

Mindfulness of Emotions

The typical duration of this exercise is 5 minutes, although it may take longer if emotion remains elevated. Do not conduct this meditation near the end of a session in case more time is needed to regulate emotion. Allow for at least 20 minutes. Prior to beginning the mindfulness of emotions meditation, engage the client in an induction.

Prior to beginning the induction, determine a situation that will likely result in heightened emotion. Using imagery will typically result in higher emotion than verbal thoughts.

Instruction for the Emotion Induction

First, identify a situation where the feared emotion (anxiety/depression/panic/fear/anger) is at least a 5/10. It can be a situation that has already happened, such as the funeral of a loved one. It may also be a hypothetical situation, such as learning one has a terminal illness at a doctor's appointment.

Script for the Emotion Induction

Now, sit back in your chair and close your eyes **(5 second pause)**.

Try to imagine that situation as vividly as possible. *(Use standard imagery techniques; have them talk as if it's happening right now; 30 second pause)*.

As you imagine this, how high is your emotion from 0 to 10? *(You can move on if emotion is above a 5. Ideally it should be 7-10. If it is below a 5, try to have them continue with the imagery or adjust the imagery to enhance emotion. If emotion still isn't above a 5, it's okay to move on if it's at least a 3).*

Script for Mindfulness of Emotions

Begin recording.

Now, I want you to keep your eyes closed and focus on where you feel the emotion **(5 second pause)**. Where do you feel the emotion **(10 second pause)**? (Client responds).

Describe what it feels like **(10 second pause)**. (Client responds).

Keep focusing on the emotion, and as you focus on the emotion, don't try to control it at all. Just let the emotion do what it does on its own **(15 second pause)**.

You can think of it like watching a movie; as you watch a movie you just sit back and watch what unfolds on the screen; you don't control the characters or plot, you just let the scenes change over time. Take this same approach to your emotion. Sit back and watch as your emotion changes over time **(30 second pause)**.

If it gets more intense, let it get more intense **(5 second pause)**.

If it stays the same, let it stay the same **(5 second pause)**.

If it gets less intense or fluctuates, let that happen as well **(5 second pause)**.

All you must do is notice what happens as you observe your emotion while giving up control of it **(30 second pause)**.

If your mind wanders or you get caught up in thoughts, notice this has happened, and gently bring your focus back to your emotion **(30 second pause)**.

If you notice yourself thinking about the emotion, go back to directly experiencing the emotion as a physical sensation, letting it happen on its own **(60 second pause)**.

What level is your emotion now? *(Stop the meditation and recording if emotion is at least half of its original intensity. If there's less change or it's above a 5, keep going by repeating the same instructions above. Check emotion intensity every additional 2 minutes until it has reduced by half. Use diaphragmatic breathing if you're at 15 minutes, emotion is a 7 or higher, and there hasn't been any decrease.)*

Follow-up Questions

How was that experience for you?

What did you notice?

What happened to the emotion as you allowed it to be present?

Were you able to tolerate experiencing the emotion?

Did [the client's beliefs about emotion] end up happening?

What do you make of that?

Was this helpful?

Do you think it would be helpful to practice this for your action plan?

How do you think you could use this skill in your day-to-day life?