



Creative Mindfulness

A creative activity pack, filled with artworks from our art collection, accompanied with mindfulness exercises designed to renew your natural sense of curiosity, and help you approach your everyday experiences with kindness.

Welcome!

Mindfulness is a simple and effective way to train our attention. It's all about paying close attention to the here and now. Mindfulness can also help prevent us from getting lost in our thoughts, especially those that may contribute to stress and anxiety. The more we practice mindfulness, the more effective it can be.

This booklet aims to help you pay attention to the moment. Exercises include looking at and reflecting on artworks from Heritage Doncaster's art collection. It also includes creative meditative exercises, drawing, and the odd bit of trivia.

We recommend completing a couple of these exercises a day to notice a difference but feel free to dip in and out of it, as and when you want to.

Activity Key

This booklet is filled with lots of different exercises. Some of these activities may have an icon next to them to indicate what kind of activity it is. Use the key below to identify them.

Meditation



Mindful Drawing Exercises



Reflection



Trivia



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How to Look at Art Mindfully

Looking at a work of art forces us to slow down and shift our thoughts from our usual ways of thinking, to streamline and focus on something else. When we look at art, we engage our senses. We take in the colour of the artwork, the lines, the movements, maybe even some of the more subtle details that aren't immediately obvious upon the first glance.

You might also notice how the art work makes you feel. You might feel happy, anxious, relaxed or it might just make you feel bored. Remember that there's no wrong or right way to look at art, just note how you feel. Take notice of how you might take in your breath, the sensations you feel in your body and what sounds you might notice around you.

Throughout this booklet you'll see some images from Heritage Doncaster's Art Collection, coupled with creative exercises to help you practice mindfulness in your everyday life. Try to practice at least one a day. Follow the instructions below to get the best results.

Instructions and Top Tips!



1. Take some deep breaths (at least 3).
 2. Soften your gaze, relax your jaw, neck and shoulders.
 3. Take a moment to observe the artwork. How does your eye move across the work? Where is your eye drawn to first? Are you drawn to a colour or a specific shape? Trace the path of your gaze as you explore the painting and note down your observations in the boxes under each artwork.
 4. Notice what pops in to your mind as you observe. Don't try to stop the thoughts, emotions, memories or ideas that surface.
 5. Allow yourself plenty of time to 'view' each artwork (at least 5 minutes).
 6. Try to approach these exercises with kindness and compassion.
- Mindfulness takes practice, so don't worry if it is tricky at first!



Remember to come back to this page and repeat the steps above before looking at each artwork in this booklet. It'll help you get the most out of your experience.

Spend 5 minutes looking at this painting...



Kilnsey Crag, Priestman, Bertram (1868–1951) Image: Heritage Doncaster

What is the first thing that you see?
What is your eye most drawn to?

What was the artist seeing when they
created this painting?

Imagine you are stepping into this scene.
What can you see, smell, hear and taste?

How does this painting make you feel?
Happy? Sad? Anxious? Bored? Excited?



Watching the Clouds

Did you notice the clouds in the painting? Although the painting is called 'Kilnsey Crag' the largest part of the picture is taken up by a cloud filled sky.



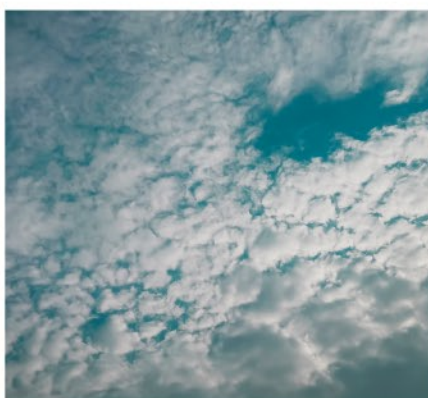
Writing in 1933, Priestman considered how difficult it is to paint the clouds;

'Clouds of the cumulus order have considerable atmospheric substance, although often appearing in the distance rather map like. You will see the light and shade on the nearer ones, which show their actual forms if you are painting with the light shining on the clouds. If the sun is shining behind the clouds, the edges are the brightest part, the mass being thrown into shadow.'

