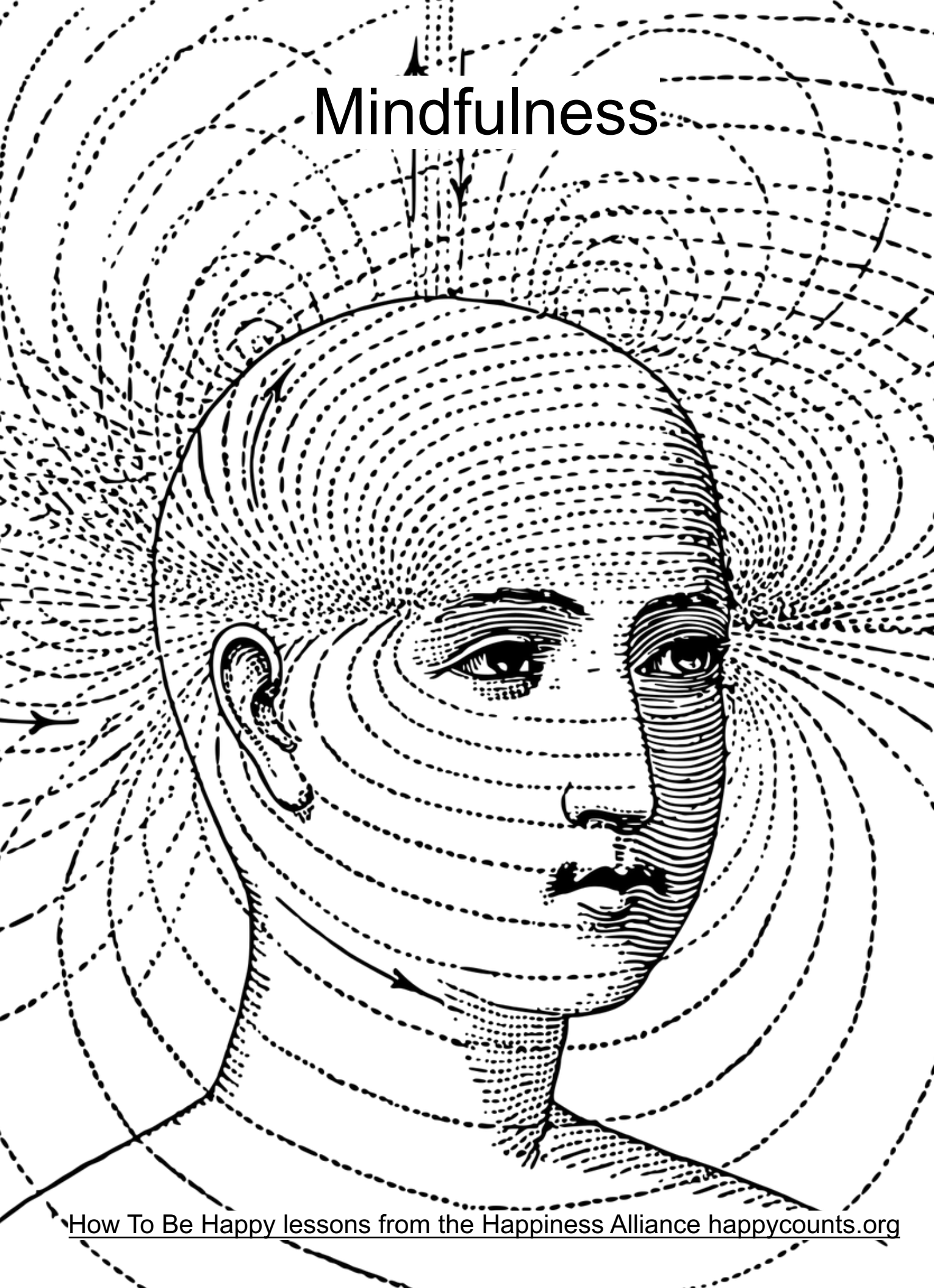


Mindfulness



You do not have to go to a monastery or retreat from life to practice mindfulness.



Not every mindfulness practice is for everybody, and at different times in your life different mindfulness practices will work for you.

Here are mindfulness practices that you can explore.



bare attention



Bare attention means keeping your mindfulness simple.

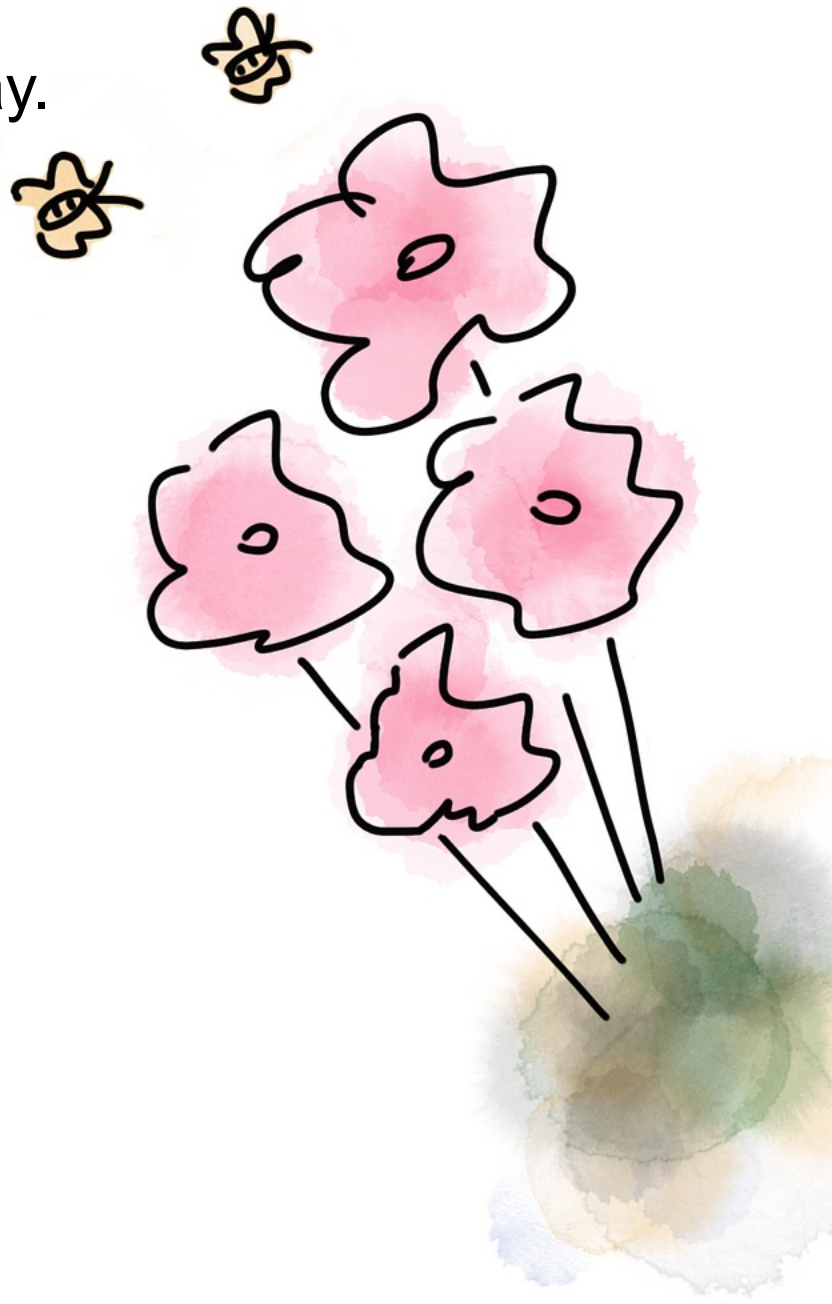
There is nothing magical or special needed to practice mindfulness.

No struggle or force is needed.

No one is grading you.

There is no right way.

Practice with ease.



follow your breath



Spend some time everyday focusing on your breath.



When your mind wanders, which it will, bring your focus back to your breath. Each time you bring your mind back is a good thing – it means you are training your self to be more present in every day life.

