



READING BLUE COAT

When you do any mindfulness exercise, the 3 key steps are:

Notice – when your mind wanders, which is just what minds do, simply notice where your thoughts have drifted to.

Be aware and accept – notice and be aware of emotions you are feeling or sensations in your body. Try to observe and accept these feelings with friendly curiosity and without judgement.

Be kind to yourself – remember that mindfulness is difficult to do and our minds will always wander. Try not to be critical of yourself. When you notice your mind wandering, you can just gently bring yourself back to the exercise.

Try these 4 mindfulness exercises

The Name Game:

Go outside, look around you and name three things you can hear, then two things you can see, and finally one sensation that you feel. Now repeat the exercise and notice whether your observations have changed.

Deep breathing exercise

The quality of our breathing tells us a lot about our state of mind. If we are feeling a bit anxious, our breath may feel short or constrained.

One simple way to relieve stress is to practice deep breathing through the diaphragm. Taking long, deep breaths when feeling cluttered or distracted begins to relax the nervous system and draws the attention to the present moment, which in turn promotes a feeling of intimacy with the body.

If you're new to deep breathing exercises, try the four count method. Breathe in for four seconds, then breathe out for four seconds. Repeat this five times.

Fruit challenge

Eat a piece of fruit (something small like a strawberry or grape is good) as slowly as possible. To begin, aim for 30 seconds to a minute. Notice the taste, the texture, any scent.



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Gratitude

Before you go to bed at night, write five things that make you feel grateful.

Gratitude lists is a really useful way to ground yourself in difficult times because they help you focus on what is working. The trick is to get specific. So instead of just writing down 'I am grateful for family,' try: 'I am grateful for the time I had to talk to my mum, dad and sister when we were out walking'.