



Taking Hold of Your Mind: “What” Skills

OBSERVE

- Notice your body sensations** (coming through your eyes, ears, nose, skin, and tongue).
- Pay attention** on purpose, to the present moment.
- Control your attention**, but not what you see. Push away nothing. Cling to nothing.
- Practice wordless watching:** Watch thoughts come into your mind and let them slip right by like clouds in the sky. Notice each feeling, rising and falling, like waves in the ocean.
- Observe both inside and outside yourself.**

DESCRIBE

- Put words on the experience.** When a feeling or thought arises, or you do something, acknowledge it. For example, say in your mind, “Sadness has just enveloped me,” or “Stomach muscles tightening,” or “A thought ‘I can’t do this’ has come into my mind.”
- Label what you observe.** Put a name on your feelings. Label a thought as just a thought, a feeling as just a feeling, an action as just an action.
- Unglue your interpretations and opinions** from the facts. Describe the “who, what, when, and where” that you observe. Just the facts.
- Remember, **if you can’t observe it through your senses, you can’t describe it.**

PARTICIPATE

- Throw yourself completely into activities of the current moment.** Do not separate yourself from what is going on in the moment (dancing, cleaning, talking to a friend, feeling happy or feeling sad).
- Become one with whatever you are doing**, completely forgetting yourself. Throw your attention to the moment.
- Act intuitively from Wise Mind.** Do just what is needed in each situation—a skillful dancer on the dance floor, one with the music and your partner, neither willful nor sitting on your hands.
- Go with the flow.** Respond with spontaneity.

Ideas for Practicing Observing

BY COMING BACK TO YOUR SENSES

Remember: Observing is bringing your mind back to the sensations of your body and mind.

Observe with your eyes:

1. Lie on the ground and watch the clouds in the sky.
2. Walking slowly, stopping somewhere with a view, notice flowers, trees, and nature itself.
3. Sit outside. Watch who and what go by in front of you, without following them with your head or your eyes.
4. Notice the facial expression and movements of another person. Refrain from labeling the person's emotions, thoughts, or interests.
5. Notice just the eyes, lips, or hands of another person (or just one feature of an animal).
6. Pick up a leaf, a flower, or a pebble. Look at it closely, trying to see each detail.
7. Find something beautiful to look at, and spend a few minutes contemplating it.
8. Other: _____

Observe sounds:

9. Stop for a moment and just listen. Listen to the texture and shape of the sounds around you. Listen to the silences between the sounds.
10. If someone is talking, listen to the pitch of the voice, to the smoothness or roughness of the sounds, to the clarity or the mumbling of the speech, to the pauses between the words.
11. Listen to music, observing each note as it comes and the spaces between the notes. Try breathing the sounds into your body and letting them flow out again on your out breath.
12. Other: _____

Observe smells around you:

13. Breathing in, notice any smells around you. Bring something close to your nose, and notice the smells. Take it away, and then notice the smells again. Do they linger?
14. When eating, notice the aroma of the food; when cooking, notice the aroma of the spices or other ingredients; when bathing, smell the soap or shampoo; when walking outside, notice the aroma of the air; when near flowers, bend down and "smell the roses."
15. Other: _____

Observe taste and the act of eating:

16. Putting something in your mouth, pay attention to the taste. Keep it in your mouth, and notice all the taste sensations.
17. Lick a lollipop or something else. Notice just the sensation of taste.
18. Eat a meal, or even a part of a meal, paying attention to the taste of each mouthful.
19. Other: _____

Observe urges to do something:

When you are feeling an urge to do something impulsive,

20. "Urge-surf" by imagining that your urges are a surfboard and you are standing on the board, riding the waves.
21. Notice any urge to avoid someone or something.
22. Scan your entire body, and notice the sensations. Where in the body is the urge?
23. When you are chewing your food, notice when you have the urge to swallow.
24. Other: _____

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MINDFULNESS HANDOUT 4A (p. 2 of 4)

Observe sensations of touch on your skin:

25. Stroke your upper lip with your fingernail.
 - Stop stroking, and notice how long it takes before you can't sense your upper lip at all.
26. When walking, notice the sensations of walking—your feet hitting the ground and rising up and down. Sometimes walk very slowly and notice. Sometimes walk very fast and notice.
27. When sitting, notice your thighs on the chair. Notice the curve of your knees and your back.
28. Pay attention to anything touching you.
 - Try to feel your feet in your shoes, your body touching your clothes.
 - Feel your arms touching a chair.
 - Notice the sensations of your hands.
29. Touch something—the wall, a fabric, a table top, a pet, a piece of fruit, a person.
 - Notice the texture of what you feel, notice the sensations on your skin.
 - Try it again with another part of your body.
 - Notice the sensations again.
30. Focus your attention on the sensations in your chest, your stomach, or your shoulders.
31. Focus your attention on the place in your body where you feel tight or tense.
32. Focus your attention on the space between your eyes.
33. Other: _____