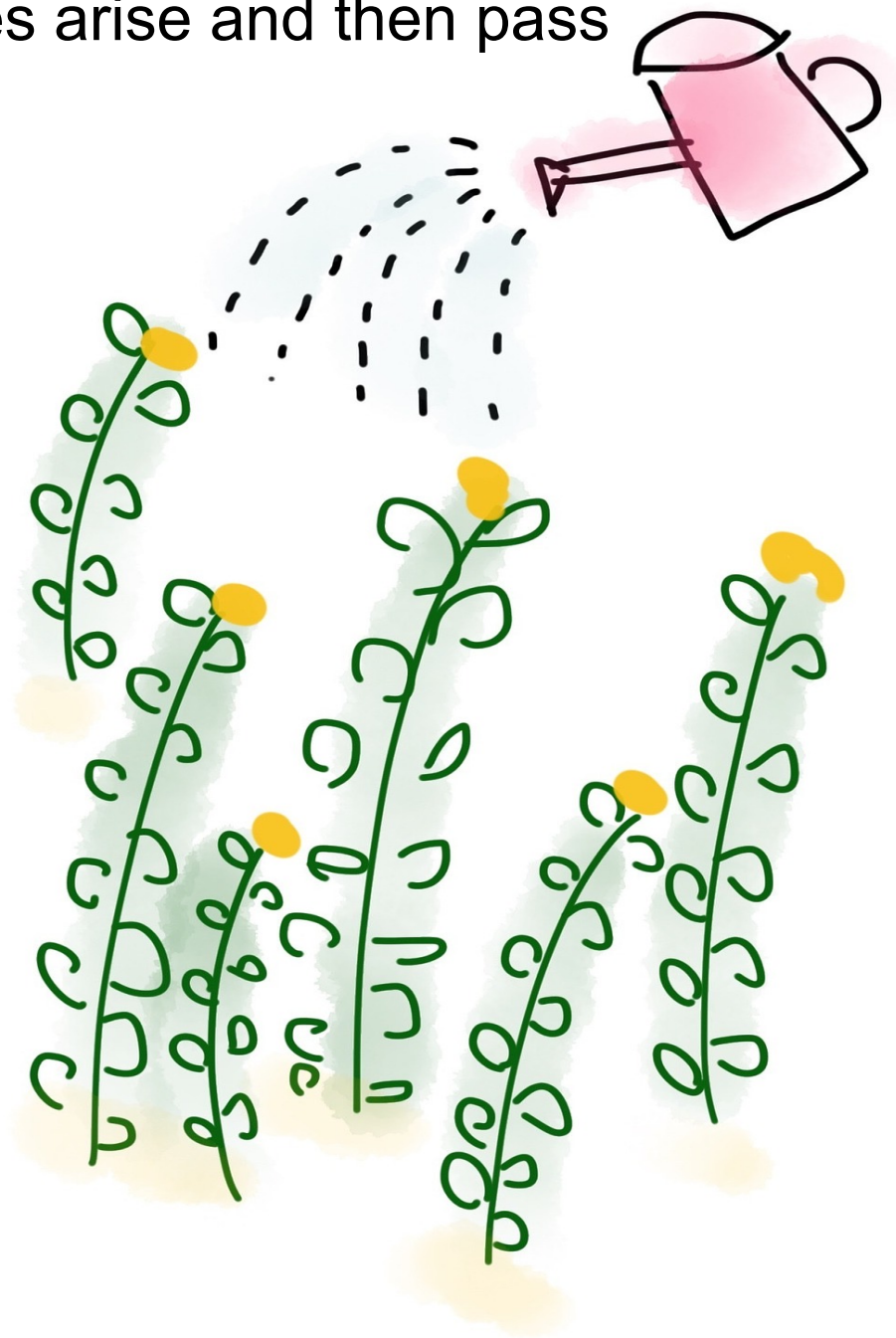
follow your thoughts



Spend some time everyday noticing your thoughts.

As your mind wanders, notice it.

Notice how thoughts, feelings, desires, and impulses arise and then pass away.





body scan



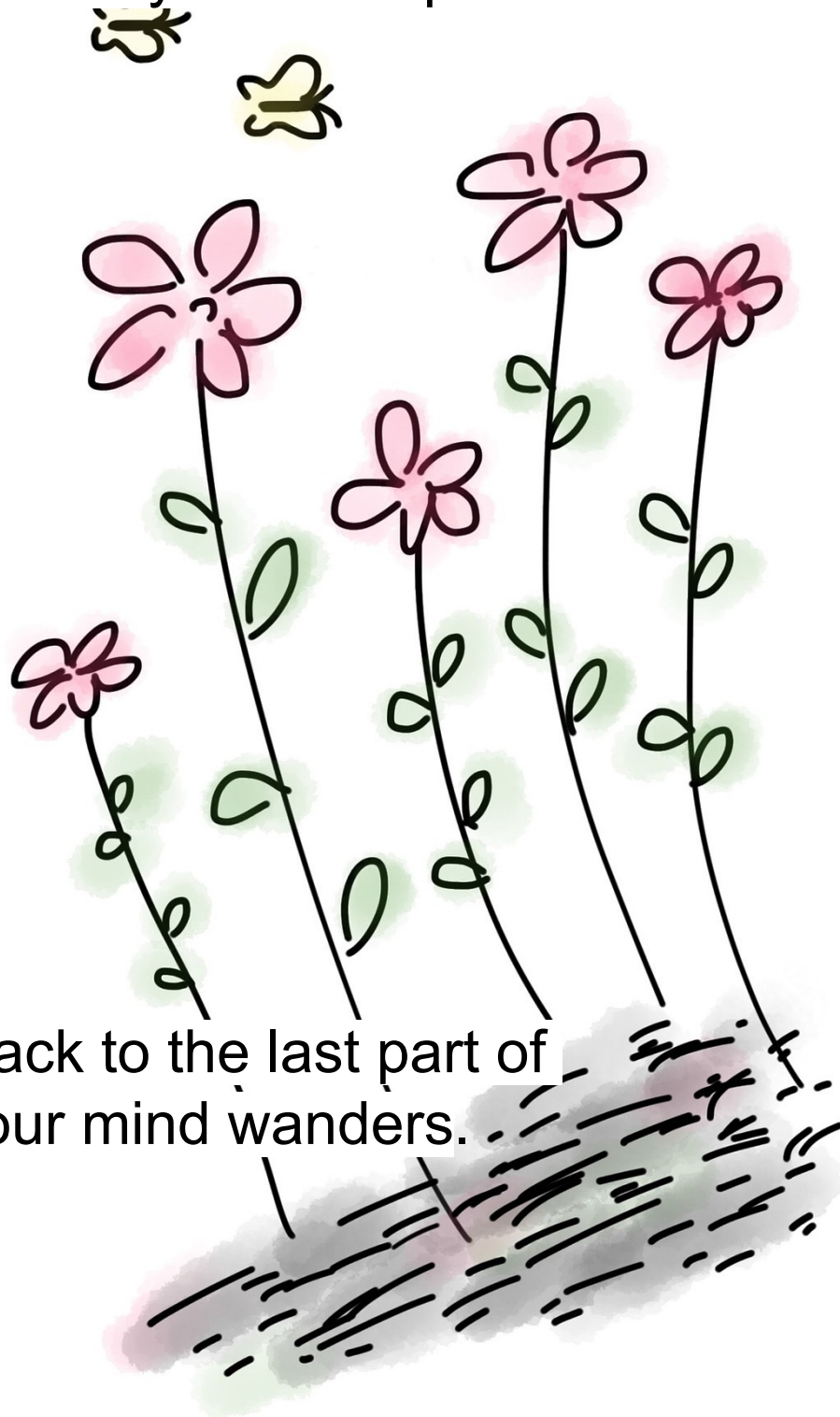
Start with your toes and work your way to the top of your head, noticing how each part of your body feels. If a part of the body has no feeling, notice that. Bring yourself back to the last part of your body when your mind wanders.

gratitude body scan



Start with your toes and work your way to the top of your head, thanking each part of your body.

If a part of your body is hurt, thank it for all the work it has done for you in the past.



Bring your focus back to the last part of your body when your mind wanders.

giving practice

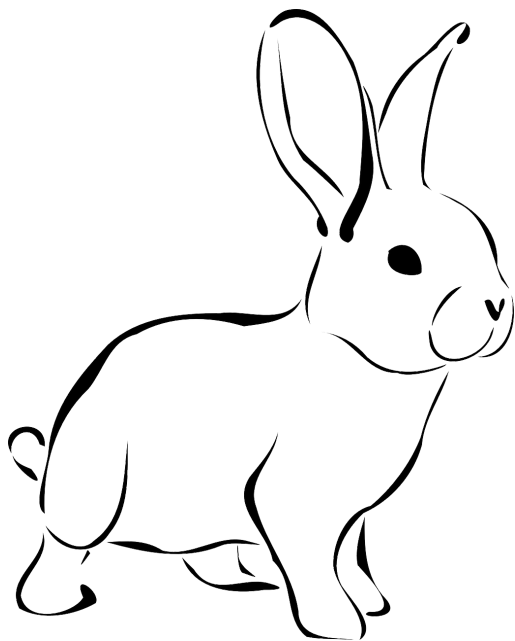


At least once a day, practice generosity.
Give a gift, time or an act of service to
someone.



