

## Session 4

1. This week we suggest you continue alternating what you do each day: aim to do a movement practice of your choice (see week 3) one day and the "sitting" breath awareness practice the other. Remember you can do this in sitting, lying or standing. It can be worth experimenting with how you do it.

You can find a longer sitting awareness practice here:

<https://soundcloud.com/fiona-mckechnie108681984/sitting-practice-25-mins/s-DgF59SMNVHe>

2. A pause or breathing space, regularly and also when you feel you need it.

You can find a recording to guide you through this pause here:

<https://soundcloud.com/fiona-mckechnie108681984/3-minute-pause/s-T9yMnZ8Cq2d>

3. Making peace with gravity
4. Noticing what soothes you

*Engaging in the mindfulness training requires a time commitment and a trust in the process, even when it doesn't make any sense. You'll find that one day, you are aware of the benefits.*

(Participant quote)

### **Mindfulness of the breath – focussing on the breath:**

- Brings you back to this very moment: the here and now.
- Is always available as an anchor and haven, no matter where you are.
- Can actually change your experience by connecting you with a wider space and broader perspective from which to view things.

## **Posture**

- It helps to adopt an upright and dignified posture, with your head, neck, and back aligned vertically. This is the physical counterpart of the inner attitudes of self-reliance, self-acceptance, patience, and alert attention that we are cultivating.
- If you use a chair, choose one that has a straight back and that allows your feet to be flat on the floor. If at all possible, sit away from the back of the chair so that your spine is self-supporting (see Figure A). You can always play with this by moving backwards and forwards so you have sometime unsupported, but work within your body's abilities. You can put a cushion or bolster behind your back to support you too.
- If you choose to sit on the floor, do so on a firm, thick cushion (or pillow folded over once or twice) which raises your buttocks off the floor three to six inches. Try sitting in one of the positions shown below: Figure B involves drawing one heel in close to the body and draping the other leg in front of it; Figure C involves kneeling with the cushion between the feet.
- You may of course choose to lie down, and if you do what is important is that you retain a sense of openness, dignity and wakefulness (see page 6).



**A**



**B**



**C**

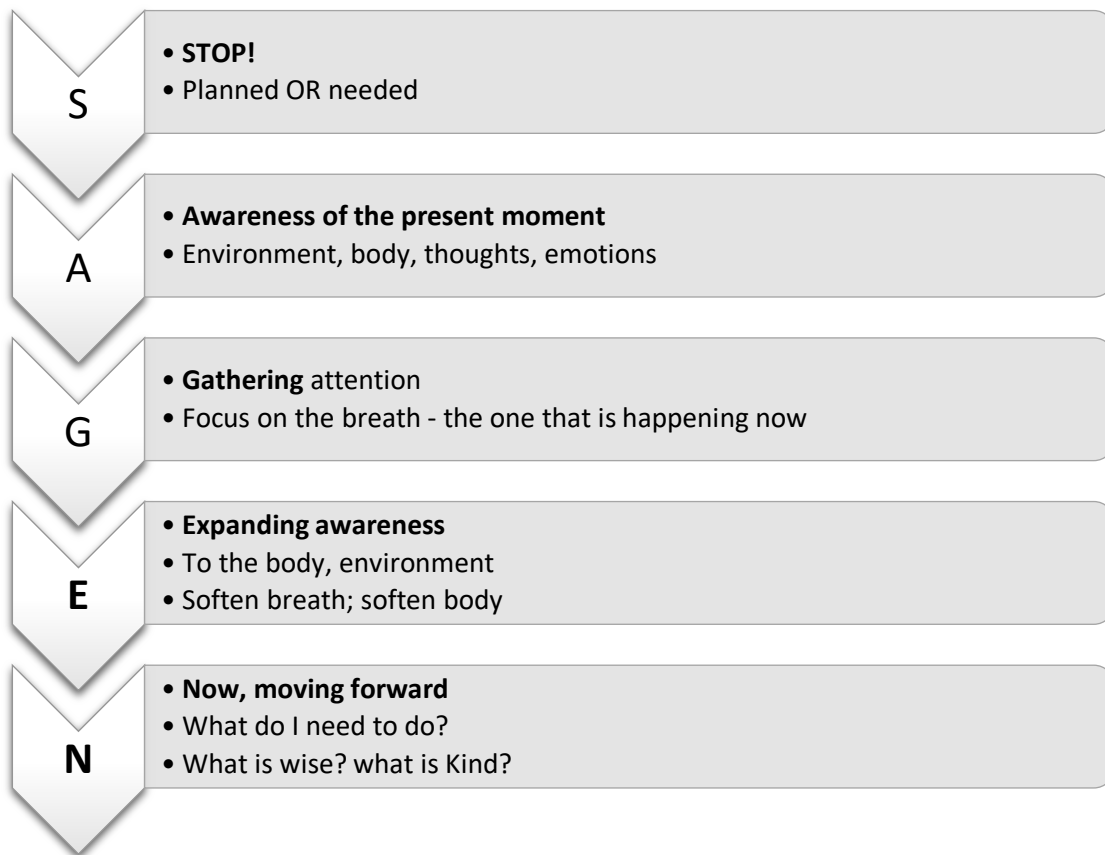
### 3 Step “Breathing space” or pause

Continue to use this 3 step pause regularly as part of your routine. Perhaps use it when you are pacing yourself and having a break from an activity: to pause, check in, and then decide how best to look after yourself afterwards.

