BEGINNING MINDFULNESS MEDITATION INSTRUCTIONS

Sitting Practice Instructions (5-10 minutes)

Sitting practice involves three components: Posture, Focus on the Breath, and Labeling Thoughts. The purpose of sitting practice is to slowly cultivate a gentle and observing mind, without judging or evaluating.

Posture

- Sit on a cushion or chair, with your body in a relaxed and upright position. Feel "grounded" and stable as you sit.
- If you are sitting on a cushion, cross your legs at the ankles. If you are sitting on a chair, sit to the front of the chair with your feet relaxed, touching the floor. Relax your arms and place your palms (face down) loosely on your thighs, just above the knees.
- Your back is straight yet relaxed.
- Your head is resting on top of your spine.
- Your chin is tilted slightly downwards.
- Your eyes are open and your gaze is soft and relaxed, about 4 to 6 feet in front of you.
- Feel relaxed and grounded as you sit in this posture. Be there. This posture invites wakefulness and a sense of dignity and self-respect.

Focus on Breath

- The breath is an object of focus and an anchor for you in meditation.
- Breathe naturally, in and out.
- Follow your breath naturally, placing your conscious awareness solely on breathing. How do you know you are breathing? You simply feel it.
- Relax with your breath and feel your body breathing with gentle attentiveness. Notice the different qualities of your breath.

Labeling Thoughts

- As you pay attention to your breath, it is natural that thoughts arise in your mind as you breathe - we always think, and think, and think. In fact, it's the mind's job to think.
- Whatever thought arises in your mind, gently invite that thought in, label that thought "thinking," let go of that thought gently, and return your attention to your breath.
- When you notice that you have drifted off, gently label that drifting off as "thinking" and return your attention to your breath.
- Each time you label thoughts "thinking" and return to the breath, you are experiencing a moment of mindful awareness, a moment of "nowness."
- Each time you bring your attention back to the breath after you've wandered off, you are developing your ability to concentrate and are giving yourself a "fresh start." This means that each moment is a brand new moment.
- Don't struggle. Be gentle and easy with yourself. Relax and let go.

Helpful Hints

- Finding a Place to Meditate: Choose a place that feels comfortable, as quiet as practically possible, where you will not be disturbed by others or regular activities and distractions.
- Gathering Sitting Equipment: There are three basic options – sitting in a chair, sitting on a firm cushion on the floor, or sitting on a meditation bench.
- Regular Scheduling: Gradually work on sitting in the same place at the same time of the day, on a frequent and regular if not daily basis. Begin sitting for 5 to 10 minutes each day and gradually increase your sitting time to 20 minutes, then to 30 minutes. Even a few minutes of mindfulness practice has been shown to make a difference.
- Protecting Your Time: Do what you need to do to protect your practice, such as letting others know you will be unavailable or setting a reminder for yourself.
- Each meditation sit is different: Try to be accepting of your practice and not compare it to other meditation sits. Practice with a non-judgmental and accepting attitude towards yourself. Label any judgments as "thinking," and let them go.
MINDFULNESS MEDITATION: The Attitudes of Mindfulness
(from “Mindfulness in Plain English” by Bhante Henepola Gunaratana)

(1) Don’t expect anything. Just sit back and see what happens. Treat the whole thing as an experiment.

(2) Don’t strain. Don’t force anything or make grand exaggerated effort.

(3) Don’t rush. There is no hurry so take your time.

(4) Don’t cling to anything and don’t reject anything.

(5) Let go. Learn to flow with all the changes that come up.

(6) Accept everything that arises. Accept your feelings even the ones you wish you didn’t have. Accept your experiences even the ones you hate.

(7) Be gentle with yourself.

(8) Investigate yourself. Question everything. Take nothing for granted.

(9) View all problems as challenges.

(10) Don’t ponder. You don’t need to figure everything out. Discursive thinking won’t free you from the trap.

MEDITATION APPS
Headspace https://www.headspace.com/
Stop, Breathe & Think http://stopbreathethink.org/
Insight Timer https://insighttimer.com/
10% Happier https://www.tenpercent.com/
Liberate (Meditation for BIPOC) https://liberatemeditation.com/

FREE GUIDED MEDITATION LINKS
Free Guided Meditations – Center for KORU Mindfulness (Evidence-based mindfulness for college aged adults)
Mindful Way Through Anxiety by Susan Orsillo & Liz Roemer
The Mindfulness Solution by Ron Siegel
Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy by Zindel Segal, Mark Williams, & John Teasdale
Sitting Together by Susan Pollak, Thomas Pedulla, & Ron Siegel