

**Overcoming Your Inner Critic**  
**Glasgow & Clyde Specialist Weight Management Service**

**Useful References**

**Books**

**Mindfulness**

There are lots of books on mindfulness:

- Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005). *Coming to Our Senses: Healing ourselves and the world through mindfulness*. New York: Piatkus.
- Ronald Siegel (2010). *The Mindful Solution*. New York: Guilford.
- Don Siegel (2007). *The Mindful Brain*. New York: Norton.

**Compassion**

- Bikshu Sangharakshita (2008). *Living with Kindness: The Buddha's teaching on metta*. London: Windhorse Publications.
- Jeffrey Hopkins (2001). *Cultivating Compassion: A Buddhist perspective*. New York: Doubleday.
- Christopher Germer (2009). *The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion: Freeing your self from Destructive Thoughts and Emotions*. New York: Guilford.
- Paul Gilbert (2005). *Compassion: Conceptualisations, research and use in psychotherapy*. London: Routledge.
- Paul Gilbert (2009/10). *The Compassionate Mind*. London: Constable Robinson and USA: New Harbinger.
- Paul Gilbert (2010). *Compassion Focused Therapy*. London: Routledge

**Weight Specific**

- Ken Goss (2011). *The Compassionate Mind Approach to Beating Overeating; Using Compassion Focussed Therapy*. Constable and Robinson Ltd.

**Self-esteem / Social Confidence**

- Lynne Henderson (2010). *The Compassionate-Mind Guide to Building Social Confidence*. New Harbinger Publications, Inc.
- Melanie Fennell (2009). *Overcoming Low Self Esteem; A self help guide using Cognitive Behavioural Techniques*. Robinson.

**Anxiety**

- Dennis D. Tirch (2012). *The Compassionate-Mind Guide to Overcoming Anxiety*. New Harbinger Publications, Inc.

**Trauma**

- Deborah Lee (2012). *The Compassionate-Mind Approach to Recovering from Trauma; Using Compassion Focussed Therapy*. Constable and Robinson Ltd.

**Body Image**

- Thomas F. Cash (1998). *The Body Image Workbook*. Fine Communications.

## CDs

- Jeffrey Brantley (2003). *Calming Your Anxious Mind: How mindfulness and compassion can free you from anxiety, fear and panic*. New York: Harbinger
- Pema Chodron (2007). *How to Meditate: A practical guide to making friends with your mind*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True.
- Paul Gilbert (2008). *Overcoming Depression: Talks with Your Therapist*
- Mark Williams, John Teasdale, Zindel Segal and Jon Kabat-Zinn (2007). *The Mindful Way through Depression: Freeing yourself from chronic unhappiness*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True.
- Jon Kabat-Zinn; *Guided Mindfulness Meditation* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2005).

## Free Compassion / Mindfulness Exercise Audio Links

<http://www.compassionatemind.co.uk/resources/audio.htm>

<http://www.mindfulcompassion.com/cms/?cat=4>

<http://www.get.gg/mindfulness.htm>

[http://www.mindfulselfcompassion.org/meditations\\_downloads.php](http://www.mindfulselfcompassion.org/meditations_downloads.php)

<http://www.freemindfulness.org/links>

<http://www.psychologytools.org/download-audio-therapy-resources.html>

## Websites

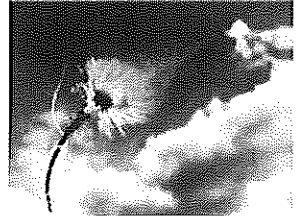
Compassionate Mind Foundation ([www.compassionatemind.co.uk](http://www.compassionatemind.co.uk))

Mind & Life Institute ([www.mindandlife.org](http://www.mindandlife.org))

Self-Compassion ([www.self-compassion.org](http://www.self-compassion.org))

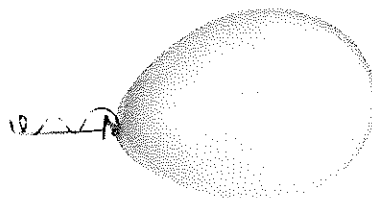
## Mindful Breathing

The primary goal of mindful breathing is simply a calm, non-judging awareness, allowing thoughts and feelings to come and go without getting caught up in them.