Observe your breath: *Breathe evenly and gently, focusing your attention on:*

34. The movement of your stomach.
 - As you begin to breathe in, allow your belly to rise in order to bring air into the lower half of your lungs.
 - As the upper halves of your lungs begin to fill with air, your chest begins to rise.
 - As you breathe out, notice your belly, then notice your chest. Don't tire yourself.
35. The pauses in your breathing.
 - As you breathe in, notice the brief pause when your lungs have filled with air.
 - As you breathe out, notice the brief pause when you have expelled all the air.
36. The sensations in your nose as you breathe in and as you breathe out.
 - As you breathe, close your mouth and breathe in through your nose, noticing the sensations traveling up and down your nostrils.
37. Your breath while walking slowly. Breathe normally.
 - Determine the length of your breath—the exhalation and the inhalation—by the number of your footsteps. Continue for a few minutes.
 - Begin to lengthen your exhalation by one step. Do not force a longer inhalation. Let it be natural.
 - Watch your inhalation carefully to see whether there is a desire to lengthen it. Now lengthen the exhalation by one more footstep.
 - Watch to see whether the inhalation also lengthens by one step or not.
 - Only lengthen the inhalation when you feel that it will be comfortable.
 - After 20 breaths, return your breath to normal.
38. Your breath while listening to a piece of music.
 - Breathe long, light, and even breaths.
 - Follow your breath; be master of it, while remaining aware of the movement and sentiments of the music.
 - Do not get lost in the music, but continue to be master of your breath and yourself.
39. Your breath while listening to a friend's words and your own replies. Continue as with music.
40. Other: _____

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MINDFULNESS HANDOUT 4A (p. 3 of 4)

Observe thoughts coming in and out of your mind:

41. Notice thoughts as they come into your mind.
 - Ask, "Where do thoughts come from?"
 - Then watch them to see if you can see where they come into your mind.
42. As you notice thoughts in your mind, notice the pauses between each thought.
43. Imagine that your mind is the sky and that thoughts are clouds.
 - Notice each thought-cloud as it drifts by, letting it drift in and out of your mind.
 - Imagine thoughts as leaves on water flowing down a stream, as boats drifting by on the lake, or as train cars rolling by you.
44. When worries go round and round in your mind, move your attention to the sensations in your body (those most intense right now). Then, keeping your attention on your body sensations, notice how long it takes for the worries to ooze away.
45. Step back from your mind, as if you are on top of a mountain and your mind is just a boulder down below.
 - Gaze at your mind, watching what thoughts come up when you are watching it.
 - Come back into your mind before you stop.
46. Watch for the first two thoughts that come into your mind.
47. Other: _____

Imagine that your mind is a:

48. Conveyor belt, and that thoughts and feelings are coming down the belt.
 - Put each thought or feeling in a box, and then put it on the conveyor belt and let it go by.
49. Conveyor belt, and that you are sorting thoughts and feelings as they come down the belt.
 - Label the types of thoughts or feelings coming by (e.g., worry thoughts, thoughts about my past, thoughts about my mother, planning-what-to-do thoughts, angry feeling, sad feelings).
 - Put them in boxes nearby for another time.
50. River, and that thoughts and feelings are boats going down the river.
 - Imagine sitting on the grass, watching the boats go by.
 - Describe or label each boat as it goes by.
 - Try not to jump on the boat.
51. Railroad track, and that thoughts and feelings are train cars going by.
 - Describe or label each as it goes by. Try not to jump on the train.
52. Other: _____

Observe by expanding awareness:

53. Breathing in, notice your breath. Then, keeping your breath in your awareness, on the next breath notice your hands. Then, keeping both in your awareness, on the next breath expand your awareness to sounds.
 - Continue holding all three in awareness at the same time.
 - Practice this awareness of threes at other times, selecting other things to be aware of.
54. Keeping your focus on what you are currently doing, gently expand your awareness to include the space around you.
55. Go hug a tree, and feel the sensations of the embrace.
 - Attend to the embrace of the sheets and blankets or comforters around you as you lie in bed.
 - Do this when you feel lonely and want to be loved or to love.
56. Other: _____

