

Freedom from fear

Welcome to the RelationKit mindfulness series. It's time to release yourself from any fears that you may hold about yourself, your parenting, your relationships, or in life.

Fear can have quite a toxic presence in our life if we don't handle it well. It can stop us from living our life to the full and reaching our goals.

Remembering fear is normal emotion that we all have from time to time. It's our response to feeling threatened in some way. Our brains tendency remember is to be on the lookout for danger or threat, so naturally we are going feel fear in our lives because of that. It's how we manage that fear that decides whether our lives are run by that fear or not.

As we practice mindfulness of fear, we are changing our brains, re-wiring our brains. The science behind mindfulness shows that we actually change our brain through practice so that it's better able to respond to threat, or fear or feelings of insecurity.

The key to changing our response to fear is to change the physical state of the body as that fear takes hold of us. This practice will allow you to use mindfulness to sit with and be with any fears you may be holding right now. And when we do this, we allow them to be there, understand them better and to gently let go of them. We can calm those feelings down in order to calm us down.

So, sitting with your breath for a few moments feeling your body breathing in, and feeling your body breathing out

When you feel ready and staying close to your breath ask yourself what you are afraid of. Inviting and welcoming it into your mind's eye. Maybe something coming up today or maybe later on in the week or mont. Or is there something a little bigger, a deeper fear that is present in your life, maybe about the future, or about a relationship. Maybe it's a fear of not being good enough, being the best parent for your children, or the best partner. Is it fear about money? Use your breath to stay present with whatever is naturally arising – anything is fine.

If nothing does arise, don't worry something may come as you sit quietly in meditation with your breath. But if something is there for you now, ask yourself without being dragged in to the drama or story surrounding your fear:

“Am I afraid of something happening now, or that has happened already, or that I think will happen in the future? “

Breathe with any feelings that this fear brings up in the body. How does it feel in your body? Where do you feel it? Does your breathing change when you're afraid? Does your posture change in any way, maybe a tension in the shoulders, clenching your jaw, sweaty palms, a holding on somewhere, maybe around your hips. Notice very subtle feelings or maybe more clear ones. Feel into your body now: what do you notice?

So we learn to sit with this fear, and watch it play out in our body, breathing with your body, and breathing with what's there.

Is there a curve to your fear, where or when it increases, peaks, and then lowers?

If you stay with your feelings of fear now, not grasping onto it or trying to get rid of it, do you find other feelings beneath it or within it? Do you find a sadness there? Or is there anger? With a friendly interest be aware of any pushing away of those feelings; instead allow them to be felt and breathe with them.

Ask yourself: what is the worst that can happen? Can I do anything to change the situation that is unsettling to me? So you're looking more closely at what you're afraid of, leaning gently into it. Imagine you are holding this fear in the palm of your hand, and you are examining it, standing back and looking at it. It's part of you, but it's not you – it's a feeling that you're examining at this moment. Is this fear tied up with memories or past experiences, perhaps you are gently reflect on your life growing up, any messages you heard family or relatives. Maybe the fear comes from the way you were parented? Or maybe from teachers in the past? Remind yourself that it's okay to feel anything right now. Say to yourself: *"How human of me to feel this..."*

We're not judging anything or anyone; simply noticing if it's possible to see your fear from all sides, to see if you can break it down into smaller pieces. Where it's come from.

Breathe through any discomfort - don't push anything away. See if you can allow yourself to feel the feelings of fear. Feelings are an important message carrier. These feelings are the body's way of letting us know what we need and allows us to tend to them. See what your body has to say about this fear you are holding onto, and what you can learn from it. Sometimes, all it needs is your presence, your kindness and your compassion.

When we allow ourselves to move towards our fears and to sit still with them in mindfulness, we learn to observe our thoughts and feelings and not be ruled by them. From the safety of our calm and present body, we can open our mind to fears, play out our fears, so picturing what is the worst that could happen, break them down and eventually end the fear – release them.

Breathing space into and out of any feelings that come with this fear now. With practice, with this gentle, open awareness, we start to see that many of the things we're afraid of are not as scary as we first thought. Feelings may go up or down in strength or disappear altogether. Maybe they feel the same right now, and that's okay – don't judge yourself if they do.

With practice we recognise that fear is just a state of mind that is transient, flow-like, like our thoughts, and not a fact that is stuck and rigid, and we can begin to have a different relationship with it. We don't have to fight with it or see it as a threat, but just offer ourselves friendliness when fear enters our mind and body.

Be kind to yourself in fear, as you would for a friend, seeing what happens when you stay with it, and hold your ground with fear. You may feel a strength within, a different kind of energy, one of self-belief and healthy personal power, perhaps.

Remember the inner attitude that should always be present in this practice is kindness and gentleness towards yourself.

If you wish you can carry out the following silent mantra while you're breathing, to conclude the practice:

"Breathe in love": feel this positive energy entering your body that is cleansing, healing, and nourishing.

"Breathe out fear": feel the pain and darkness that often surrounds fear leaving your body.

"Breathe in love, breathe out fear."

Continue with this if it feels helpful.

And check in now. How does it feel in body and mind to no longer have the presence of fear? Or if it's still there a little, can you imagine how it would feel to let it go? Letting go of fear. Maybe a little lighter in the heart and mind; more free.

When it feels right slowly bring your meditation to an end, and gently blink your eyes open.

Take care of yourself 'til next time.