



Letting go of uncomfortable feelings

Welcome to the RelationKit mindfulness series. In this practice, you will tune into what you're feeling, and practice accepting what you find without judging it, so that you can let your feelings go.

So, let's begin by finding a comfy posture, sitting or lying down, and take in some deep breaths to help gather your attention and to become more aware of your body.

Then find your natural flow of breath. And you start there, noticing the feeling of your breath in your body.

If it's helpful, you can drop in the question: *"How does my body feel as I breathe in, and how does my body feel as I breathe out?"*

And as your breath brings you into the here and now and your attention becomes more focused in the body, can you notice how your physical body feels today?

So, you can just take a minute to flow your attention through your body, seeing if you feel any physical tightness or holding anywhere in your body - maybe around your shoulders or your neck? Maybe in your back? Or is there a feeling of space or relaxation - places where your breath flows more freely into? Just notice what you find in your physical body, without changing it or wanting it to feel any different. This is about becoming aware of what's there already: how things feel right now for you.

And then can you begin to move your attention inwards, towards your general emotional tone or 'feeling' of you, seeing if you can get a sense of what is your mood in this moment; a tiredness maybe, a restless feeling, some anxiousness or stress, or maybe there's a calmness there? Just be with this 'feeling sense' of you, without judging yourself or pushing it away. You are gently opening up to whatever you find there.

You might notice just a general sense of whether your inner environment feels pleasant, or unpleasant. Or maybe somewhere in the middle more neutral - so neither good or bad. Notice how the mind naturally labels these feelings in this way: those we like and those we dislike. Breathing with whatever is there.

If there is something there which feels unpleasant, uncomfortable, notice the urge to resist this or push it away, and instead maybe you could open to it; explore it a little; become interested in the kind of physical feelings that this unpleasantness creates in your body. Is there somewhere that you hold or experience those feelings more?

Could you get a sense of whether those feelings feel rough, sharp, tingly or even smooth, or maybe there's a charged feeling inside, or does this feeling feel flat, heavy? Is there heat or coolness about this feeling that you're noticing?

And sometimes it can be helpful to try and give this feeling a name. Can I name this feeling? Anxiety, anger, guilt, or is it frustration? It might even have a colour: red, blue, green? See if anything just comes up.

If nothing is there in your awareness or felt in your body, maybe now you can bring to your attention a recent thing that has caused you a little bit of stress or anxiety. There's no need to choose the worst thing that's happened, just something that you are happy to reflect on and work with right now.

Play out the situation briefly in your mind without getting caught up in the story or with thoughts about it. And then see if you can drop your attention down into your body to feel any related physical feelings there. How do you feel inside your body as a result of what you were thinking about? What feelings are present in your body now?

"With my gentle attention I see that 'anxiety' is there or 'frustration' is there, or 'anger' is there. I see that 'boredom' is there, or 'excitement'."

Saying to yourself: "It's okay to feel this way" or "How human of me to feel like this".

Whatever is there for you, you're just accepting it's there as part of you right now. Allow yourself to feel the physical sense of it and being with it with a friendliness - seeing if you can sit with this feeling like you would sit with an upset friend, holding their hand. Can you hold the hand of your feelings now and gently breathe with them?

Where does the feeling sit in the body? Maybe it's a specific place? For example the chest getting tight, or you feel butterflies in your tummy, clenching of the jaw or fists. Can you now send your breath there to that place? Breathing in and towards the felt sense of that feeling and then with a lot of kindness and much care really softening into the feeling, on your out-breath.

Take care of that feeling with a kindness and with your soothing breath, *"It's okay to feel this... it's okay. Breathing in, I realise that this feeling is here, and breathing out I allow a lot of space for this feeling."*

Returning to your breath and the feeling of the body grounded by the seat or the earth beneath you, if at any time those feelings become too strong or uncomfortable, just staying with your breath until you are ready to revisit them, if it feels okay to.

Much of the time our attention is focused outward to take care of the feelings of others, and now we have this time to bring our attention inward, to accept the care of our very own attention. Where we don't have to fix or solve feelings, or change what we are feeling, we can really just allow it to be there.

"Can I just stay with this feeling, as it is, with my breath?"

You might begin to notice as you hold your attention on the feeling it becomes stronger for a time, or, softer all by itself, Maybe it changes shape or texture or colour. Or it may stay the same for now and that's okay too, but quite often with practice, just by noticing and accepting a feeling exactly as it is and breathing with it, that feeling begins to soften, change, and even dissolve all by itself.

Come back to your breath if your mind has travelled off, be in your body. Notice once again any new feelings, pleasant ones, or not so pleasant ones. Just being with them as best you can.

Or if you wish, re-play the difficult situation, without being dragged into the story of it. Just remembering it and then focusing again on how it feels in your body, noticing any connected physical feelings occurring there, checking in: where, and how they are playing out in your body, notice your inner reactions to them with a kindness.

And if you notice yourself moving into fixing, solving or pushing the feeling away again, can you see how that comes from your thinking mind, and see if you can very gently guide your attention back into your body and really allow yourself to feel the feeling, breathing in and breathing out to give it space.

Really give permission for the feeling just to be there as it is in this moment. It's okay to feel this way.

So as we sit for the last couple of minutes see if you can allow the energy of mindfulness - your focused and caring attention - to gently hold your feelings; as though we had taken hold of the hand of the feeling, just to sit with it and to take care of it, breathing with that feeling.

And just before you draw this practice to a close, notice the general feeling tone of your physical body and the quality of your mind now. And no matter how well your meditation went today, tell yourself "well done" for having a go of being with 'you' and your feelings in this new, more friendly and accepting way.

Remembering feelings are meant to be felt and then let go of and that's what we're learning to do here with mindfulness. It takes practice, but it can make such a difference to how we handle our difficulties.

And just when you're ready, begin to bring your meditation to an end, blinking your eyes open and coming back into your room.

And as you move through your day today, whenever you are gripped by a difficult feeling or emotion, can you try and hold it with more presence? Can you breathe with the feeling to create some space there; breathe until it softens, and then notice how you respond?

Take care of yourself and I'll see you next time.