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MINDFULNESS HANDOUT 4A (p. 4 of 4)

Open your mind to your senses:

57. Practice walking with your senses as wide open as you can make them.
- Notice what you hear, see, and feel.
 - Notice what you feel when shifting your weight between each step.
 - Notice your body experience as you turn.
58. For one mouthful in a meal, pause with a spoonful or forkful of food.
- Look at what you are going to eat, smell it, and listen to it. Then, when you are ready, put it in your mouth.
 - Note the taste, texture, temperature, and even the sound your teeth make in chewing your mouthful slowly.
 - Note the changes in its taste, texture, temperature, and sound as you chew it to completion.
59. Focus your mind on paying attention to each sensation that comes into your mind.
- Attend to sensations of sight, smell, touch, hearing, and taste, or to the thoughts generated by your brain.
 - Notice sensations as they arise, and notice them as they fall away.
 - Let your mind focus on each sensation as it arises.
 - Notice each sensation with curiosity, allowing it to be. Examine the uniqueness of each sensation.
60. Be here. Be in the present now.
- Take a moment to notice every sense you are aware of.
 - To yourself, make a statement, about each sense: "I feel the chair; the chair feels me." "I hear the heater; the heater hears me." "I see the wall; the wall sees me." "I hear a stomach growl; it hears me."
61. When a feeling arises within you, notice it—saying, for example, "A feeling of sadness is arising within me."
62. When a thought arises within you, notice it—saying, for example, "The thought 'It is hot in here' is arising within me."
63. Take just a moment of your time, and practice "nothing-to-do" mind.
- Let yourself become completely aware of your present experience, noticing sensations and the space around you.
64. Find a small object, one you can hold in your hand. Place it in front of you on a table or in your lap. Observe it closely—first not moving it, and then picking it up and turning it over and around, gazing at it from different angles and in different lights. Just notice shapes, colors, sizes, and other characteristics that are visible.
- Then change your focus to your fingers and hands touching the object. Notice the sensations of touching the object; notice the texture, temperature, and feel of the object.
 - Put the object down. Close your eyes, and inhale and exhale deeply and slowly.
 - Then, with beginner's mind, open your eyes. With new vision, once again notice the object. With beginner's mind, open to feeling new textures and sensations, explore the object with your fingers and hands.
 - Put down the object, and once again focus your mind on inhaling and exhaling once.
65. Other: _____

Ideas for Practicing Describing

Practice describing what you see outside of yourself:

1. Lie on the ground and watch the clouds in the sky. Find and describe cloud patterns that you see.
2. Sit on a bench on a busy street or at a park. Describe one thing about each person who walks by you.
3. Find things in nature—a leaf, a drop of water, a pet or other animal. Describe each thing in as much detail as you can.
4. Describe as accurately as you can what a person has just said to you. Check to see if you are correct.
5. Describe a person's face when the person seems angry, afraid, or sad. Notice and describe the shape, movement, and placement of the forehead, eyebrows, and eyes; the lips and mouth; the cheeks; and so on.
6. Describe what a person has done or is doing now. Be very specific. Avoid describing intentions or outcomes of the behavior that you do not directly observe. Avoid judgmental language.
7. Other: _____

Practice describing thoughts and feelings:

8. Describe your feelings as they arise within you: "A feeling of anger is arising within me."
9. Describe your thoughts when you feel a strong emotion: "I feel X, and my thoughts are Y."
10. Describe your feelings after someone else does or says something: "When you do X, I feel Y."
11. Describe thoughts, feelings, and what you observed others do: "When you do X, I feel Y, and my thoughts are Z." "When X occurs, I feel Y, and my thoughts are Z."
12. Describe as many of your thoughts as you can while feeling a strong emotion.
13. Other: _____

Practice describing your breathing:

14. Each time you inhale and exhale, as you inhale, be aware that "I am inhaling, 1." When you exhale, be aware that "I am exhaling, 1." Remember to breathe from the stomach. When beginning the second inhalation, be aware that "I am inhaling, 2." And, slowly exhaling, be aware that "I am exhaling, 2." Continue on up through 10. After you have reached 10, return to 1. Whenever you lose count, return to 1.
15. Begin to inhale gently and normally (from the stomach), describing in your mind that "I am inhaling normally." Exhale in awareness, "I am exhaling normally." Continue for three breaths. On the fourth breath, extend the inhalation, describing in your mind that "I am breathing in a long inhalation." Exhale in awareness, "I am breathing out a long exhalation." Continue for three breaths.
16. Follow the entrance and exit of air. Say to yourself, "I am inhaling and following the inhalation from its beginning to its end. I am exhaling and following the exhalation from its beginning to its end."
17. Other: _____

