

Mindfulness of Emotions



We often start to learn mindfulness skills by focusing our attention on our breath, our bodies, the environment or activities. Being mindful of emotions helps us to stand back from the emotion, understand it, not to fear it or struggle against it, and it can have the added benefit of reducing the distress (although the aim is to learn to accept the experience, rather than lessen the distress).

Set aside a few minutes when you can be quiet and won't be disturbed.



Start by bringing your attention to your breath. Notice your breathing as you slowly breathe in and out, perhaps imagining you have a balloon in your belly, noticing the sensations in your belly as the balloon inflates on the in-breath, and deflates on the out-breath.

Notice the feelings, and what it feels like.

Name the emotion:

- What is it?
- What word best describes what you are feeling?
- Angry, sad, anxious, irritated, scared, frustrated...



Accept the emotion. It's a normal body reaction. It can be helpful to understand how it came about – what it was, the set of circumstances that contributed to you feeling this way. Don't condone or judge the emotion. Simply let it move through you without resisting it, struggling against it, or encouraging it.

Investigate the emotion.

- How intensely do you feel it?
- How are you breathing?
- What are you feeling in your body? Where do you feel it?
- What's your posture like when you feel this emotion?
- Where do you notice muscle tension?
- What's your facial expression? What does your face feel like?
- Is anything changing? (nature, position, intensity)



What thoughts or judgements do you notice? Just notice those thoughts. Allow them to come into your mind, and allow them to pass. Any time you find that you're engaging with the thoughts – judging them or yourself for having them, believing them, struggling against them, just notice, and bring your attention back to your breathing, and to the physical sensations of the emotion.

If any other emotions come up, if anything changes, simply notice and repeat the steps above. Just notice that the feelings change over time.

As you become more practised, you can use this mindfulness technique when you feel more intense emotion.

