

Mindfulness Count Down

When the world around us feels out of control, centering ourselves in self-awareness is critically important to slow things down. One way of doing so is to isolate one sense at a time and pay attention to whatever comes into our awareness through that sense. The key is not to over-analyze any particular sense, but just to be mindful of whatever sensation you experience at the present moment.

Read through this mindfulness exercise to be sure that you understand it. Then, take a deep breath and work through the steps below focusing on each sense. It only takes a few minutes. You can do this exercise just about anywhere you may be feeling increased anxiety – sitting in class before a test, at the office, in the privacy of your own room or in the parking lot before work.

To begin, sit quietly and take two big deep breaths. If desired, you can do this exercise with your eyes closed.

Next, bring to mind **five** things that you recall **seeing** in whatever space you currently find yourself. For example, in your room, you may bring to mind your bed, dresser, a jacket hanging over the chair, a plant, etc. Notice whatever you recall – the shape of the objects, the color, the number of objects, whatever it may be. Even with your eyes closed, you may sense some light. Be aware of it. There might be sensations of color, light or dark shades, of brightness.

Then, bring to mind **four** things that you sense yourself **touching** at that moment. This may include clothing material on your body, your feet on the floor, a breeze in the room, etc. Pay attention to whatever sense of contact or touch comes into awareness – the touch of the fan breeze, your body in contact with the floor, your clothes against your skin. You might be aware of temperature or the texture of different surfaces that you are in contact with. Notice the sensation of where your hands meet something solid like the fabric of your clothes or the surface of your desk. Notice the pressure between your feet and the floor. Try feeling the textures that you noticed by sight a moment ago.

Then, bring to mind **three** things that you can **hear** right now, such as your breathing, an air conditioner or heater, outside voices, an emergency siren in the distance, a neighbor's dog, etc. Open yourself up to all the sounds around you. You might notice the unique quality of different sounds. You might even hear sounds from within your body. Begin to relax by just noticing all of the sounds around you.

Then, bring to mind **two** things that you can **smell** right now and bring them to your awareness. You might smell something specific or something more neutral. Shift your concentration to noticing the smells of your environment.

Finally, bring to mind **one** thing that you can **taste** right now. Sense the taste within your mouth. You might sense sweetness or bitterness or it could even be a neutral taste. Notice your tongue in your mouth, your saliva, and your breath as you exhale. Run your tongue over your teeth and cheeks and be aware of what you notice.

To conclude the exercise, take two deep breaths and exhale very slowly. Softly open your eyes and note how you are feeling.