

The following are simple experiential exercises which can help to develop a deeper sense of being grounded through being more present to sensory experiences. Even though they are relatively simple exercises, try not to let the simplicity of the exercises fool. They are powerful in their own right if practiced daily.

The exercises require less than five minutes of your time per day. I call them contact exercises because they are designed to help us get in touch with different aspects of sensory experience. It is a method of helping us be more present in our lives.

The first exercise is to hold an image in your head for one minute. It can be any image but a calm relaxing one is good to begin with. Your goal is to attempt to not be distracted for this minute. At first, you may find that the mind wanders so simply just bring your attention back to the image when you notice the mind wandering.

The second part of this exercise is to notice the gap between various experiences. For example, the gap between one thought and the next. A way to do this is to hold the number three in our minds and simply wait for the next thought to appear. We only need to notice the space between things for a few seconds.

Our next step is that once we have held the image in our minds for a minute is to surrender it to this gap between things. It is a gentle letting go rather than wilfully trying to force the image into the space between thoughts.

On the next day instead of an image, choose a smell and hold that in mind for a minute. Like the image once a minute has passed, surrender it into the space between thoughts. Each day we use a different sense. For example, on the third day we might hold how something feels (touch) in our minds and so on. We end each exercise by surrendering to the space. Once we have cycled through the five senses, we start over and rinse and repeat.

One of the benefits of this exercise is that once we become familiar with it, it can be used as a way to disrupt our minds from following ingrained patterns. An example may be getting worked up over someone's criticism of us. We may find ourselves getting caught up in anger too frequently. We can use the exercise to give us a little breathing room and respond differently than we ordinarily might.

The exercise does not attempt to fix anything. Underlying anger, frustration, anxiety still has to be dealt with in a more meaningful way. It does however allow us to immediately disrupt a pattern which may have negative consequences if followed through completely.

Cycling through the various senses has the benefit of not being overly reliant on one mode of perception. Usually people will be more visually orientated or sounds oriented or touch, taste, smell focussed. Accessing different modes on a daily basis helps to bring better balance in this regard.

Another potential benefit is that if our minds are overly scattered, we can increase the duration from one minute to three or five. This helps us to become more focussed and can bring some clarity into our lives.

Finally, most people are not aware of the inner workings of the mind. They often miss that there is a space between things which can be used as a break from the machinations of the mind by resting there. It is imperative to develop a different perspective from which to observe the self.

The next exercise is even simpler. Every night spend a few minutes being thankful for the experiences of the day. This helps to get us in touch with gratitude which is an important facet of growing up spiritually. If we have been in a depressive mood or in a state of anguish, we can still be grateful for having a bed to sleep in, for food and water in our mouths etc. They do not necessarily have to be big things, being grateful for the small things in life are just as effective.

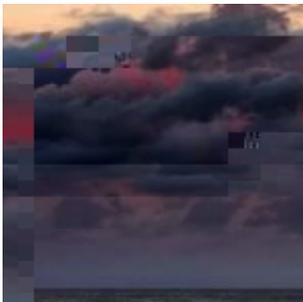
Doing this exercise on a nightly basis helps to break ingrained negative moods and thoughts. It takes a while to soak into the unconscious, but in a few months time, it is often remarkable to see the changes in people just by using this exercise alone.



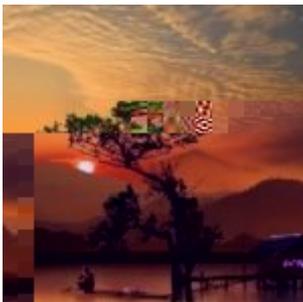
Where is and Who has
Consciousness?



Spiritual Exercises -
Contact Exercises



An Exercise in Noticing
Awareness



A Test of Letting Go