

Pleasant vs Unpleasant

Mindfulness Worksheet

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

Thoughts? Heart? Body? None

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
- the fact that many others are feeling similarly about this topic as you
- how you might feel with increased awareness around this topic
- when you can apply increased mindfulness to this topic in your day-to-day life



[MindfulnessExercises.com/Pleasant-vs-Unpleasant](https://www.MindfulnessExercises.com/Pleasant-vs-Unpleasant)

With this worksheet, we'll deepen our awareness of the tendency to label each of our experiences as good or bad, positive or negative.

We'll begin by working with physical sensations in the body, and then apply this same awareness to thoughts and emotions. Once we label something or someone as negative, we solidify that thing in our minds as being just one way.

And yet, we've all had the experience of disliking something that we later discovered a love for, or the experience of an enemy or a stranger who later became a friend.

We've also had the experience of labeling something as negative, only to find out that others disagree. So who is right?

In the following exercise, we'll use mindfulness of sensations in the body to develop awareness of the ways in which our mind colors our perception of the world.

Through this exercise, we'll open our hearts and our minds to the possibility that nothing is just one way. If we can practice curiosity in place of judgement, we'll cause ourselves and others less pain, resulting in a life of greater ease and happiness.

Let's begin with the following seated meditation exercise...

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THE EXERCISE: SENSE AWARENESS MEDITATION

- Set a timer for 3, 5, 7 minutes or more...
- Begin in a comfortable seat (your meditation posture) with your spine tall and neutral
- Close your eyes or keep a soft gaze towards the ground in front of you
- Breathe deeply yet quietly in and out through your nose
- Turn your awareness inwards towards your physical body
- Beginning with your feet, notice any sensations in the body that are calling your attention
- Without lingering too long on any one sensation, quickly label what you notice, and then notice whether or not it's pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.
- For example, "tight knee, unpleasant" or "rise and fall of the chest, pleasant"
- Slowly move from the feet, to the lower legs, upper legs, hips, belly, low back, mid back and chest, upper arms, lower arms and hands, and back up to the neck, the jaw, the face.
- Without seeking any type of sensation in particular, remain open to the arising of sensation within your awareness
- Notice the sensation, and then notice the label.
- Continue until you've scanned the whole body, or until your timer stops.

WHAT DID YOU NOTICE?

Use the following prompts to further explore your experience with the above meditation.

What was your general experience during the meditation?

Describe the experience of body awareness.

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What did you notice about physical sensation, or your labeling of it, that was new to you?

Did the labels arise automatically with each sensation? Or separately?

How often did you label a sensation as neutral? Why do you think that's the case?

Which did you notice more, pleasant sensations, or unpleasant ones, or did they both arise evenly?

Do you think it's possible to be aware of sensation, absent of an opinion or thought about that sensation?

If so, how would that skill be useful outside of your meditation?

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What do you think the difference is between “my knee hurts” and “an unpleasant sensation is arising in my knee”?

How might it be of benefit to create more separation between “my knee” and “sensation in my knee”?

Were the sensations that you noticed present throughout the entire meditation?

If not, did the sensation go away physically? Or did your mind wander from the sensation? Is there a difference

REPEAT THE EXERCISE AND QUESTIONS

After having completed the above exercise and worksheet questions, try repeating the same exercise not with the body, but with thoughts and emotions. We explain how below. You might find that one is easier to work with than others.

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Thoughts

Find a comfortable seat just as before, and settle your mind on the breath. As you rest the mind on the breath, you'll also notice thoughts. The mind never stops completely! Each time you find yourself moving away from the breath toward a thought, simply label that thought as "pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral" and then just as quickly, return your attention to the breath. Repeat as many times as you need to. There's no need to go looking for thoughts, no need to keep yourself busy. If you can, spend most of your time on the breath.

Emotions

Find a comfortable seat just as before, and settle your mind on the breath. As you rest the mind on the breath, you may also notice emotions. This could be impatience, frustration, happiness, bliss, anger, sadness, contentment, or excitement. Each time you notice an emotion, quickly label it as "pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral" and then just as quickly, return your attention to the breath. Repeat as many times as you need to. Again, no need to seek out emotions. If you can, spend most of your time on the breath.

Apply the questions above to your experience with thoughts or emotions. We suggest trying just ONE set of these meditations and questions each day.

REVIEW

Everything we notice has equal potential to be lovely or unpleasant. The quality of that which we notice is not fixed. The world is not black and white, and neither is any one thing within the world.

By placing greater attention on our tendency to label things as good, bad or neutral, we begin to understand how these labels can change. Everything that arises in our awareness does so dependently. It depends on our mind.

Once we realize that labels can change, we also realize that we have the power to change our world, ourselves and others by intentionally changing the labels we apply. Further, we could drop the practice of labeling completely.

When we become present with what we notice without judging it, we break down the barriers between "me" and "the world I notice." By softening boundaries in this way, we experience a greater connection between ourselves and our world.

Thank you for your mindfulness practice.