

# Mindful Conversation Exercise

Thu, 6/25 9:06AM • 11:08

Hello, my name is Jackie Hutchison and I am recording this audio for Grinnelians Take Pause. I am here in my home, as many of us are these days. It's a rainy Grinnell morning. And it is before my family has stirred too much, except for Maxine the cat, who's doing wind sprints around the kitchen. So

Here we go.

Today I want to first talk about how our mindfulness practice is for us, but also for our relationships. And then I want to walk us through an exercise intended for you, to be part of your practice.

So, here we go.

Let's start just by, I invite you to take a seat. And if you are at a desk or in a chair, you might sit so that your feet can be flat on the floor, however is comfortable for you.

And take a moment just to close your eyes.

And as you do, think of someone in your life who's important to you, just imagine what it would be like to be a little bit better in maintaining your side of that relationship.

What would it be if you could be a little happier, a little bit less judgmental, a little bit freer to simply enjoy that other person's company, less distracted by your own thoughts and anxieties?

Realize that your practice is also for that person.

It's for that relationship too.

That you, you're really improving your mental health so that you can be a better friend or partner or spouse. And you might take a moment now just to feel grateful that you have this opportunity to do that and that you've taken it.

And then just allow yourself to sink into the sensations of just sitting. Feel the heaviness of your pelvis, maybe the weight of your body, at the backs of your thighs.

Feel any tension, any sensations of heat or cold

Movements

Or vibrations.

And then just notice anything else that appears in your awareness.

You might soften the muscles around your eyes.

Remembering that the sensations of breath are also a beautiful home base to return to, allowing it to be enough to simply breathe in and breathe out.

I'm now going to walk you through an exercise that I propose you take with a friend.

As social distancing continues, we're slowly re-inviting friends to come closer, perhaps sitting across the table, or out on a patio in the backyard with a friend.

If you consider the setup for this activity, you might mute and set aside your cell phone.

Sit with this friend.

And as you do, take a moment to become unconditionally present in your own physical body, just as we did previously.

You might feel the sensations of your physical body relaxing into the chair that you're sitting in.

Bring loving kindness into your awareness by smiling with your eyes.

You might also bring a subtle but real half smile to your lips and set the intention for this encounter, to be unconditionally present for the next three minutes with them.

As you listen with your whole self, while making gentle eye contact, you might simply ask an open ended question of your friend.

Something such as, Tell me about what's going on for you right now.

Allow your eyes to remain soft and present with your friend

And simply allow the time and space that they need to begin.

If your mind begins to wander, or you feel the urge to solve a problem or offer insight or share a story, see if you can recognize that is an energetic pattern and simply return to the awareness of your breath, and the feelings of heaviness in your pelvis. You might also soften through your belly in that moment.

Part of the exercise is just to notice those urges, those patterns, those temptations and then simply return to neutral. Just for three minutes. Remain present and receptive to the person right in front of you.

Breathe in

Breathe out.

You could set a timer if you'd like, if you anticipate that this might be a challenge for you, and you're worried somehow about time.

And at the end of this practice—this experiment of mindfulness—check in with how you feel. Was it difficult? Was it difficult to be receptive?

What was the quality of your mind?

And you might ask your friend, what, if anything, felt different in this conversation with them?

I encourage you to play with this with, you know, the person at the grocery store in the moment when you ask how their day is going and they paused to actually respond. And can you just drop into your feet and be present in that moment just to witness? It can be challenging through masks, because we miss out on facial cues. What a wonderful, lovely gift to give to someone. Your attention might be the greatest gift that you can share today.

So, thank you for listening. I hope you will consider this exercise as a means to deepen your practice and improve relationships and I'll talk to you soon.