

Week 4 Mindfulness

Pleasant place

Place both feet flat on the floor about a shoulder's width apart and rest your hands in your lap. If you feel comfortable, close your eyes, or look down at the floor if you would prefer. Allow yourself to have a gentle facial expression, perhaps a slight smile.

Start by gently focusing on your breathing. As you breathe in, try to allow the air to come down into your diaphragm; feeling the area underneath your ribs move as you breathe in and out until you find a breathing pattern that, for you, seems to be your own soothing, comforting rhythm. It's like you're checking in, linking up, with the rhythm within your body that is soothing and calming to you.

When you are ready begin to create a place in your mind – a place that is pleasant and calming for you. If at any point you notice your mind being pulled away by thoughts, gently notice that this has happened and come back to the exercise.

Imagine looking around you, what can you see? It might be a beautiful wood where the leaves of the trees dance gently in the breeze, shafts of light touching the ground. Or it might be a beautiful beach with the sea stretching out to the horizon where it meets the sky. Or relaxing next to a log fire...

Now focus on what you can feel, like the sensation of the sun on your face or a breeze going your hair, or the feel of sand underfoot.

Next think about what you can hear... perhaps the rustle of the leaves on the trees, or birds singing, or the sound of waves on the sand...

Now think about whether you can smell anything such as the salty smell of the sea, or the smell of wood smoke, or a sweetness in the air...

When you bring your pleasant place to mind allow your body to relax. Think about your facial expression: allow it to have a soft smile of pleasure at being there.

Imagine that the place itself takes joy in you being there. Allow yourself to feel how your pleasant place has pleasure in you being there. Notice your feelings when you imagine this place is happy with you being there – even if it is just a fleeting sense of where the image might be, try to create an emotional connection to this place.

Then when you are ready, begin to let the image fade and start to bring your attention back into the room. Wriggle your hands and feet and gradually open your eyes, moving back in the here and now.

You may find it helpful to get materials together that can help you to visualise your pleasant place. Is there a certain texture, sound, image or smell that would help you to bring to mind your pleasant place? Perhaps a pebble from the beach? Or a scent of lavender? If you can find an item that will remind you of your place you can keep this close by and use it to assist you in bringing your pleasant place to mind in future.