



**Collective**

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# **The Mindful and Trauma-Informed Lens**

## **Exploring Trauma-Sensitive Care and the Healing Potential of Mindfulness**

### **Tool Kit**



## Mindful Attention Awareness Scale

### **Description:**

The MAAS is a 15-item scale designed to assess a core characteristic of dispositional mindfulness, namely, open or receptive awareness of and attention to what is taking place in the present. The scale shows strong psychometric properties and has been validated with college, community, and cancer patient samples. Correlational, quasi-experimental, and laboratory studies have shown that the MAAS taps a unique quality of consciousness that is related to, and predictive of, a variety of self-regulation and well-being constructs. The measure takes 10 minutes or less to complete.

### **Day-to-Day Experiences**

Instructions: Below is a collection of statements about your everyday experience. Using the 1-6 scale below, please indicate how frequently or infrequently you currently have each experience. Please answer according to what really reflects your experience rather than what you think your experience should be. Please treat each item separately from every other item.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Almost Always	Very Frequently	Somewhat Frequently	Somewhat Infrequently	Very Infrequently	Almost Never
I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until some time later.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I break or spill things because of carelessness, not paying attention, or thinking of something else.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the present.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I tend to walk quickly to get where I'm going without paying attention to what I experience along the way.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I tend not to notice feelings of physical tension or discomfort until they really grab my attention.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I forget a person's name almost as soon as I've been told it for the first time.	1	2	3	4	5	6

It seems I am "running on automatic," without much awareness of what I'm doing.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I rush through activities without being really attentive to them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I get so focused on the goal I want to achieve that I lose touch with what I'm doing right now to get there.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I'm doing.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I find myself listening to someone with one ear, doing something else at the same time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I drive places on "automatic pilot" and then wonder why I went there.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I find myself preoccupied with the future or the past.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I find myself doing things without paying attention.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I snack without being aware that I'm eating.	1	2	3	4	5	6

**Scoring information:**

To score the scale, simply compute a mean of the 15 items. Higher scores reflect higher levels of dispositional mindfulness.

**Reference:**

Brown, K.W. & Ryan, R.M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84, 822-848.

## 4–7–8 Breathing Technique

This breathing technique developed by Dr. Andrew Weil is a powerful way to elicit the relaxation response that gets more effective over time. It is a tonic for the nervous system, shifting energy from the sympathetic to the parasympathetic system, with many physiological benefits, including lowered blood pressure and heart rate, increased circulation to the extremities and skin, and improved digestion. It can also help you let go of emotional upset and cravings.

### Instructions

1. Place the tip of your tongue against the ridge behind and above your front teeth and keep it there through the whole exercise.
2. Exhale completely through your mouth, making a *whoosh* sound.
3. Close your mouth and inhale deeply and quietly through the nose to a (silent) count of 4.
4. Hold your breath for a count of 7.
5. Exhale audibly through your mouth to a count of 8.
6. Repeat steps 3, 4, and 5 for a total of four breaths.

This breathing practice can be done in any position; if seated, keep your back straight. Note that you always inhale quietly through your nose and exhale audibly through your mouth. The tip of your tongue stays in position the whole time. Exhalation takes twice as long as inhalation. The absolute time you spend on each phase is not important; the ratio of 4:7:8 is important. If you have trouble holding your breath, speed the exercise up but keep to the ratio of 4:7:8 for the three phases.

Practice the exercise at least twice a day and, in addition, whenever you feel stressed, anxious, or off center.

Do not do more than four breaths at one time for the first month of practice but repeat the exercise as often as you wish. After a month, if you are comfortable with it, increase to eight breaths each time.

# 6 Simple Practices from the Masters

with

Sylvia Boorstein, PhD

Joan Borysenko, PhD

Tara Brach, PhD

Rick Hanson, PhD

Sharon Salzberg

and Elisha Goldstein, PhD

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## 6 Simple Practices from the Masters

### **Metta Meditation** with Sylvia Boorstein, PhD

One of the practices that I have is to be in touch with how I'm feeling. When I'm not feeling good, I try to have good intentions for myself.

