

ANCHORING IN THE PRESENT

The present moment is the only moment that counts. If you are truly in the moment, you are not being pulled back into the past or drawn into the future. It is the space between the past and the future where time can stand still. This is an important concept for the client to experience, enjoy, and understand.

The following exercise is designed to engage the client in the moment and serves as a precursor to better understanding mindfulness. In this space, the client may experience calm, clarity, safety, security, strength, and hope that their life can be different.

This exercise can be conducted routinely with clients. Make sure the client is sitting comfortably and erect in a chair with their feet firmly planted on the ground and then instruct them to do the following:

Close your eyes and become aware of what is going on around you. Feel your feet. Move them. The best way to ground yourself quickly is to feel your feet. Can you feel your socks? (Pause.) Can you feel the inner soles of your shoes? (Pause.) Can you feel the rug under your feet? (Pause.) Can you feel the concrete under the rug? (Pause.) Can you feel the hardness under your feet? (Pause.) How about what is under the concrete? (Pause.) Can you feel the coldness of the damp earth beneath the concrete? (Pause.) Now feel the texture of the upholstery of the chair on which you are sitting. (Pause.) Feel it. Take it in. (Pause.) Can you feel the foam under the fabric? (Pause.) Can you feel the wood structure that supports the chair? (Pause.)

Listen to the sound of my voice as I talk. Listen to what other sounds you can hear. Can you hear the overhead fan? (Pause.) Can you hear the traffic outside? (Pause.) Can you hear voices in the hall outside? (Pause.) What else can you hear? (Pause.) Listen to all the sounds that you were consciously unaware of 30 seconds ago.

Take a breath. What do you smell? Feel the cool air in your nostrils. How does it feel? What do you smell? Taste the saliva in your mouth. Feel what your skin feels.

Please open your eyes now and look around. What shapes do you see? (Pause.) Look at the colors, shapes, patterns, designs, and textures of everything in the room. (Pause.) Count 10 things in the room that are blue. (Pause.) Now count 10 things that are red. (Pause.)

How are you feeling? Are you feeling differently than before we started this exercise?

Seeing, or, in this case, feeling, is believing. An important offshoot of this exercise is that the client has an opportunity to feel the difference between living in the present versus living in the past or future.

Once the client appears to be fully present, ask them to **notice how it feels and report their experience of being here**. Then ask them to **focus on a disturbing event in their past**. "How does that feel?"

Have them **come back to the present**. Then ask them to **focus on something disturbing that may be happening in the future**. "How does that feel?"

Often the client can experience what it is truly like to be "in the present."