Ideas for Practicing Participating

Participate with awareness of connection to the universe:

1. Focus your attention on where your body touches an object (floor or ground, air molecules, a chair or armrest, your bed sheets and covers, your clothes, etc.). Try to see all the ways you are connected to and accepted by that object. Consider the function of that object with relation to you. That is, consider what the object does for you. Consider its kindness in doing that. Experience the sensation of touching the object, and focus your entire attention on that kindness until a sense of being connected or loved or cared for arises in your heart.

Examples: Focus your attention on your feet touching the ground. Consider the kindness of the ground holding you up, providing a path for you to get to other things, not letting you fall away from everything else. Focus your attention on your body touching the chair you sit in. Consider how the chair accepts you totally, holds you up, supports your back, and keeps you from falling down on the floor. Focus your attention on the sheets and covers on your bed. Consider the touch of the sheets and covers holding you, surrounding and keeping you warm and comfortable. Consider the walls in the room. They keep out the wind and the cold and the rain. Think of how the walls are connected to you via the floor and the air in the room. Experience your connection to the walls that provide you with a secure place to do things. Go hug a tree. Think of how you and the tree are connected. Life is in you and in the tree and both of you are warmed by the sun, held by the air and supported by the earth. Try and experience the tree loving you by providing something to lean on, or by shading you.

2. Dance to music.
3. Sing along with music you are listening to.
4. Sing in the shower.
5. Sing and dance while watching TV.
6. Jump out of bed and dance, or sing before getting dressed.
7. Go to a church that sings, and join in the singing.
8. Play karaoke with friends or at a karaoke club or bar.
9. Throw yourself into what another person is saying.
10. Go running, focusing only on running.
11. Play a sport and throw yourself into playing.
12. Become the count of the breath, becoming only “one” when you count 1, becoming only “two” when you count 2, and so on.
13. Become a word as you slowly say the word over and over and over.
14. Take a class in improvisational acting.
15. Take a dance class.
16. Other: _____

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Taking Hold of Your Mind: “How” Skills

NONJUDGMENTALLY

- See, but don’t evaluate as good or bad.** Just the facts.
- Accept each moment like a blanket spread out on the lawn,** accepting both the rain and the sun and each leaf that falls upon it.
- Acknowledge** the difference between the helpful and the harmful, the safe and the dangerous, **but don’t judge them.**
- Acknowledge** your values, your wishes, your emotional reactions, **but don’t judge them.**
- When you find yourself judging, **don’t judge your judging.**

ONE-MINDFULLY

- Rivet yourself to now.** Be completely present to this one moment.
- Do one thing at a time.** Notice the desire to be half-present, to be somewhere else, to go somewhere else in your mind, to do something else, to multitask—and then come back to one thing at a time.
 - When you are eating, eat.
 - When you are walking, walk.
 - When you are worrying, worry.
 - When you are planning, plan.
 - When you are remembering, remember.
- Let go of distractions.** If other actions, or other thoughts, or strong feelings distract you, go back to what you are doing—again, and again, and again.
- Concentrate your mind.** If you find you are doing two things at once, stop—go back to one thing at a time (the opposite of multitasking!).

EFFECTIVELY

- Be mindful of your goals in the situation,** and do what is necessary to achieve them.
- Focus on what works.** (Don’t let emotion mind get in the way of being effective.)
- Play by the rules.**
- Act as skillfully as you can.** Do what is needed for the situation you are in—not the situation you wish you were in; not the one that is fair; not the one that is more comfortable.
- Let go of willfulness and sitting on your hands.**

Ideas for Practicing Nonjudgmentalness

Leaving out comparisons, judgments, and assumptions:

1. Practice observing judgmental thoughts and statements, saying in your mind, **“A judgmental thought arose in my mind.”**
2. **Count judgmental thoughts and statements** (by moving objects or pieces of paper from one pocket to another, by clicking a sports counter, or by marking a piece of paper).
3. Replace judgmental thoughts and statements with nonjudgmental thoughts and statements.

