

**BREATH AS EVER PRESENT FRIEND**

"Your body knows how to breathe." (Vidyamala Burch)

1. Your breath is always there. It can be used as a gentle anchor at any time.
2. Breathe soothing, nourishing, kindly breath into parts of your body where you feel pain or tension.
3. Use imagery of the ocean. The swell of the waves in the sea. The swell of the breath in the body.
4. Become aware of the breath in the back of the body. What do you notice?
5. Count breaths. Breathe in, breathe out 1. Breathe in, breathe out, 2... When you lose track, simply note where your awareness is and start again.

**MINI MINDFUL MOMENTS**

"Pause to tune your instrument." (Jon Kabat-Zinn)

1. Drop in. Notice any tension in your body and allow it to soften with the breath.
2. Pause. Breathe. Ground feet. Breathe. Soften resistance. Breathe. Enjoy the moment.
3. Three minute breathing space.
4. Habit releasers - watch the sky, watch a kettle boil, make peace with gravity, perform a random act of kindness.
5. Make one small mindful movement.
6. Take a mindful moment before entering a difficult situation, before answering the phone, sending an email, opening a door, or moving onto your next task.
7. Set reminders for moments of mindfulness - hourly to establish a routine, or at random to avoid it becoming predictable and stale. Use a mindfulness bell app.

**CREATE A MINDFUL RHYTHM TO YOUR DAY**

"Mindfulness is being awake to your life as it happens, with a quality of emotional engagement of brightness and warmth." (Vidyamala Burch)

1. Take a break before you need it.
2. Use a timer and diary to pace your day, enabling yourself to carry out activities without increasing stress or symptoms. Try out different charts and visual aids.
3. Be imaginative and creative when approaching pacing, allowing fluidity and flexibility to bring a sense of ease.
4. Consider which activities sustain you and which activities drain you. Can you include more sustainers and fewer drainers in your day? How can you approach necessary drainers to minimise their effects?
5. Choose restorative, active resting activities rather than filling the time on autopilot, reaching for your iPad or the TV remote. The body scan is ideal at this time.
6. Move gently with the breath. Bring a lightness of touch and attitude to your everyday movements.
7. Which should/ought to/must can you let yourself off?
8. Is the doing mode creeping in?
9. Make compassionate and wise choices with clear intentions, aligning your values, aspirations and abilities.

## CREATE A LARGER CONTAINER OF AWARENESS

"The little things? The little moments? They aren't little." (Jon Kabat-Zinn)

1. Mindfulness is the middle ground between blocking (suppression) and drowning (over-identification). If you're blocking, open out awareness. If you're drowning, focus in awareness.
2. Remember it's human nature to cling to the pleasant and push away the unpleasant, but this limits our experience of life and creates resistance and tension.
3. Allow experiences to come to you and enter your awareness whilst remaining grounded, rather than actively seeking out the pleasant or rejecting the unpleasant.
4. Take a few moments to listen to the sounds around you. Notice any clinging or resistance, or if the mind starts creating stories about what you hear. You can do this with each of the senses.
5. Remember the 'treasure of pleasure'. No matter what pain you're experiencing, there are always pleasant experiences to notice. They can be as simple as the feeling of the sun warming your face or seeing a loved one smile. You can also find pleasure in neutral, ordinary experiences. Write a list. Allow those moments to seep in.
6. Rest back in what is there.

## KINDNESS, COMPASSION, CONNECTION, CHOICE

"Mindfulness and compassion training - performing neurosurgery on yourself." (Vidyamala Burch)

1. Accept the things you can't change and change the things you can change.
2. Respond, rather than react.
3. Remember thoughts are not necessarily facts. Can you look *at* them rather than *from* them?
4. Ask yourself, "how can I make this day better for me? How can I best help myself? What do I need? Which part of my suffering is secondary?"
5. Resistance comes from a wise place, trying to protect you. Can you befriend it, thank it for looking out for you and allow it to soften and let go? What emerges when you simply let things be?
6. Is your self-talk kind? Are your actions kind? Are you treating yourself as you would a loved one?
7. Remember the similarities between all humans. The details of our stories are different, but we all have the same basic desires, needs and tendencies. "We're all just human beings doing our best to get by." (Paul Gilbert) The whole world is breathing.
8. It's okay to say, "this hurts" "this is hard".
9. "I give myself permission to..."

## PRACTICES

"Mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally." (Jon Kabat-Zinn)

Body scan  
Breathing anchor  
Kindly awareness to self and others (connection)  
Treasure of pleasure  
3 minute breathing space  
Mindful movement  
Mountain meditation  
Lake meditation  
Soften Allow Feel Expand  
Recognise Allow Investigate Non-identification  
Stop Take a breath Observe Perceive  
Loving kindness phrases - May I/you/we be well/happy/safe/live with peace and ease of being.

## BOOKS AND POETRY

Books and poems are a constant source of wisdom to me and inform many of the ideas and practices above. Here are just a few -

'Living Well with Pain and Illness' by Vidyamala Burch  
'Mindfulness for Health' by Vidyamala Burch and Danny Penman  
'Full Catastrophe Living' by Jon Kabat-Zinn  
'The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion' by Christopher Germer  
'The Little Mindfulness Workbook' by Gary Hennessey  
  
'Love after Love' by Derek Walcott  
'Birdwings' by Rumi  
'Wild Geese' by Mary Oliver  
'Kindness' by Naomi Shihab