**Coast Guard Operational Stress Control (CG-OSC)**

Mindfulness Guidebook

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**MINDFULNESS**

**DESCRIPTION**

Mindfulness is a mental state achieved by intentionally focusing ones **awareness** on the present moment without judgment. It is an attitude of being aware and remaining present to what is happening without becoming involved with feelings.

### Silent walking

Take ten minutes to walk silently – it maybe in the garden or in the local neighborhood. Try to remain silent throughout the course of the entire walk, so that you can listen to the content your mind is producing. As your attention is drawn to particular objects in your environment, thoughts in your mind or feelings in your body, notice them by naming them quietly to yourself 3 times. For example, if you feel stressed say ‘stress’ 3 times and notice what happens when you do this.

Notice each time your attention is repeatedly drawn to something. For example, if you notice that you keep coming back to certain thoughts or feelings during your walk, you may want to gently file this information away.

### mindful eating

Becoming aware of your eating behavior, rather than just rushing through, is an excellent way to bring yourself back to the present moment. Observing yourself while you eat can also help improve your self-awareness. The important thing is to practice connecting to the present moment.

To start, move through the meal slowly – take your time performing every action and notice what your experience is, as you go through it. When you lift a fork or cut your meat, notice what this is like for you. As you place a bite of food in your mouth and chew it, think about the flavors and the texture of the food. Is it enjoyable or repulsive? Don’t get hung up in judging it – just notice it.

Are you eating with a friend or partner? Are you eating alone? It may be interesting watching your mind as you interact with the people with whom you take your meals. It may also be interesting to note the kinds of thoughts and emotions that come up when you are eating alone.

### 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 grounding technique

This technique will take you through your five senses to help remind you of the present. This is a calming technique that can help you get through tough or stressful situations.

**5- LOOK.** Look around for 5 things that you can see. For example, you could say, I see the computer, I see the cup, I see the picture frame.

**4- FEEL.** Pay attention to your body and think of 4 things that you can feel. For example, you could say, I feel my feet warm in my socks, I feel the hair on the back of my neck, or I feel the chair I am sitting on.

**3- LISTEN.** Listen for 3 sounds. If could be the sound of traffic outside, the sound of typing or the sound of your stomach rumbling.

**2- SMELL.** Say two things you can smell. If you can't smell anything at the moment or you can't move, then name your 2 favorite smells.

**1- TASTE.** Say one thing you can taste. It may be the toothpaste from brushing your teeth, or a mint from after lunch. If you can't taste anything, then say your favorite thing to taste.

**MEDITATION**

**DESCRIPTION**

Meditation is simply a process of concentrating the mind on an object or activity, something people are doing most of the time when attention is turned outward. When using meditation to elicit the relaxation response, the attention is turned inward, concentration is on a repetitive focus such as the breath or a word, and the activity of the sympathetic nervous system slows down. A state of physiological and mental rest ensues. But as we all know too well, our minds are usually very active and difficult to focus.

### Simply Being

Let’s begin this meditation with the intention of letting go of everything. This is a time to simply be.

Take some time to find a comfortable position and now close your eyes. Quite naturally when you close your eyes, the attention starts to go within. Simply notice what you are experiencing right now (*pause 10 seconds*).

Thoughts come…emotions are present…there are sensations in the body…pleasant and unpleasant.

And you may be aware of what’s going on around you…hearing noises (*pause 5 seconds*).

Simply being aware of what you experience without doing anything about it. There’s nothing that you have to do now. Simply be aware of what’s happening without trying to change anything…without trying to resist anything. Quite naturally you are aware of what’s going on (*pause 10 seconds*).

Sometimes the mind may wonder off in thoughts. It doesn’t matter just easily bring it back to the meditation. Don’t resist thoughts and yet don’t follow a train of thoughts. Let thoughts go the way they came…effortlessly.

Just be easily aware of what’s happening…not minding the mind’s commentaries (*pause 5 seconds*).

There’s nothing that you have to do right now. You can let go of everything that you think you need to do…all of the things that your mind is working on. Just let it all go (*pause 10 seconds*).

The natural flow of life brings us thoughts…feelings…sensations…all sorts of experiences.

Not resisting anything…not holding on to anything…simply being (*pause 10 seconds*).

