

#05



# Introducing Mindfulness

Healing from child sexual abuse involves the practice of Mindfulness, which is purposefully paying attention with kindness and curiosity to the present moment.



Each Saprea Support Group meeting begins with 'Group Leader A' reading the script while participants follow along. The script will be the same for every group meeting. **To find the script, visit [saprea.org/support-groups](https://saprea.org/support-groups).** Below are the additional meeting materials for this course.



To watch the intro video for this lesson, scan the QR code or go to <https://vimeo.com/showcase/10293739>.

## Group Activity

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### WALKING WITH AWARENESS

Walking can be a powerful part of your healing journey. And when you incorporate the elements of Mindfulness into your walking, it becomes even more impactful on your physical, mental, and emotional health. Taking a walk can be healing as it strengthens the connection between your brain and body. **The rhythm of your steps can help to regulate your emotions as the bilateral movement engages both hemispheres of the brain.** This consistent rhythm can provide a calming effect that helps to reduce levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Walking also gives you the chance to quiet any distressing thoughts about the past or future by focusing only on the present—the setting around you, the senses you experience on your walk, and the movement of your body.

### ACTIVITY STEPS

- 01** Begin by standing up, taking a few deep breaths, and noticing how you feel. Observe the weight of your feet on the ground and the sensations in your feet.
- 02** Next, take the next 5–7 minutes to go on a walk. During your walk, try one of the activities below. These activities are not intended to be done at the same time. You may decide to try one and then move to another, or you may decide to stick with the same activity throughout.

### Notice your surroundings.

Apply Mindfulness by directing your attention to your sensory experience. What do you see, hear, smell, or feel? As you notice your mind wander, gently guide it back to the present and the details around you.

### Carry a pen and paper.

Pause to take notes of what you see, hear, or discover on your walk. You might even record a single word, like a color or a name.

### Try walking outside.

If the weather, environment, and venue allow, try walking outside, even for a few seconds. This change in environment can help to recharge your senses.

### Focus on your steps.

Rather than observing the details of your environment, you may decide to direct your attention to the rhythm of your steps and the feel of your feet hitting the ground.

### Practice breathing techniques.

Notice your breathing as you walk, perhaps even timing your breaths to the rhythm of your steps. You could also imagine inhaling comforting thoughts or emotions and exhaling tension and distress.

### Use positive affirmations.

Combining positive statements with physical movement helps strengthen the communication between your cortex and the messages it sends to your body. Try saying encouraging things while you walk, such as "I am strong," "I am loveable," "I am grateful for . . ." Repeat the affirmation as you walk.

**03** When you return from your walk, take a moment to notice any thoughts, emotions, or physical sensations you are experiencing. Are there any differences between how you feel now and how you felt before the walk? What are they?

# Grounding Exercise

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## PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) is based on the practice of intentionally contracting and relaxing the different muscle groups of the body. Not only does this exercise help reduce stress, anxiety, and muscle tension, but it can help draw your attention to the different parts of your body and all the ways it serves you. So let's begin.

### Activity Steps

- ◆ Settle into a comfortable position, sitting or lying down.
- ◆ Soften your gaze or close your eyes.
- ◆ Point the toes of your right foot toward your face and then away. Tense the thigh and calf muscles of your right leg. *Hold . . . relax.*
- ◆ Point the toes of your left foot toward your face and then away. Tense the thigh and calf muscles of your left leg. *Hold . . . relax.*
- ◆ Tense both legs. *Hold . . . relax.*
- ◆ Squeeze your right hand into a fist, tense your right arm, and bring your forearm toward your body. *Hold . . . relax.*
- ◆ Squeeze your left hand into a fist, tense your left arm, and bring your forearm toward your body. *Hold . . . relax.*
- ◆ Squeeze both hands into fists, tense both arms, and bring your forearms towards your body. *Hold . . . relax.*
- ◆ Raise both shoulders. *Hold . . . relax.*
- ◆ Select another muscle or muscle group of your choosing. *Hold . . . relax.*
- ◆ If you are able, tense your entire body. *Hold . . . relax.*
- ◆ After you have finished tensing and relaxing, take a moment to notice what your body feels like. Think back to a specific part of the body you tensed and relaxed and note how that muscle or muscle group has helped you today. (For example, "My calves helped me get up the stairs this morning.") continuing to calm you.

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### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

If you are interested in learning more, we invite you to explore the following articles in the Online Healing Resources section of our website at [saprea.org](https://saprea.org).

- **MINDFULNESS AND ITS ROLE IN HEALING FROM CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**
- **GROUNDING TECHNIQUES**
- **MOVEMENT**

### NEXT TOPIC:

#06



### NEUROPLASTICITY AND HEALING

Whatever trauma you've endured as a survivor, healing is possible due to your brain's incredible ability to adapt and create new pathways. This process is called neuroplasticity.