Do it mindfully, being aware of how you feel,
before, during and after you give. Allow any
judgments or thoughts to arise and notice
their passing. Give to yourself too, especially
if you are already a giving person.

gratitude practice

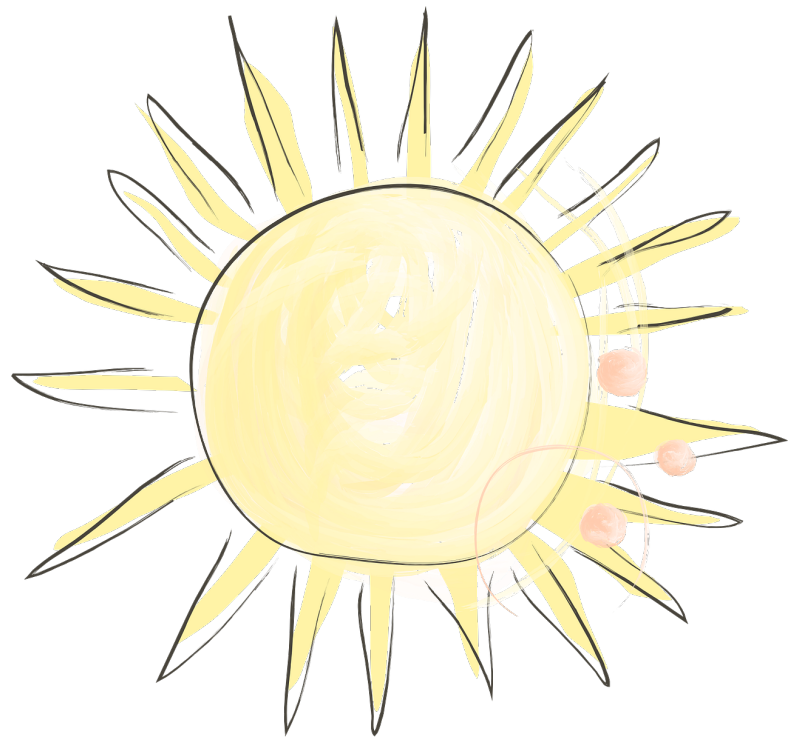


Spend some time silently listing all the people, circumstances and things for which you are grateful. Dwell on each one, feeling the gratitude. Notice how you feel while you do this, and after.



little moments of gratitude practice

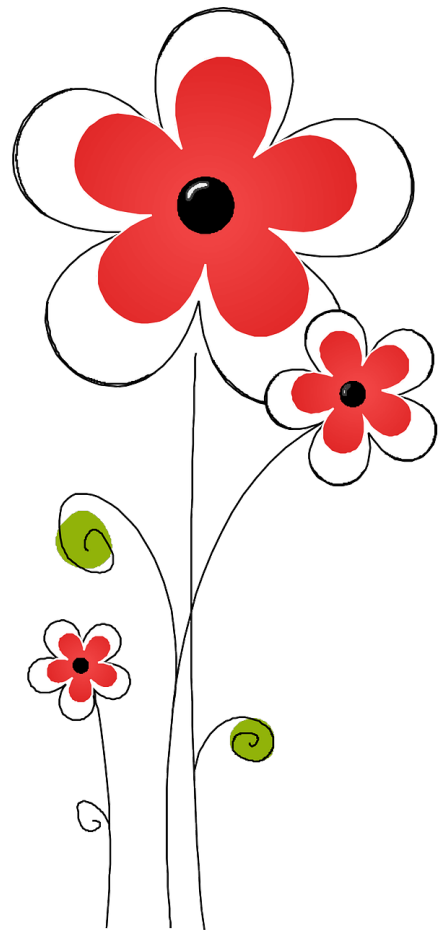




In this practice, you sprinkle reminders to be grateful throughout your day. Start by choosing five things for which you are grateful. Perhaps it is your pet, your partner, your home, your pillow – anyone or thing that you feel lucky to have in your life. Make a list or create some reminder and put it where you will see it everyday, such as on the bathroom mirror or by the toothpaste. Set the intention to pause for one moment and feel gratitude when you encounter that person or thing in your daily life. At the end of the day, you can make up for any lost movements as you re-encounter your list.

loving kindness





Naming first yourself,
then someone you dearly love (this can be
a pet too),
then a friend or family member,
then a person your feel neutrally about,
then a person you feel hostility towards,
then all people in the world,
silently chant the three phrases:
may ___ be happy,
may ___ be healthy,
may ___ be at peace.

guided loving kindness



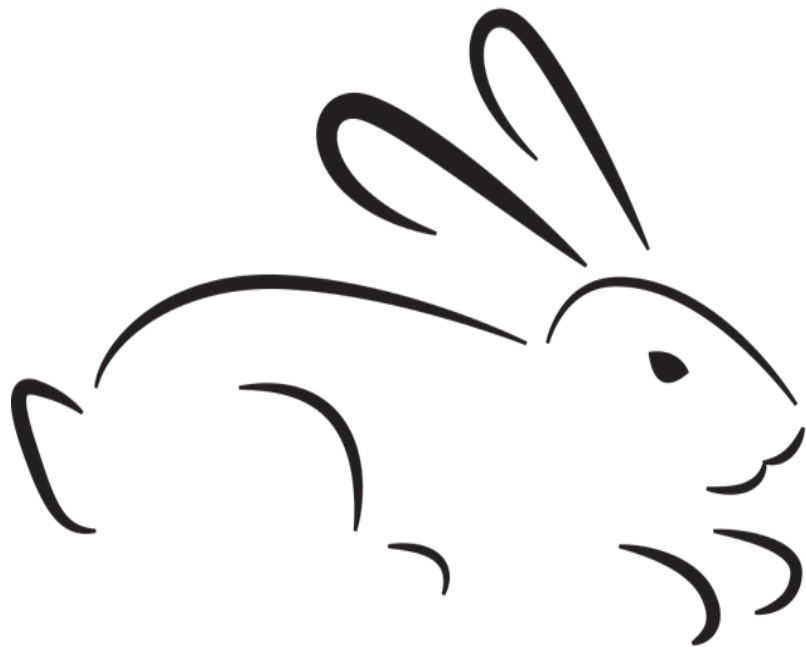
Find a guided loving kindness meditation and listen to it regularly.



There are many online. A few are:
dharmaseed.org; tarabrach.com; and
portlandinsight.org/node/25.

Choose one that has a voice that feels loving and comforting to you and that gives instructions that feel loving and kind.

me-you loving kindness



In this meditation, you focus first on yourself for a while, then someone you love. Slowing go through the three phrases,

may ___ be happy,
may ___ be healthy,
may ___ be at peace,



allowing visualizations and thoughts to arise with the intent of these to be loving and kind.

When feelings or thoughts of anger, sadness, grief or ill-will arise, focus loving kindness on these thoughts and feelings and on yourself.

feeling fat practice



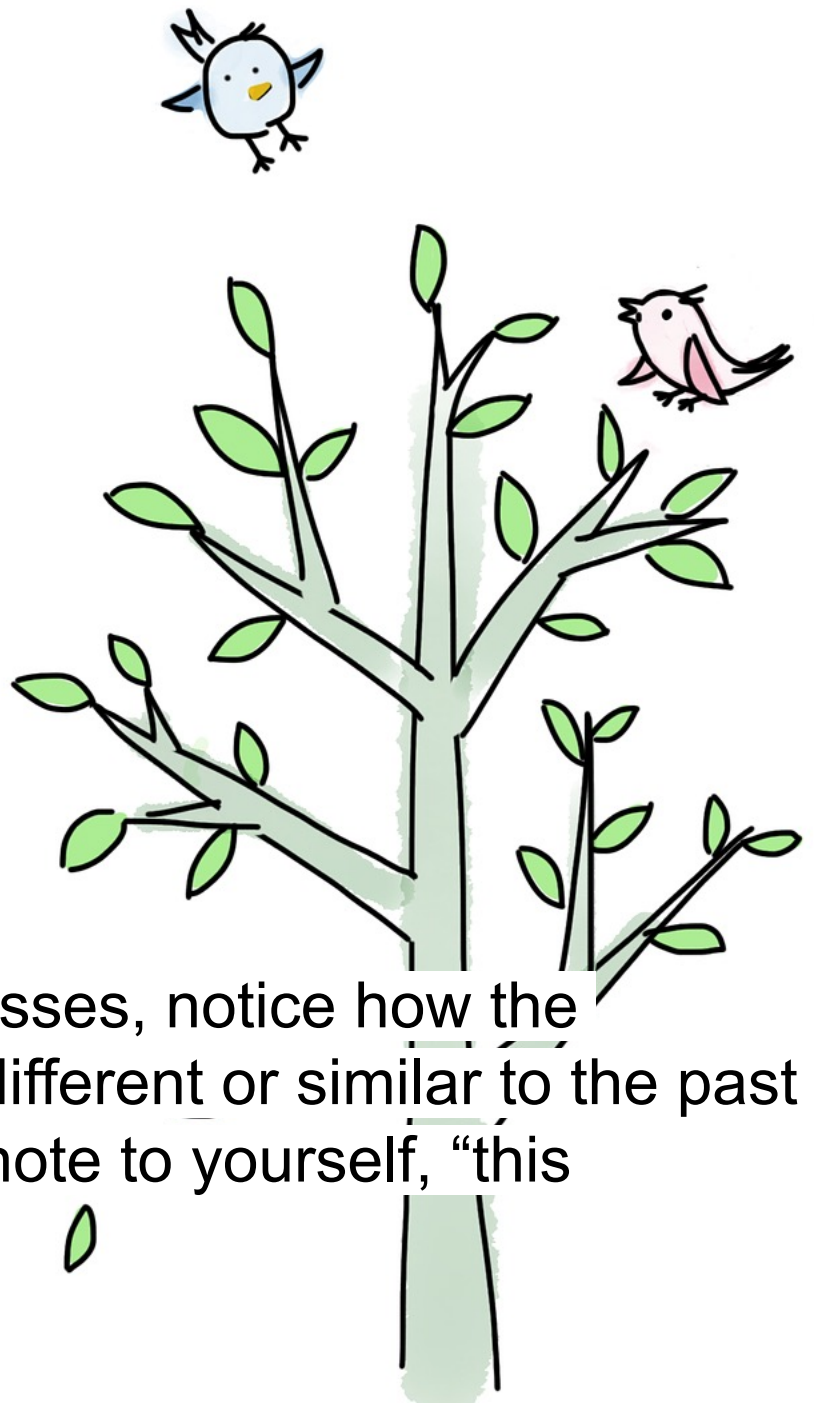
This practice is for when you are feeling fat, stupid or otherwise hating yourself. When these thoughts and feelings arise, take a moment to just note your thoughts, feelings and judgment, of yourself.

