# Mind-Body Connection to Help Offset Stress

*Prior to starting, ensure that you have viewed the home practice assignments so you can confidently review them with the client.*

***Hi \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_***

Welcome back to the session today. We are currently in session 2 of 6 sessions. Today we will talk about how the mind-body connection can be used to help us offset stress.

Before we begin with our warm up exercise, I would like to check in with you. How are you feeling in this moment, what sensations, thoughts, and emotions come up for you right now? Can you rate your mood from 1-10?

***Let’s start off with our warm-up based on positive psychology….***

* *The reason why we do this is to help us focus, highlight, and identify some of the positive things that you do and are doing to manage your social-emotional well-being*

ASK CLIENT TO PICK ONE QUESTION OR CAN PICK ONE FOR THEM:

* + *How has another person shown that they care about you within the past week?*
  + *What has happened this week that has been exciting?*
  + *Describe something fun that you did today.*
  + *What was something nice you said to someone this week?*
  + *Describe something that made you laugh this week.*
  + *Describe something you were thankful for this week.*
  + *What was a challenge you overcame this week?*
  + *What was something that made you feel happy this week?*

Let’s continue now with a tangible exercise to experience the practice of tuning in to our mind-body connection.

BODY SCAN - THIS IS A DIRECT EXCERPT FROM MBSR HANDBOOK (Counselling and Personal Development Service at Dublin City University, n.d.):

Some tips to keep in mind during this activity are:

“1. Whatever is going on for you, just keep doing the body scan. Whether you fall asleep, lose concentration, get lost in distractions, don’t feel anything, forget which part of the body you are suppose to be focusing on - it doesn’t matter. The main thing is that you notice you've drifted off and you simply bring your attention back, even if you have to do this every few seconds.

2. Remember that thoughts and distractions are just that, experiences of the moment to be noted as passing events. When we do that, we can then gently bring the mind back to the body scan.

3. Let go all ideas of "success", "failure", "doing it really well", and “purifying the body". The only important thing is simply to follow the instructions and let go of any goals or achievements. The more you strive, the less effective it will be.” (p.11)

CLIENT CAN BE LYING DOWN OR IN ANY COMFORTABLE POSITION - GIVE CLIENT A FEW MOMENTS TO GET COMFORTABLE

THIS IS A DIRECT EXCERPT FROM MBSR PROGRAM HANDBOOK (MaineHealth Community Education Program/Bitterauf, 2016):

“When we practice the body scan, we are systematically and intentionally moving our attention through the body, attending to the various sensations in the different regions.

Without moving a muscle, we can put our mind anywhere in the body we choose and feel and be aware of whatever sensations are present in that moment.” (p. 8)

INSTRUCTIONS BASED ON https://movingforward.help/resource/grounding-mindfulness-and-breathing-exercises

Start by inhaling through your nose, expanding your stomach, and taking a few inhales and exhales this way.

On your next breath in, visualize or imagine your soothing breath filling your feet, and then exhale through your lips for a count of five, while visualizing yourself releasing any tension you may have been carrying there.

On your next breath in, visualize or imagine your soothing breath filling your ankles, and then exhale through your lips for a count of five, while visualizing yourself releasing any tension you may have been carrying there.

On your next breath in, visualize or imagine your soothing breath filling your shins, and then exhale through your lips for a count of five, while visualizing yourself releasing any tension you may have been carrying there.

On your next breath in, visualize or imagine your soothing breath filling your knees, and then exhale through your lips for a count of five, while visualizing yourself releasing any tension you may have been carrying there.

On your next breath in, visualize or imagine your soothing breath filling your thighs, and then exhale through your lips for a count of five, while visualizing yourself releasing any tension you may have been carrying there.

On your next breath in, visualize or imagine your soothing breath filling your pelvic region, and then exhale through your lips for a count of five, while visualizing yourself releasing any tension you may have been carrying there.

On your next breath in, visualize or imagine your soothing breath filling your mid-section, and then exhale through your lips for a count of five, while visualizing yourself releasing any tension you may have been carrying there.

On your next breath in, visualize or imagine your soothing breath filling your chest, and then exhale through your lips for a count of five, while visualizing yourself releasing any tension you may have been carrying in your heart-centre.

