

## Brief Mindfulness

Begin by sitting comfortably with your feet flat on the ground and your back supported by the back of the chair. Arrange your head, neck, and shoulders so that they are upright but not stiff. As we do this exercise, you can do one of two things with your eyes: you can either close them or, if you prefer not to, you can leave them open with your lids half closed and your eyes directed at a point approximately 30° in front of you. This is how we will conduct most mindfulness exercises this semester. This is not the "right" way to do it, but it's a useful way to start.

If you are comfortable, begin by allowing your eyes to close gently. In your mind's eye, turn your attention to your breathing... \*Simply observe the rising and falling of your breath in your chest and belly... Though you will likely be tempted, there is no need to try to control your breathing in any way. As best you can, allow your breath to breathe itself... Next, turn your attention to your body in the chair... Scan your body, observing the places where you make contact with the chair... Notice the sensations of touch or pressure there...

As you do this exercise, you will notice that your mind tends to drift off. That's completely normal: that is what minds do. Minds are prone to drifting off toward problem solving, predicting, worrying, planning, judging, and a variety of other activities. When you notice that you have done this, just gently bring yourself back to this moment and the area of your body or the environment to which I'm directing your attention...

Now, turn your attention to your feet inside your shoes... Notice the variety of sensations there: touch, pressure, temperature... See if you can pick out each individual toe... If it helps, wiggle your toes a little bit... Next, turn your attention to the places where your skin makes contact with the air – on your face, on your hands, wherever... Notice the sensations there... Next, turn your attention to the sounds around you... Both inside this room and, if you can pick them out, outside this room...

Finally bring your attention back to your breathing... Watch the rising and falling in your chest and belly as your breath flows in and flows out... This here, what you are noticing, is the present moment and this exercise is a simple practice in mindfulness: paying attention to the here and now, without judgment.

*\*To maintain a pace that is not too fast (a common problem), consider allowing yourself to complete three full breaths with each ellipsis.*