

# Mindful Listening



If possible, have someone read out the following guided instructions as you try this practice. You can take it in turns to read out and lead the practice if you like.

- **Begin by sitting comfortably – upright but also relaxed... Feeling the sensations of your feet on the floor and the weight of your body on the seat... Allowing your eyes gently to close...**
- **Now turn your attention first to the sounds that are coming and going. You may notice the mind wanting to label them, but try exploring what it's like to direct your attention just to each sound:**
  - Noticing how sounds arise – maybe they fizz, vibrate, flicker and then pass away.
  - Perhaps notice their volume [whether they're loud or soft].
  - Their pitch [whether they're high or low].
  - Whether they're continuous or come and go. Are there spaces between the sounds?
- **Now try playing with directing your attention to sounds coming from further away. What sounds can you hear? Just allow these sounds to arrive in your ears without going out to find them.**
- **Then, when you're ready, draw your focus closer in to sounds from around you in this nearer space...in this garden. Maybe some sounds are being made by the plants themselves as the wind moves through them.**
- **How about drawing the focus of attention even closer? Can you notice any sounds inside your own body, perhaps sounds you've never listened to before?**
  - The sound of your normal, quiet breathing?
  - ... your heart beating, or pulsing softly in your ears?
  - ... any sense of a high-pitched back-ground sound, sometimes called "the sound of silence", that's often in our ears...
  - If you can't hear any of these sounds, don't worry. Just notice as best you can sounds from inside and outside the room, coming and going.
- **When you're ready, bring your attention back to a sense of your body sitting in this space, just breathing.**
- **How was that? What did you notice? How did that feel?**

## Why do this practice?

Developing the skill of mindful listening can support us in a number of ways:

Just as with mindful eating, looking or moving, being fully present when listening can be an important way to step out of autopilot and really notice what is happening right now.

On average, we can remember only 25% of what someone has said, just a few minutes after a conversation. This is usually because our minds are elsewhere – planning what we are going to say, or thinking about something else entirely. Mindful listening can help us to silence the internal noise of our own thoughts, so that you can hear the whole message, and so that the speaker feels understood.

'Mindfulness is being alive and knowing it.'

Jon Kabat-Zinn