I have a rubric that I say to myself: "May I feel safe; may I feel content; may I feel strong; may I be at ease; may I feel safe, may I feel content..." Sometimes I say, "May I feel happy; may I feel strong; may I be at ease." I've said that to myself thousands of times as part of a meditation exercise.

When I realize I'm unhappy in a situation, it starts by itself like a little metronome in the mind. I can be listening, I can be talking, and in the back of my mind it's playing my soothing words, "May I feel safe; may I feel content; may I feel strong; may I live with ease..."

It focuses my attention because I've given my attention something more than being neutral. I've given it something positive, soothing, and trustworthy to balance itself on. This allows you to catch your balance when you're shaky.

### **Cultivating Attention** with Joan Borysenko, PhD

Dan Siegel, MD has a great exercise to do before you sit and do a mindfulness meditation, and it goes like this: "Put your attention on the wall in back of you. Now, put your attention on the wall in front of you. Now bring it to the middle of the room. Finally, bring it inside."

That is a teaching in and of itself because you realize you get to choose where your attention goes. It doesn't have to get hijacked by everything that goes by. Attention is a choice.

Mindfulness is like a microscope that allows you to hone in, but it allows you to have a greater depth of field so that you see more.

Here's an example of that. There was a time during World War II when one of the intelligence agencies was recruiting spies. The test for how good a spy you would be was this: they would put you in a waiting room and then, when they brought you in for your interview, they would simply ask you questions like, "What did you see in the waiting room? Did you notice the color of the couch? Did you notice the scents? Did you notice a crooked picture hanging?" They would ask any question like this.

It's like finding Waldo – to practice pattern recognition, which is what mindfulness really is. Take a break during your day: How many sounds do you hear in the room right now?

Take a break during the day just for thirty seconds. What's going on in your body? Are your shoulders like concrete? Is your back starting to hurt?

Whether we are doing mindfulness meditation or not, take a break. Learn to be mindful. Remember, you choose what you pay attention to.

## **The Pause** with Tara Brach, PhD

One of the big misunderstandings in meditation is that we are trying to get rid of thoughts, and that is not the case. It's really this patient, interested, friendly attention that notices when we've gone off into the trance of thinking and gently gets us to ask, "Well, what's actually right here?"

In the moment of noticing a thought, I always encourage people to simply pause because it's one of the central facets of being able to really be here.

I invite people to pause and then notice, "What are the actual sounds that you're listening to right now? Can you re-relax in your body and feel the sensations right now? Even relax your heart and sense right now what is here..."

People start getting the knack. It's like neuro-pathways. We know that we can strengthen some: we can strengthen the ones that are worrying about the future or we can strengthen the ones that have a remembrance of presence.

## **Taking in the Good** with Rick Hanson, PhD

Memory research shows that there are four factors in particular that have a huge impact. One is intensity of experience or information you are trying to learn. We are talking about learning, not events, but in effect learning experiences. We are talking about the implicit memory of a positive emotion, a positive view, or a behavioral inclination. So, here are the four factors: 1 - intensity; 2 - duration; 3 - whole body, or enacted; and then 4 - personal relevance.

In other words, if a person can savor an experience for ten, twenty, or thirty seconds in a row and let it be as intense and as whole-body as possible, and have a sense of how it is personally meaningful, at a mechanical level deep down in the brain there is a dosing effect. The more you rely upon, or evoke, or activate those four factors, the deeper the memory traits will tend to be.

Novelty helps, but often mild-positive experiences are not particularly novel. But we still have an opportunity to take them in.

To summarize quickly there are three steps.

- Number one, let good facts become good experiences. That is the hardest step for most people to actually let the needle move, to register emotionally that there is actually a good event here, or a good condition, or a good thing in oneself.
- Two, savor it ten, twenty, or thirty seconds in a row.