What are you experiencing right now in this moment? You don’t have to label it or name it. Simply notice.

You don’t have to make any effort to notice. It happens quite naturally…spontaneously.

Continuing with an easy open awareness of what’s happening right now (*pause 10 seconds*).

When the mind has wandered - it doesn’t matter. Just easily bring it back to whatever is happening in the moment.

Easy, open awareness of what is happening.

Whenever you notice some resistance to what is happening – whenever you notice an attempt to change anything…just let that go. Simply be.

Whatever is happening is just perfect. There is no right or wrong experience in this meditation.

Simply being.

Letting everything be just as it is. Letting yourself be just as you are.

Naturally experiencing whatever is happening. Letting go of resistance…letting go of effort.

Simply being.

Noticing what you are experiencing right now (*pause 5 seconds*).

Your thoughts are part of what you are experiencing. Not trying to push them out, but not following the meaning of thoughts.

Awareness of emotions…sensations…sounds. Letting go of the stories of the mind (pause 10 seconds).

Sometimes you may notice a sense of urgency about what you may need to do. Simply feel that and let go of the thoughts about it. There is nothing you need to do now (*pause 10 seconds*)

Sometimes resistance may come and you may notice yourself trying to change things – trying to be different. That’s fine. Just let that go when you notice that happening (*pause 10 seconds*).

There is no right or wrong way to do this meditation. Whatever spontaneously happens is just right. Letting yourself be…letting it all be just at it is. What is being experienced right now in this moment (*pause 10 seconds*)

Letting go of labels…evaluations. Simply be aware of what is happening.

Simply being.

Letting yourself relax into this time of doing nothing.

Simply being aware of what’s happening right now. Easy, open awareness of what is being experienced in this moment. In this moment…in **this** moment (*pause 10 seconds*)

There is nothing you have to do now. Letting go of every attempt to make something happen.

Be easily aware of what’s happening right now.

Easy, open awareness of everything that is being experienced (*pause 20 seconds*).

Now it is time to end the meditation. Take your time to come out slowly. Stretch, move around a bit. And then when you feel ready, you can open your eyes.

### connection (metta) Meditation

You can begin by sitting down in a comfortable position, with your arms and legs uncrossed, your back erect but not rigid, and your hands resting gently on your lap.

Take a few deep breaths, focusing your attention on the air as it moves in and out through your nostrils, as your body rises on the in breath and falls back on the out breath, and on your diaphragm as it expands and contracts with every breath. Now allow your breath to return to its usual pace. Feel your energy settle into your body and into the moment. Begin to let go of preoccupations and worries, and simply be present to the sensations of each breath as it comes in, as it goes out.

The following practice is one of opening the mind and heart to deeper and deeper levels of the feeling of connection. Connection is not a sentimental feeling of goodwill. It does not depend on relationships, or on how the other person feels about us. The process is first one of breaking down barriers that we feel inwardly toward ourselves, and then those that we feel toward others.

Breathing in and out from the heart center, begin by generating this kind feeling toward yourself. Feel any areas of mental blockage or numbness, self-judgment, self-hatred.

Then drop beneath that to the place where we care for ourselves, where we want strength and health and safety for ourselves.

Continuing to breathe in and out, say the following phrases to yourself:

*May I be safe and protected.*

*May I be happy.*

*May I be healthy and strong.*

*May I be able to live with ease.*

Next, move to person who most invites the feeling of pure unconditional caring connection, the bond that does not depend on getting anything back. The first person is usually someone we consider a mentor, a benefactor, an elder. It might be a parent, grandparent, teacher, a battle buddy, or someone toward whom it takes no effort to feel respect and reverence, someone who immediately elicits the feeling of care. Repeat the phrases for this person:

*May they be safe and protected.*

*May they be happy.*

*May they be healthy and strong.*

*May they be able to live with ease.*

After feeling a strong caring connection towards the benefactor, move to a person you regard as a dear friend and repeat the phrases again, breathing in and out of your heart center.

*May they be safe and protected.*

*May they be happy.*

*May they be healthy and strong.*

*May they be able to live with ease.*

Now move to a neutral person, someone for whom you feel neither strong like nor dislike. As you repeat the phrases, allow yourself to feel connected to them and concerned for their welfare.

