Three Minutes to Help De-Stress!*

The three minute breathing space is a practical, effective tool to manage stress, feel more centered, come out of Automatic Pilot, and be more in control of our responses. It is meant to begin to create a non-judgmental perspective from which we can connect with the present moment and to step out of spiraling negative thinking.

To prepare for these 3 minutes bring your attention to just the present moment. Sit in a dignified posture with a tall spine. Close your eyes or keep a soft half gaze. Using your feet to help ground you, see if you can allow your entire body to feel grounded. Allow yourself to take three slow and easy deep breathes feeling the sensation of your breath as it flows in and out of your nostrils at the tip of your nose.

The first step is to ask yourself what you notice about your present experience, without building up the story about why. Right now, can you simply ask yourself “What is my experience right now? .... in thoughts .... in feelings .... and in bodily sensations." Just note your thoughts, feelings, or sensations without trying to judge them as good or bad. Instead you might say to yourself “Oh, interesting, this is what I notice right now” or “This is what the sensation of tension feels like.” Again, becoming aware, simply noting whatever is happening in this moment. Do not try to change or fix anything - just hold your observations gently in your awareness.

The second step is to focus your awareness on the simple act of paying attention to your breath. Gathering and anchoring yourself to just this moment, bring your attention to the rise and fall of your abdomen or your breath as it moves in and out of your lungs, spending a minute focusing on just this as best as you can, being as aware as you can. Just notice your breathing without altering it and where you can feel the breath most alive in the body. Keep coming back to the present sensation of the breath, whenever you become aware of being distracted. Try to do this with a bit of kindness and without judgment.

And finally the third step, is allowing your awareness to expand to the entire body, bringing a sense of being more open to your experience, letting the breath be present but in the background. Bring your attention to your entire body, your posture, breath, facial expression, (including any tightness) as well as the space around your body. Gently broaden out this awareness to notice the nature of your whole experience. In this moment try holding your awareness in this spaciousness place, breathing in and breathing out.

Finally, when you are ready, open your eyes, letting go of this brief practice.

You can do this practice (it doesn't need to be exactly three minutes!) at any time in the day, or night, when you feel you could benefit from feeling more grounded and relaxed. The more you practice the better it gets!!

*adapted from Jon Kabat-Zinn & MBCT