

## Two Mindfulness Practices

Here is a simple way to bring mindful awareness to your present moment experience. First arrange yourself so you are sitting in a comfortable position.

Begin by softening your gaze, keeping your eyes open slightly but without looking at things. Notice sounds. Tune into the sounds you hear around you. Listening with a gentle focus of attention that is not trying to accomplish anything. Just listening. Just noticing whatever sounds you hear. Notice sounds that seem to be far away... outside the room where you are sitting. Notice sounds that are closer, inside the room, maybe even inside your body.

As you are listening this way to sounds, without any preferences or effort, you might notice your own breathing. Let your attention shift to noticing the flow of your own breath into and out of your body. Again, don't try to make anything happen... simply notice this movement of breath. Your breathing might begin to change somehow on its own... perhaps the rhythm of your breathing begins to change... just notice this. Feel the sensation of breath in your nostrils, your throat, your chest and torso... feel the movement that happens in your body as you are breathing. Just continue for a few breaths to be aware of your experience of breathing.

As you are noticing sounds, or your own breathing, you might be aware of thoughts that come to mind, thoughts about the sounds, or about the breathing. Let your attention become curious about the thoughts that arise... almost as if you begin to look for and at each thought that comes. Let the thoughts come and go and simply witness each one, You might continue to notice sounds, to notice your breathing or other body sensations, even feelings. Simply invite into your mindful awareness whatever shows up.

Another practice of mindfulness that you can do alone or in pairs or small groups is called Naming. This involves first of all silently naming whatever you are noticing about your present experience using a gerund... *sighing, inhaling, thinking, listening, shifting, swallowing, remembering, wondering, smiling, enjoying, itching, fantasizing*... Just this way, naming what is happening in your experience as you witness it. Or use an adjective from time to time such as *curious, bored, distracted, restless, uncomfortable, worried, calm, thoughtful*... to name your general experience in the moment or some part of you that shows up.

After some time of witnessing and naming silently your present experience, continue this naming but begin to do it softly but audibly ...

If you have a partner for this practice, one person can be a silent witness for the person in mindfulness who is silently or audibly naming her own experience. After a couple of minutes, switch roles. Finally discuss how this experience was for you... what effect did it seem to have on your experience for each of you, and for your experience of your relationship?