*May they be safe and protected.*

*May they be happy.*

*May they be healthy and strong.*

*May they be able to live with ease.*

Now move to someone you have difficulty with-hostile feelings or resentments. Repeat the phrases for this person. If you have difficulty doing this, return to the benefactor and let the sense of connection arise again. Then return to this person.

*May they be safe and protected.*

*May they be happy.*

*May they be healthy and strong.*

*May they be able to live with ease.*

Let the phrases spread through your whole body, mind, and heart.

When you're ready, you may open your eyes, and as you continue through your day, try to carry this feeling of caring connection with you.

**DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING**

**DESCRIPTION**

Controlled breathing through diaphragmatic (deep), rhythmic inhales and exhales initiates a relaxed state in the body and may assist in focusing the mind. The breath is the foundation of most relaxation techniques.

### Breath Awareness:

Lie on the floor on your back or sit in a chair. Close your eyes and turn attention to your breathing. Place your right hand on your belly and your left hand on your upper chest. Take a deeper breath than usual and focus on feeling your belly rise and fall with each breath. Some people find it helpful to visualize a balloon in their belly. The balloon slowly inflates as you breathe in and slowly deflates as you breathe out. Most of the movement should be in the lower hand; the hand on the chest moves only slightly.

Variation: Place both hands on abdomen just above the navel, third fingers lightly touching. Inhale deeply; as the belly rises and expands, the fingertips separate-a graphic sign of correct breathing.

### Calming Breath:

Inhale deeply through the nose and exhale through rounded lips, as if blowing out a candle. Feel free to make sound as you exhale either simply blowing out the air or with a sighing, releasing sound. Allow the head to drop toward the chest as you exhale, thus releasing the back of the neck. Imagine that all tension and stress is being released with each of these exaggerated out-breaths.

Caution: any time you feel lightheaded or dizzy immediately discontinue and return to normal breathing rate.

### Counting Down:

Count down from 10 (or 20) to 1, repeating the number silently to yourself with each out­ breath. Allow all physical tension, feelings, and thoughts to be released with the out­ breath. Use images of being centered and calm to deepen the effect. Imagine the out­ breath dissolving all obstacles to deep relaxation.

### Paced Breath:

Still your body while sitting in a chair or lying on the floor in a quiet, safe place. Closing your eyes or using an eye mask may be beneficial.

Get comfortable in this space by breathing naturally and noticing your breath for a few minutes. Note that you are not trying to DO anything at this point but observe your breath and thoughts.

Place one hand over your heart and one hand on your belly, below your belly button and notice your breath moving in through your nose to your lungs, followed by gentle chest or belly movement and then exhale. Stay here for a few minutes.

Now, with each inhale draw the breath in to a count of 3, with each exhale release the breath to a count of 3. Slowing your breathing down without straining to do so, find a rhythm that works for you. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to counting 1, 2, 3 as you inhale….1, 2, 3 releasing the breath, exhaling out the breath.

Steady your count and your breathing for 5-10 minutes. When you are ready to end the time, gently wiggle your fingers and toes, move your head side to side, one deep breath in with a stretch of arms overhead, and slowly come to a seated position if you have been lying down. Open your eyes. Be aware of how you feel, give yourself a positive message and move on with your day. It is very important not to jump right up when you are done with a session. Give your body a minute or two to readjust.

### Box breathing:

Breathe in through your nose for 4 breaths. Like this: inhale....1...2...3...4...hold for 4 breaths...1...2...3...4...exhale for 4 breaths...1...2...3...4...hold your lungs empty for 4 breaths...1...2...3...4...Continue this for 4 more rounds of breath.

**RECALIBRATION**

**DESCRIPTION**

A quick paced breathing technique that can help manage physiological arousal, and improve focus, attention and performance.

### SCRIPT:

For this practice, you can sit or stand, and leave your eyes open or closed.

Slowly inhale for four whole seconds - pause - and then slowly exhale for six whole seconds.

Like this: inhale*...1...2...3...4...* And hold *1...2...*Exhale*...1...2...3...4...5...6...*Continue this for three more rounds of breath.