- Three, sense and intend that it is sinking into oneself. That will prime, bias, and stimulate memory systems to really register this experience.

## **Experiencing a Cup of Tea** with Sharon Salzberg

There are exercises that don't take too long and can break the crazy momentum of our day. For example, it can be as simple as letting the phone ring three times before you pick it up, breathing, and then picking up the phone. And if we just do that, it can be a very different day.

Or my favorite – drinking a cup of tea. Take an activity that doesn't last a long time. You can actually enjoy a cup of tea so much more if you are not drinking the tea, and checking your email, and making a phone call, and doing any number of things.

It is not going to take away from responsibilities and obligations – it doesn't last that long – but it is so enjoyable just to sit there, feel the warmth of the teacup, smell the tea, lift the teacup, and taste the tea.

## **STOP - A Quick Practice to Start Patients Off** with Elisha Goldstein, PhD

A lot of us love acronyms because we can remember them. So one of the acronyms I really like as an introductory practice is STOP.

**S** stands for stop. That's just to stop what they're doing.

**T** stands for take a breath. This can be done in a couple of different ways if you're actually leading this. It could be either someone just taking a few deep breaths, and being aware of taking a few deep breaths. Or you can actually have them come to their breath and start resting their attention and just be curious about what it's like to breathe in, or breathe out, and when the mind goes off, just noting it and gently bringing it back.

**O** is observe, the idea of observing where their body is, what's going on in their body, the connection to whatever they are standing or sitting on, their emotions, being able to maybe label or name the emotion or just feeling something that's there. If there's nothing there and they can't label it, that's okay. They can just kind of be with the experience of not knowing what's there or they can be with their thoughts, and observe if their mind's busy or calm.

**P** is for proceed, [and] what I think is so effective about this is now that you've broken out of autopilot, you can ask yourself this question: What's most important for me to be paying attention to in this moment?

So you're really teaching them that they have more ability to not only control their attention, but actually to have more influence over living in accordance with what's most important in their lives in that moment.



## Guided Imagery

Imagine going to a place, real or invented, where you feel safe, peaceful and calm. You want to take the time to develop the imagery so you fully experience this place with all your senses.

Start out with a simple check-in of your emotional state, your thoughts, and what you are feeling in your body. Just notice what's happening, without judgment or expectation. Let your breath deepen, and locate a spot in your body where you are starting to feel an opening, a lightness, or a loosening. Allow that to expand with every in-breath and every out-breath, imagining it gradually filling up your entire body. Imagine this relaxing energy moving through your body in waves, reaching every part of you.

### Sea Shore

Imagine you are at the sea shore on a beautiful day. It's the perfect time of day, and the perfect time of year for you to be there. Recall the feeling you get in your body when you are at the beach, or what it was like when you were there as a child. Let yourself explore that feeling.

Imagine the warmth of the sun on the top of your head and your shoulders. Allow this image to develop. Perhaps there's a pleasant breeze, which you feel on your face and arms. Imagine the refreshing, salty breeze off the water, and breathe. Maybe you can even taste the salt spray.

Look up and down the beach and notice the expanse of sand, the color and texture of it, the way it sparkles in the sunlight. Imagine that you are standing in the dry, soft, sand, and feel it beneath your feet and between your toes. Imagine taking a few steps, and feeling what it's like to walk in deep, warm, soft sand. Move closer to the water and walk in the cool, firm sand. Feel it take on the shape of your feet as you walk. Look behind you and see your footprints. Notice the waves gently rolling in and lapping the shore, gradually smoothing those footprints out, rhythmically washing them away as the waves roll back out.

Look at the edge of the water and notice the color. Notice that color meeting the sand, and the waves gently lapping on the shore, rolling in, breaking softly, and going back out, over and over, endlessly. Hear the, deep, calming, rhythmic sound of the waves breaking on the beach. Look out to the horizon, and notice the waves as far back as you can see, rolling toward the shore, breaking, glittering in the sunlight. Notice the dancing light moving rhythmically across the whole surface of the water. Notice the place where the surf meets the sky, and see where the colors come together. Notice the light. Let yourself feel the expanse of the sky, and imagine breathing that in, filling yourself with that feeling of spaciousness, brightness and light.

