

A mindfulness activity you might like:

Balloons

Mindfulness skills help to focus our attention, especially when we are overwhelmed with strong emotions. This skill can help us stay calm and rational, allowing us to choose how we want to respond rather than automatically and impulsively reacting to situations. We want any thoughts (e.g. 'I blame myself'), feelings (e.g. 'I feel angry'), urges (e.g. 'I want to hurt myself') and physical sensations (e.g. 'I feel sick') that come up in this activity to float away, using your mind. Make your thoughts to be like balloons. Follow the instructions of this short mindfulness activity.

Start by sitting upright in your chair, putting your hands comfortably on your lap. If you want to, close your eyes. Remember that your task is to simply observe any thoughts, feelings, sensations or urges that you may experience in your body.

I want you to imagine that you are standing in the middle of a large open field holding a bunch of balloons. Take a few moments to observe what is going on around you and what is happening within you. Remember observing is just looking around, it is not attempting to label, describe or respond in any way.

... stay quiet for 20 seconds

Now start to describe what you see around you. Describe something, then place that description on one of the balloons and allow that balloon to float away. Describe another thing you see, and put that description on a balloon. Keep doing this for a moment while you remain standing in the field.

... stay quiet for 20 seconds



Now, slowly bring your attention to yourself, and start describing things that are happening within you - thoughts, feelings, urges and physical sensations. Each time you notice one of these, describe it with one of these four labels (a thought, a feeling, an urge, a physical sensation), put the description on a balloon and let the balloon float away from you up into the sky.

... stay quiet for 20 seconds

If you notice your mind wandering off, gently notice where your mind was, what you were thinking about, describe this distraction, put it on a balloon and let the balloon float away.

... stay quiet for 2 minutes

Now slowly bring your focus back into the room. Feel yourself sitting on the chair, listen to any sounds in the room... and in your own time begin to open your eyes.

Practice this activity often. Allowing your distracting thoughts, feelings, urges and physical sensations to float away, helps you calm the mind. Our mind can be so full of past regrets and future worries that we never enjoy the current moment. Allow those worries and regrets to float away on a balloon. A calm mind allows you to focus on what is important for you right now, today.

The Project Air Strategy acknowledges the major support of NSW Health. The Project works with mental health clinicians, consumers and carers to deliver effective treatments, implements research strategies supporting scientific discoveries, and offers high quality training and education. Contact us at info-projectair@uow.edu.au or visit <http://projectairstrategy.org>