Did you know the 'Cumulus' cloud is just one of ten different types of cloud? Have you ever noticed any of cloud types below?



Cumulus Cloud. Image: Pixabay



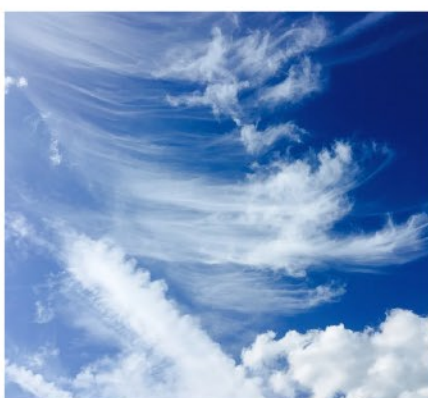
Cirrocumulus Cloud. Image: CC BY 4.0



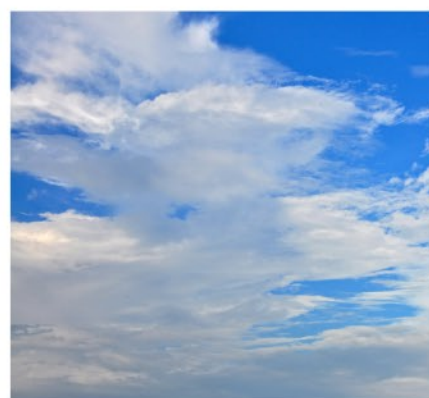
Altocumulus cloud. Image: Pixabay



Altostratus clouds. Image: CC BY SA



Cirrus Cloud. Image: Pixabay



Stratocumulus clouds. Image: CC BY SA

Cloudy Thoughts

Have you ever spent time watching the clouds go by? People usually lay back on the grass and look up at the sky. Sometimes a cloud will take on the familiar shape of an animal or object. It can be fun to name the clouds too sometimes! You might want to try this out at home, in your garden, or by looking out of your window.

For now, why don't you draw more clouds, maybe even a rain or storm cloud, then fill them with your thoughts...



...Then

watch them

float away.

Top Tip

When you're next cloud watching at home, have a go at practising this on real clouds. Breathe deeply, sit or lay back and as you notice thoughts and any emotions you may have, place them on the clouds and watch them as they pass across the sky.

Spend 5 minutes looking at this painting...



Wreck at Whitby, North Yorkshire, Timmermans, Louis Etienne (1846-1910) Image: Heritage Doncaster

What is the first thing that you see?
What is your eye most drawn to? Why?

What's happening in this painting?
Where did it take place? When?

What do you like about this painting and what don't you like?

How does this painting make you feel?
Happy? Sad? Anxious? Bored? Excited?



Now try to step inside this painting. Feel the rain lashing down. The waves crash against the rocks, a spray of cold crisp water suddenly hits your face. Droplets of water continue to run down your neck. The wind snatches your breath... You can hear the squawking of the seabirds and the men shouting from the boat... When you're ready, begin to explore places to be within the painting. You could soar like a wind-tossed seabird in the sky or put yourself in the rowboat with the men battling the waves as they row to shore. Where do you choose to go?

Ocean Wave Breathing



How to practice 'Ocean Wave Breathing':

This exercise creates a state of deep relaxation. To practice, take long, slow, deep breaths through your nose. With each in-breath, fill your lungs, fill your belly and your diaphragm to take in as much air as possible. Then slowly breath out, gently tightening up muscles in your stomach and throat to remove every last bit of air. When done correctly, each breath should make a sighing or hissing noise, like ocean waves rolling and crashing into the shore, and then receding.



Drawing Your Breath:

This exercise is great way to exercise mindfulness through an awareness of our breath. Our breath is somewhat like the waves of the ocean. The waves rise as we breathe in and fall as we breathe out. Pick up a pencil or pen and draw your breath, below, as it rises and then falls.

What does it look like? Are the waves deep or shallow?

Are the waves evenly spaced? Do they alter according to your mood?



Emotion Ocean

Just as the ocean can change, so can our emotions. Our feelings often come to us in waves, some calm and serene and others rocky and angry, but they will all pass eventually. As the real ocean is affected by high winds, sunny days and storms, our emotions can be affected by things that happen in our own environments.