If you like, you might imagine going into the water, and feeling gently carried on the waves, safe in the protected cove, warmed by the sun. Just rolling gently on the surf, carried safely on the buoyant waves.

When you come out of the water, find the clean, dry, soft towel you have placed there. Imagine lying down on the towel, feeling the warm sand beneath mold itself to your body. Notice how the warm, firm surface supports your whole body, and allow yourself to relax deeply into it, letting the warmth and comfort fill your body and mind.

When you have finished your guided meditation, take a few minutes to sit quietly, noticing what you are experiencing in your body, what your thoughts and emotions are like.

Other ideas for guided meditation: walking through a meadow, floating in the clouds, snorkeling in a coral reef, sitting by a fire in a cozy cabin, being in lovely, comfortable room, or in bed on a rainy day.

## Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This exercise involves systematically tensing and relaxing different muscle groups. This is a good relaxation exercise for those who have trouble concentrating, or experience racing thoughts or other mental distractions. You may leave your eyes open or close them, as you prefer. Experiment with how much you tense your target muscles: some find tensing tightly is most helpful, while others use "threshold tensing," just tightening enough to barely sense the tension.

Start out by taking a few deep breaths into the abdomen. Just notice the breath.

Do a simple check-in of your emotional state, your thoughts, and what you are feeling in your body. Just notice what is happening, without judgment or expectation.

Make a fist with your right hand, and tense the muscles in your right forearm, allowing the rest of the arm to remain relaxed.

Study the sensations of tension.

Compare the tensed muscles to the relaxed ones in the opposite arm, and in the rest of the body.

When you're ready, take a deep breath in, and, as you exhale, slowly, gradually release all of the tension, until every last bit has left the tensed muscles. You may imagine it's like a fire hose that was rigid and becomes more flexible as the water drains out, or a any image that works for you.

Spend a few moments studying and appreciating the sensations in the muscles once they are relaxed.

Repeat this with your left fist and forearm.

Raise your right shoulder, pin your right upper arm to the side of your body, and tense the muscles in the right upper arm and shoulder.

Study the sensations of tension.

Compare the tensed muscles to the relaxed ones in the opposite arm, and in the rest of the body.

When you're ready, take a deep breath in, and, as you exhale, slowly, gradually release all of the tension, until every last bit has left the tensed muscles. Find an image that captures this gradual release of tension for you: the sun melting ice, butter melting, releasing pressure with a valve, et cetera.

Spend a few moments studying and appreciating the sensations in the muscles once they are relaxed.

Repeat this with your left upper arm and shoulder.

With your leg extended, bend your right foot up at an angle, so the muscles of your right calf, shin, ankle and foot are tensed. Allow the rest of the leg to remain relaxed.

Study the sensations of tension.

Compare the tensed muscles to the relaxed ones in the rest of the leg, and in the rest of the body.

When you're ready, take a deep breath in, and, as you exhale, slowly, gradually release all of the tension, until every last bit has left the tensed muscles. You may imagine it's like a fire hose that was rigid and becomes more flexible as the water drains out.

Spend a few moments studying and appreciating the sensations in the muscles once they are relaxed.

Repeat this with your left foot and lower leg.

Tense the muscles in the right buttock and thigh, allowing the remaining muscles in the right leg to remain as relaxed as possible.

Study the sensations of tension.

Compare the tensed muscles to the relaxed ones in the opposite buttock and thigh, and in the rest of the body.

When you're ready, take a deep breath in, and, as you exhale, slowly, gradually release all of the tension, until every last bit has left the tensed muscles.

Spend a few moments studying and appreciating the sensations in the muscles once they are relaxed.

Repeat this on the left side.

Suck in your abdominal muscles, and simultaneously push the small of your back against the chair or floor. Study the sensations of tension.

