MINDFUL SMELLING EXERCISES

Courtesy of Genna Magnall <https://www.gennasyogasanctuary.co.uk/>

OLFACTION & WELLBEING

Scents play an important role in our emotions. Researchers suggest that smells can change our mood and affect our attention span, memory and ultimately our quality of life.

Without the sense of smell, our experiences become duller and our ability to know ourselves and communicate with others is disturbed. It has been seen that smell loss can lead to depression and depression can lead to loss of smell.

NOSE TRAINING/MINDFUL SMELLING

Training your nose:

Smell is the most effective sense to influence emotions. In the same way that we workout in the gym to strengthen our muscles and be in good shape, we should regularly train our sense of smell.

We take around 23,000 breaths a day. We could create a routine where we dedicate some of those breaths to consciously smell and observe how we feel about them.

The more you train your nose, the stronger and skilful it gets. We do not use our noses as much as we could. We often only notice smells when these are strong and if we do not recognise a smell, it is quite difficult for us to describe it. However, when you train you sense of smell, you start picking on more details and ultimately your sensorial experiences will be more nuanced.

Mindful smelling:

Mindfulness is “Give yourself permission to allow this moment to be exactly as it is and allow yourself to be exactly as you are.”

― Jon Kabat-Zinn

Mindful smelling involves slowing down and focusing your attention to specific smells as well as understanding their impact on you. It gives you the possibility to be aware of the present moment, engage with your emotions and the environment. It is about observing non-judgmentally and expressing curiosity with a beginner’s mind whilst expressing kind, non-striving, compassionate acceptance of what is in this moment.

Below a couple of easy exercise to practice mindful smelling:

1. **Write a smell diary**

* Get in the habit of writing down your olfactory experiences:
* How many smells have you notice today?
* Could you describe them?
* Any feelings that are associated with these smells?

1. **Smell routine at home**

Select a time in your day and keep it as a routine. You could exercise alone or as a family.

Exercise 1:

* Pick 3 items that have distinct smells, like coffee, rosemary, mint.
* Find a quite space and take three deep breaths from a seated comfortably position.
* Close your eyes and slowly inhale.
* Can you associate any texture to the item or odour?
* How would you describe them?
* Can you notice any links between the distinct smell, memory and physical sensations in the body?
* If so can you describe the physical sensation and location in the body.
* If you want to practice in family, you can take turns to smell blind and trying to guess the item.
* Change the picked items periodically for greater fun!

Exercise 2:

* Pick star anise as the exercise item.
* Find a quite space and take three deep breaths from a seated comfortably position.
* First look at the shape and try to memorise its shape, colour, texture.
* Then close your eyes and smell it for a few minutes. Try to memorise the odour and notice any physical sensations that you might experience.
* Keep your eyes closed, hold the anise in your hand but away from your nose. Try to recall the smell in your mind.
* Finally, place the anise where you can smell it without touching it. Bring your attention back to smelling and try to recall the shape and other visual details in your mind.
* Change the picked item periodically for greater fun!

1. **Smell routine outdoors**

The next time you go for a walk, notice the different smells that you encounter pleasant and/or unpleasant. Try to describe them in 3 to 5 words as well as the feelings they bring to you.