**BODY SCANS**

**DESCRIPTION**

The goal of a body scan is to focus your attention on different parts of the body in sequence. Body scans often involve beginning at one "end" of the body, for example, the feet, and then slowly moving your awareness or focus to another area of the body. Simply notice the sensations in each part of the body at a given moment.

### SCRIPT 1:

Start by taking a few deep cleansing breaths. (Pause 10 seconds) Return your breath to its natural relaxing rhythm.

If your mind wanders at any time during this meditation, simply acknowledge the thoughts and gently return to your focus.

Start by bringing your awareness to your right big toe (Pause) Think of the toe as being made of atoms, with space between the atoms, so that the toe feels open and spacious. Now slowly shift your awareness to your second – third – fourth – and – fifth toes.

Gradually shift your awareness to the ball of your right foot - then the arch - top of your foot – ankle – calf – knee – thigh – and hip.

As you shift your awareness, continue to visualize the atoms and space between the atoms. Allow your whole right leg to relax, feeling open, spacious and light.

Bring your awareness to your left big toe. Think of the toe as being made of atoms, with space between the atoms, so that the toe feels open and spacious. Now slowly shift your awareness to your second – third – fourth – and – fifth toes.

Gradually shift your awareness to the ball of your left foot - then the arch - top of your foot – ankle – calf – knee – thigh – and hip.

As you shift your awareness, continue to visualize the atoms and space between the atoms. Allow your whole left leg to relax, feeling open, spacious and light.

Now bring your awareness to your back (Pause). Consciously relax your lower – middle – and then upper back. Visualize each vertebra as open and spacious.

Relax your shoulders (Pause). This is where we hold a lot of tension in the body.

Slowly shift your awareness to your belly (Pause). Feel your belly rise and fall with each breath.

Now bring your awareness to your right thumb – second – third – fourth – and fifth fingers. Then slowly shift your awareness to the palm of your hand – wrist – forearm – elbow - upper arm – and shoulder. Let your whole arm relax. Feel your whole right arm as open, spacious and light.

Now bring your awareness to your left thumb – second – third – fourth – and fifth fingers. Then slowly shift your awareness to the palm of your hand – wrist – forearm – elbow - upper arm – and shoulder. Let your whole arm relax. Feel your whole left arm as open, spacious and light.

Now bring your awareness to your neck and jaw (Pause). Yawn (Pause). Allow your jaw and neck to relax.

Shift your awareness to your forehead (Pause). Soften the muscles in your forehead - at the top of your head – and the back of your head.

Let your whole body relax into the support of the floor or chair if you are sitting. As you inhale, imagine bringing energy and light into your body (Pause). As you exhale, visualize the tension in your body melting away (Pause).

If you notice any part of your body still tense, focus your breath in that area, releasing tension each time you exhale (Pause 10 seconds). If your mind wanders, simply acknowledge the thoughts and gently return to your focus (Pause 10 seconds).

Take a few minutes to rest and notice the experience of yourself when your mind is quiet and your body relaxed. Trust in your ability to relax (Pause 2 – 3 minutes).

When you feel refreshed, slowly deepen your breath (Pause). Begin to stretch and yawn, as you become aware of your surroundings (Pause). Slowly open your eyes. Know that you can return to this quiet place anytime you choose.

### SCRIPT 2:

Let us begin by affirming the value of practicing the relaxation response on a regular basis.

This is a time to set aside for yourself to experience a change of pace from the busyness of everyday life. To sit quietly and allow your awareness to turn within so that the mind and body can restore their natural balance.

Whenever we are fully absorbed in an activity, the mind tends to become focused and one pointed. And so in meditation, we focus the mind on the breath or on sensations in the body or on a chosen word or phrase which helps the mind to become steadier and quieter.

Sit comfortably in a quiet place where you will not be interrupted and as we begin, let your back be straight but not stiff. Let your hands rest comfortably in your lap and take three or four long, slow, diaphragmatic breaths feeling the abdomen move out as your inhale and move back as you exhale.

Pause

With each out breath, begin to let go of physical tension. Begin to let go of preoccupations and worries and simply be present to the sensations of each breath as it comes in, as it goes out.

Pause

Now let your breathing find its own natural rhythm and simply observe a few more breaths. Notice the cool feeling of the breath as it enters the nose and the warmth as it goes out. Coolness on the in breath. Warmth on the outbreath.