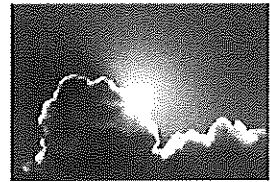


- ❖ Sit comfortably, with your eyes closed and your spine reasonably straight.
- ❖ Bring your attention to your breathing.
- ❖ Imagine that you have a balloon in your tummy. Every time you breathe in, the balloon inflates. Each time you breathe out, the balloon deflates. Notice the sensations in your abdomen as the balloon inflates and deflates. Your abdomen rising with the in-breath, and falling with the out-breath.
- ❖ Thoughts will come into your mind, and that's okay, because that's just what the human mind does. Simply notice those thoughts, then bring your attention back to your breathing.
- ❖ Likewise, you can notice sounds, physical feelings, and emotions, and again, just bring your attention back to your breathing.
- ❖ You don't have to follow those thoughts or feelings, don't judge yourself for having them, or analyse them in any way. It's okay for the thoughts to be there. Just notice those thoughts, and let them drift on by, bringing your attention back to your breathing.
- ❖ Whenever you notice that your attention has drifted off and is becoming caught up in thoughts or feelings, simply note that the attention has drifted, and then gently bring the attention back to your breathing.

It's okay and natural for thoughts to enter into your awareness, and for your attention to follow them. No matter how many times this happens, just keep bringing your attention back to your breathing.



# 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.

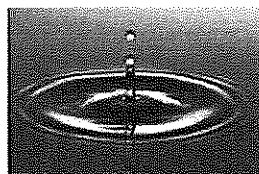
- How intensely do you feel it?
- How are you breathing?
- What are you feeling in your body? Where do you feel it?
- What's your posture like when you feel this emotion?
- Where do you notice muscle tension?
- What's your facial expression? What does your face feel like?
- Is anything changing? (nature,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



# DRIFT

## The Distant & Restless Inner Focus Trap



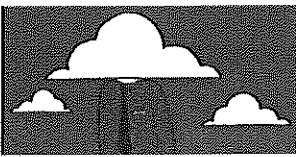
We often go about our daily lives 'in our heads'. Whatever we're doing, whoever we're with, wherever we are, our focus of attention can be 'in our heads'. Constantly drifting off and following the thoughts about our plans for that day, worries about tomorrow, regret or concern about past events, worries about other people. Even if we're thinking about the current situation – where we are and who we're with – it's very often that we'll be thinking about what other people will think about us, how we're going to cope with the situation, or what we should do or say.

Even though we're going to different places, being with different people, working, talking, doing – our focus of attention can mostly be 'in our heads'. We drift off into our heads, almost constantly. It's just the way we are, the way human minds work. Is it helpful to us? It can be. Sometimes, we need to work a problem through in our minds. But very often, having done so, we just keep drifting back to it, in our heads, doing that Distant & Restless Inner Focus Trap. DRIFT.

- D** Distant: taking us away from the here and now
- R** Restless: shifting about, drifting aimlessly
- IF** Inner Focus: in our heads, focussed on ourselves
- T** Trap: lying in wait for us to fall into



We can learn to notice that DRIFT, acknowledge the DRIFT, and put our focus of attention on the here and now – on what we're doing, on who we're with, on our surroundings, on what we can see or hear, on physical sensations, on our breath – whatever would be most helpful.



Daydreaming is often different from the harmful DRIFT we're talking about here. Daydreaming is what we do when we're bored and we want to think about something else, a fantasy, something nice, a distraction or diversion. Daydreaming can sometimes drift into DRIFT. DRIFT is when we start worrying about things, following our thoughts that take us off down roads, lanes and tracks that are not helpful to us. Worry about tomorrow, doubts about yesterday, concerns about today. Focusing our attention on ourselves, in our heads, on worries and issues that affect the way we feel and behave. DRIFT is just following our thoughts, wherever they take us, drifting about with the clouds.