Try not to judge yourself for having these thoughts and feelings, just note that you have them. If you can, give yourself a little pat on the back for being someone who cares about yourself, like “I am glad I am the kind of person who cares about my appearance and health.” As you practice, you will start to notice patterns in these sorts of thoughts. If you can, follow this practice with a walking or loving kindness meditation.

this moment meditation



You can do this meditation anywhere at any point in your daily life. Notice what is happening, or any aspect of what is happening, and say to yourself, “this moment is like this.” If you find yourself liking or disliking the moment, notice that, and say to yourself, “it’s like this, this moment is like this.”



As each moment passes, notice how the present moment is different or similar to the past moment and again note to yourself, “this moment is like this.”



walking meditation



Find a space in your home of about three or more feet. Slowly walk back and forth, noticing how each step feels as you rise your heel, lift off your toes, lift your foot, move it, toes touch ground, heel touches ground, full foot. Then do the same with the next foot.

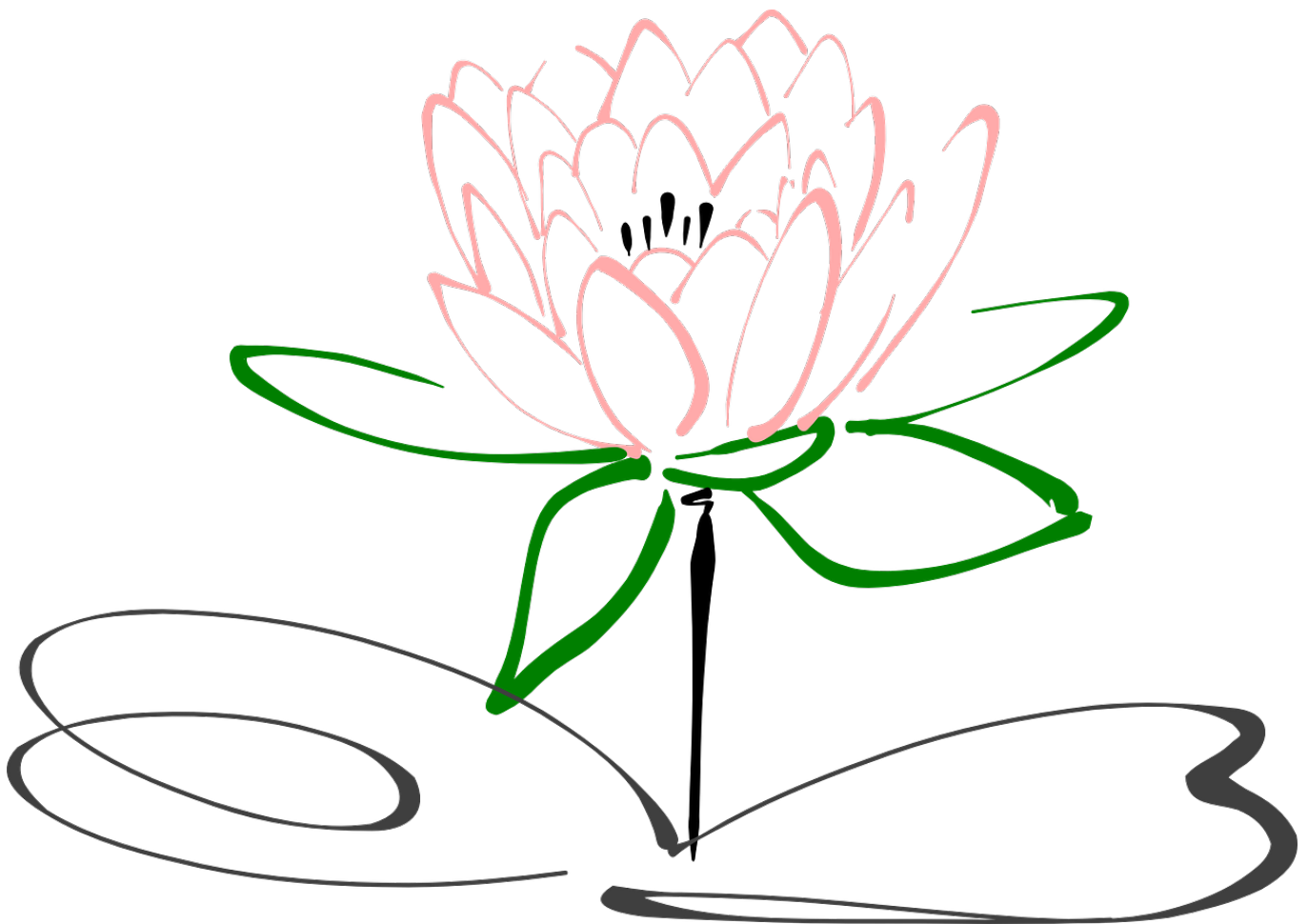
Notice how a foot step begins and ends, and when it is over, it is over.

Each time your mind wanders, bring it back to your footstep.

