

Focus on the Present - Mindfulness of Sound Meditation

"Listen to silence, it has so much to say." Rumi

Being mindful of sound can train our attention to where we want to be and connect us more deeply to our surroundings and the people that we come into contact with each day. When we internally or externally say, "I cannot stand this" or "I cannot handle this" we are suffering frustration intolerance or as Albert Ellis states, 'I can't-stand-it-itis'. When we suffer from such symptoms, we may experience lack of motivation, difficulty focusing, and a reduction in productivity that promote unhealthy negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, and anger, as well as maladaptive behaviours including procrastination and avoidance.

As with all mindfulness meditation it is important to ensure the body is relaxed and comfortable. This practice is preferably done in a seated position but you can lie down if you prefer.

1. Sounds of Silence

Start the practice by tuning into the rhythm of the breath then simply shift your attention to the sounds that come and go each moment wherever you are - if there are no sounds then just notice the silence. Notice, as you pay attention to the sounds, whether you have any preferences and notice whether some sounds are pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

2. Sounds of Noise

We often perceive sound as a distraction so in this practice we are going to use sound e.g. random construction noise or a beeping alarm to anchor our practice and become part of the process.

Set yourself up by sitting comfortably in a chair or on the floor or wherever you feel comfortable, upright or lying down and breath. When you hear a (harsh) sound pay attention to your reaction/emotion to that sound and do not direct your attention to the actual sound. If the sound is unpleasant or startling, triggering annoyance or irritation – allow that feeling to be present, simply notice the feeling and do not try to change it ... try to accept it.

This meditation develops our frustration threshold which in turn aids in the development of emotional balance. Your frustration threshold improves as you accept sound/noise to be part of your meditation practice.

3. Sounds of Music

Chose a piece of music that you love and set aside some uninterrupted time to practice mindful listening, allowing you to be fully present to the music. Tune in to the different instruments, sounds and pauses in the piece and, notice how you feel. If your mind wanders, recognise the thought and let it go and bring your attention back to the music.

Tip

If you can surrender to what is happening in the present moment without attempting to alter the immediate experience you will cultivate an improved ability to tolerate a full range of emotional, cognitive and physical experiences, without trying to suppress unpleasant experiences. Be gentle, playful and patient and try to bring some humour to your practice. Once mastered, this is a lovely mindfulness practice to bring into everyday life.