

# MINDFULNESS TOOLS FOR CONQUERING STRESS

## Module A: Calming the Monkey Mind - Presence and Awareness



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## TOOL #1

# *The Calming Breath*

## **1. Breathing out through a straw or pursed lips:**

Breathe in through your nose for a count of 4, then breathe out through a thin straw or pursed lips for a count of 7. Making the out-breath longer fires up the parasympathetic nervous system, the relax and repair mode, so this is especially useful in times of stress or anxiety when the sympathetic system may be turned up too high, with too much flight and flight flooding your system.

## **2. Square breathing, or 4-4-4-4:**

Start by breathing out all the way, then breathe in through your nose for a count of 4, then hold your breath for a count of four, then breathe out through your nose for a count of four, then hold your breath for a count of four and keep repeating. This is a balanced breathing technique that brings you lots of oxygen for energy but also turns on the wise prefrontal cortex for seeing things clearly and responding instead of reacting.

## TOOL #2

# *Stop*

**S – STOP**

**T – TAKE A BREATH**

**O – OBSERVE: MIND, BODY, FEELINGS**

**P – PROCEED MINDFULLY**

If you like, get some red dots and put them in a dozen places where you will see them at least once a day. Make a point of noticing them and actually physically stop moving. Take an intentional breath in, and exhale slowly, noticing that you are breathing in and out. Check-in with your body, notice sensations. Take your emotional temperature. Check your thoughts. Now that you can see exactly where you are in this moment, go on mindfully.

## TOOL #3

# Rescue

When your mind is spinning out of control, when your emotions are heating up to the boiling point, when you are so uncomfortable you want to jump in front of a train, or push someone else there, or even if you are just annoyed waiting in line at the grocery store, try the RESCUE: 3, 2, 1.

Here is how it works.

When things get dicey:

Notice 3 things that are in your visual field, maybe three colors, or three shapes, three shadows, three areas of light – no labeling, no judging, just seeing what is true in your world of vision right now.

Then notice 2 things in the soundscape, sounds or silence, continuous, repeated, high or low pitched, soft or loud, not wanting or pushing away, just aware of 2 sounds of this moment.

Then drop the awareness into the sensation 1 part of your body, like your feet on the floor, fully inhabiting those feet to appreciate the richness of what can be felt right now.

And then take a deep intentional breath in, and release any unnecessary tension on the out-breath. Let the deep in-breath nourish you, let the long out-breath bring ease.

## BONUS TOOL

# Self-Compassion Break

Adapted from Kristin Neff, PhD

In this practice, we use three short phrases to bring to mind the essential elements related to self-compassion, something that is especially necessary during difficult times.

The practice begins with an invitation to bring to mind something in your life that is difficult. When you begin to work with this practice, the suggestion is to start with something that is not overwhelming or crushing, but rather a situation that is causing you stress, anxiety, worry. Perhaps it is a relationship problem, a work issue, something that you worry may happen.

Inviting the situation to come fully into your mind's eye, and to whatever extent is possible, sensing into the experience, including the thoughts, emotions and associated body sensations.

And as this difficult situation is recalled, softly saying the first phrase:

### **1. This is a moment of suffering**

With this, we bring mindful awareness to the fact that suffering is present. Inviting you to find your own words to express this, perhaps:

- This hurts.
- Ouch.
- This is stress.

- This is really hard right now.
- I'm really struggling

We are turning towards our difficulty, acknowledging it, naming it, this is a moment of suffering.

As we recognize and acknowledge our suffering, we then whisper the second phrase:

## **2. Suffering is a part of life**

We are reminding ourselves of our common humanity. Suffering is a part of this human life. No one is spared. While the nature and degree of suffering vary, we all know what it is like to suffer. And inviting you to find the words that make this feel real for you.

- I'm not alone.
- We all struggle in our lives.
- Other people feel this way.
- It's not abnormal to feel this way, many people are going through this.

Knowing that our own suffering is real, and that others, just like us, suffer, we turn towards offering tender caring to ease the suffering, whispering the third phrase:

## **3. May I be kind to myself at this moment**

To support this heartfelt intention, if it feels right for you, increase the kindness by adding a soothing touch, perhaps putting your hands over your heart, or bringing the palm to your cheek, or rubbing your arms gently. Feeling the warmth of your hands, your gentle touch. Allowing caring to stream from your fingers into your body.

And saying: May I be kind to myself.

You might want to use words that you might say to a good friend who was going through a similar difficulty. It may be something like “I am here for you” “It’s going to be OK” “I care about you”. Perhaps something like “sweetheart, I am so sorry you are having a hard time” or even calling yourself by your own name.

You can also ask yourself, “What do I need to hear right now to express kindness to myself?”

- May I learn to accept myself as I am
- May I forgive myself
- May I be strong.
- May I be patient

And then letting go of the practice, allowing kindness and compassion to sink in deeply, allowing yourself to be just as you are in this moment. Resting in a gentle, open-hearted, kind space.

May this practice nurture and nourish your kind heart!

# RESOURCES

## Podcast:

This is not what I ordered.



*Episode #8 with Bob Stahl*

You can listen to the podcast using your favorite podcast app or downloading it from AppleStore or GooglePlay.

Here is the link:

**<https://thisisnotwhatIordered.libsyn.com/>**

## Websites:

**[mindfulhealers.com](https://mindfulhealers.com)**

**[Mindfulness4All.org](https://Mindfulness4All.org)** (coming soon)