Tips for replacing judgment by stating the facts:

1. **Describe the facts** of the event or situation—*only* what is observed with your senses.
2. **Describe the consequences** of the event. Keep to the facts.
3. **Describe your own feelings** in response to the facts (remember, emotions are not judgments).
4. **Observe your judgmental facial expressions, postures, and voice tones** (including voice tones in your head).
5. **Change judgmental expressions, postures, and voice tones.**
6. Tell someone what you did today nonjudgmentally, or about an event that occurred. Stay very concrete; only relate what you observed directly.
7. **Write out a nonjudgmental description** of an event that prompted an emotion.
8. Write out a nonjudgmental blow-by-blow account of a particularly important episode in your day. Describe both what happened in your environment and what your thoughts, feelings, and actions were. Leave out any analysis of why something happened, or why you thought, felt, or acted as you did. Stick to the facts that you observed.
9. Imagine a person you are angry with. Bring to mind what the person has done that has caused so much anger. Try to become that person, seeing life from that person’s point of view. Imagine that person’s feelings, thoughts, fears, hopes, and wishes. Imagine that person’s history and what has happened in his or her history. Imagine understanding that person.
10. When judgmental, **practice half-smiling and/or willing hands.** (See Distress Tolerance Handout 14: Half-Smiling and Willing Hands.)
11. Other: _____

Ideas for Practicing One-Mindfulness

1. **Awareness while making tea or coffee.** Prepare a pot of tea or coffee to serve a guest or to drink by yourself. Do each movement slowly, in awareness. Do not let one detail of your movements go by without being aware of it. Know that your hand lifts the pot by its handle. Know that you are pouring the fragrant, warm tea or coffee into the cup. Follow each step in awareness. Breathe gently and more deeply than usual. Take hold of your breath if your mind strays.
2. **Awareness while washing the dishes.** Wash the dishes consciously, as though each bowl is an object of contemplation. Consider each bowl sacred. Follow your breath to prevent your mind from straying. Do not try to hurry to get the job over with. Consider washing the dishes the most important thing in life.
3. **Awareness while hand-washing clothes.** Do not wash too many clothes at one time. Select only three or four articles of clothing. Find the most comfortable position to sit or stand, so as to prevent a backache. Scrub the clothes consciously. Hold your attention on every movement of your hands and arms. Pay attention to the soap and water. When you have finished scrubbing and rinsing, your mind and body will feel as clean and fresh as your clothes. Remember to maintain a half-smile and take hold of your breath whenever your mind wanders.
4. **Awareness while cleaning house.** Divide your work into stages: straightening things and putting away books, scrubbing the toilet, scrubbing the bathroom, sweeping the floors, and dusting. Allow a good length of time for each task. Move slowly, three times more slowly than usual. Focus your attention fully on each task. For example, while placing a book on the shelf, look at the book; be aware of what book it is; know that you are in the process of placing it on the shelf; and know that you intend to put it in that specific place. Know that your hand reaches for the book and picks it up. Avoid any abrupt or harsh movement. Maintain awareness of the breath, especially when your thoughts wander.
5. **Awareness while taking a slow-motion bath.** Allow yourself 30–45 minutes to take a bath. Don't hurry for even a second. From the moment you prepare the bath water to the moment you put on clean clothes, let every motion be light and slow. Be attentive of every movement. Place your attention on every part of your body, without discrimination or fear. Be aware of each stream of water on your body. By the time you've finished, your mind will feel as peaceful and light as your body. Follow your breath. Think of yourself as being in a clean and fragrant lotus pond in the summer.
6. **Awareness with meditation.** Sit comfortably on the floor with your back straight, on the floor or in a chair with both feet touching the floor. Close your eyes all the way, or open them slightly and gaze at something near. With each breath, say to yourself, quietly and gently, the word "One." As you inhale, say the word "One." As you exhale, say the word "One," calmly and slowly. Try to collect your whole mind and put it into this one word. When your mind strays, return gently to saying "One." If you start wanting to move, try not to move. Just gently observe wanting to move. Continue practicing a little past wanting to stop. Just gently observe wanting to stop.
7. Other: _____

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Ideas for Practicing Effectiveness

1. Observe when you begin to get angry or hostile with someone. Ask yourself, “Is this effective?”

2. Observe yourself when you start wanting to be “right” instead of effective. Give up being “right” and switch to trying to be effective.

3. Notice willfulness in yourself. Ask yourself, “Is this effective?”

4. Drop willfulness, and practice acting effectively instead. Notice the difference.

5. When feeling angry or hostile or like you're about to do something ineffective, practice willing hands.

6. Other: _____