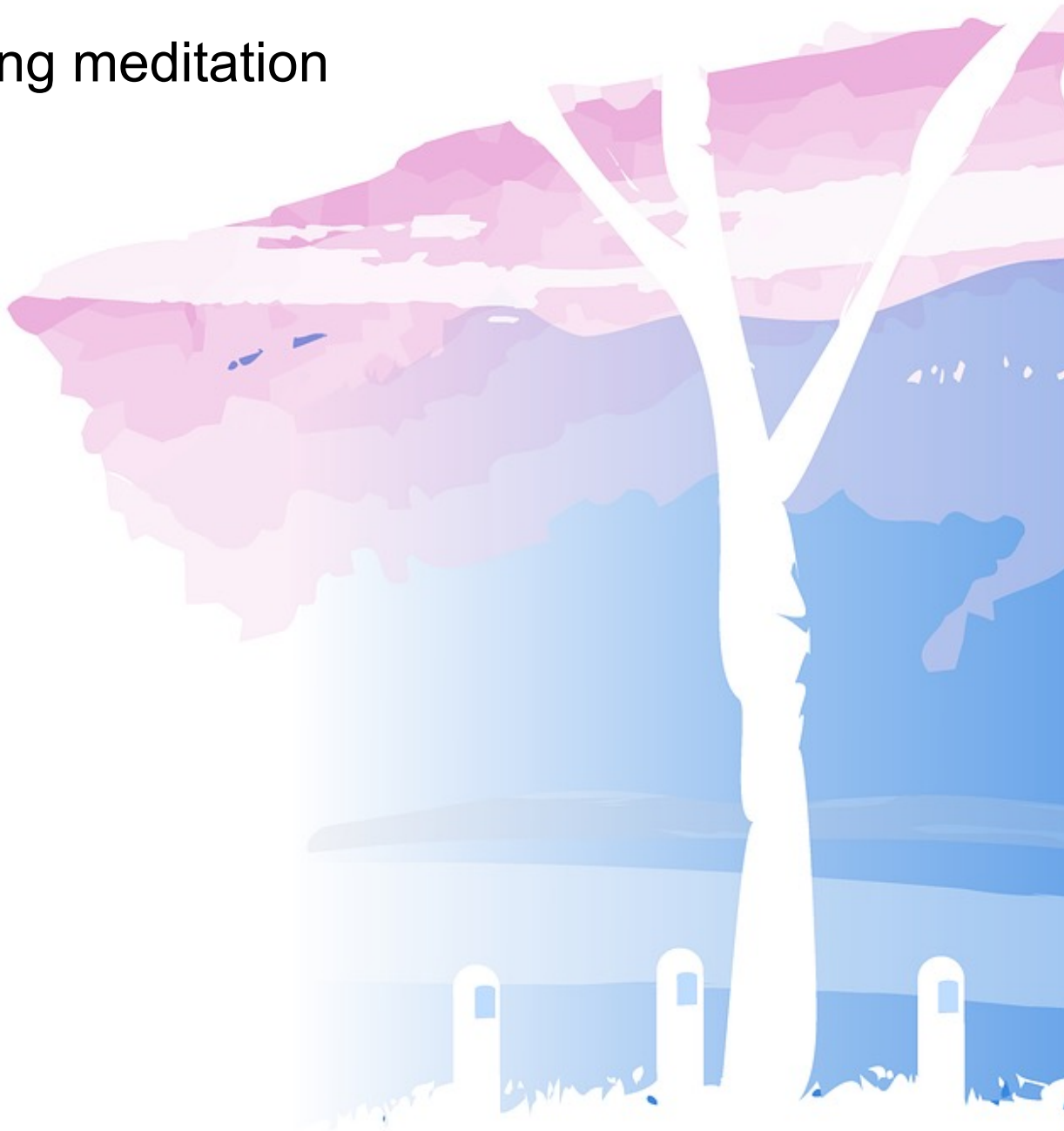
moving quickly meditation



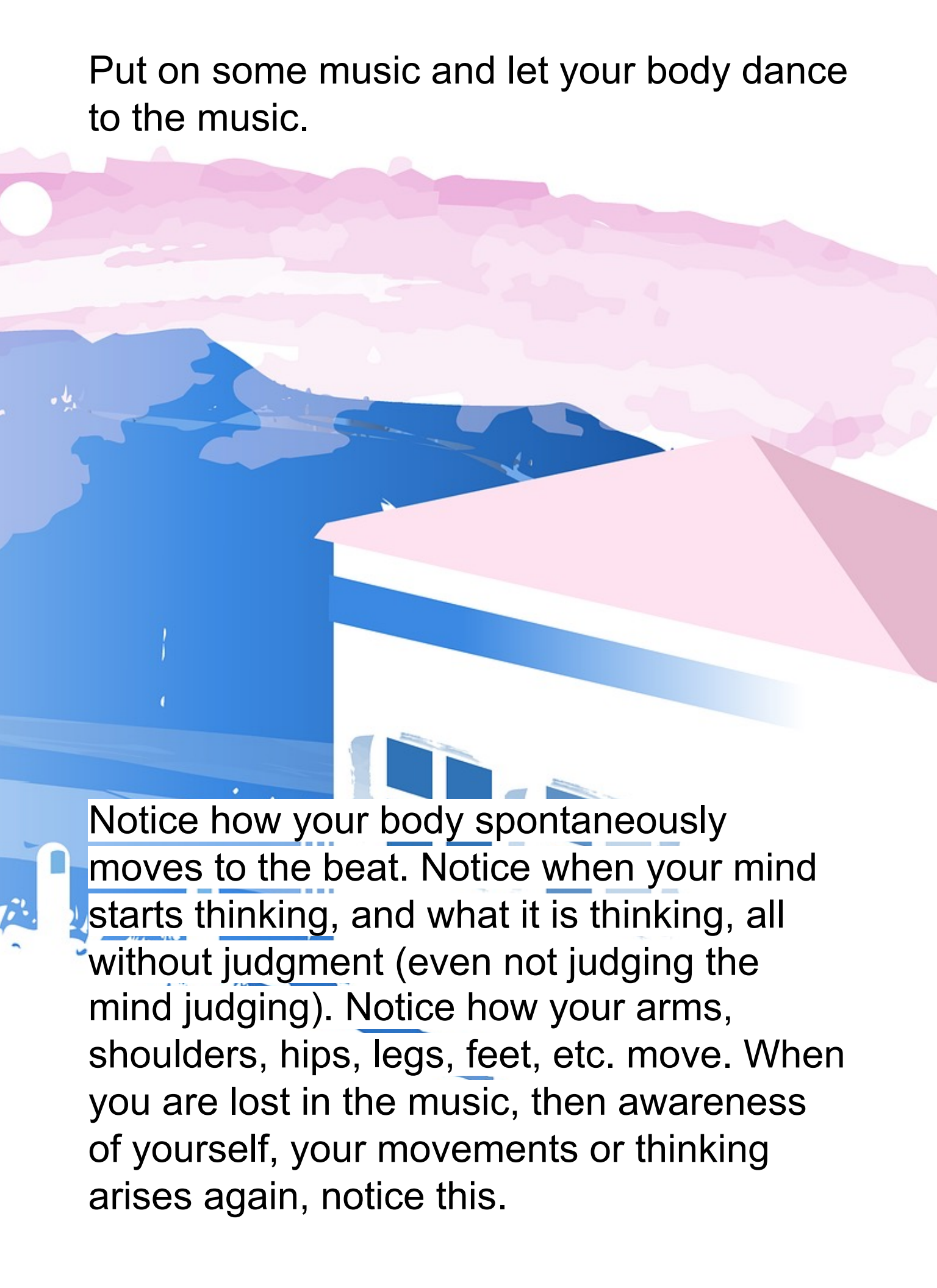
This practice is best done after you have some practice doing walking meditations. In this practice, you apply mindfulness to fast movements like walking quickly, jogging or running. You can take each footfall, the feet, your legs or your entire body as your object of focus. Notice your mind straying from your object of focus, and bring it back to your object of focus. Notice how objects outside you appear and disappear as you rush. You can do this meditation when you are in a hurry too, such as rushing to an appointment or to catch a flight in the airport.



dancing meditation



Put on some music and let your body dance to the music.



Notice how your body spontaneously moves to the beat. Notice when your mind starts thinking, and what it is thinking, all without judgment (even not judging the mind judging). Notice how your arms, shoulders, hips, legs, feet, etc. move. When you are lost in the music, then awareness of yourself, your movements or thinking arises again, notice this.

eating meditation



Choose one food item and set the intention to focus on each bite as you eat it.

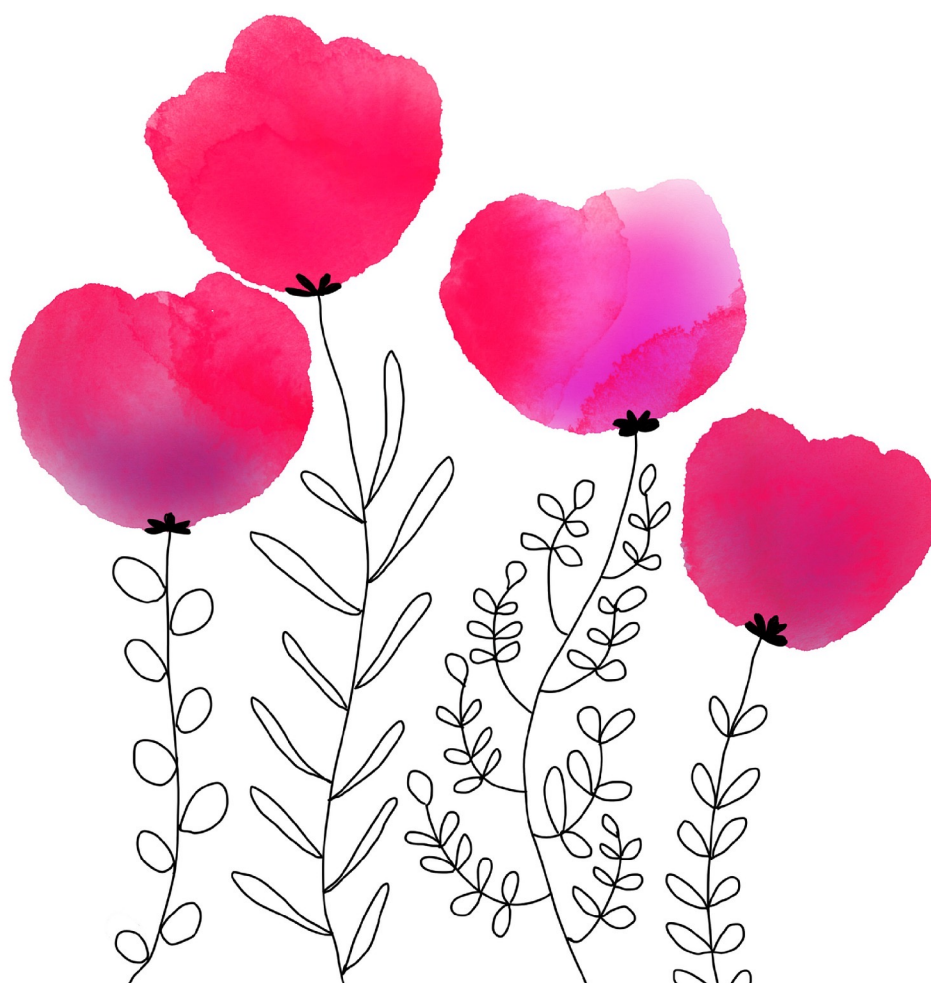
Notice how you feel and what is happening in your body as you prepare to eat.

Notice how the first bite feels (or lick if its ice cream!), notice the next bite.

Notice the thoughts that come up.

If your mind wanders off your food, notice when you notice the mind has wandered and bring your focus back to your food.

pleasure meditation



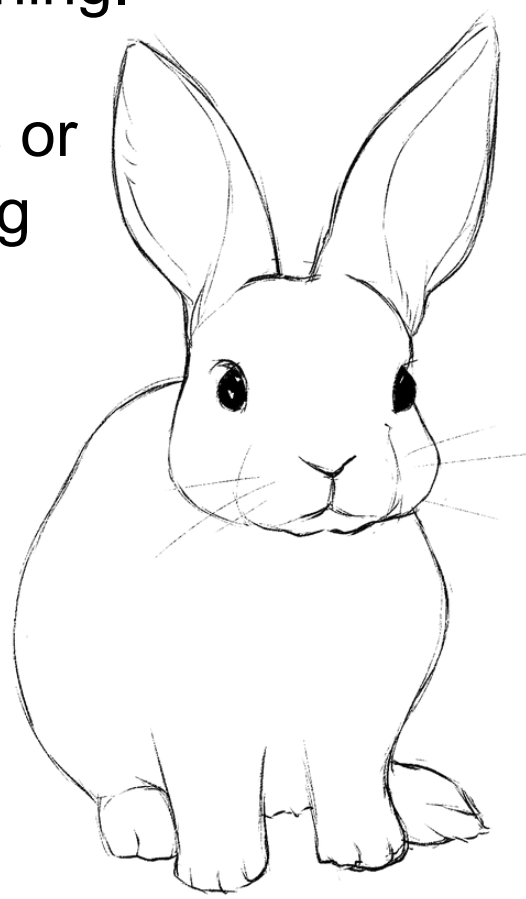
Like with the eating meditation, choose something that you love to do.