Pause

To deepen the process of relaxation, we’ll focus now on various parts of the body using the breath to let go of restlessness and tension. Start by focusing on your feet. Becoming aware of their contact with the floor. You may notice that when you direct awareness to a certain part of the body, you may feel sensations of tingling or warmth, heaviness or expansiveness. This is simply the process of letting go. Of relaxing, of being fully present to whatever is happening from moment to moment.

Let the awareness move now to your calves, your thighs, to your pelvis and buttocks. Experiencing the sensations of contact with the chair or pillow. Feel how the weight of your body is supported and let go even more with the next outbreath.

And now let the muscles of the belly begin to soften. And notice the gentle rising and falling with rhythm of the breath. Awareness on the in breath, letting go on the outbreath. And now focus on your hands and the sensation of contact as they touch each other or the thighs. Be very aware of even the subtlest sensations in your hands. Perhaps warmth. Or heaviness. And appreciate how the hands feel when they are quiet.

Now become aware of the upper body noticing how the breath moves the ribs, letting go of any tightness in the chest, feeling if you can the rhythm of your own heartbeat. Noticing your upper body expanding slightly on the in breath and relaxing down on the outbreath.

Many of us hold tension in the upper back, the neck or shoulders so experiment now with softening throughout that area with each exhalation. Just letting go and softening.

Let your focus move now to the back of the neck and begin to soften there. And now moving your attention to the top of your head imagining that even there, you could release a little tightness and soften, open. And now in the same way, begin to allow any tension or effort to drain from your face. Let your forehead expand and soften. Notice the point between the eyebrows and imagine that you can soften there too. Allow the eyes themselves to become soft and all the little muscles around the eyes.

And now letting go in the muscles of the cheeks. Around the mouth and the jaw. Experiencing your face in repose. Serene. Peaceful. Breathing out any residual tension that you may notice.

Pause

Now expand your awareness to include the entire body noticing how it expands and rises on the in breath and relaxes down on the out breath. If you notice any tension, any holding, imagine letting go of it in a wave from your head to your feet.

And for the next few breaths, you can let go even more deeply by counting down on the outbreaths quietly to yourself. Repeat 10 on the first outbreath and then let go in a wave. Nine on the next outbreath and so on. All the way down to one.

Pause

Counting the breath is one form of developing concentration, another is the mental repetition of a word or a sound. You may wish to choose a word, a mantra, a short prayer that has meaning to you and repeat silently to yourself in rhythm to your breath. An ancient and natural mantra of the breath is “hum sah.” Imagine that the sound of the in breath is “hum” and the sound of the outbreath is “sah.” “Hum” as you breath in. “Sah” as you breathe out.

“Hum,” a sound of fulfillment. “Sah,” a sound of letting go.

And whenever the mind wanders off as it will, simply observe that and without judging, gently return to your awareness of the breathe of hum on the in breath and sah on the outbreath.

Pause

Whenever you get caught up in distractions, restlessness, anxiety or whatever. Gently begin to observe the presence of those thoughts and simply note to yourself, thinking, and thinking. Just labeling the thoughts in that way. When you begin to label thinking, thinking. The thoughts tend to soften or even dissolve and then return to the breath. To hum sah or to your own focus and continue to let each outbreath be an opportunity to let go. An opportunity that is present in each breath throughout the day. All we need is that moment of remembering. Remembering to be aware, remembering that it is possible to witness the mind. To witness feelings and sensations in the body.

There may be moments of stillness when the mind becomes quieter and there is only the subtlest reminder of breath or just pure awareness. And when you become very quiet, you may notice a subtle pause at the end of the outbreath before the next breath rises. Or perhaps a slight pause at the end of the in breath before the next exhalation.

Can you be aware of that gentle moment when the breath turns and let go into that moment of stillness.

Pause

And now as we come to the end of this time for meditation. With your eyes still closed become aware of your surroundings. Perhaps visualize the room where you are sitting. And then begin to breathe a little more deeply. Move or stretch a little if you like. And when you feel ready, gently open your eyes. You may want to sit quietly for a few moments staying in touch with the state of relaxation and experience the stillness while your eyes are open. And remember throughout the day, you can return at any moment to awareness of your breath. Letting go of tension that arises in the mind and body and let the breath be your anchor to the present moment in this way, the benefits of your meditation will spread throughout the rest of the day.

**PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION (PMR)**

**DESCRIPTION**

By tensing large muscle groups, focusing on the sensation and then releasing the tension, you can become aware of the ability to control muscle tension to remain comfortable. When we experience anxious thoughts or stressful events the body responds with increased muscle tension. The physiologic tension further aggravates a subjective sensation of anxiety. By releasing the tension using PMR the patient can control this anxiety cycle.

### SCRIPT:

This relaxation is a physical relaxation where you will be tensing and releasing your muscles. By contracting and relaxing different muscle groups in the body, you can deeply relax your whole body. This relaxation can be done in a seated position or lying down. Take a few moments to adjust yourself so that you are comfortable. If you are seated, have your feet flat on the floor. If you are lying down, have your legs extended out in front of you. Take a deep breath in and let it go. Take another deep breath in and let it out.

Tense the muscles in your forehead by raising your eyebrows up as far as you can. Hold....and now release and relax. Imagine your forehead muscles becoming smooth and limp as they relax. Breathe. Tense the muscles around your eyes by squeezing your eyelids shut. Hold....and now release and relax. Completely relax your eyes. Breathe.

Tighten your jaw by opening your mouth as widely as possible. Hold...and now release and relax. Let your lips part as your jaw hangs loose. Breathe. You can say to yourself "My whole face is relaxed".

Tighten your shoulders by raising them up towards your ears. Hold...and now completely relax your shoulders. Breathe. Tighten the muscles around the shoulder blades by drawing them back and towards each other. Hold the tension...and now release and relax. Breathe. You can say to yourself "My neck and shoulders are completely relaxed".

Tighten the muscles in your chest but taking a deep breath in and extending your chest forward. Hold...and now relax. Breathe.

Clench both fists and make a muscle with arms by drawing your fists towards your shoulders. Hold, feel the tension....and now release. Completely relax your arms and hands. Breathe. You can say to yourself "My chest and upper body are completely relaxed".

Squeeze the muscles in your hips and thighs all the way down to your knees. Hold...and now release. Completely relax your hips and thighs. Breathe. Tighten your calf muscles by flexing your toes towards your knees. Hold....and now release and relax. Breathe. Tighten your feet by curling your toes and squeezing them. Hold...and now completely relax your feet. Breathe. You can say to yourself "My legs and feet are completely relaxed".

Take a moment to scan your body from head to your toes. Release any tension that may still exist. Breathe in sensations of relaxation and comfort. Breathe out any feelings of tension. Say to yourself "My whole body is relaxed. I am peaceful and at ease".

Take a few moments to breathe in the feelings of relaxation. Knowing that your breath is like an anchor, keeping you steady and focused in your mind and body. Begin to notice any sounds of the room around you. Feel your body being supported by your chair or the ground beneath you. Notice how you feel in your body and the quality of you mind.

**IMAGERY/VISUALIZATION**

**DESCRIPTION**

Imagery is simply creating thoughts and pictures in your mind using all of the senses, not just visualization. Imagery is the most effective when it incorporates sight, sound, smell, touch and taste.

### Mountain Stream

Imagine standing in a pine forest. Notice the pine needles, the breeze through the trees, the smell of the pine, etc. Then imagine slowly walking along a path throughout the forest. As you walk along the path, you begin to hear the sound of water as you approach a mountain stream. Notice the sound of the water. Notice, as you get closer to the mountain stream, the sound of the water getting louder, the path feeling moister, the air getting cooler. When you get to a step count of 20, you are at the stream.

Imagine sitting by the stream. What can you see, what can you smell, what can you feel on your skin, etc.? Stand up and walk over to the water, put your hand in the water, notice your senses. After 5-10 minutes, slowly start to walk back to the path. Over a slow count of 20, walk along the path, hearing the sound of the water getting fainter, and the air getting warmer, etc. Then, slowly begin to concentrate on your body in the chair, sounds in the room, etc.

### Beach – Short Version

Imagine -yourself standing on a staircase 20 steps above a beautiful beach. Go down a few steps, becoming aware of a few bits of sand under your feet, a few more steps, becoming aware of a breeze against your skin, down to the 10th step where you feel the sun against your back, a few more steps, and you hear the ocean. When you get to the bottom step, step onto the sand and begin to slowly walk toward the water, being aware of all your senses-smells, sounds, sensations.

