

### **3 Minute Breathing Space:**

#### *Awareness*

Bring yourself into the present moment by deliberately adopting an erect and dignified posture. If possible, close your eyes. Then ask: "What is my experience right now ...in thoughts...in feelings...and in bodily sensations? Acknowledge and register your experience, even if it is unwanted.

#### *Gathering*

Then, gently redirect full attention to your breathing, to each in breath, and to each out breath as they follow, one after the other. It may help to count the breaths or simply note in your mind "breathing in...breathing out" Your breath can function as an anchor to bring you into the present and help you tune into a state of awareness and stillness.

#### *Expanding*

Expand the field of your awareness around your breathing, so that it includes a sense of the body as a whole, your posture, and facial expression. Take the breath to any discomfort, tension or resistance you experience, "breathing into it" You can say to yourself "It's okay to feel whatever I'm feeling. Include a sense of space around you too, holding everything in awareness. The breathing space provides a way to step out of automatic pilot mode and reconnect with the present moment

(Adapted from Segal, Williams, and Teasdale '*Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression*' 2002)

### **The chocolate meditation**

Choose some chocolate - either a type that you've never tried before or one that you have not eaten recently. It might be dark and flavoursome, organic or fair-trade or, perhaps, cheap and trashy. The important thing is to choose a type you wouldn't normally eat or that you consume only rarely. Here goes:

- Open the packet. Inhale the aroma. Let it sweep over you.
- Break off a piece and look at it. Really let your eyes drink in what it looks like, examining every nook and cranny.
- Pop it in your mouth. See if it's possible to hold it on your tongue and let it melt, noticing any tendency to suck at it. Chocolate has over 300 different flavours. See if you can sense some of them.
- If you notice your mind wandering while you do this, simply notice where it went, then gently escort it back to the present moment.
- After the chocolate has completely melted, swallow it very slowly and deliberately. Let it trickle down your throat.

- Repeat this with one other piece.

How do you feel? Is it different from normal? Did the chocolate taste better than if you'd just eaten it at a normal breakneck pace? Do you feel fuller than normal, more satisfied?

(Mark Williams, Ph.D., and Danny Penman, Ph.D from 'Finding Peace in a Frantic World')

### **5 senses drill**

1. Pause what you are doing for a moment and take one or two deep breaths to help bring you into the present moment.
2. Look around you, and silently name three things that you see in your immediate vicinity
2. Now opening to the sounds around you, silently note and name three things that you can hear right now
3. Bringing your attention to your body, silently name three sensations that you can feel in this moment (maybe warmth, tingling, contraction, coolness...)
4. Bringing your attention to smell and taste, what do you notice in your immediate awareness when you bring your attention to these senses- lightly name what you experience.
5. Take one or two breaths to finish this mindfulness exercise.

Repeat this exercise every now and then to deliberately bring your awareness to what is happening in the present moment and to build your resilience to deal with exam anxiety and general pressures around this time of the academic year by cultivating mindfulness in this way

(From <http://mindfulnessforstudents.co.uk>)

### **Walking in nature...**

...is another way to practice meditation.

As you walk, concentrate on your walking rhythm and your breathing. Walk at a pace that allows your breath to become regular as you begin to focus on the quality of your steps and your contact with the earth.

Allow yourself to get into a relaxed space with a spring in your step so your whole body can become charged with the power of your walk. Allow your gaze to rest on what is around you but do not stare at it. Every now and then stop and contemplate your surroundings.

If you are familiar with Sama Vritti breath (breathing in for 4, holding for 4, breathing out for 4 and holding for 4) begin to allow this breath to develop as you walk, eventually allowing this to turn into anuloma breath, (4, 6, 4, 4). Please note: You should not retain either the inhalation or the exhalation if you have high or low blood pressure, glaucoma, are pregnant or think you may be pregnant.

If any of these apply to you, as you walk, just concentrate on breathing evenly in and out for a count of 4.

(With thanks to Leeds University)