

Self-Care during Mindfulness Practices:

Adapted from David A Treleaven, Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness

Every body and mind is unique, and we each need to experiment in a way that most serves our own awakening and healing. It is essential to recognise and embrace your own agency with any guided mindfulness practice that asks you to lean into body sensations and emotions. It is up to you what instructions you follow ☺

Grounding practices for before, during or after meditation:

Body position:

What posture allows you to feel most alert and relaxed? Remember you have many choices about how you position your body - you can explore practicing while sitting, standing still, lying down, slowly walking or otherwise moving. (We will practice these options throughout the course).

Eyes open or closed:

You might explore how it feels to have the eyes open, closed, partially open and gazing downwards, soft and diffuse, gazing slightly upward or spread to the sides. If needed, during a meditation you can open your eyes and observe objects, colours and the surrounding space; and/or name ten things you are noticing in the room you are in, or silently name what you are seeing outside.

Using an anchor for attention:

You can choose to direct your attention in purposeful ways to develop an anchor for stability. Your anchor might be at the breath (nostrils, chest, or belly, or throughout the body), listening to sounds, feeling points of bodily contact while sitting, sensations in the hands, feet or elsewhere. You can also choose to focus on a meaningful set of words (a mantra). Or, you might prefer not to use an anchor for attention.

Body scans:

It is possible that previous traumas and strong emotions may be triggered while attending to certain parts of the body. You might try offering words of comfort (see below) to those areas of physical vulnerability as part of the body scan. You can also choose not to do a scan or not to attend or to linger on particular areas of the body.

Comfort through Physical Contact:

If it feels right for you, you can place your hand gently on your heart, belly or cheek (or a combination of these) and feel the sensations of warmth and contact. You might also hug yourself.

Self-Compassion and Metta practices:

Mentally repeating a whispered phrase of reassurance, comfort, or love: *"It's ok, sweetheart. I am sorry and I love you. I'm here with you. Trust your goodness. You are enough"*. You might also repeat a set of phrases such as the Metta or Loving Kindness: *"May I be happy, may I be free from harm, may I be peaceful, may I be free"*

If at any time during practice distress does arise, you can shift your focus to self-nurturing: change in body position; open eyes; physical contact; loving kindness; and/or being with your anchor. You can also choose to stop practicing in that moment and turn to a more external form of self-nurturing – having a cup of tea or a drink of water, walking outside, shaking, showering, dancing, wrapping yourself in a blanket, sitting in nature or reaching out to one of the teachers.

Be curious about what is arising. Relate with gentleness, kindness and patience. And for your own sake, and for all those whose lives you touch, dedicate to loving yourself into healing.