

Movement Meditation

Guided Meditation

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

☐ Thoughts? ☐ Heart? ☐ Body? ☐ None

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
- the fact that many others are feeling similarly about this topic as you
- how you might feel with increased awareness around this topic
- when you can apply increased mindfulness to this topic in your day-to-day life



MEDITATION

We spend so much of our lives with goals, striving towards something. But in meditation, for the most part, we do the opposite of that.

In fact, one of meditation's most important teachings is that if we can't accept ourselves as we are in this moment, we will never feel fulfilled or contented.

The paradox is that, once we begin to practice that acceptance, we often become kinder, happier people.

One way to think of it is that meditation is like building an endless castle, one brick at a time. We don't often see the "results" of our work. But every so often, we stand back and realize how far we've come since we placed the first brick, or the 50th.

This is why it is important to challenge ourselves in our practice – compassionately. This is where the Buddhist concept of being a warrior can help. We are being warriors not in a violent way, but by being in the present. We are not numbing out or distracting ourselves, just for right now. We are staying present with the difficult emotions and the feeling of groundlessness that can arise. This is an act of courage – of a warrior.

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Movement meditation is a great way to rise to this challenge. It's also a great tool to have when we simply feel like we cannot sit still. When something very difficult or scary comes up in our lives – a health diagnosis, the loss of someone we love, a trauma – the idea of sitting can seem impossible. Mindful movement is a way to stay present with what's happening in our body, rather than get lost in thought, planning, fantasizing, or worrying.

Make no mistake: being present in our bodies is difficult! Why? We think of our bodies as a place where physical pain lives, but it is also the home of our emotional pain. An amazing thing to observe is that the difficult emotions – grief, anger, fear – are difficult to be present with because of the *physical sensations they evoke*. It is not the thing we are afraid of that is actually causing us suffering... it's the uncomfortable physical expression to the emotion of fear, and, often, of trying to repress that feeling.

Which begs the question: why? Why should I spend time in my body? Why should I stay present when it's so much easier to Netflix, eat a bag of chips, or take a nap?

This physical and/or emotional pain is asking for our attention, so it can process and heal. It's like a puppy or a child. When we hold space for it, the way we would for someone else who's in pain, it moves through us. When we try to resist it... it persists. And the best and fastest and, really, only way to do that for ourselves is to be in our bodies. And movement meditation is one very effective way of doing that.

As you go through these exercises, remember that we are so accustomed to rushing or being efficient, so moving this slowly can be difficult at first. Be very patient and gentle with yourself and with whatever emotions arise.

SET-UP

Lie on your back on a yoga mat or carpet – something comfortable but firm. Have your knees bent with your feet flat on the floor if that's comfortable. Legs straight out is good too.

You are going to move like molasses here... like you are in slow motion. And with all of these exercises, don't stretch to the edge of your range of motion – stop within 30% of it. This is really about physical presence, not exercise or stretching.

Do each of these exercises for at least 2 minutes. It might help you to set a timer.

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1. Start by nodding your head up and down, like a slow yes. Feel your body's reaction to moving this slowly.
2. Once your head is centered again, move into a slow no. Slowly in one direction, and then in the other, remembering to remain very safely within your range of motion.
3. Then, nod yes and say no at the same time. This will kind of feel like a zigzag. Remember, be very gentle with any sensations or emotions that arise with this experience. We are unlocking knots of emotional tension here. The release can sometimes bring up feelings we weren't expecting.
4. Roll your eyes up and down, while doing the zigzag. Slow your movement by 20% so that you're moving almost imperceptibly slowly.
5. Raise your arms so they're perpendicular from the floor. Bend them so you're holding both elbows with the opposite hand, so your arms are in a square above you. Move them slowly backwards and forwards over you – down as low as is comfortable towards your chest, and the same over and behind your head towards the floor.
6. Once your arms are back in the center above your head, pause, and then start moving them to the left towards the floor, as far as is comfortable, and then back to center, and then down to the right – like a rainbow.
7. Slowly release your arms and let them drop to your sides. If your legs are stretched out, raise them so your knees are bent and your feet are flat on the floor. Then, ever so slowly, windshield washer your knees to the left, and to the right.
8. Finally, straighten one leg while bending the other one until the foot of the bent leg is flat on the floor. Then do the opposite, and so on.

When you're finished, lie in a comfortable position and be very present in your body. Get up very slowly and gently. It may not feel this way, but this is a very powerful exercise. Take your time returning to "life", and notice any emotions coming up throughout the rest of the day.

