can practice saying to themselves during the week. Carefully write the affirmation on an index card or a post it note and decorate. Practice compassion while writing the affirmation for yourself.
 28. Create lavender sachets. Put loose lavender in tea bags that are ready for filling. Attach a tag to the tea bag with the words, JUST BREATHE.
 29. Draw an intricate design on an index card. Fill the entire card up with color. Mindfully color. Place the index card in an appointment book or a notebook as a reminder to practice Participation. On the back side of the index card, write the word Participate. Or nudge yourself with a question, “WHERE AM I?”
- Focus on an object and observe first; then as group practice, put words to the

experience....focus on: (list from Rosie Roy)

Rocks, shells, coins, plants, flowers, leaves, candles, pictures, posters, jewelry, hands, feet, toes, fingers, feather, people, pets, sports equipment, clouds, the blue sky, grey sky (any color sky), stars, animals.....

Observation can be directed to one or more of the five senses:

30. Vision: Look out the window, watch what passes by.
31. Vision: Look at a painting or picture in a room.
32. Vision: Close your eyes, notice what you see when your eyes are closed.
33. Vision: Look at your palm or the back of your hand.
34. Vision: Pick one object in the room and focus on it.
35. Hearing: Listen to a piece of music.
36. Hearing: Listen to the birds.
37. Hearing: Listen to the wind.
38. Hearing: Listen to voices in a crowded room.
39. Hearing: Close your eyes and notice what you hear.
40. Touch: Feel a piece of fabric (try different textures...)
41. Touch: Feel the sensation of ICE, put an ice cube in cup and then spend time pouring the ice cube into the center of your palm.
42. Touch: Let sand pour through your fingers. Try rice.
43. Touch: Play with finger paint.
44. Touch: Pet your dog, cat, lizard, bird...or whatever. (could be a live animal or a special stuffed animal)
45. Taste: try a funky new flavored drink.
46. Taste: try different kinds of chocolate.
47. Taste: gum (notice changes in flavor when chewing or not)
48. Taste: an especially good salad that you've prepared
49. Taste: new teas or coffees.
50. Smell: a new recipe you've made while it cooks.(try making homemade bread)
51. Smell different kinds of incense, lit or not.
52. Smell the air on a particularly beautiful spring/summer/autumn/winter day or on a very grey or cold or rainy or dark day.
53. Smell different kinds of metal. Copper, silver, gold, bronze....is there a difference?
54. Smell: try a new food and try to focus on the smell.
55. Blow bubbles alone or in a group.
56. Focus on one body part sitting in the chair, or standing, or moving. Notice

what you notice.

57. Play balloon volley ball in a group. Add more balloons. And then more. And then more.

58. Read a story to the group. Direct their attention to words they like and ask them to notice them, or direct their attention to objects, smells, colors, phrases.

59. Write prayers on post-it notes and share with the group. Try to write prayers asking for strength or ability to get through a situation, not a particular outcome.

60. Write prayers on a recipe card.

61. Write a recipe for a balanced life individually or as a group.

62. As a group leader use the bell to signal stopping points or changes. For the practice have the group stand on one foot.....let time pass, ring bell, tell group to get down on the floor and sit on their bottoms, ring bell, tell the group to continue sitting but try to spin on the floor on their bottoms...when you begin to hear giggles, ring the bell, tell everyone to stand up and use one hand to tap their heads and one to rub their belly.....keep going or stop. (excellent for practicing being non-judgmental)

63. Give everyone a photograph in the group. ASK them to copy it with art supplies that you've placed on the table in front of them...paints, crayons, pencils, markers...give lots of time...ring the bell 10 minutes into the exercise and take the photo away, but let them continue to create.....ask group members to notice what their thoughts are....

64. Color with crayons a picture in a kids coloring book.

65. Color with colored pencils a design that is more adult-like.

66. Do both 64 and 65 and compare experience of any emotions that may or may not have emerged.

67. Stand in a circle with a ball of yarn. Unwind the yarn by passing it around. Rewind. Stay silent. Try a variation...keep eyes closed and know that a ball of yarn will be given to you.

68. Have each group member draw on a piece of paper and pass the drawing to the next person, etc. end when the drawing has returned to the first person. What did you notice? What were the results?

69. Have each group member write a sentence or a story and then pass it around until you return to the beginning. How did you originally want the story to go and how did it turn out...did you have assumptions about how it would go? What were they?

70. Walk outside in a state of quiet mindfulness. Return with one object from the natural world. Gather in a circle; leader will instruct each person to put their

object on the floor in the center....allow for time for each person to carefully choose where their object is placed.....after all the objects are placed,

Ask: Why that object?

Ask: Why that placement?

Stay in the circle. Mindfully take a couple of steps back. What is this like? Stepping back...staying in the circle.

Keep the questions very present oriented...add more.

Notice what happens.

71. Practice shifting attention: Look at a flower, then the window, etc. Use a bell to signal shifts.

72. Break into small 2-3 person groups. Have one person open their hands and another person put a book in one hand and a pencil/pen in the other. The individuals without the book and the pencil watch for facial expressions the person is instructed to notice the weight of the lighter object...see if you can tell that the person is trying to direct their attention where it might not automatically be taken. Take turns. Watch for judgments.

73. Do sensory Counting: Leader gives instructions as follows to whole group or to individual. If in a group, participants are asked to say the words silently to themselves:

Identify One item in the room that you can see.

Identify One sound you can hear.

Identify One sensation you can feel with your skin.