 Note down any thoughts you may have that stir up any emotions for you. Observe that emotion. Don't judge it. Let yourself experience it. Remember you are not the feeling and you don't have to act on it, you only need to accept it... and then when you're ready... let it pass.



Did you know that Peter Jefferson, who read the BBC Radio 4 shipping forecast from 1969 to 2009, has reinvented the broadcast as a sleeping aid for users of the meditation app 'Calm'.

Does the shipping forecast send you off to sleep? You can listen to the shipping broadcast live on BBC Radio 4 at 00:48, 05:20 or 17:54, or listen to recordings online.



Blind Violinist, Lussen, R. (19th Century)
Image: Heritage Doncaster

Music Meditation



Music can be very powerful. It can make us cry, laugh and dance! Put on some music that you love to listen to and just focus on how it sounds.

If you find yourself thinking about other things, gently redirect your attention to the present moment, the sound of the music, and the feelings in your body that the music evokes.

As thoughts come into your head, gently let them go. Simply let the sounds and lyrics resonate in your body. Try to really 'feel' the music and stay present.

Afterwards use the lines below to write down some of your favourite lyrics or write a song of your own!

For best results, find a quiet place, get comfy and use headphones.



A large musical staff with a treble clef and a bass clef, intended for writing lyrics or a song.

Top Tip

You may want to start out with just a few songs and work your way up to longer practice. 20 minutes is a good minimum time for music meditation, but even one song can help reduce stress.

Spend 5 minutes looking at this painting...



Hilda's Warning: 'Mind you're in by half-past seven, it's bath night',
Brumfitt, George Edward (1917–1993) Image: Heritage Doncaster

What is the first thing that you see?

What is happening in this painting?

Step into the scene. What can you smell, hear and taste? Can you hear the stove roaring? Can you smell the coal burning? Can you feel the uneven cold stone slabs beneath your feet? Is the room warm or cold? How does the room make you feel?

Tea Break: Drink Tea Mindfully



Take a break. Make yourself a cup of your favourite tea or preferred drink of your choice...

Notice the temperature of the cup in your hands... Breathe in the aroma...

Then bring the cup to your lips. Notice how your hand and arm know exactly how to move without you having to tell them consciously what to do...

Now, take a sip. Try not to gulp it down. Instead, gently let the liquid trickle into your mouth. You might even move the liquid around in your mouth to savour the taste...

Notice the flavour. Is it too strong or too weak? Or is it just perfect? You don't have to do change anything unless you want to. Simply be aware of the sensations you're experiencing.

Thoughts may enter your mind. Just notice this and let them pass. Instead, try to stay focused on the tasting. You may also notice that you have the desire to rush the drinking. Be aware of this without judgement, and continue to drink mindfully.

As you finish your cup of tea. Take a moment to notice the temperature of the cup again. Has it changed or stayed the same? Does the tea taste the same as it did to begin with? Perhaps it is more bitter or sweeter?

Come back to this page as many times as you'd like and afterwards have a go at decorating the mugs below.



Spend 5 minutes looking at this painting...



Long Grass, Curtis, David (b.1948) Image: Heritage Doncaster

What is the first thing that you notice about this painting? And why?

What was the artist seeing when they created this painting?

What do you like about this painting and what don't you like?

How does this painting make you feel? Happy? Sad? Anxious? Bored? Excited?

Walking Meditations

1 Visualisation Meditation

Looking at the 'Long Grass' on the last page, imagine you have stepped into the painting... It's a warm day, and there is a cool breeze that hits your skin and causes the long grass to dance. You're walking barefoot. You can feel the rough ground beneath your feet... Take in a deep breath slowly as you inhale the sweet, fresh air... And then slowly exhale... Take a few steps forward and feel the blades of grass tickle your feet and ankles...

Notice the sights around you. You see the mix of meadow grasses, and wildflowers. Watch a small ladybird climb a blade of grass. Climbing up toward the top, pausing for a moment, and then flying away.

What can you hear? Can you hear any bird song? Can you hear the chirps of the crickets? A buzzing bee? ...Notice how you feel.