On your next breath in, visualize or imagine your soothing breath filling your shoulders and your entire arms and hands, and then exhale through your lips for a count of five, while visualizing yourself releasing any tension you may have been carrying there.

On your next breath in, visualize or imagine your soothing breath filling your neck all the way up to your head, and then exhale through your lips for a count of five, while visualizing yourself releasing any tension you may have been carrying there.

Expanding your full awareness to your entire body now.

Noticing any and all areas of the body that feel lighter, calmer, or more at ease.

As we complete the body scan, you can wriggle your fingers and toes.

Let your eyes focus and become aware of the environment around you, orienting yourself in your own space, becoming aware of the sights, sounds and smells around you, and re-centred in yourself to continue the rest of our activities for today

WHAT ARE YOU NOTICING AFTER THAT EXERCISE?

HOW CAN MINDFULNESS BE USED TO OFFSET STRESS?

First, let’s talk about what stress is………PLAY VIDEO FOR CLIENT

Summary of **TED video on Stress and What it Does to your Body- 5 MINS**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-t1Z5-oPtU&ab_channel=TED-Ed>

**I am wondering what you took away from that video and if there was anything you found helpful in the video?**

* In this program Stress is defined as *what we feel when everything seems to have become too much* – we are overloaded and wonder whether we can cope with pressures placed upon us.  Anything that poses a challenge or a threat to our well-being is a stress.

**Q) What are some of the things that happen to us when we are stressed?**

**Q) When you hear the word STRESS, what thoughts or images come to mind?**

“Stress is a feeling of being tense, overwhelmed, worn out, or exhausted.”

* A small amount of stress can be motivating, too much stress makes even small tasks seem daunting. Sometimes stress is the accumulation of many small hassles, other times it is the result of major life changes or long-term problems.

**Here are some things that happen when we are stressed:**

* Fight, Flight or Freeze response
* Blood pressure rises
* Breathing becomes more rapid
* Digestive system slows down
* Heart rate rises
* Immune system goes down
* Muscles become tense
* We do not sleep and feel alert/on edge

**It is important to note that we do not interpret each situation in the same way.**

* Because of this, we do not all call on the same resources for each situation, we do not all have the same resources, skills, or tools.
* This program is about maximizing the number of tools for your toolbox.

**Review prior week worksheets:**

* Symptoms of Stress
* Stress Management Tips
* **Symptoms of Stress**
  + What did you notice were your symptoms?
    - Is stress good or bad? Or can it be both - continuum
* **Stress Management Tips**
  + What tip stood out the most as most helpful?
  + What are one or two things you can do to help manage or lower stress?

Let’s spend some time discussing the homework videos with an eye towards how mindfulness can be applied to offset stress. **(If a client is on video, the coach can choose at their own discretion to watch some videos with clients in session, time permitting. Can be handy if there are short videos and the client did not watch during the previous week.)**

**Q) What stood out for you in the videos?**

* What were some of the main points you took away from the videos?
* Did you feel like you were able to apply these steps to any scenarios in your own life?

SUMMARY OF VIDEO [Meditation 101: A Beginner's Guide](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-kMJBWk9E0)

Mindfulness is simple, secular, scientifically validated, and for everyone.

Three steps:

1. Sit, with your back straight, eyes closed. \*OR ANY COMFORTABLE POSITION…OR WITH EYES GAZING SOFTLY

1. Notice, the feeling of your breath coming in, and coming out.

1. Focus, with full attention on where you feel your breath sensations the most- your nose, chest and belly.

You will immediately start to think many thoughts that will take you out of the present moment. Take notice of yourself getting lost in your thoughts, and bring yourself back to the present moment, starting over.

Now repeat this, as your thoughts come back, bringing yourself back again and again to the start.

This apparent "failure" is actually a success.

Meditation is retraining your brain, to come back to the present moment, a "radical act" of breaking out of thought projection and rumination, and instead focusing on what is happening right now.

Meditation should be done, 5-10 minutes a day, everyday \*IF POSSIBLE

SUMMARY OF VIDEO [What is Mindfulness? Dr. Joti Samra Explains and Shares the Benefits of a Daily Practice](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=29&v=lqV7Wp8cSJc&feature=emb_title)

"Mindfulness is increasing our attention and awareness to the present moment, the here and now, and drawing it back to the present moment, each and every time our attention drifts."