Walk to the water. Look over it, noting the color of the water, the sound of waves, feeling the sand under your feet, feeling the sun against your skin, feeling the breeze against your face. Walk slowly up and down the beach, noting all sensations. After 10 minutes, take a last slow look of the water, and then walk back towards the steps. Walk up one step at a time, noting the sensations getting dimmer. At the top of the stairs, refocus slowly to the sounds in the room.

### Leaves on a stream

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 on a bridge above a stream. Floating on the stream are leaves from the surrounding trees. This may be a stream that you have actually been to before, or one that you have near your house, or it may be one that you just imagine. 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.

Pause for 20 seconds.

For the next few minutes, take each thought that enters your mind and place it on a leaf… let it float by. Do this with each thought – pleasurable, painful, or neutral. Even if you have joyous or enthusiastic thoughts, place them on a leaf and let them float by.

Pause for 20 seconds.

Allow the stream to flow at its own pace. Don’t try to speed it up and rush your thoughts along. You’re not trying to rush the leaves along or “get rid” of your thoughts. You are allowing them to come and go at their own pace.

If your mind says “This is dumb,” “I’m bored,” or “I’m not doing this right” place those thoughts on leaves, too, and let them pass.

Pause for 20 seconds.

If a difficult or painful feeling arises, simply acknowledge it. Say to yourself, “I notice myself having a feeling of boredom/impatience/frustration.” Place those thoughts on leaves and allow them float along.

From time to time, your thoughts may hook you and distract you from being fully present in this exercise. This is normal. As soon as you realize that you have become sidetracked, gently bring your attention back to the visualization exercise.

Pause for 20 seconds.

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

### Guided Relaxation

It's time to relax... time to take a mental vacation. Start by making yourself comfortable. You may want to sit or lie down... loosening any tight clothing and adjusting your position so you can relax.

Begin to let go of tension and relax your body. Just start with one small area of your body that is tense. Notice this area of tension, and allow it to ease slightly. Take a deep breath in.... and as you exhale, feel the muscles in the area you are focusing on becoming more relaxed. Imagine breathing in relaxation.... and breathing out tension. Notice with each breath how you can relax this one area of tension.

You may want to scan your body now for other areas of tension. Choose one area to focus on, and concentrate on breathing in relaxation.... and breathing out tension. Feel your muscles relaxing.... loosening.... as you breathe slowly and deeply.

Notice now where your body is the most relaxed. See how this feeling of relaxation is growing.... spreading... to other areas of your body....

Feel your muscles relaxing... becoming loose..... your limbs are feeling heavy and relaxed..... your eyelids feel very heavy.

Go ahead and close your eyes, if you haven't done so already.... and as you continue to relax further, begin to create a picture in your mind.

Imagine that you are near the ocean.... just before sunrise. Perhaps you are on the beach.... or a hammock.... or a dock. The ocean is very calm. Most of the water looks very smooth, but you can see small ripples, where gentle, peaceful waves roll in toward the shore.

Take a few moments to imagine this scene. (Pause)

Picture all the details of this relaxing place. The sun has not yet risen, but the sky is just starting to get light. The air is cool, comfortable, and pleasant. The temperature is very pleasant.... a calm and comfortable morning. Imagine the feel of a slight, gentle breeze on your skin. The breeze blows just enough to move the leaves of palm trees gently back and forth. The leaves of the trees make a dark silhouette against the gradually lightening sky.

Imagine the fresh smell of the air... the smell of the clean water and sand. It is a refreshing scent.

Picture in your mind the sound of the water lapping against the shore. The sea is so calm, the waves are very quiet, but you can hear them as they move gently and calmly.

Hear the slight rustling of leaves as the palm branches sway gently.

It is early morning, and you are the only one here. This is such a calm, safe, pleasant place. Relax here near the gentle ocean.

Perhaps you are on a deck with wooden tables... umbrellas, closed for the night. They will soon be opened to provide shelter from the sun, but for now they remain with their cloth tops folded down, as if resting.