Maybe it is dancing, maybe sex, maybe taking a walk, watching a sunset, getting a massage or petting an animal.

Decide to pay attention to what is happening each moment. Notice where the pleasure is.

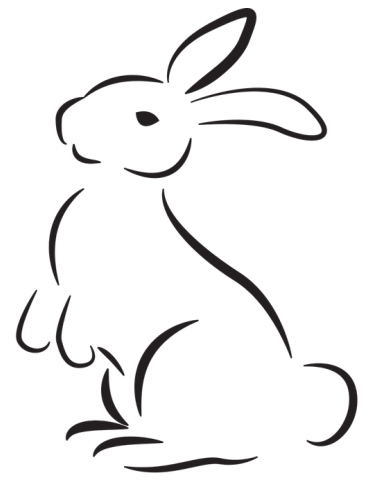
Notice when the mind starts thinking, feeling or wandering and bring your attention back to what is happening.

Notice when memories, desires or cravings are triggered, and bring your attention back to what is happening.



napping meditation



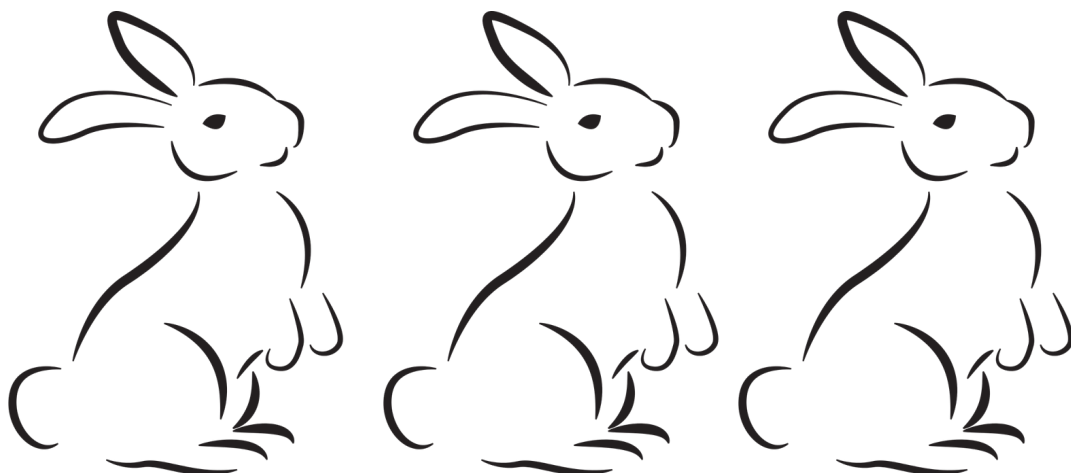


In most meditations, your aim is to stay focused on your meditation object.

In this meditation, your aim is to focus on your breath with the intent of watching your mind, body and breath as you fall asleep.

Try to notice whether you fall asleep on an in-breath or out-breath.

Do the same when you wake, and notice your mind, body and breath upon awakening.



waking up meditation



For this practice, you take some extra time in the morning. You can set your alarm for a half hour or ten minutes before you want to get out of bed, and use snooze or set another alarm for the time you will get out of bed. When the alarm wakes you up, start your practice. You may decide to follow your breath or your thoughts or focus on sounds. As you drift off, bring your focus back. When you fall back asleep, notice when you wake up again, and bring your mind back to your mindfulness practice. Notice any judgments or thoughts, and then bring your focus back to your object of focus. Even if you have only one moment of mindfulness in the morning, that is very good!



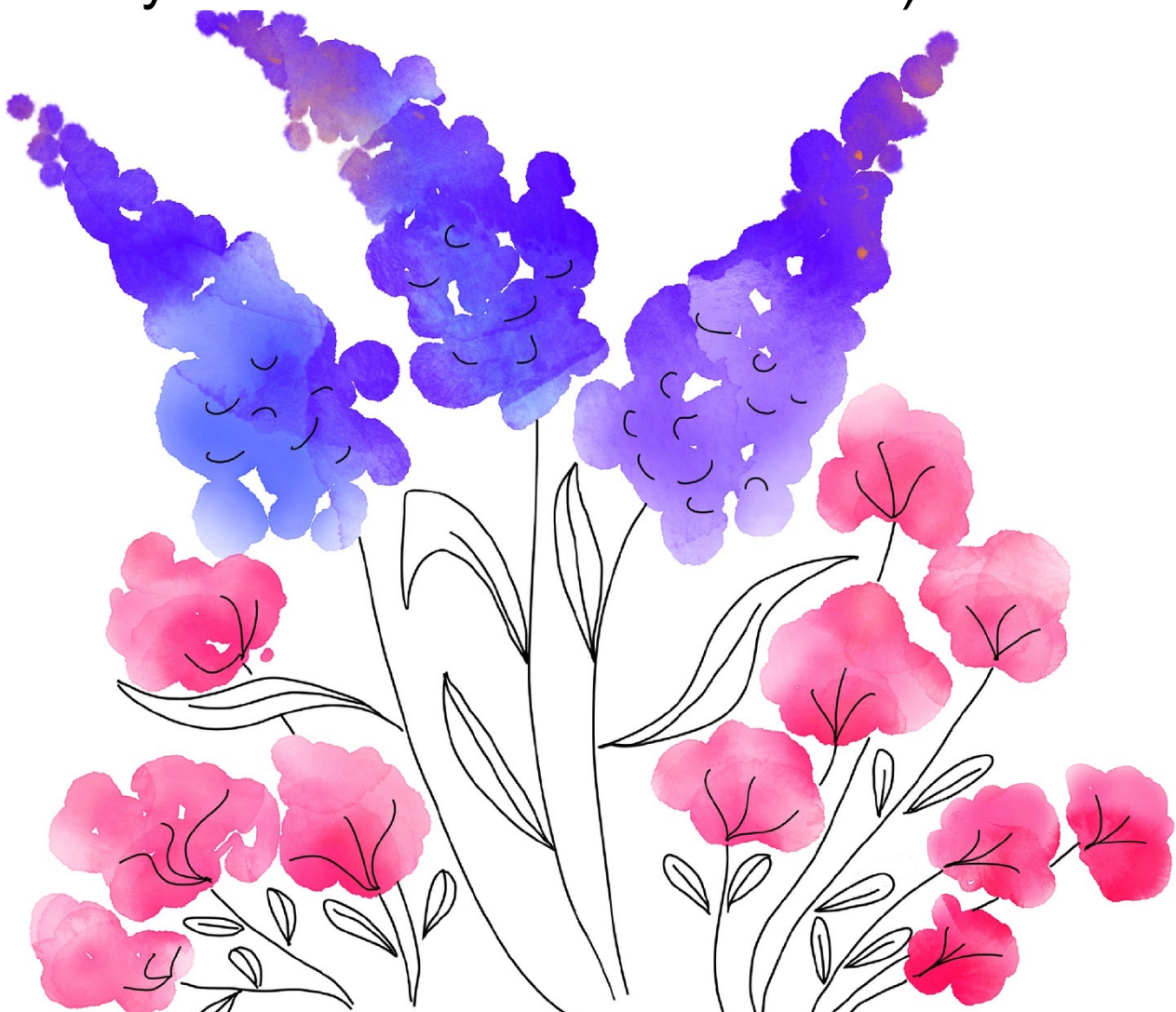
insomnia meditation



When you can not sleep, practice a breath focusing meditation or body scan.

As you breath, notice when your mind fades into a dull state and whether it does this on an in-breath or out-breath. Notice when your mind comes back fully awake and whether it does this on an in-breath or out-breath.

Each time your mind thinks about your insomnia, what ever it bothering you, or wanders away, notice whether you do this on an in-breath or out-breath. (Actually, you can do any of meditations for insomnia).