If you're in a meeting at work, and you notice the DRIFT, well, maybe it's understandable that your mind will drift from time to time, and that's okay. But you can notice it, and then choose where to put your focus of attention. You might choose to put your focus on the meeting, on the speaker, on what's being said. Your attention might then drift and you notice that you're having thoughts about what others in the meeting might be thinking about you, or expecting you to say. That's DRIFT. Notice the DRIFT, and bring your attention back to what the speaker is saying, your environment, your breath – choose where to put your focus. As your mind starts to DRIFT again, perhaps worrying about a future situation, on today's concern, or a regret from the past:



- Notice the DRIFT: "There's that DRIFT again"
- Choose where to direct your focus of attention
- Do it!
- Each time your mind drifts, just bring your attention back to your chosen focus

## Using Music Therapeutically



Music can greatly affect our mood. Choose your piece of music wisely. If you're feeling depressed, choose upbeat, energising music. If you're feeling tense and uptight, then choose music that is likely to relax you – with a slower and gentler pace. Generally, choose music that is the opposite to how you're feeling. Very often when we're depressed, we like to listen to sad songs. Sometimes that might be helpful, but if you want to feel better and improve your mood, you'll need to choose different music.

However, music is very personal, and what works for one person may be very different from what works for another. If you're not sure what piece of music to use, then get a few tunes together, and try them. You'll soon know if a song or piece of music is going to do the job! Very quickly you'll notice it starting to affect you.

Watch out for song lyrics. Whilst the music does the main job of affecting our mood, the lyrics also play a part. If you're going to practise mindful listening, then it may be best to choose music without words.



### Listening

Sometimes you can put the music on in the background whilst you carry on with your daily activities. It's okay to sing or hum along, or even dance! You may prefer to do that alone, although it can be more fun with others.

### Mindful Music

Put some time aside to sit or lie down and be with the music, so that you can give it your full focus of attention. Ask others not to distract you, turn off your phone and do whatever else you need to do to reduce distractions.

Find somewhere comfortable and give it your total focus, with your full attention on the music. As you listen:

- Bring your attention to aspects of the music that you don't normally notice: the rhythm, the different instruments or sounds at different times, the pauses, the tune and the background harmony, the varying loudness and speed of the music, the high and low notes, long and short.
- Notice how the music is affecting you as you listen: notice your breathing, your heart rate, your body's rhythm.
- Bring your attention to the rest of your body, and notice the physical sensations as you listen to the music.
- Notice what emotions the music bring up, and how your mind is being affected (calming, energising, inspiring, more alert, relaxing).
- Listen to the music as a whole – let it sweep you away and along, getting lost in that music. If any thoughts come into your mind, just notice them and allow them to be carried away on the music, then bring your attention back to the music.



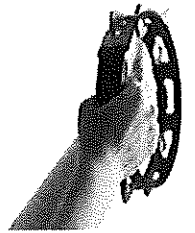
## Participating



Singing or humming can be a very effective way to express yourself. Again choose the music wisely. Watch out for the song lyrics too – they can be very relevant.

Dancing or moving – when we allow ourselves to move our bodies with the music, it can strengthen the power of the music to affect us. Any form of exercise is likely to be beneficial. In depression, physical activity has a very powerful anti-depressant effect – it's motivating and energising. When we're feeling tense, because of stress, anxiety or anger, then physical activity uses the energy that the adrenaline response has created, thereby having a calming effect.

Playing an instrument – however 'badly' – can help relieve stress, improve concentration, give you a sense of achievement and enjoyment, build confidence, improve your ability to think rationally, and has the benefits of including physical activity. If you don't have an 'instrument' at home, maybe it can just be banging on pans or cushions with wooden spoons.

