



Practicing Mindfulness

As we practice Mindfulness, we can more easily feel connected to the present, observe our experiences without judgment, and cope with trauma symptoms like dissociation and triggers.



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.** 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



Disclaimer: While practicing meditation, there's a chance you might experience dissociation and/or triggers. If this occurs, we encourage you to pause the meditation and redirect your attention to your breath or to a detail in your present environment (the color of a lamp, the sound of a fan, the feel of the carpet beneath your feet, etc.). From there, reassess if you'd like to continue the activity or try something else that may better meet your needs right now.

MEDITATION

Meditation is an especially powerful Mindfulness technique; **it includes any time we focus our attention intentionally and with purpose.** Each time we practice directing our attention in this manner, we increase our ability to create new neural pathways in the brain and to interrupt habitual thought patterns that are unwanted or intrusive by refocusing on our experience in the present.

Sometimes this type of focus can feel difficult, especially when we have a lot on our minds. Don't get discouraged if you struggle to maintain your focus for lengthy periods of time, especially if you are just starting to explore mindful practices. **Remember, it's natural for the mind to wander, which is why a key part of Mindfulness and grounding is *learning* to redirect your attention back to the present, gently and without judgment.**

Today we will try a simple meditation that centers around whatever anchor you choose.

If your mind wanders during this meditation, respond by gently guiding your attention back to your anchor with curiosity and self-compassion. As you do, you are strengthening the communication between the different parts of your brain by teaching your mind how to respond to your direction.

ACTIVITY STEPS

- 01** Choose an anchor on which you'll focus for the next 3–5 minutes, such as a word, image, quote, object, or sensory detail. You can even choose your own breath.
- 02** Relax and, with eyes closed or opened with a soft gaze, focus on the word(s), image, object, or other detail you've selected as your anchor.
- 03** Breathe slowly and fully. Find the speed that feels most comfortable to you.
- 04** As your mind wanders, notice what your mind is interested in examining, and then bring it back to your anchor. Be patient with yourself, refocus, and keep going.
- 05** After the 3–5 minutes is up, refocus your gaze and allow yourself a moment to reflect on how you felt during the activity. Remind yourself that it's okay your mind wandered and will continue to wander in future meditations. Remember that meditation is not about clearing your head but about guiding your attention where you'd like it to go and gently redirecting it with compassion and curiosity whenever it wanders.
- 06** Finally, reflect on your anchor. If you did this activity again, would you focus on the same anchor? Or would you like to try something else? If so, what are some other ideas you have for anchors in the future?

Grounding Exercise

PACED BREATHING

Think of your breath as an anchor that holds you to the present. Your breathing serves you right now, in this moment. You cannot take breaths for the past or for the future—only for your present needs.

So let's begin.

ACTIVITY STEPS

- 01** Take a moment to get comfortable. Close your eyes or soften your gaze.
- 02** Rest a hand on your chest or stomach if it helps you feel calm.
- 03** Focus on the image of a breathing heart, one that swells with each inhale and compresses with each exhale.
- 04** Inhale through your nose, envisioning your heart expanding. Count four heartbeats. 1, 2, 3, 4.
- 05** Hold your breath, counting two heartbeats. 1, 2.
- 06** Exhale through your nose, envisioning your heart compressing. Count six heartbeats. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. The key is to try making the exhale longer than the inhale to help calm the body.
- 07** Repeat this for 2–5 minutes, or if you are using the exercise to help manage a trigger, repeat these steps as many times as necessary to feel grounded in the present moment. You may also choose to place both hands over your heart as you envision it expanding and contracting. As your heartbeats slow, your breathing will get deeper, continuing to calm you.

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.

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

NEXT TOPIC:

#09



INTRODUCING ASPIRATION

Healing from child sexual abuse involves the practice of Aspiration, which is directing your thoughts and actions toward healing.