Small huts with grass roofs provide shelter for some of the tables. During the day, this place is bustling with activity, as people sit at the tables in the shelter of the grass huts, sipping cool drinks by the water. But now, all is quiet... peaceful.... serene.

Notice that the sun is starting to rise. You can see a spot of light at the horizon, as if the sun is rising right out of the water. See the light growing as the sun begins to rise above the horizon. Small streaks of light shine into the sky, as the sky grows lighter and lighter with the growing dawn.

See the birds that are active early in the morning. Some fly overhead... some are already diving into the water looking for fish. Other birds simply sit quietly. They are enjoying the dawn as well.

You can see some peaceful waves as they break some distance from the shore. White peaks rise in a line out in the water, crashing on a stone breaker that keeps the water close to the shore peaceful and calm.

See the waves crashing on the breaker.

See the peaceful waves gently lapping at the shore. Washing gently onto the sand.

The waves are very calming... they are so peaceful.... so rhythmic.

Watch the peaceful waves flowing like your breath.... in.... and out.... in.... out.... continue to observe the rhythm of the peaceful waves, flowing with the rhythm of your breath. (Pause)

As you relax, you can enjoy the beautiful sunrise. Pink and orange give everything around you a warm glow. The sun has risen above the horizon... still low in the sky...

The breeze.... the warm early sunlight.... the gently lapping, peaceful waves.... softly moving palm leaves.... all of these create a calm and peaceful place.

Continue to relax for a few moments here.... enjoying the peaceful waves and the remaining calm time at sunrise. (Pause)

Soon this place will be busy with people going about their morning routines. Enjoy the last few remaining moments of solitude as the sun rises higher in the sky.

The sun is shining, brighter each moment. This has become a beautiful morning. You can see people in the distance, walking along the beach.

The waves become a little bigger, a bit more lively as the breeze increases.

Everything around you seems to be waking up. Getting ready for a lovely day.

When you are ready to wake up your body and your mind, and return to the present, give yourself a few moments to do so.

Return your awareness to your surroundings and notice the real environment you are in.

Let your muscles wake up by opening and closing your hands, shrugging your shoulders, moving around a bit.

Keep with you the feeling of peace and calm you had while you were relaxing, as you open your eyes and sit quietly for a moment.

When you are awake and alert, you can return to your usual activities, knowing that you can return to this place in your mind whenever you want to relax.

**PRAYER (MANTRA REPETITION)**

**DESCRIPTION**

In Prayer (Mantra Repetition), you can use breathing in conjunction with focusing on a spiritual word, phrase, or brief prayer that you repeat silently to yourself to calm the body, quiet the mind and improve concentration to restore the spirit. Research suggests using a Mantra which has been handed down for generations and has passed the “test of time.” Pick a word/phrase that is brief and has a positive feeling/meaning or attractive sound. Here are a few suggested spiritual words/phrases from various world traditions:

Mantra (pronunciation) Meaning

Om mani padme hum An invocation to the jewel (self), in the lotus of

(omh mah-nee pahd-may hume) the heart

Aloha (A-lo-ha) God is with us

Maranatha (mah-rah-nah-tha) Lord of the heart

Kryie Eleison (kir-ee-ay ee-lay-ee-sone) Lord have mercy

Jesus, Jesus Christ Jesus of Nazareth

Rama Eternal joy within

Om The Divine and power of God

Om Namah Shivaya Invocation to beauty and fearlessness

(ohm nah-mah shee-vah-yah)

Om Prema (ohm pray-may) A call for universal love

Om Shanti (ohm shawn-tee) Invocation to eternal peace

Shalom (Shah-lome) Peace, completeness

So Hum (So Hum) I am that Self within

Barukh Atah Adonoi Bleed art Thou, king of the Universe

(bahrookh at-tah ah-doh-nigh)

O Wakan Tanka (wah-kahan than-kay) Great Spirit

Start repeating your Mantra anytime, anywhere. As you focus your attention on slowly repeating your Mantra, notice that your breathing will slow. As you extend your exhale, release all body tension and mental stress. If your mind wanders, simply return your attention to repeating your Mantra. Mantra Repetition can be practiced during the day as you wait in lines, between events, and anytime you feel stressed or expect a difficult situation. Before sleep, mantra repetition helps free the mind from worry.