

Awareness of Emotions

Mindfulness Practice

Take a few moments to focus on your breathing; you don't have to change your breath, just notice how it feels to breathe: pay attention to the feel of the air as it enters your nostrils, and then as your chest and then your belly expands as they fill with air. Notice how your body feels as you draw in that oxygen.

When you're ready, draw your attention to how you're feeling emotionally in this moment. Pay attention to whatever feeling is there, keeping your focus on it until you have a sense of it. Describe the feeling to yourself – label it. It might be curiosity, anger, boredom, contentment – whatever it is, just pay attention.

Now notice the strength of the emotion is and see if you can find words to describe the intensity. Notice if it's getting stronger, or if it's diminishing in strength. Imagine the emotion is a wave: at what point of the wave are you at in this moment? Is it working its way up to peaking? Is it at that crest already? Perhaps it's just beginning to ebb once again.

Now notice any changes in the emotion. Are there other emotions beginning to join the first emotion? Describe to yourself any new emotions that have appeared. Continue watching and looking for words to describe the slightest change in the quality or the intensity of the feelings.

As you continue to observe your experience, you might notice the need to block the emotion or try to push it away or avoid it. This is normal; as best as you can, however, keep just watching those emotions for a little while longer. Keep just observing and describing to yourself what you feel, and notice any changes that are taking place.

Notice now what it's like to not act on your emotions – to not just blow up, or try to push the emotions away by hurting yourself or doing other things. Just be aware of the feeling and notice that you don't have to act; you can watch without doing anything to try to change the feeling.

Remind yourself that your emotion is just like a wave, and that it will pass; just like it's impossible for a wave to hang around at the beach, it's impossible for your emotion to remain the same and not dissipate. Waves come and go; and so do emotions. This emotion, just like a wave, will come in, it will peak, and then it will go out again. Watch it and allow it to happen.

If judgment about yourself, about the emotion, or about anything else arises, just notice that and as best as you can, let it go. As best as you can, accept this feeling; it's just a feeling; it means you're human.

Stay aware of your emotions just a little longer. If they're changing, just allow this to happen, describing to yourself what you feel. Keep watching until the emotion either changes or dissipates.