

Audio Exercise 9: Thoughts sensations and emotions

Feelings are often labelled as positive (happy, confident, joyful, brave, etc) or negative (sad, scared, hurt, angry etc). In mindfulness practice, feelings are not good or bad; they just are what they are – emotions that might be comfortable or uncomfortable, easy or difficult.

We are often taught to feel that the experience of some feelings is wrong – “You mustn’t feel like that,” “Be positive,” “Don’t be sad/scared/hurt” – and that the experience of some feelings is right – “Be happy/brave,” “Lighten up,” “Move on, get over it.” This exercise is simply about noticing whatever you are feeling, at the moment you are feeling it, with a gentle, non-judgemental acceptance and curiosity.

Start off this exercise by becoming mindful of your breath.

Allow yourself now to notice any emotions or feelings you are experiencing. If names for these emotions come that is fine – if they don’t, just be aware of them vaguely.

Notice where they are in your body – your head, throat, chest, stomach, abdomen, gut. Notice if the physical sensation moves, drifts or shifts.

Notice what they make you feel like – nauseous, queasy, calm, relaxed, tense?

Notice any thoughts that come with the emotions – be aware of them just as thoughts, curiously and without judgment.

Allow yourself to just sit with and notice with awareness the shifting and movement of thoughts, feelings and physical sensations in your body.

Finally, bring your awareness back to your breath for a couple of minutes.