Seeing:

For some, the absence of visual stimuli can feel stifling. After all, a healthy imagination does not come naturally to everyone.

The activity of Mindful Seeing may be helpful to anyone who identifies with this.

It is a simple exercise, requiring only a window with some kind of a view.

* *Step 1*: find a space at a window where there are sights to be seen outside;
* *Step 2:* look at everything there is to see. Avoid labeling and categorizing what you see outside the window; instead of thinking “bird” or “stop sign,” try to notice the colors, the patterns, or the textures;
* *Step 3*: pay attention to the movement of the grass or leaves in the breeze. Notice the many different shapes present in this small segment of the world you can see. Try to see the world outside the window from the perspective of someone unfamiliar with these sights;
* *Step 4*: be observant, but not critical. Be aware, but not fixated;
* *Step 5*: if you become distracted, gently pull your mind away from those thoughts and notice a color or shape again to put you back in the right frame of mind.

Hearing:

Mindful listening is an important skill. In general, people thrive when they feel fully “heard” and “seen,” and mindful listening offers a break from focusing on the self or our own response.

Instead, this form of listening can create an inner stillness where both parties feel free of preconceptions or judgments, and the listener is not distracted by inner chatter whilst learning [valuable positive communication skills](https://positivepsychology.com/active-constructive-communication/).

The Mindful Listening exercise involves these steps:

* *Step 1*: think of one thing you are stressed about and one thing you look forward to;
* *Step 2*: share that out loud;
* *Step 3*: direct your attention to how it feels to speak, how it feels to talk about something stressful as well as how it feels to share something positive;
* *Step 4*: observe your own thoughts, feelings, and body sensations both when talking and when listening;
* *Step 5*: reflect on the following…
1. How did you feel when speaking during the exercise?
2. How did you feel when listening during the exercise?
3. Did you notice any mind-wandering?
4. If so, what was the distraction?
5. What helped you to bring your attention back to the present?
6. Did your mind judge while listening to yourself?
7. If so, how did “judging” feel in the body?
8. Were there times where you felt empathy?
9. If so, how did this feel in the body?
10. How did your body feel right before speaking?
11. How did your body feel right after speaking?
12. What are you feeling right now?
13. What would happen if you practiced mindful listening with each person that you spoke with?
14. Do you think mindful listening would change the way you interact and relate with others?
15. How would it feel if you set the intention to pay attention with curiosity, [kindness](https://positivepsychology.com/kindness-activities-empathy-worksheets/), and acceptance to everything you said and everything you listened to?

Working with a Difficulty:

There are moments in life that are hard, painful, scary and difficult to endure. There are times when we feel anger, anxiety, grief, embarrassment, stress, remorse or other unpleasant emotions.

In these trying times we often want to escape the pain, drown it out or push it away somehow. We may begin a mental struggle with the pain trying to mentally talk our way out of it, or we distract ourselves with activities or drown it out with food or drink or something stronger.

All these ways of avoiding pain only perpetuate it in the long run. Avoidance creates suffering and keeps us from living fully, this miraculous and precious life that we have.

Through mindfulness you can learn to turn your difficult emotions into your greatest teachers and sources of strength.

How?

Instead of ‘turning away’ from pain in avoidance we can learn to gently ‘turn towards’ what we’re experiencing. We can bring a caring open attention toward the wounded parts of ourselves and make wise choices about how to respond to ourselves and to life.

**Here is a six step process for mindfully dealing with difficult emotions…**

**1. Stop, Turn Towards**
Once you have become aware of the feeling, stop for a moment. Take a deep breath and then ‘sit with’ the anger, shame, guilt, anger, anxiety, frustration and fear. Don’t inhibit it, suppress it, ignore it or try to conquer it. Just be with it with an attitude of open curiosity and acceptance.

**2. Identify The Emotion**
Acknowledge the emotion is there. If you are embarrassed, you can specifically recognize that feeling. You can mentally say to yourself, for example, “I know there is embarrassment in me.”

**3. Acceptance Of What Is**
When you are embarrassed, or feeling another difficult emotion, you don’t need to deny it. You can accept what is present. We can actually mentally acknowledge to ourselves…
“I can accept that I am experiencing intense embarrassment right now.”

Through your mindful acceptance you can embrace or hold the feeling in your awareness– this alone can calm and soothe you. This is an act of self-compassion and responsiveness to your own distress, and it is so much more effective than punishing yourself for having this feeling.

See if you can open to feeling what you feel. Opening to it means to see what is there fully without suppressing, rejecting, ignoring or trying to be ‘stronger’ than the emotion.

By opening and embracing the emotion you create a mental space around it and witness it instead of being enmeshed in it. Be creating this space you’ll discover that you are not your anger, your fear or your pain. You are much larger than that.

Think of embracing your difficult emotion in your arms like a mother holding her upset child.

**4. Realize the Impermanence of all Emotions**
Acknowledge that all emotions are impermanent. They arise, stay for a while and then disappear. They come and go in you like waves in the sea, cresting and receding.

Your task is simply to allow this current wave to be and to witness, with patience, as it continuously changes form and eventually disappears.

We often take emotions (especially negative ones) very personally, but mindfulness invites us to view them as simply mental events passing through- temporary waves in our ocean of awareness.

Psychologist and mindfulness teacher Elisha Goldstein suggests, it can be helpful to say to ourselves, “While this is a temporary feeling, it is here right now, how can I care for it, what do I need?”

**5. Investigation & Response**
When you are calm enough, you can look deeply into your emotion to understand what has brought it about, and what is causing your discomfort.

It may be that particular kinds of thoughts were the cause. You may have been worrying unnecessarily about something or someone and that generated feelings of anxiety. Perhaps you were ruminating on a random comment a colleague said last week and it created anger or embarrassment.

You may also find that you have particular values, beliefs, expectations and judgments about how you should behave or be seen by others that contributed to the emotion.

Perhaps an event has happened and your response is perfectly natural or perhaps an old habitual reaction. Allow the light of your mindful awareness to help you gain insights into the emotion.

You may then reflect on how you want to respond to what is happening. This may be take the form of simply realizing that your thoughts are not reality and therefore not taking them seriously.

It could be that the simple embracing of the emotion is all you need to do for now, or it could be that a response is needed to a situation that has arisen in your daily life.

Trust yourself to choose the appropriate response.

**6. Be Open To Outcome**