When are we mindful?

We are typically mindful during creative pursuits, and when we are fully immersed with all of our senses in an activity, e.g. during a focused workout, painting, dancing, singing.

Under stress, and in depressive episodes, we are usually not mindful.

Benefits of Mindfulness:

* Stress reduction
* Decreased rumination
* Decreased symptoms of anxiety and depression
* More effective emotional regulation
* Enhanced cognitive flexibility
* Improvement in working memory

MBSR, MBCT- are evidence based treatments for anxiety, stress and depression. OUR PROGRAM CONTENT WILL BORROW FROM SIMILAR MINDFULNESS FRAMEWORKS

As Dr. Samra said, keep it simple:

"Eyes watching, ears listening, voices quiet, body still."

Expand client’s understanding by discussing some of the examples for each column below in terms of how the mind-body connection is experienced during the following: ASK CLIENT TO COME UP WITH THEIR OWN PERSONAL EXAMPLE BASE ON ONE NEGATIVE PERSPECTIVE (E.G., A SITUATION THEY FOUND MILDLY ANNOYING) AND ONE POSITIVE PERSPECTIVE (E.G., THEIR EXPERIENCE DURING THE BODY SCAN). IN EACH EXAMPLE ASK THE CLIENT TO DESCRIBE THE MIND-BODY CONNECTION THAT THEY EXPERIENCED.

**The Mind – Body Connection**

| **Thoughts** | **Behaviour** | **Body** |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |

We are near the end of the session, so let's go over an exercise that you can try this week at home if you’d like. Similar to previous exercises, these activities are based on mindfulness principles.

**Safe Place Imagery**

This exercise is useful when you want to find relief from anxiety and worry. Find a comfortable position and close your eyes if this feels comfortable, otherwise keep them open.

* Imagine a place where you feel calm, peaceful and safe.
* It may be a place you have been before, somewhere you have dreamt about going to, or maybe somewhere you have seen a picture of.
* Focus on the colors in your peaceful place.
* Now notice the sounds that are around you, or perhaps that silence.
* Think about any smells you notice there,
* Then focus on any skin sensation- the earth beneath you, the temperature, any movement of air, anything else you can touch.
* Now whilst you are in your peaceful and safe place, you might choose to give it a name, whether one work or a phrase that you can use to bring that image back, anytime you need to.
* You can choose to linger there a while, just enjoying the peacefulness and serenity. You can leave whenever you want to. just by opening your eyes and being aware of where you are now.

Once you have finished the experience, write down everything you noticed and how you feel.

**Ask client to rate their check out mood from 1-10**

**Ask client to identify the takeaway(s) from today’s session**

**HOME PRACTICE - NEXT SESSION THE TOPIC WILL BE ABOUT GROUNDING**

**Watch videos:**

**-** [How to Turn off the Fight/Flight/Freeze Response: Anxiety Skills #4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=agdpFsKGdOE)

**-** [Grounding Exercise: Anxiety Skills #5](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ao4xdDK9iE)

* + 1. ***What are the main points of each video?***
    2. ***What skills/strategies did I learn?***
    3. ***How can I apply these skills to my own situation?***

**Read and work on the following handouts**

**-** STOP

- Mental Exercises (pick one exercise)

**End of Session 2**

**EMAIL CLIENT THE HOME PRACTICE WHEN THE SESSION ENDS:**

Hi \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (client name),

It was great to be with you for Session 2! The goal of this program is to provide you with mindfulness-based strategies and skills that you can apply to improve your mental wellness in day-to-day life.

Here is your home practice for this week:

**Watch videos:**

**-** [How to Turn off the Fight/Flight/Freeze Response: Anxiety Skills #4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=agdpFsKGdOE)

**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=agdpFsKGdOE**

**-** [Grounding Exercise: Anxiety Skills #5](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ao4xdDK9iE)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ao4xdDK9iE

***-What are the main points of each video?***

***-What skills/strategies did I learn?***

***-How can I apply these skills to my own situation?***

**Read and work on the following handouts (attached):**

**-** STOP

- Mental Exercises - pick one exercise

Do what you can, you do not need to do all of it at once. Breaking it down and doing about 5-10 minutes a day can sometimes make it easier.

I look forward to seeing you for Session 3 on \_\_\_\_\_(date) at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (time).