Compare the tensed muscles to the relaxed ones in the rest of your body.

When you're ready, take a deep breath in, and, as you exhale, slowly, gradually release all of the tension, until every last bit has left the tensed muscles.

Spend a few moments studying and appreciating the sensations in the muscles once they are relaxed.

Let your head fall forward, or, alternatively, press your head backward against a wall, to tense the muscles in the back of your neck.

Study the sensations of tension.

Compare the tensed muscles to the relaxed ones in the rest of your body.

When you're ready, take a deep breath in, and, as you exhale, slowly, gradually release all of the tension, until every last bit has left the tensed muscles.

Spend a few moments studying and appreciating the sensations in the muscles once they are relaxed.

Push your tongue against your upper palette, purse your lips, squint your eyes, tighten your jaw and scrunch up your face.

Study the sensations of tension.

Compare the tensed muscles to the relaxed ones in the rest of your body.

When you're ready, take a deep breath in, and, as you exhale, slowly, gradually release all of the tension, until every last bit has left the tensed muscles.

Spend a few moments studying and appreciating the sensations in the muscles once they are relaxed.

Take a few slow, deep breaths, and allow yourself to be aware of the sensations throughout your body. If there is any part that remains tense, repeat the exercise there until the tension is gone. Just allow the relaxation to move through your body in waves, allowing yourself to relax more, and more, and more deeply as you continue to take slow, deep breaths. If you like the seashore, you may want to think of gentle waves lapping at the sand, gradually washing away physical, and emotional, and mental tension, smoothing ... soothing ...relaxing.

When you are done with the relaxation exercise, allow yourself a few minutes to reorient before getting up. Just enjoy the sensations of relaxation throughout your body. You may notice sensations you have never been aware of before.

# LOVING-KINDNESS MEDITATION

Difficulty: **MODERATE** | Frequency: **1X/DAY** | Duration: **15 MINS**



## WHY YOU SHOULD TRY IT

Practicing kindness is one of the most direct routes to happiness: Research suggests that kind people tend to be more satisfied with their relationships and with their lives in general. We all have a natural capacity for kindness, but sometimes we don't take steps to nurture and express this capacity as much as we could.

Loving-kindness meditation (sometimes called “metta” meditation) is a great way to cultivate our propensity for kindness. It involves mentally sending goodwill, kindness, and warmth towards others by silently repeating a series of mantras.

## TIME REQUIRED

15 minutes daily

## HOW TO DO IT

This exercise draws on a guided meditation created by researcher Emma Seppala, Science Director of Stanford University's [Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education](#).

We recommend listening to the audio of this guided meditation in the player below; you can read more about it on [Dr. Seppala's website](#). We have included a script of the meditation to help you follow it yourself or teach it to others.

### Body Position

Close your eyes. Sit comfortably with your feet flat on the floor and your spine straight. Relax your whole body. Keep your eyes closed throughout the whole visualization and bring your awareness inward. Without straining or concentrating, just relax and gently follow the instructions.

Take a deep breath in. And breathe out.

### Receiving Loving-Kindness

Keeping your eyes closed, think of a person close to you who loves you very much. It could be someone from the past or the present; someone still in life or who has passed; it could be a spiritual teacher or guide. Imagine that person standing on your right side, sending you their love. That person is sending you wishes for your safety, for your well-being and happiness. Feel

the warm wishes and love coming from that person towards you.

Now bring to mind the same person or another person who cherishes you deeply. Imagine that person standing on your left side, sending you wishes for your wellness, for your health and happiness. Feel the kindness and warmth coming to you from that person.

Now imagine that you are surrounded on all sides by all the people who love you and have loved you. Picture all of your friends and loved ones surrounding you. They are standing sending you wishes for your happiness, well-being, and health. Bask in the warm wishes and love coming from all sides. You are filled, and overflowing with warmth and love.

### **Sending Loving-Kindness to Loved Ones**

Now bring your awareness back to the person standing on your right side. Begin to send the love that you feel back to that person. You and this person are similar. Just like you, this person wishes to be happy. Send all your love and warm wishes to that person.