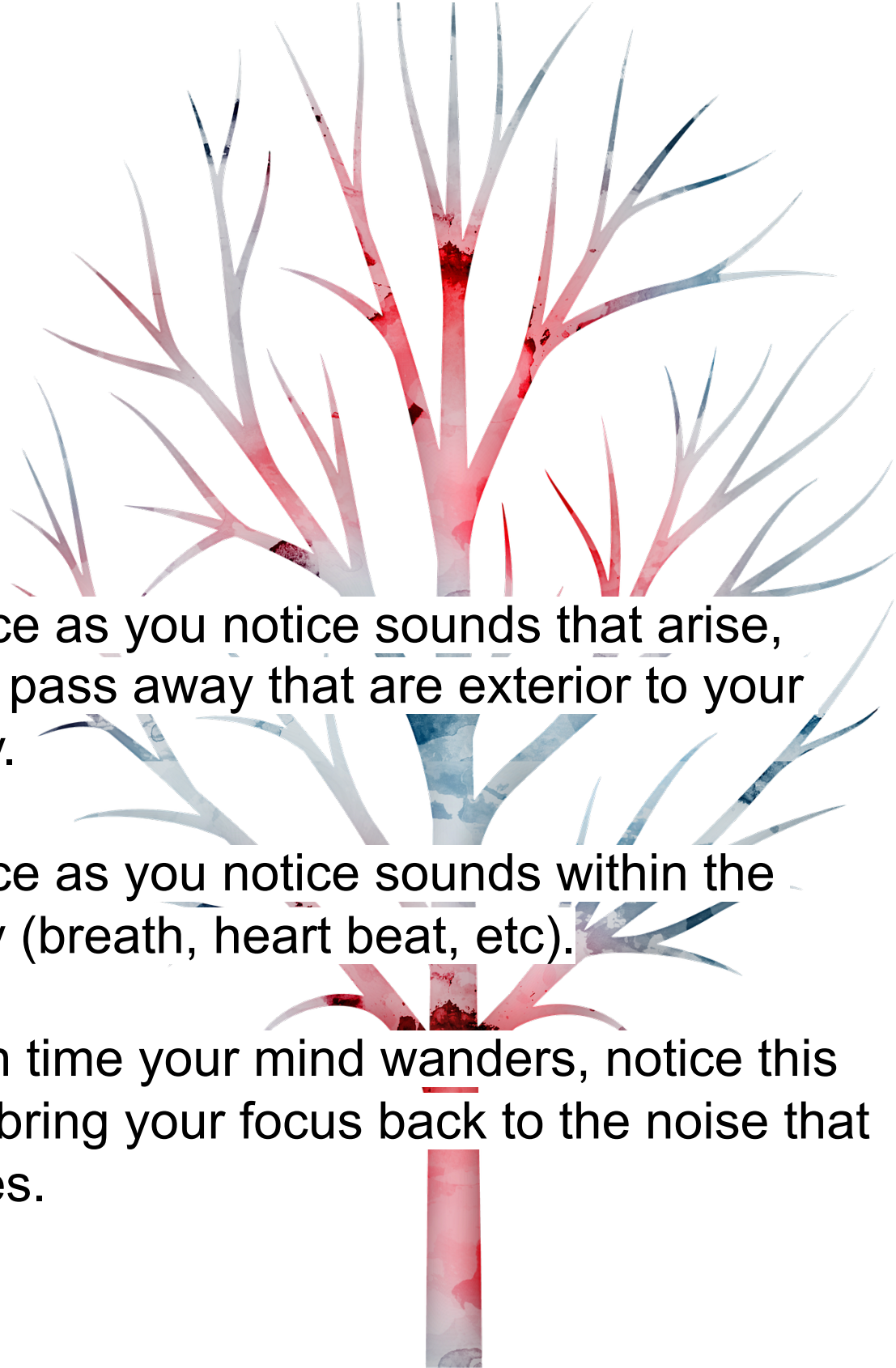


sound meditation



Spend some time noticing each sound as it arises.

Notice your noticing of the sound.



Notice as you notice sounds that arise, then pass away that are exterior to your body.

Notice as you notice sounds within the body (breath, heart beat, etc).

Each time your mind wanders, notice this and bring your focus back to the noise that arises.

music meditation



Choose a piece of music that is relaxing and lovely to you. Find a comfortable place where you feel safe. Close your eyes and listen to it with full attention. Each time your mind wanders, bring it back to the music. Notice how the music affects your mind, body, feelings, and thoughts, and bring your focus back to the music.



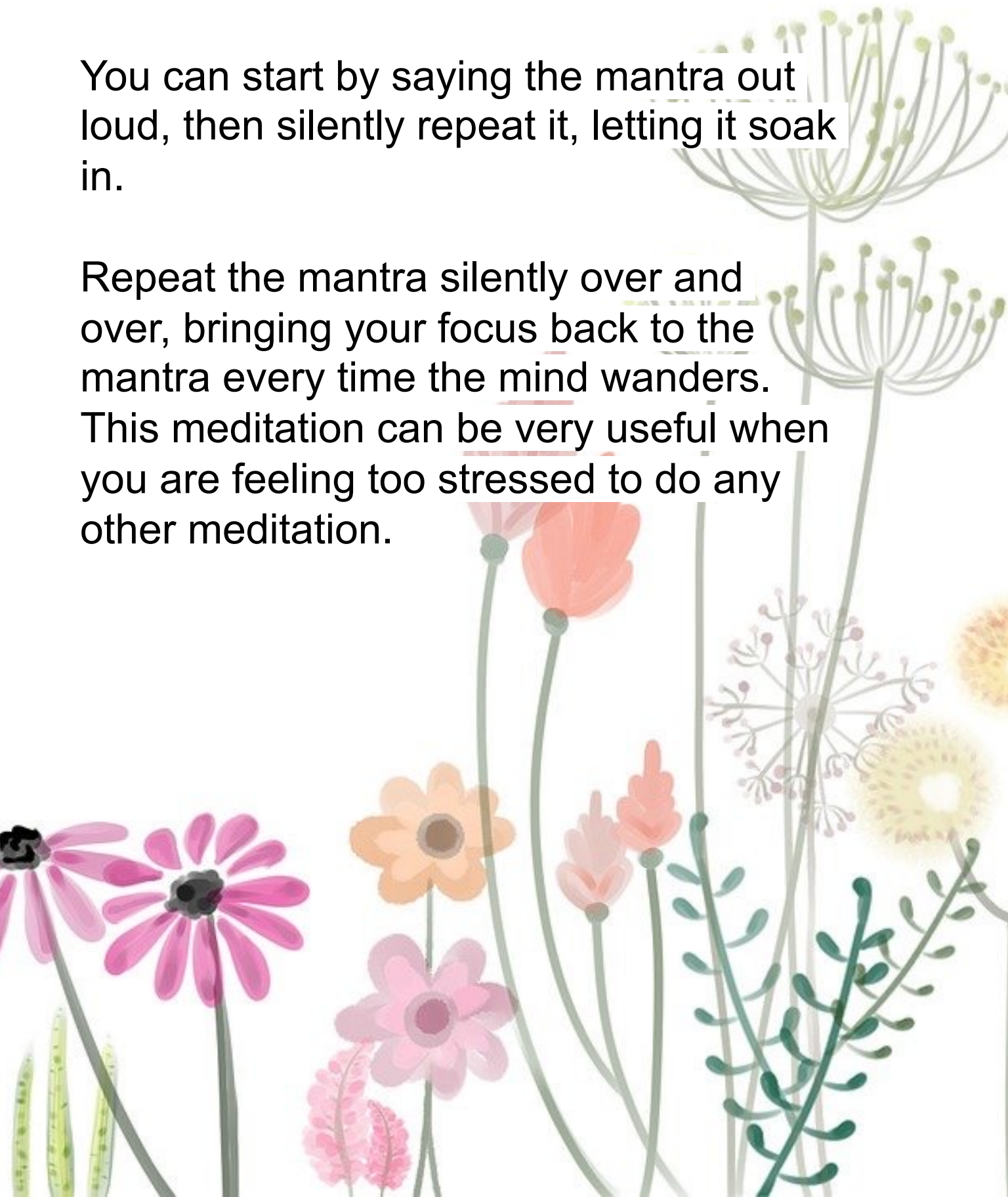
mantra meditation



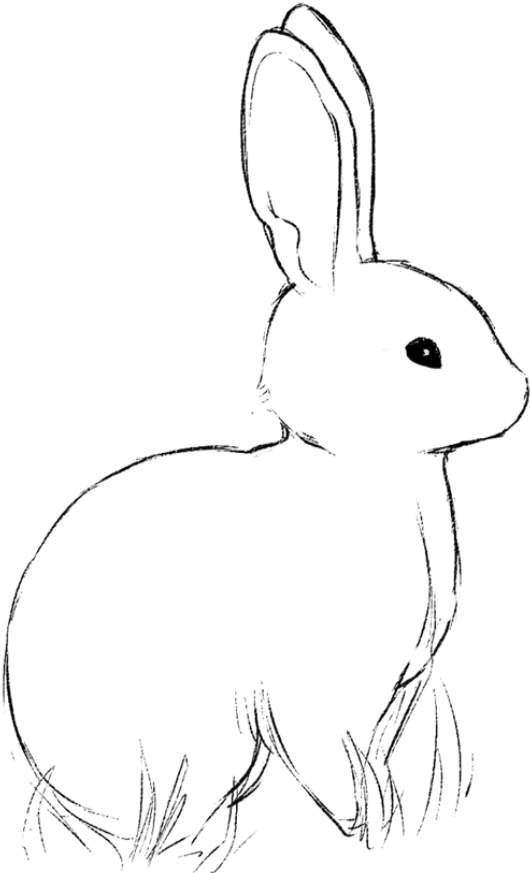
Choose a mantra. Some people use the sound “om” or a similar chant. Others use a special phrase.

You can start by saying the mantra out loud, then silently repeat it, letting it soak in.

Repeat the mantra silently over and over, bringing your focus back to the mantra every time the mind wanders. This meditation can be very useful when you are feeling too stressed to do any other meditation.



energy flow meditation



You can do this meditation anywhere at any time, in a crowd or alone. In this meditation, you note what you are seeing.

