

**Emotions**

Exercise



10-40 min.



Group



No



Building Emotional Awareness

Noticing and understanding emotions in oneself is considered one of the four key ingredients of emotional intelligence (Davies, Stankov & Roberts, 1998). According to Charoensukmongkol (2015), mindfulness can help one develop emotional intelligence, by increasing people's understanding of their own emotions. Since the practice of mindfulness involves noticing one's current thoughts and feelings without judgment or interference, one learns to observe different emotional states. In line with this notion, Feldman, Hayes, Kumar, Greeson, and Laurenceau (2007) found that mindfulness is positively correlated with increased clarity of feelings, attention to feelings, and lower distraction. Just as intellectual intelligence is manifested through reading and learning, emotional intelligence can be fostered through mindfully attending to current emotional states.



Author

This tool was created by Hugo Alberts (PhD) and Lucinda Poole (PsyD).

Goal

The goal of this tool is to help clients develop their emotional awareness through mindfulness meditation.



Advice

- While other mindfulness practices for emotions typically include 'acceptance' instructions (e.g., direct the breath toward the feeling in the body, allow the feeling to be there, sit with the feeling until it reduces or changes) to allow clients to experience the transient nature of difficult or painful emotions (see the Acceptance of Emotions Meditation tool), this exercise focuses on emotional awareness only, and as such does not guide people through the process of emotional acceptance. Clients are invited to simply notice and connect with an emotional state. The goal is not to regulate or tolerate emotions, but to help clients to become gradually more familiar with their emotions. As such, it is advisable that clients choose to connect with positive or neutral emotions in this exercise, rather than difficult or distressing emotions.
- Clients who have a low level of emotional awareness may struggle to find words to describe their emotions or find it hard to describe edges, colors, and any other characteristics of the emotion. The practitioner should instruct these clients to adopt a curious attitude while completing this exercise. Moreover, it takes time and practice to increase emotional awareness.



Suggested Readings

Charoensukmongkol, P. (2014). Benefits of Mindfulness Meditation on Emotional Intelligence, General Self-Efficacy, and Perceived Stress: Evidence from Thailand. *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, 16, 171–192.

Davies, M., Stankov, L., & Roberts, R. D. (1998). Emotional intelligence: In search of an elusive construct. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75, 989–1015.

Feldman, G., Hayes, A., Kumar, S., Greeson, J., & Laurenceau, J.-P. (2007). Mindfulness and emotion regulation: The development and initial validation of the Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale-Revised (CAMSAR). *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*, 29, 177–190.



Tool description

This exercise invites you to become aware of your emotions. It's your chance to really get to know your emotions. By practicing emotional awareness in this way, you can build your emotional intelligence.

Step 1: Emotional awareness meditation script

1. Find a comfortable seated position. Either sitting on a cushion on the floor, or in a chair. Allow your spine to be straight and long, and let your shoulders drop. Gently close your eyes, or, if you'd prefer, simply gaze down in front of you with a soft focus.
2. As you sit here, notice where your body is making contact: your feet touching the floor, perhaps your back on the ground, your sit bones on a chair...
3. Notice your breath. For the next five or so breaths, follow each inhale and exhale, feeling or imagining the breath flowing into and out of the body.
4. Now, shift your awareness from your breath to your body, and begin to scan through the body slowly from head to toe, observing any feelings or emotions that are present.
5. You might detect numerous feelings or emotions throughout the body. For the purpose of this exercise, choose one feeling or emotion to focus on for now.
6. Notice where in your body this emotion is located... so what part of the body is holding this feeling?
7. How big or small is the feeling?
8. Where are its edges? Are these edges sharp or soft?
9. Does the feeling have a color? And if so, is the color changing or remaining the same?
10. Is the feeling heavy, or light?
11. Is the feeling moving, or still?
12. Is the feeling hard or soft? Is it rough or smooth? If I could touch this feeling with my hand, what would its texture be like?
13. Now, if you were to give a name to this feeling or emotion, what would it be? Can you identify it? Can you give it a label?
14. If a name for this feeling doesn't come to mind, that's OK. Be kind to yourself, and continue to observe the feeling in the body with curiosity and without judgment, until the nature of this emotion becomes clearer to you.
15. Continue to get to know this emotion for another five or so minutes. When you feel that you have reached a level of comfort with and understanding of this feeling, gently open your eyes and bring your attention back to the room you are in.



Step 2: Reflection

In the space below, write about your experience in Step 1 in as much detail as possible. Writing about your experience of this emotion will enhance your understanding and familiarity with it.