



Combat Migraines with Mindfulness

Your body's chemical response to stress can trigger a migraine headache or make your migraine worse. The next time you feel stressed, try these mindfulness exercises.

You can practice these techniques anytime and anywhere. Even if you don't have a headache, mindfulness will help you deal with the challenges of everyday life.

Mindful Breathing

Mindful breathing is a simple and powerful tool that you can use at any time. It helps you notice and appreciate your surroundings more profoundly. Whether you are finding beauty in nature or seeing something you have frequently overlooked on the rush to work, this mindful breathing exercise will help to put you at ease:



Step 1: Slow your breathing.

Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth, letting your breath flow effortlessly in and out of your body. One breath cycle should last for approximately 6 seconds.

Step 2: Let go of your thoughts.

Push away thoughts of pending projects and to-do's and let your mind sort and sift without worry.

Step 3: Purposefully watch your breath.

With every inhale and exhale, feel each breath work its way up and out of your mouth. Feel the pace of your breathing slow and the calmness become stronger with each breath.

Mindful Observation

The power of observation is stronger than you think. It allows you to see through a new lens, giving your mind a fresh perspective (and a much-needed break) as you carefully inspect and explore every detail of your surroundings. Take five minutes to put your mind at ease with mindful observation:

Step 1: Find your focal point.

Choose a natural object from your immediate environment. This could be a photograph on your desk, a book, or even a spot on the wall.



Step 2: Keep your gaze.

Try not to notice anything except the object you selected and let your eyes settle and feel relaxed.

Step 3: View the object as if you are seeing it for the first time.

Visually explore every detail and allow yourself to be consumed by its presence.



Mindful Listening

Don't think, just hear. The idea of this exercise is to listen intently and become thoroughly engrossed in the music, without preconception or judgment of the genre, artist, lyrics or instrumentation. The goal is to listen from a neutral standpoint and be present in your observations:

Step 1: Select a piece of music you have never heard before.

Find something in your own collection that you have never listened to or look for something new.

Step 2: Close your eyes and listen intently.

Try not to get drawn into judging the music by its genre, title or artist name before it has begun. Do your best to ignore any labels and allow yourself to get lost in the various sounds for the duration of the song.

Step 3: Focus on each and every sound.

Even if the music isn't to your liking at first, let go of your dislike and be aware of every piece of audio that travels to your ear. Listen to the dynamics of each instrument, separate each sound in your mind and analyze each one by one.

Step 4: Hone in on the vocals.

Continue to let the sound waves guide your mind to relaxation. Move your focus to the sound of the voice and its range and tones.



Sources: Pocketmindfulness.com, WebMD publications