2 Walking Meditative Exercise

Pay attention to the experience of walking, and keep your awareness focused on this experience. Feel the sensation of your feet touching the ground. The movement of your leg muscles. Notice how your body balances itself. As you move, pay attention to any areas of stiffness or pain, and consciously relax them. Be aware of the space you are in. The sounds around you. The air temperature. Then notice beginning, the middle, and the end of your stepping. Allow your awareness to move up through every part of the body, noticing the sensations as you walk. Become aware of how you feel. Is your mind calm or busy, cloudy or focused? Where is your mind at?

Top Tip

Why not have a go at the Walking Meditative Exercise indoors or in the garden if safe to do so? Research suggests that walking barefoot in the grass can have a positive effect on wellbeing.



Spend 5 minutes looking at this painting...



Doncaster Market, Higson, Edyth (d.1980) Image: Heritage Doncaster

Have a look at this painting. And ask yourself the following questions:



Where is your eye drawn to first?

What can you see when you look at this painting?

What can you hear?

As you start to explore this artwork?
What details do you notice?

Perhaps you notice the man sweeping the road? Can you hear the brush sweep against the rough surface of the road?

Can you hear the sounds of dogs barking?
Or perhaps you hear the sound of street criers selling their wares?

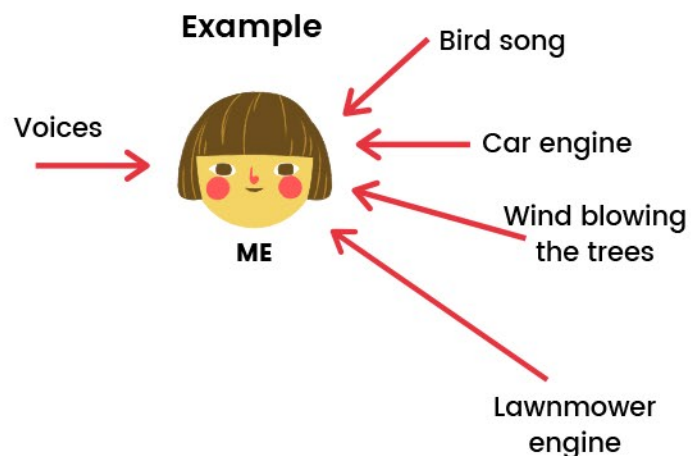


Sound Mapping

Take a moment right now to pause and just listen. Get into a comfortable position and spend just 3 minutes simply noticing the surrounding sounds.

As you become aware of these sounds, try to identify which direction they're coming from and how far away that might be. Use the blank space below to record this.

Notice that they appear and disappear. When one sound disappears, you may even notice other noises within the silence.



Top Tip

Notice if your mind gets busy with images or stories connected with the sounds, let those thoughts go and try to come back to the present. Focus on just listening. For longer sound meditation practice visit:

<https://www.mindful.org/even-loud-sounds-meditation-practice>

Spend 5 minutes looking at this painting...



Cheeking Hilda, Brumfitt, George Edward (1917–1993) Image: Heritage Doncaster

What is happening in this painting?

List the different objects you notice.

Now, step into the painting. Imagine it is you in the tin bath. Your feet are in the hot, soapy water. You can feel the warm water run down your skin. The soapsuds tickle your ankles. Notice how your skin feels the warmth coming from the hot stove.

Mindful Hand Washing (20 seconds)

First, turn on the water and find a temperature that suits you... Notice the sensation of the water covering your skin and the sounds of water running from the tap.

Then turn off the tap, take the soap in your hands and lather... Palm to palm, rub your hands together in a slow circular motion. Take in the aroma of the soap.

Next, interlace your fingers and lathering the webbing between each finger, count up to 10.

Now, rub the back of each hand with the palm of the other. Turn your hands over, tucking your knuckles of your left hand into your right palm, and vice-versa, counting up to 10 as you turn your hands over and over. Take this time to also wash your wrists, thumbs and fingertips.

When you're done, turn on the tap and rinse off the lather, watching as the water washes away the suds. Dry your hands with care, noticing the texture of the towel against your skin as you do so. Feel the sensation, warmth and aliveness in your fingertips.



