Brownes Addition Wellness Center — Following the Breath Mindfulness Exercise

1. Begin by finding a relaxed, comfortable position. You could be seated on a chair or on the floor on a cushion. Keep your back upright, but not too tight. Hands resting wherever they're comfortable. Tongue on the roof of your mouth or wherever it's comfortable.

2. Notice and relax your body. Try to notice the shape of your body, its weight. Let yourself relax and become curious about your body seated here—the sensations it experiences, the touch, the connection with the floor or the chair. Relax any areas of tightness or tension. Just breathe.

3. Tune into your breath. Feel the natural flow of breath—in, out. You don't need to do anything to your breath. Not long, not short, just natural. Notice where you feel your breath in your body. It might be in your abdomen. It may be in your chest or throat or in your nostrils. See if you can feel the sensations of breath, one breath at a time. When one breath ends, the next breath begins.

4. Now as you do this, you might notice that your mind may start to wander. You may start thinking about other things. If this happens, it is not a problem. It's very natural. Just notice that your mind has wandered. You can say "thinking" or "wandering" in your head softly. And then gently redirect your attention right back to the breathing.

5. Stay here for five to ten minutes. Notice your breath, in silence. From time to time, you'll get lost in thought, then return to your breath.

6. After a few minutes, once again notice your body, your whole body, seated here. Let yourself relax even more deeply and then offer yourself some appreciation for doing this practice today.

Why it Works

Mindfulness gives people distance from their thoughts and feelings, which can help them tolerate and work through unpleasant feelings rather than becoming overwhelmed by them. Mindful breathing in particular is helpful because it gives people an anchor-- their breath--on which they can focus when they find themselves carried away by a stressful thought. Mindful breathing also helps people stay "present" in the moment, rather than being distracted by regrets in the past or worries about the future.