

Building Mindfulness Through Movement

Meditation doesn't have to mean sitting still and emptying your mind, it can also happen through slow, fluid or rhythmic movements. Yoga, dance, walking, or even your own creative movements can be a form of moving meditation.

No matter how you move, it's important to go at a comfortable pace. Start with about 30 minutes at a time. Focus on the sensations in your body as it moves. You may also experiment with your breath. Begin with natural breathing and slowly deepen it, expanding your belly and rib cage as you inhale.

Five mindful movement exercises

Tip: Do each exercise at least 5 times. Focus on the sensations in your body and match your movements to your breath.

1. Arm lift with deep breathing

- Stand with your feet hip-width apart.
- Take a deep breath in through your nose and raise your arms overhead.
- Exhale as you lower your arms.
- Repeat, noticing the weight of your arms and the movement in your shoulders.
- As you inhale, feel your belly expand. As you exhale, feel your body release the breath.

2. Gentle waist twist with arm swing

- Stand with feet hip-width apart and hands on your hips.
- Close your eyes and gently twist at the waist a few times.
- Extend your arms straight and let them swing naturally as you continue the twist.
- Notice how your twisting movement influences your arms and torso.

3. Forward bend with sway

- Stand with feet hip-width apart and hands on your waist.
- Gently bend forward at the waist, letting your arms fall toward the ground, and your head hang.
- Bend your knees slightly for comfort.
- Close your eyes and sway your arms slowly from left to right.
- When ready, grab opposite elbows and continue swaying, feeling your spine lengthen.

4. Balance awareness exercise

- Stand with feet hip-width apart and arms by your sides.
- Slowly lift your right knee toward your left elbow, then lower it.
- Lift your left knee toward your right elbow.
- Repeat several rounds, noticing your balance and body awareness.
- If it feels challenging, modify the movement to suit your comfort. If you lose balance, simply start again.

5. Neck mobility

- Sit or stand up straight with your hands on your waist or thighs.
- Bring your chin to your chest and let your head hang.
- Slowly move your head up and down for a few rounds.
- Move your head left to right, noticing your chin grazing your chest.
- If comfortable, try a full clockwise and then counter-clockwise neck rotation.

Remember: Listen to your body, do only what feels good, and modify movements as needed.

For more mental health educational resources, visit depressioncenter.org/toolkit.

This document provides general educational information developed by the Eisenberg Family Depression Center. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice. Please consult your health care provider if you have questions about your health or treatment options.