Mindful Hand-tracing

Find a blank piece of paper large enough to place your hand on top of. Place one hand on the paper and notice the sensations you feel through your fingertips.

Then with your other hand, take a pencil and trace each finger, breathing deeply as you do so. You might breathe in as your draw up along the first finger and then breathe out as your draw down the other side. As you do this, concentrate on only how it feels and let other thoughts float away. Repeat the process until you've traced both hands.

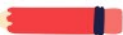
Notice how you feel afterwards.

River Visualisation Meditation



River Scene, Bridgehouse, Robert (1818–1881) Image: Heritage Doncaster

Get comfy, close your eyes and clear your mind... Imagine that you are sat on the rocks beneath the trees, by the side of the river. The leaves on the tree above have changed colour and some begin to fall. You watch one particular leaf twirl as it falls into the river. The leaf sends a ripple through the water.

You look at the water, noticing how clear it looks. You notice how gently it flows and slides over rocks. You then look back to the leaf and notice there are now many leaves in the water, varying in size and colour. You notice that these leaves have words of them that represent a thought or feeling. You may want to draw some of these leaves below: 



Watch as they come closer to you, notice how they come and go. Don't hurry them along or try to stop them just simply let them go by.

Spend 5 minutes looking at this painting...



White Ducks, Dorothea Sharp (1874–1955) Image: Heritage Doncaster

What is the first thing that you see?
What is your eye most drawn to?

How many colours do you notice in this painting? Notice each brush stroke.

Imagine you are stepping into this scene.
What can you see, smell, hear and taste?

How does this painting make you feel?
Happy? Sad? Anxious? Bored? Excited?

Practising Gratitude

Gratitude exercises can be coupled with mindfulness to help boost our wellbeing and spread happiness. Follow the instructions below to give it a try!

1. Get comfortable and gently close your eyes...
2. Then, gradually bring to mind someone you love and you're grateful for – This could be your partner, child/grandchild, or a good friend.
3. Imagine them at their absolute happiest, maybe smiling and laughing.
4. Now imagine you are giving them a gift of something they really want.
5. How does this make you feel? Can you feel any sensations in your body? Can you sense your smile? Notice it and stay with it for a few moments.

What are you grateful for? Make a list and say 'thank you'.



Come back to this page again and again, until it's filled with gratitude.

Test Your Observation Skills

When you've eventually completed all the activities in this booklet, see if you can figure out which painting each image has been taken from. Match the cropped image to the correct artwork title:

1.



**'Cheeking Hilda', by
George Brumfitt**

2.



**'River Scene', by
Robert Bridgehouse**

3.



**'Kilnsey Cragg', by
Bertram Priestman**

4.



**'Hilda's Warning: "Mind you're in
by half-past seven, it's bath
night" ', by George Brumfitt**

5.



**'Long Grass',
by David Curtis**

**'Blind Violinist',
by R. Lussen**

Answers:

