

The Ten Most Effective Tools to become More Conscious, More Calm and More Grounded

Debbie Homewood

1. Slow, deep abdominal breathing.

When we breathe slowly and deeply into the bottom of our lungs we are using the most powerful tool there is to get ourselves out of the Fight or Flight Response, and into a more calm, relaxed state. By practicing slow, deep abdominal breathing on a regular basis, we become more aware of when our breathing shifts into shallow, faster breathing, a sign that we have become more anxious and stressed. As soon as we focus awareness on our breath and start breathing more slowly and deeply, we immediately become calmer and will feel better able to deal with whatever the situation is that changed our breath and how we are feeling.

2. Connecting to your heart.

Our heart centre is a source of incredible inner resources and strength. It is very different from our intellect. To access these resources we must consciously decide to connect with our heart centre and the most effective way to do this is to focus our awareness on our breath and breathe to our heart centre. Using our awareness we direct our breath to our heart centre, connecting our awareness to our heart centre by following our breath. A meditation exercise teaching you how to connect with your heart is available at www.kerrybrook.ca

3. Staying in your body.

Many times when we are very upset, frightened or distressed, we leave our body. Biofeedback allows us to see the effect of this very clearly. When we have left our body, we feel disconnected, “out of it”, depressed, shutdown, foggy..... Leaving our body is a primitive protective mechanism which can happen in a fraction of a second and without us even realizing it. If we can begin to notice when this happens, we can learn to quickly come back. The most effective way to come back is to take a few moments to become aware of our breath and to begin to take slow, deep abdominal breaths, and, then, to focus our awareness in our body, our torso, and allow ourselves to feel whatever feelings are there. By

breathing deeply and then breathing to the feelings, we connect with them and are back in our body.

4. Mindfulness.

Mindfulness practices are among the oldest, most effective practices to help us be more aware, more present and more grounded. Learning any of the many techniques gives us tools to nurture and take care of ourselves. The techniques include mindfulness meditation, usually beginning by becoming mindful or aware of our breath, mindfulness walking, bringing open, gentle mindful awareness to any activity we are doing, such as washing the dishes or preparing a meal. A wonderful, simple book on mindfulness is ***The Miracle of Mindfulness*** by Thich Nhat Hanh.

5. Staying in the present.

Most of us spend most of our time either thinking about the past or the future. When we are doing that we are not really there in the moment of the present, and when we are not really there in that moment, we are not aware of that moment. Of course there are times when we need to think about the past or future, but not all the time or even most of the time. The only time we can truly do anything about is the present. By becoming more aware of dwelling in the past or future, we can learn to keep bringing ourselves back to this moment, with awareness and in our body.

6. Accepting and not fighting what is.

So much of our energy is lost in resisting or fighting against what is. It is snowing. That is what is happening. If I allow myself to be upset and distressed about it, I am resisting and fighting what is. My energy is all going into that. However, if I stop resisting it, I am then able to choose how I want to react to the snow. I can breathe, let go of being upset about the snow and figure out a way to relate to it that allows me to feel calm, present, grounded and better able to handle the situation.

7. Prayer.

Prayer is the most universal spiritual practice. Evidence is growing all the time that demonstrates the effectiveness of prayer in helping us achieve peace, find inner strength and encouragement. There is not one form of praying that is best. Developing a regular habit of taking time to enter into prayer is a wonderful gift

we can give ourselves. There are many resources available to help us find a way of praying that feels right for us.

8. Compassion and loving kindness.

Compassion and loving kindness are two of the most powerful forces in the universe. The Buddha said “You can search the world over and you will not find a person more worthy of compassion than yourself.” However, being able to embrace ourselves with compassion seems to be one of the most difficult things for us to do. Compassion and loving kindness are two of the incredible resources in our heart centre. Learning to meet suffering in all its many forms with compassion and loving kindness will change you and your life. Compassion has the power to transform.

9. Meditation.

There are many styles of types of meditation including mindfulness, guided relaxation, working with a mantra, guided imagery, creative visualization and many more. Meditation helps us tap into other parts of our consciousness and is a powerful tool for expanding beyond our usual reliance on our intellect alone. Finding a meditation practice that works for you may take a little trial and error, but the effort is worth it as the benefits are great. As a starting point, you can find a number of guided meditations and relaxations at www.kerrybrook.ca

10. Exercise/yoga.

Most forms of exercise, if done with awareness, and mindfully, can help you connect with your body, with the present and feel more grounded and calm. There are many styles of yoga which are especially helpful in learning to be in your body, aware of your breath and aware of tension and tightness. Honouring our bodies with awareness, exercise and compassion are empowering and healing to our whole being.