

Mindfulness Meditation 5: Sorting Into Boxes

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Introduction: Much of the emotional distress people experience is the result of thinking about upsetting things that have already happened or anticipating negative events that have yet to occur. Distressing emotions such as anger, anxiety, guilt, and sadness are much easier to bear if you only focus on the present – on each moment one at a time. This is an exercise to increase your mindfulness of the present moment so that you can clear away thoughts about past and future events.

Start by observing your breathing.

Don't try to change anything about your breathing, just notice the sensations of breathing air into and out of your body.

Try to focus all of your attention on your breathing.

As you breathe, you may notice that a thought comes to mind, or you may become aware of a sensation, or experience an emotion of some kind.

Continue breathing and noticing thoughts, sensations, and emotions as they come into your awareness.

Now, imagine that your mind contains three boxes. One box is labeled "Thoughts", one box is labeled "Sensations", and one box is labeled "Emotions".

Continue focusing on your breathing and if anything else comes into your awareness, observe whether it is a thought, a sensation, or an emotion and imagine sorting it into the right box.

Continue clearing your mind of any thoughts, sensations, or emotions by putting each in their correct box.

Keep noticing and sorting until you hear the sound of the bell.

Adapted from:

Linehan, M.M. (1993). *Skills Training Manual for Treating Borderline Personality Disorder*. NY: The Guilford Press.