

Sitting Meditation: Helpful Hints

- It's worth taking some time to find a sitting position that works for you. The idea is to find a comfortable, stable sitting position, with your back erect but not stiff.
- It's fine to use a chair—there's nothing special about sitting on the floor, although some people find it more comfortable. If you use a chair, choose one that has a straight back and allows your feet to be flat on the floor with your legs uncrossed. It is best, if you can, to sit well away from the back of the chair so that your spine is self-supporting.
- If you sit on a soft surface on the floor, use a firm, thick cushion, or a meditation bench or stool, that raises your bottom three to six inches off the floor and allows your knees to touch the floor. You have the choice of three different ways to sit:



Option 1: on a cushion, drawing one heel in close to your body and folding your other leg in front of it

Option 2: kneeling with a cushion between your feet

Option 3: sitting on a meditation bench or stool



Option 1



Option 2



Option 3

Experiment with the height of the cushions or bench until you feel comfortable and firmly supported.

Whatever you sit on, arrange things so that your knees are lower than your hips.

When you sit with your knees lower than your hips, your lower back will have a gentle inward curve and your spine will be self-supporting. Rest your hands in your lap or on your thighs.

Many people find a bench the ideal way to get the right posture—you can experiment with adding cushions or a folded blanket to get the height just right for you.

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YOUR MIND'S TOP 10 UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS

When you've watched your mind a great deal and seen the same old thoughts come up again and again, you will eventually find you don't rise to the bait anymore.

Naming your familiar thought patterns can help you recognize them when they start up. It allows you to say, "Ah, I know this program. This is my 'I can't stand my boss' program or my 'No one recognizes how hard I work' program." The recognition of thought patterns for what they are creates space between you and them. Eventually you may see these familiar patterns so clearly that they will no longer press your buttons.

See if you can identify your own Top 10 unhelpful thought patterns or programs. Keep a record of these "usual suspects" here:

Program 1 _____

Program 2 _____

Program 3 _____

Program 4 _____

Program 5 _____

Program 6 _____

Program 7 _____

Program 8 _____

Program 9 _____

Program 10 _____

It's fine to make this a continuing project extending over the next few weeks—and you don't have to find 10! (Feel free to make extra copies or download this from www.guilford.com/teasdale-materials.)

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DEPRESSION EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

What triggers emotional distress or depression for you?

- Triggers can be external (things that happen to you) or internal (e.g., thoughts, feelings, memories, concerns).
- Consider small triggers as well as large ones—sometimes something that seems quite trivial can spark a downward mood spiral.

What sorts of thoughts run through your mind when you first feel your mood dropping or your feelings running out of control?

What other emotions do you notice as well?

What happens in your body?

What do you do or feel like doing?

What old habits of thinking or behavior might unwittingly keep you stuck in painful moods? (e.g., ruminating, trying to suppress or turn away from painful thoughts and feelings, struggling with them instead of allowing and exploring them)

What, in the past, has prevented you from noticing and attending to warning signs and signals? (e.g., pushing away, denial, distraction, a sense of hopelessness, using alcohol, arguments, blaming family members or colleagues)

How might you include friends and family members in your early warning system?

It's quite likely that thinking back to the past in this way has reawakened some sad feelings right now. If this is true for you, now would be a good time to

Take a 3-minute breathing space.

MY EARLY WARNING SIGNS (RELAPSE SIGNATURE)

The five key signs that tell me that my life may be spinning out of control or that depression may be taking hold again are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

MY LIST OF PLEASURE (P) ACTIVITIES

Examples: *Visit a friend, watch something funny or uplifting on TV, listen to music, have a nice hot bath, treat yourself to a favorite food.*

P Activity 1 _____

P Activity 2 _____

P Activity 3 _____

P Activity 4 _____

P Activity 5 _____

P Activity 6 _____

P Activity 7 _____

P Activity 8 _____

P Activity 9 _____

P Activity 10 _____

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MY LIST OF MASTERY (M) ACTIVITIES

Examples: *Clear out a drawer, pay a bill, catch up with e-mails, wash the car, do something you have put off doing (no matter how small or irrelevant it may seem).*

M Activity 1 _____

M Activity 2 _____

M Activity 3 _____

M Activity 4 _____

M Activity 5 _____

M Activity 6 _____

M Activity 7 _____

M Activity 8 _____

M Activity 9 _____

M Activity 10 _____

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My Pattern of Daily Practice

Weekdays:

1. *Responsive Breathing Spaces* _____
2. _____
3. _____

Weekend:

1. *Responsive Breathing Spaces* _____
2. _____
3. _____

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My Action Plan

Dear _____:

I know you probably will not be keen on this idea, but I think it is very important for you to take action as soon as you or those around you notice the following signs that tell you that things are beginning to get out of control:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

I recommend the following action:

- **Step 1:** Begin with a breathing space.
- **Step 2:** Use these practices to gather yourself as best you can:

- **Step 3:** Take some action that will give a sense of **pleasure** or **mastery**:

Be **mindful** of the following obstacles that may block constructive action:

What you need at this time is no different from what you have already practiced many times throughout the MBCT course.

Good luck!

Signed _____ Date _____