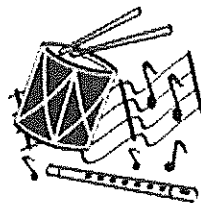


Taking up and learning to play a musical instrument may give you a focus, a sense of purpose, a goal, a sense of achievement and enjoyment, self-confidence and all the benefits previously described.

Playing music with others will add to the sense of fun and enjoyment and give you a sense of being close to others. That's particularly important if you normally isolate yourself from others – music can be a great and less threatening way to get together with others who have similar interests – any conversation is likely to be about the music and the activity. If you don't already play an instrument, you could always join in with a community drumming group or choir in your area.

However you choose to use music, enjoy it, and notice how it affects you. If it doesn't have the desired effect, then just choose a different piece of music, or a different musical activity.

Encore!



## Exercise 1: Soothing Rhythm Breathing

Okay, now that you are sitting comfortably, place both feet flat on the floor about shoulder's width apart and rest your hands on your legs. Close your eyes, or look down at the floor if you prefer. Allow yourself to have a gentle facial expression may be a slight smile.

Now what we can do is just gently focus on our breathing. As you breathe try to allow the air to come down into your diaphragm (that's just at the bottom of your ribcage in the upside down 'V'). Feel your diaphragm, the area underneath your ribs, move as you breathe in and out. Just notice your breathing and play an experiment with your breathing. Breathe a little faster or a little slower until you find a breathing pattern that, for you, seems to be your own soothing, comforting rhythm. It is like you are checking in, linking up, with the rhythm within your body that is soothing and calming to you.

What you will usually find is that your breathing is slightly slower and deeper than normal. The in-breath is about 3 seconds ... hold ... and then take 3 seconds for the out-breath. Ensure that the breaths in and out are smooth and even. So, for example, notice if you're breathing in a bit too quickly or collapsing the out breath.

Now we can spend a little while – for as long as we wish - just focusing on our breathing, just noticing the breath coming down into the diaphragm, your diaphragm lifting and then the air moving out, through your nose. Sometimes it's useful to focus on the point just inside the nose where the air enters. So, in through your mouth and out from your nose, in through your mouth and out through your nose..... Just focus on that for a while.....

Now we can just 'ground ourselves for a moment'. So turn your attention to your body. Sensing the weight of your body resting on the chair and the floor underneath you.... Allowing yourself to feel held and supported.....coming to rest...in the present moment....

Remember that it is perfectly ok for your mind to wander. Simply notice it happening with curiosity about where your mind has gone and then gently guide your attention back to an awareness of your body as best as you can. Now just sense the flow of air coming in and out of your nostrils...just gently observing....no need to change anything.....just allowing things to be as they are.

If you find focusing on your breathing a bit difficult (and some people do) then allow your attention to rest on an object. Find something you might like to hold such as a smooth stone or a soft ball – something that gives you the feeling of gentleness and calmness. Now as you just focus on your breathing also focus on your object that you're holding noticing how it feels in your hand resting your gaze on your object as best as you can.... staying with the sensations of holding it in your hand.

When you feel ready, slowly open your eyes and bring yourself back to the present moment. Sometimes it helps if you just have a gentle stretch and a deep breath to prepare you to carry on with your day.



## Exercise 2: Simple body scan and relaxation

Now try once again to focus on your breathing until you click into, find, sense, or feel that rhythm that is most comfortable and soothing for you. If that seems hard, do not worry, just breathe in as comfortable a way as you are able. When you have done that, focus on your legs. Notice how they feel for a moment. Now imagine that all the tension in your legs is flowing down through your legs and down into the floor and away. Let it go on its way. So, as you breathe in, just note any tension and then, as you breathe out, imagine the tension flowing down through your legs and out through the floor. Imagine your legs feeling grateful that they can let go. Sometimes people find that if they slightly tense their muscles as they breathe in, and then relax as they breathe out, this can be helpful. Just spend as much time as you find is helpful to you exploring the idea of letting that tension go with kindness .....