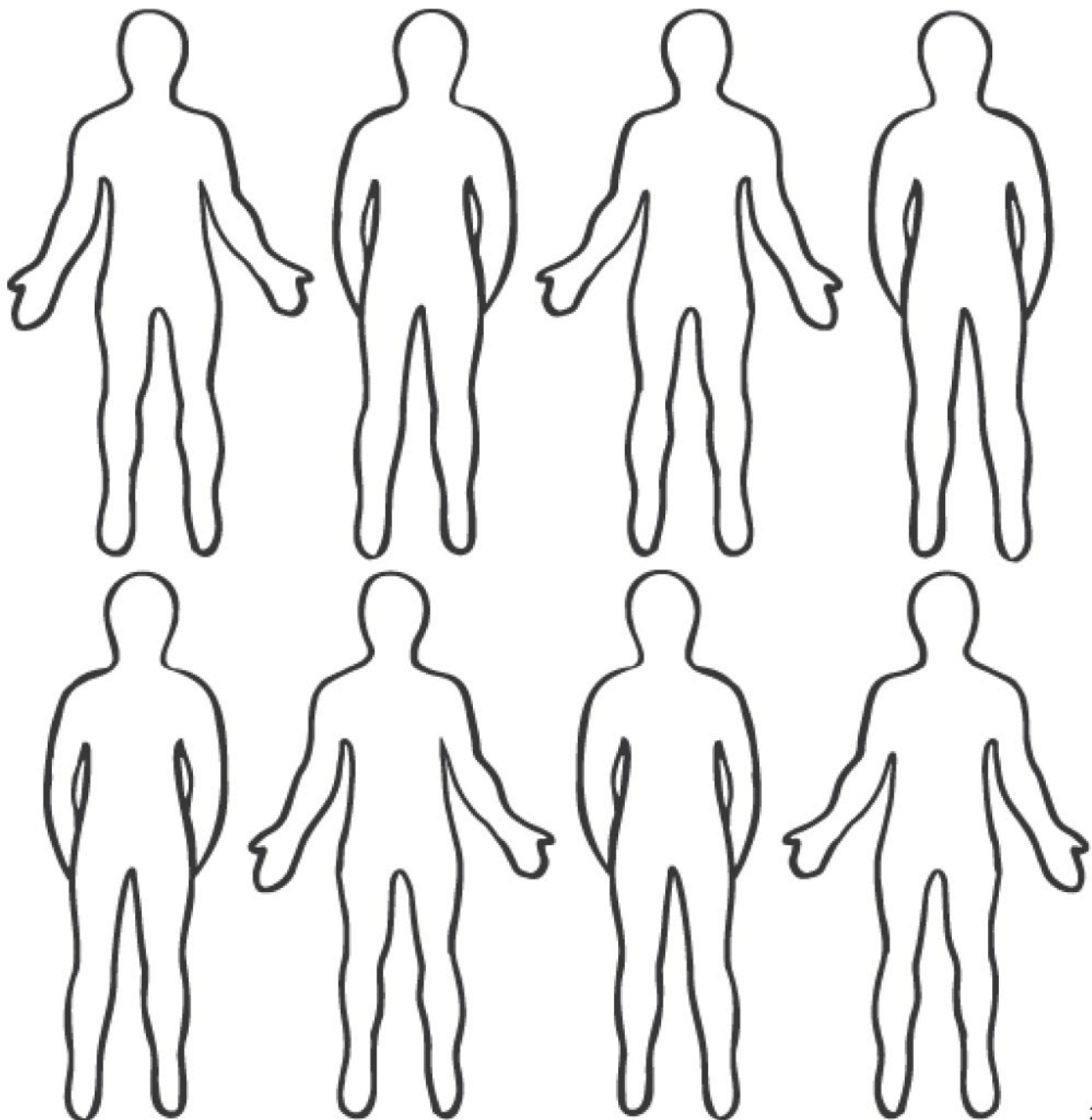
1 - River Scene, 2 - Wreck at Whitby, 3 - Cheeking Hilda, 4 - Blind Violinist, 5 - Hilda's Warning.

How to: Body Scanning

Sit or lay down somewhere comfy. Take 3 slow and deep breaths, in through your nose and out through your mouth. Then close your eyes and bring your attention to your body. Start with your toes and gradually work your way through individual parts of the body: your feet, ankles, calves, etc. Take your time and try to relax any areas that feel tense.

What sensations did you notice? Where did you notice them? Use these body maps to record what you found. You can colour, scribble and/or write on them, to illustrate how you're feeling. Revisit this page as many times as you like or until the page is completed.

Sometimes our emotions can have a physical effect on our body. This exercise can help encourage self-awareness of any physical and/or emotional sensations we might be ignoring. It can also help to reduce stress and muscle tension.



Useful Numbers:

Doncaster Samaritans. 01302 327474 or call free on 116 123.
To talk about anything that is upsetting you, you can contact the Samaritans 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Doncaster Mind. 01302 812190
Support for people experiencing mental health difficulties, including personal wellbeing.

Doncaster Talking Shop. 01302 565650
Free for people over 18 who need knowledge and support about talking therapies.

Find out more about mindfulness:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/drugs-and-treatments/mindfulness/mindfulness-exercises-tips

www.freemindfulness.org/download

www.headspace.com/covid-19

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