Identify Two.....etc, etc. try to go to three for the first round...higher later on...

This requires joint attention...i.e. the individual is attached to listening for your instructions as well as coming up with items to notice and identify...also, works on remembering....

74. Notice what thoughts come up in your head while sitting and gazing at one spot, or with your eyes closed. When a thought, sensation, image, etc. comes up, notice it and label it.....Negative, Positive, Neutral. You're not judging the thought that comes up but rather noticing it's charge...if it comes up again, as often thoughts do, try to put it in a different category...and inquire...does it fit? What happens to it?

75. Making contact with the present:....Notice how a piece of paper feels in your hands..Feel its surface, its edges....Notice how your body feels....feel your muscles in your body...notice your breathing....notice thoughts without judgement...notice

the room you're in. Notice the sounds you hear. Return your focus to the paper....are you present?

76. Draw or paint a soothing, comforting place on a piece of paper that can be hung up somewhere or pulled out of a notebook, appointment book etc...to take with you as a reminder....

77. The Name Game...go around the room and say the name of a famous person....only there's a hitch...Say the name...say it is ABE LINCOLN, the next person says a name that starts with the first letter of the previous last name...i.e. Larry King. If both first and last names start with the same letter....Sharon stone, for ex....then you reverse direction in the circle.

78. Making rain...(a personal favorite)...Pick a leader.

Divide the group into several groups.

Everyone follows the instructions of the leader and otherwise is silent.

The actions/sounds in order are:

1. rub hands together
2. snap fingers
3. rap on table/desk. (or stamp feet)
4. snap fingers
5. rub hands together.

The leader goes from group to group, rubbing hands together and adding each group one at a time until all are doing the same action/noise. The leader continues going around the room, switching the groups one at a time to the second action...snapping fingers... leader continues around the room switching one at a time to the third sound, rapping on the table...then back to snapping fingers, then back to rubbing hands together...then back to silence....Sounds like a rainstorm....make one happen in your neighborhood.

79. Mindful eating turns a corner. Put a grape in your mouth. Keep it there as long as possible. Bite into the grape. What's it like being the grape?

80. Two truths and a lie. Each person in the group tells three things about themselves, one of which is a lie. Others try to figure out which one is the lie and use words to convey why they thought it was a lie....(pushes observation skills as well as Participating...)

81. Saying numbers/alphabet..One person starts with 1 or A...and then others in the room follow (can't go in order)...if two people speak at the same time, start over.

82. Do row rowrow your boat in rounds in the group....

Ask the group afterwards to rate emotions: anxiety, happiness, irritation....related to the exercise.

83. Put a feather on your hand. With your breath, make the feather flutter, but just barely...change your breath...what happens to your feather?

84. Try to write or tell about a memory and use only: colors, textures, taste, smells, and the names of animals.

85. Create your own tea blend after smelling two or three different "loose" teas....What's it like.....

86. Sit and breathe. When you are sitting, sit as though you are someone who knows what they are doing.

87. Spend your time contemplating something you've learned this week or something you would like to learn....where did your idea, thought, come from?

88. Do a word game: i.e. take a phrase: Happy Summer, for example, and have the group make words from the letter..individually or as a group

89. Make paper snowflakes...there are lots of directions on-line...and be especially attuned to judgmental comments....

90. Do an origami project... (Paper folding) give good instructions and make certain you can do the project yourself...some origami instructions I find are confusing....practice mindful paper folding.

91. Do a mirroring exercise...in pairs...one person moves and the other moves too....

92. Make stress balls...with balloons. Could put flour, sand or rice in the balloons, use a funnel. Work in small groups and help each other. Notice what it feels like to experience the flour, rice or sand....and then what the sense is once it is in the balloon. When squeezing the stress ball, count, name colors; think about something peaceful...etc...use the bell to begin the "squeeze" and then the bell to end the "squeeze" before giving the next instruction.

93. Do a mandala of the present moment. Predraw a circle and instruct group to represent their present moment in the circle. Have art supplies available....and offer extra circles. These are a great at home exercise that adults and kids enjoy.

94. Sit willfully. First have the discussion about willfulness....and how it feels in the body...sit willfully and then let go into willfulness...what happens, what do you notice.

95. guided imagery: think of a comforting, happy place.....what's there...what does it smell like, is anyone around, what is the sensation as the mind approaches this place....what's it like to leave.

96. From loving kindness meditation...chant the words in the group out loud:

“May I be safe, may I be safe and protected from inner and outer harm.

May I be happy and peaceful

May I be happy and free from fear and anxiety, may I be happy

May I be healthy and strong, may I be healthy and strong of body

And may I joyfully care for myself in this life.” For the full experience of loving kindness or “Metta”, you might want to turn to Sharon Salzberg, “The Force of Kindness—change your life with love and compassion” Sounds True, Inc., Boulder, CO (2005)

97. Play Simon Says....pick a leader and the leader says, Simon Says, for example, “lift one foot.” (group lifts foot) If the leader gives an instruction but doesn’t say SIMON Says and a group member follows the instruction, she or he is out...the last person standing becomes the leader.

98. Write in the voice of someone else. (a character in a movie, a family member, etc... and write about a perfect day....) What did you learn about the person, and about yourself as you wrote?

99. Make a comic strip...of you...an image before DBT, during DBT, and what it’ll be like after you’ve practiced skills. (leader...hand out a sheet of paper with three squares that are connected for participant to draw in)

TADA

100. MINDFULLY walk...in a neighborhood, down a path, around your building, in your school....notice all there is to notice.

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