

Practicing Half-Smiling and Willing Hands

1. HALF-SMILE WHEN YOU FIRST WAKE UP IN THE MORNING.

Hang a branch, any other sign, or even the word “smile” on the ceiling or wall, so that you see it right away when you open your eyes. This sign will serve as your reminder. Use these seconds before you get out of bed to take hold of your breath. Inhale and exhale three breaths gently while maintaining a half-smile. Follow your breaths. Add willing hands to your half-smile, or practice willing hands alone.

2. HALF-SMILE DURING YOUR FREE MOMENTS.

Anywhere you find yourself sitting or standing, half-smile. Look at a child, a leaf, a painting on a wall, or anything that is relatively still, and smile. Inhale and exhale quietly three times.

3. HALF-SMILE WITH WILLING HANDS WHILE YOU ARE LISTENING TO MUSIC.

Listen to a piece of music for 2 or 3 minutes. Pay attention to the words, music, rhythm, and sentiments of the music you are listening to (not your daydreams of other times). Half-smile while watching your inhalations and exhalations. Adopt a willing-hands posture.

4. HALF-SMILE WITH WILLING HANDS WHEN YOU ARE IRRITATED.

When you realize “I’m irritated,” half-smile or adopt a willing-hands posture at once. Inhale and exhale quietly, maintaining a half-smile or willing hands for three breaths.

5. HALF-SMILE IN A LYING-DOWN POSITION.

Lie on your back on a flat surface, without the support of mattress or pillow. Keep your two arms loosely by your sides, and keep your two legs slightly apart, stretched out before you. Maintain willing hands and a half-smile. Breathe in and out gently, keeping your attention focused on your breath. Let go of every muscle in your body. Relax each muscle as though it were sinking down through the floor, or as though it were as soft and yielding as a piece of silk hanging in the breeze to dry. Let go entirely, keeping your attention only on your breath and half-smile. Think of yourself as a cat, completely relaxed before a warm fire, whose muscles yield without resistance to anyone’s touch. Continue for 15 breaths.

6. HALF-SMILE IN A SITTING POSITION.

Sit on the floor with your back straight, or on a chair with your two feet touching the floor. Half-smile. Inhale and exhale while maintaining the half-smile. Let go.

(continued on next page)

Note. Exercises 1 and 3–7 are adapted from *The Miracle of Mindfulness* (pp. 77–81, 93) by Thich Nhat Hanh. Copyright 1975, 1976 by Thich Nhat Hanh. Preface and English translation copyright 1975, 1976, 1987 by Mobi Ho. Adapted by permission of Beacon Press, Boston.

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DISTRESS TOLERANCE HANDOUT 15



(Distress Tolerance Worksheets 8, 8a, 12)

Mindfulness of Current Thoughts

1. OBSERVE YOUR THOUGHTS.

- As waves, coming and going.
- Not suppressing thoughts.
- Not judging thoughts.
- Acknowledging their presence.
- Not keeping thoughts around.
- Not analyzing thoughts.
- Practicing willingness.
- Stepping back and observing thoughts as they run in and out of your mind.

2. ADOPT A CURIOUS MIND.

- Ask, "Where do my thoughts come from?" Watch and see.
- Notice that every thought that comes also goes out of your mind.
- Observe but do not evaluate your thoughts. Let go of judgments.

3. REMEMBER: YOU ARE NOT YOUR THOUGHTS.

- Do not necessarily act on thoughts.
- Remember times when you have had very different thoughts.
- Remind yourself that catastrophic thinking is "emotion mind."
- Remember how you think when you are not feeling such intense suffering and pain.

4. DON'T BLOCK OR SUPPRESS THOUGHTS.

- Ask, "What sensations are these thoughts trying to avoid?" Turn your mind to the sensation. Then come back to the thought. Repeat several times.
- Step back; allow your thoughts to come and go as you observe your breath.
- Play with your thoughts: Repeat them out loud over and over as fast as you can. Sing them. Imagine the thoughts as the words of a clown, as recordings getting all tangled up; as cute animals you can cuddle up to; as bright colors running through your mind; as only sounds.
- Try loving your thoughts.