Now let's focus on our bodies and imagine the tension in our bodies from our shoulders down to our stomach and again, as you breathe out just imagine the tension leaving this part of your body, going down through your legs, down through the floor and away. Again, if it helps, just gently tense your stomach and back muscles as you breathe in and then relax them as you breathe out. In a way it can be like imagining emptying a vessel of the tension that's now running through your legs and down through the floor..... Your body is grateful and you feel kind to it.

Now focus on the tips of your fingers, through your wrists, your arms and elbows and shoulders. Imagine that the tension that was there can be released - can be let go of. So, gently let the tension go so that it can run off down through your body, down through your legs and out through the floor and away.....

Now imagine the tension that sits in your head, neck and forehead. The tension has been your alert system in action and it would like to be released now - to take a rest. So again, as you breathe out, just imagine it running down through your body, down through your legs and out down through the floor.....

Now we can focus on your whole body. Each time you breathe out, focus on the keyword RELAX. Just imagine your body becoming more relaxed..... Okay, Just spend a minute or so doing this.

We will now end this exercise by taking a deeper breath, moving the body around a little and noting how it feels and how grateful it is to you for spending time to try to let go of the tension. When you are ready, get up and carry on with your day.

### Exercise 3: Creating a Safe Place

Engage in your soothing rhythm breathing and when you're ready try to create a place in your mind – a place that could give you the feeling of safeness and calmness.

- Imagine looking around you, what can you see? It might be a beautiful wood where the leaves of the trees dance gently in the breeze. Powerful shafts of light caress the ground with brightness. Or it may be a beautiful beach with a crystal blue sea stretching out to the horizon where it meets the ice blue sky. Or relaxing next to a log fire.
- Now focus on what you can feel, like the sensation of the sun on your face or a breeze caressing your hair. Or can you feel soft, white fine sand underfoot, which is silky to the touch.
- Next think about what you can hear. Can you hear the rustle of the leaves on the trees, or birds, or crackling fire or the gentle hushing of the waves on the sand.
- Now think about whether you can smell anything such as the salty smell of the sea or the smell of wood smoke or a sweetness of the air.
- When you bring your safe place to mind allow your body to relax. Think about your facial expression; allow it to have a soft smile of pleasure at being there.
- Imagine that, *the place itself takes joy in you being here*. Allow yourself to *feel* how your safe place has pleasure in you being here. Explore your feelings when you imagine this place is happy with you being there. Even if it is just a fleeting sense of where the image might be, try to create an emotional connection to this place.

## Compassion Focused Thought Balancing - An Example

These are examples of how to identify difficult thoughts and then think of some compassionate alternatives. You may well think of others. We have two examples here. One related to doing the imagery work and another to eating too much

Trigger	Unhelpful / distressing thoughts	Helpful / kind thoughts (try to create warm tone)
Trying to engage with Compassionate Self Imagery and struggling.	<p>I don't feel anything.</p> <p>I've missed something.</p> <p>What am I supposed to feel?</p> <p>I'm not engaging with it properly, therefore I will be stuck.</p> <p>I'm not in touch with my feelings.</p> <p>Does it work for others?</p>	<p>This is distressing - to be trying so hard and having these fears. Commonly when we start this sort of practice we can over-worry and check on whether it's going well or not or whether we are doing it correctly or not, and this can cause problems. At least I'm having a go.</p> <p>These difficulties are common so it's not just me, in fact they are normal and even expected experiences - so it is not that I have 'missed something'.</p> <p>There is no 'supposed to', it's more 'playing and exploring and seeing' what feelings and images come to mind. 'Supposed to' means that I am looking for something particular rather than exploring. Each person is different. I can just encourage myself to stay with the exercise and practice as often as I can.</p> <p>It is the practice that is important and to see what happens - it is still early days - it is not about being stuck.</p> <p>I am very in touch with some feelings (e.g. irritability with struggling with this) but am learning how to be more in touch with my compassion side and it will take time.</p> <p>This approach has worked for others can (caution: this can be helpful but may provoke counter response "but I bet it won't work for me")</p>

