BEGINNING MINDFULNESS INSTRUCTIONS

Sitting Practice Instructions (10 minutes)

Sitting practice involves three components: Posture, Focus on the Breath, and Labeling Thoughts. The purpose of sitting practice is to slowly cultivate a gentle and observing mind, without judging or evaluating.

Posture

- Sit on a cushion or chair, with your body in a relaxed and upright position. Feel "grounded" and stable as you sit.
- If you are sitting on a cushion, cross your legs at the ankles. If you are sitting on a chair, sit to the front of the chair with your feel relaxed, touching the floor. Relax your arms and place them loosely on your thighs or knees.
- Your back is straight yet relaxed.
- Your head is resting on top of your spine.
- Your chin is tilted slightly downwards.
- Your eyes are open and your gaze is soft and relaxed, about 2 - 4 feet in front of you.
- Feel relaxed and grounded as you sit is this posture. Be there. This posture invites wakefulness and a sense of dignity.

Focus on Breath

- The breath is an object of focus and an anchor for you in meditation. Place your attention on your breath in a gentle way.
- Breathe naturally, in and out.
- Follow your breath naturally, bringing your awareness to your breath.
- Relax with your breath and observe your breath and follow or notice your breath. Feel your body breathing.
- Stay with your breath with gentle attentiveness. Notice the quality of your breath.

Labeling Thoughts

- As you pay attention to your breath, it is natural that thoughts arise in your mind as you breathe. You will notice the tendency for thoughts to naturally arise-we always think, and think, and think. In fact, it's the mind's job to think.
- When a thought arises in your mind, gently invite that thought in, label that thought “thinking,” let go of that thought tenderly, and return your attention to your breath.
- When you notice that you have drifted off, gently label that drifting off as "thinking" and return your attention to your breath.
- Each time you label thoughts "thinking" and return to the breath, you are experiencing a moment of mindfulness!
- Each time you bring your attention back to the breath after you've wandered off, you are developing your ability to concentrate and are giving yourself a "fresh start." This means that each moment is a brand new moment.
- Don't struggle. Be gentle and easy with yourself. Relax.

Helpful Hints

It is often helpful to meditate in a quiet location. Pick a specific time to meditate each day. Begin sitting for 10 minutes each day and gradually increase your sitting time to 20 minutes, then to 30 minutes.

Each meditation sit is different—try to be accepting of your practice and not compare it to other meditation sits. Practice with a non-judgmental and accepting attitude towards yourself. Label any judgments as "thinking," and let them go.

If possible, find a teacher or Mindfulness Meditation group with which to practice mindfulness meditation. The University Counseling Center offers 8-session Introductory Mindfulness Meditation groups for students. You can inquire about them by calling 632-6720.