#### **Coping Breathing space**

(Use acronym SAGEN), use it when feeling stressed, pulled off centre or needing to pause and check in with self.

**SAGEN** time to make kinder and wiser choices



**When will you do the 3 step pause?**

It can be helpful to do it regularly and link it to activities you do any way, e.g. around a meal, when arriving home or at work. Because automatic pilot is so strong, it's good to decide in advance when you will do it. This table may help you.

<b>Times to do the regular 3 step pause or time you used it to cope</b> <i>E.g. With morning coffee; when I realised I was going to be late</i>	
Times and note if you did it	Reflection

Overall reflections on using a regular and coping 3 step pause?

## **Making peace with gravity!**

(Taken from Mindfulness for health, Burch and Penman)

When we are stressed and tired we can spend a lot of energy “pushing through” which can result in us bracing against gravity and increasing the amount of tension and pain we may have. This week, let your weight sink into gravity with kindness and acceptance. This could be when you get into a car, stand in a queue, sitting in a chair or lying on your bed.

Notice if you're subtly pulling away, straining to avoid your experience- and soften into it instead. Give all your weight to gravity and let your body feel supported by this invisible force. Trust your heaviness and settle into the moment.

This poem by Rilke describes an experience of gravity:

**How surely gravity's law,  
strong as an ocean current,  
takes hold of even the strongest thing  
and pulls it toward the heart of the world.**

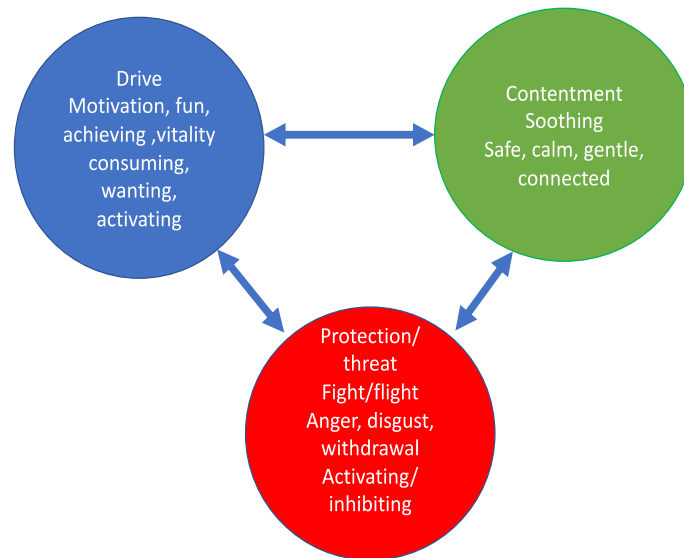
**If we surrendered  
to earth's intelligence  
we could rise up rooted, like trees.**

**Instead we entangle ourselves  
in knots of our own making  
and struggle, lonely and confused.**

**This is what the things teach us:  
to fall, patiently trusting our heaviness.  
Even a bird has to do that before he can fly.**

During the session we looked at the three emotional regulation systems. You can read more about these in the handout for this week.

## Emotional regulation systems



### This week's home practice can involve using the "Soothing" emotional system

- **Soothing system function:** Rest and digest. Regulate fight/flight and drive systems. Is known to be important for child and social development
- **Soothing system feelings:** Content, safe, connected to others; spiritual wellbeing
- **Soothing system behaviour:** Not striving or wanting, slow down, connect to natural world

**Key Message:** Being able to soothe ourselves helps balance the threat and drive systems and is key to emotional and physical health.

How do you soothe yourself? Notice what you are doing already. What else? Can you practice these after the 3 step breathing space? Here are some ideas:

#### **Physically**

- Softening the body
- Breathing slowly, gently
- Nap
- Sunbathe/lie by the fire
- Cup of tea
- Gentle movement/exercise
- Have a bath

What you do now/could try?

***Mentally:***

- Noticing difficult thoughts
- Allowing thoughts to pass (like sounds)
- Talking to self in a kind way
- Saying "stop" to repetitive thoughts and doing something else
- Visualisations and daydreams
- Expressing compassion for your busy, stressed mind: saying "ah poor brain here you go, overworking again"

What you do now/could try?

**Emotionally:** Befriending and accepting (rather than fighting or fixing) through empathy, understanding, kindness, forgiveness, tolerance.

- What would a friend say?
- What would we say to a friend?
- Engaging in enjoyable activity
- Listening to music
- Being with a friend
- Eating good food
- Making a cake
- Being outdoors

What you do now/could try?

### **Half way review**

We are now about half way through the course. It can be helpful to consider what you are learning and what can you do to maximise this opportunity

***What am I noticing/learning?***

***How can I make the most of the rest of the course?***