Trigger	Unhelpful / distressing thoughts	Helpful / kind thoughts (try to create warm tone)
<p>Eating too much and having weight problems (common to many of us!)</p>	<p>I'm useless</p> <p>I've got no willpower, no self-control</p> <p>I'm always going to be like this, I might as well give up</p> <p>I'm different to other people and feel very alone.</p>	<p>It is distressing to feel like this - but I have a brain that's designed to enjoy eating a variety of foods in all kinds of situations – the food industry has spent billions of pounds enticing all of us to eat unhealthy foods that put on weight very easily! –whereas my brain was designed millions of years ago with food shortages really. This is why so many people today have this problem –it really is not my fault. It would be help me to be gentle with myself and work as best I can - step by step way to find what will help my eating to become more healthy –blaming myself like this is really because and disappointed and angry.</p> <p>I have felt like this before and come though it so have more courage than I am giving myself credit for. This feeling is a reflection of my disappointment – so I can be mindful and think would help friend who felt like this –sometimes we do just have bad days and have to ride!</p> <p>I learned to hide my feelings in the past to protect myself but now I am learning new ways. When we feel down it is very common to feel alone –in that I am not alone! I am becoming more compassionate and caring of myself and feelings. That's what I want to be like</p> <p>This is a very understandable feeling. maybe it also a reflection or a memory of how I have felt in the past –even as a child maybe. So I can see how I feel like this. But it helps if I reach out to other people as best I can – not hide away – become mindful and kind with these feelings but not see them as the a major truth</p>

Now remember, the key thing with this approach is the *emotional tone*: so when you read through your thoughts don't worry too much about whether you believe them or not (not that we're trying to create inaccurate thoughts of course). The key thing is the kindness, understanding and support you can feel in your helpful thoughts – sometimes life is just very difficult – and it's not about controlling our thoughts, but doing things that are helpful to us; finding the compassionate path to cope with life's difficulties.

## Compassion Focused Thought Balancing

Trigger	Unhelpful / distressing thoughts	Helpful / kind thoughts (try to create warm tone)

## Compassion Practice Diary - Example Sheet

DAY	Type of Practice Time and how long	Comments ..... What was helpful
<b>THURSDAY</b>	10am Soothing Rhythm Breathing Compassionate self	I felt calmer, less stressed. Noticed mind wandering but managed to keep focusing on breathing. Tricky to get started but began to see the point - thought about someone I wanted to be compassionate to.
<b>FRIDAY</b>	Soothing Rhythm Breathing in bed Compassionate self on the bus Very busy In the bath - 15 mins compassionate relaxing	Mixed today as busy. Useful to slow down and refocus and think about the self I would like to be. Able to get in touch with a desire in myself to be kind and calm. Recognised that I can be quite self-critical, but can slow down and re-focus. Did occasionally think about being mindful and taking a moment to 'slow down'. Also thought about my compassionate colour.... But lots to do with the family. Only thought about it towards the end.
<b>SATURDAY</b>	Weekends very busy with family so no specific time	Trying to think about compassion at different points in the day.
<b>SUNDAY</b>	11am - half hour focussed on both compassionate self and compassionate imagery	Recognise I need to spend time to practice. When I can make time it does help. Working with my image was difficult, tended to come and go, but just allowed that to happen and began to have a sense of an image rather than seeing anything clearly.
<b>TUESDAY</b>	Similar to Monday	
<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	2pm - compassionate self	Have a friend who's been having difficulties so practiced imagining compassionate self and just being compassionate to them. Felt I could sense this desire in me for her to feel better. Recognising I do have those feelings. Felt good
<b>Comments on weeks practice</b>	Trying to bring my practice into every day life as well as setting time aside.	Recognising that it's about remembering to attend and focus on compassionate things.

Date: .....

## Compassion Practice Diary

DAY	Type of Practice Time and how long	Comments ..... What was helpful
THURSDAY		
FRIDAY		
SATURDAY		
SUNDAY		
MONDAY		
TUESDAY		
WEDNESDAY		
Comments on weeks practice		