

Mindfulness Exercises

1. Observing Your Breath Exercise

- Have clients focus on something in the room. While they are doing this, have them become mindful of their breath. Tell them to count their breath. Breath in, that's one. Breath out, that's two. Breath in, that's three. Breath out, that's four and so on. Have them go all the way to ten and then start back at one. Tell your clients that if a thought, urge, distraction, etc. comes into their mind, just notice it and turn their mind back to counting their breath. If they lose count, start back at one. If they count over ten, just notice that and return their mind back one.

2. Letter of Validation

- Have clients get a piece of paper and something to write with. Direct them to address the letter to themselves and have them write a letter of validation. Have clients read their letters out loud. Pass out envelopes and have the clients write their names and address on them. Collect the envelopes and mail them to your clients when they are struggling or feeling down.

3. My Defining Moment

- Have clients get a piece of paper and something to write with. Each client should write about an event that was their defining moment in their life. It is a moment that has shaped them to be who they are and how they look at life now.

4. Letter of Appreciation

- Have clients get a piece of paper and something to write with. Each client should write a letter of appreciation to someone in the life now or in the past who has made a big impact on him or her. Tell your clients to write about how this person has influenced them.

5. Describe Mindfully

- Bring different objects to group. Place one object at a time on the table and have clients DESCRIBE the object by using only the facts! Be mindful to clients who assume or judge. Get them to describe the objects by using only what they do know and nothing more.

6. Walking Mindfully

- Have clients stand up and get in a single file line. Have them focus solely on each step as they walk around the room. Be mindful to the feelings they get on the bottom of their feet. If they loose track of their step, tell them to stop and turn their mind back to their step before they continue to walk. Be mindful to all the thoughts that come in, but don't get stuck on them. Turn the mind back to your step.

7. Eat Mindfully

- Pass out a piece of chocolate to each client. Have them put the chocolate in their mouth and instruct them to let the chocolate melt and not to bite it. Tell them to be mindful to the taste, the texture and to observe the urge to want to bite it. Process with the group how they felt this went and if they picked up on anything new from this experience.

8. Praising Each Other

- Bring a tennis ball or any other object that is soft and can be tossed around the room from client to client. Instruct the group that who ever has the object is the person who will receive nothing but praise from all of the members in the group. Once that person feels as if they have received enough praise, they can pass (or toss) the object to someone else. This continues until the facilitator believes everyone has had enough praise.

9. What's in Your Garden?

- Have everyone close their eyes and one by one go around and share with the group what is in your garden. Be specific. Be descriptive. Tell the group that if they are not the one who is sharing with the group, they are to try and imagine the garden that is being described to them.

10. Skills Pictionary

- Have one client at a time go to the board and draw a skill on the board. They cannot use any words, only pictures. The group has to try and guess what skill is being drawn on the board. Who ever guesses it right, is the next person to draw a skill on the board.

11. Smile Exercise

- Have clients get relaxed in their chair with both feet touching the ground, their arms at their side and their eyes closed. Slowly begin to smile. Feel your cheeks expand. Feel your lips stretch over your teeth. Are your lips dry or wet? Is your mouth opened or closed? Notice the way your face stretches. Which way does it stretch? Notice how your forehead slightly moves back. If you notice your mind starting to wonder, acknowledge this and bring yourself back. After 5 minutes, open your eyes and describe how it felt to just sit and smile.

12. CD Exercise

- Have clients listen to any piece of music/sound (from meditative CD's, nature CD's, etc.) for three minutes. While listening to the music/sound, listen to each second. Listen to the changes in volume, the changes in pitch. Just listen. How does the music make you feel? What emotions is the music bringing out in you? Where are your thoughts leading? Focus on each note and each sensation they bring. After about 5 minutes, discuss with the group what they observed and tell them to describe what they observed.

13. Play Doh Exercise

- Each client is given a ball of Play Doh. The facilitator can either walk around the room giving everyone a ball or you can pass a full can around and have everyone take a chunk. Tell the clients to not do anything with the Play Doh, but to just hold it. Once everyone receives their Play Doh, instruct the clients to do the following. “Look at the Play Doh you have in your hand. Just notice the urge to squeeze it. Describe to yourself the temperature of the Play Doh. Describe the color. Notice how the shape of the Play Doh changes as you turn it. Concentrate on the smell of the Play Doh. Don’t judge it. Now push one finger into the Play Doh. Notice the finger print you left behind. Do it again.” Have clients process with you what that experience was like.