Repeat the following phrases, silently:

*May you live with ease, may you be happy, may you be free from pain.*

*May you live with ease, may you be happy, may you be free from pain.*

*May you live with ease, may you be happy, may you be free from pain.*

Now focus your awareness on the person standing on your left side. Begin to direct the love within you to that person. Send all your love and warmth to that person. That person and you are alike. Just like you, that person wishes to have a good life.

Repeat the following phrases, silently:

*Just as I wish to, may you be safe, may you be healthy, may you live with ease and happiness.*

*Just as I wish to, may you be safe, may you be healthy, may you live with ease and happiness.*

*Just as I wish to, may you be safe, may you be healthy, may you live with ease and happiness.*

Now picture another person that you love, perhaps a relative or a friend. This person, like you, wishes to have a happy life. Send warm wishes to that person.

Repeat the following phrases, silently:

*May your life be filled with happiness, health, and well-being.*

*May your life be filled with happiness, health, and well-being.*

*May your life be filled with happiness, health, and well-being.*

### **Sending Loving-Kindness to Neutral People**

Now think of an acquaintance, someone you don't know very well and toward whom you do not have any particular feeling. You and this person are alike in your wish to have a good life.

Send all your wishes for well-being to that person, repeating the following phrases, silently:

*Just as I wish to, may you also live with ease and happiness.*

*Just as I wish to, may you also live with ease and happiness.*

*Just as I wish to, may you also live with ease and happiness.*

Now bring to mind another acquaintance toward whom you feel neutral. It could be a neighbor, or a colleague, or someone else that you see around but do not know very well. Like you, this person wishes to experience joy and well-being in his or her life.

Send all your good wishes to that person, repeating the following phrases, silently:

*May you be happy, may you be healthy, may you be free from all pain.*

*May you be happy, may you be healthy, may you be free from all pain.*

*May you be happy, may you be healthy, may you be free from all pain.*

### **Sending Loving-Kindness to All Living Beings**

Now expand your awareness and picture the whole globe in front of you as a little ball.

Send warm wishes to all living beings on the globe, who, like you, want to be happy:

*Just as I wish to, may you live with ease, happiness, and good health.*

*Just as I wish to, may you live with ease, happiness, and good health.*

*Just as I wish to, may you live with ease, happiness, and good health.*

Take a deep breath in. And breathe out. And another deep breath in and let it go. Notice the state of your mind and how you feel after this meditation.

When you're ready, you may open your eyes.

## **EVIDENCE IT THAT WORKS**

Fredrickson, B. L., Cohn, M. A., Coffey, K. A., Pek, J., & Finkel, S. M. (2008). [Open hearts build lives: Positive emotions, induced through loving-kindness meditation, build consequential personal resources](#). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95, 1045-1062.

People who practiced loving-kindness meditation daily for seven weeks reported a steady increase in their daily experience of positive emotions, such as joy, gratitude, contentment, hope, and love. They also reported greater life satisfaction and lower depressive symptoms following the intervention, compared to when they started. People who were on a waitlist to learn the

practice didn't report these benefits.

Other evidence for the effectiveness of this practice can be found on [Dr. Emma Seppala's website](#).

## WHY IT WORKS

Loving-kindness meditation increases happiness in part by making people feel more connected to others—to loved ones, acquaintances, and even strangers. Research suggests that when people practice loving-kindness meditation regularly, they start automatically reacting more positively to others—and their social interactions and close relationships become more satisfying. Loving-kindness meditation can also reduce people's focus on themselves—which can, in turn, lower symptoms of anxiety and depression.

## SOURCES

[Emma Seppala, Ph.D.](#), Stanford University

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This practice is part of [Greater Good in Action](#), a clearinghouse of the best research-tested methods for increasing happiness, resilience, kindness, and connection, created by the [Greater Good Science Center](#) at UC Berkeley and [HopeLab](#).