Try to stay focused on just noting what you see. When a feeling thought or judgment comes up as a result of seeing something, note that and bring your focus back to what you the next thing you see.

After a while, bring your eyes down or close them and notice the feelings, thoughts and impulses that come up, letting each one pass without judgment.

Note also your judgment of yourself, and let it go without judgment.



seeing meditation



You can do this meditation anywhere at any time, in a crowd or alone.

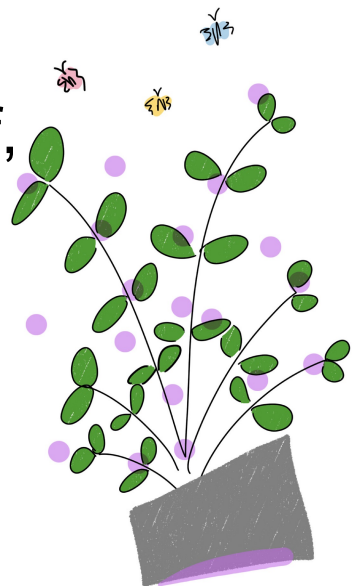
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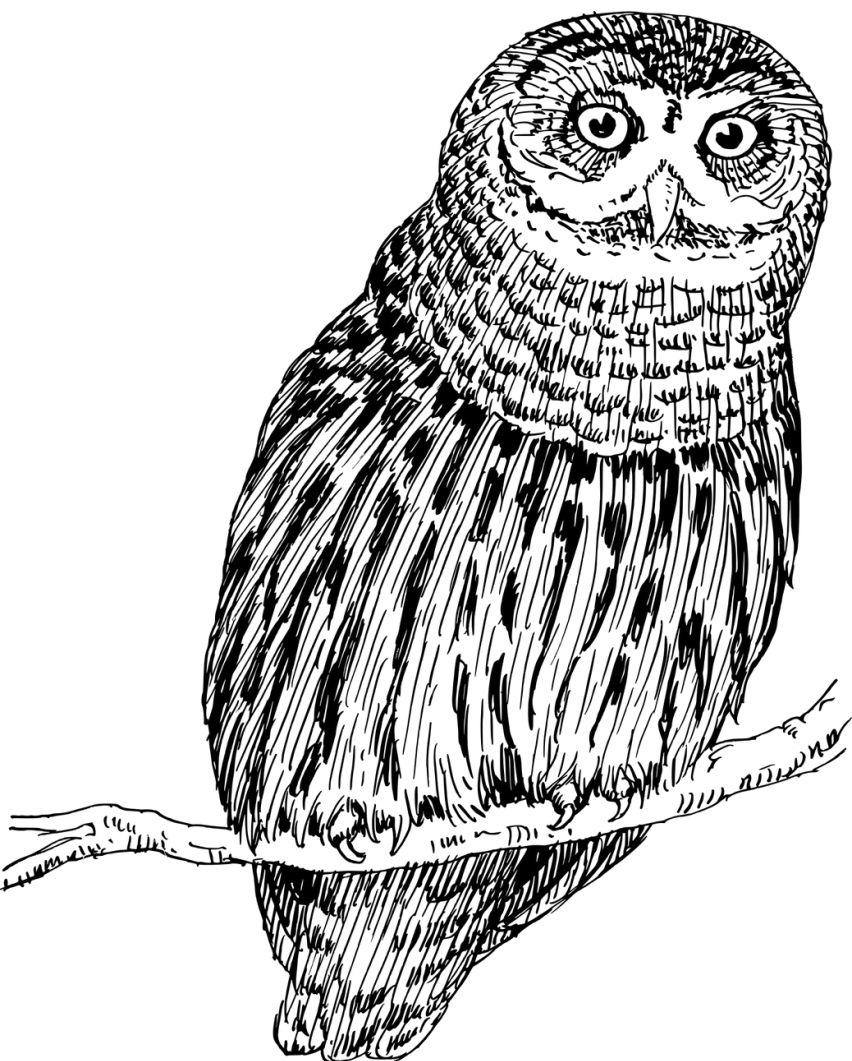
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Note also your judgment of yourself, and let it go without judgment.



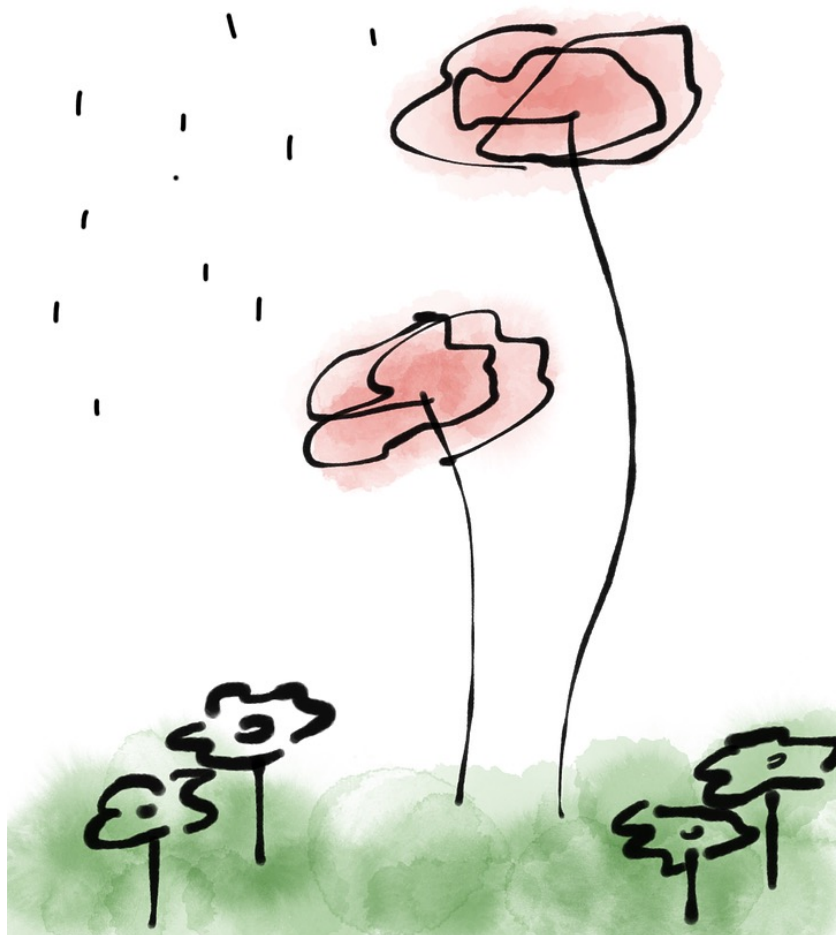
noticing other meditation



Spend some time noticing another person. Notice how they breath, how they walk or any other aspect of them.

Notice how this makes you feel. Notice the impact the other person has on you.

When you find yourself lost in thoughts about the other person or yourself, notice that. Bring your attention back to the other person. (Do be careful not to do this in a way that makes someone else uncomfortable!)



gazing meditation

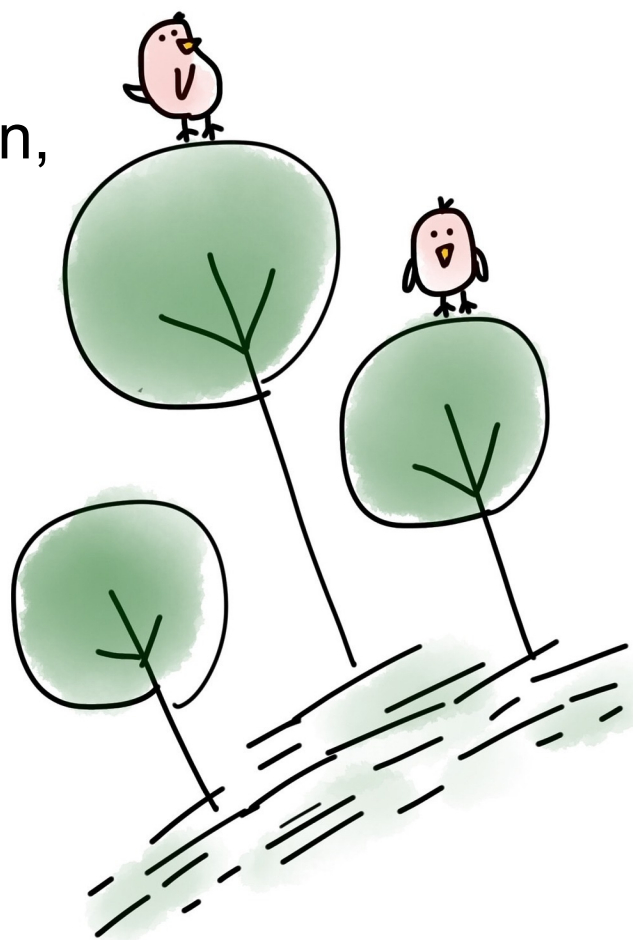


In this meditation practice, you take an external object for your focus. It may be the light of a candle, the rain dropping on a pond, the wind rustling a branch. Focus on it.

Each time your mind strays, bring your focus back to it.

After a while, close your eyes and bring the object to mind, bringing your focus back to the object in your imagination each time it strays.

When your eyes open again, note their opening and bring your focus back to the object.



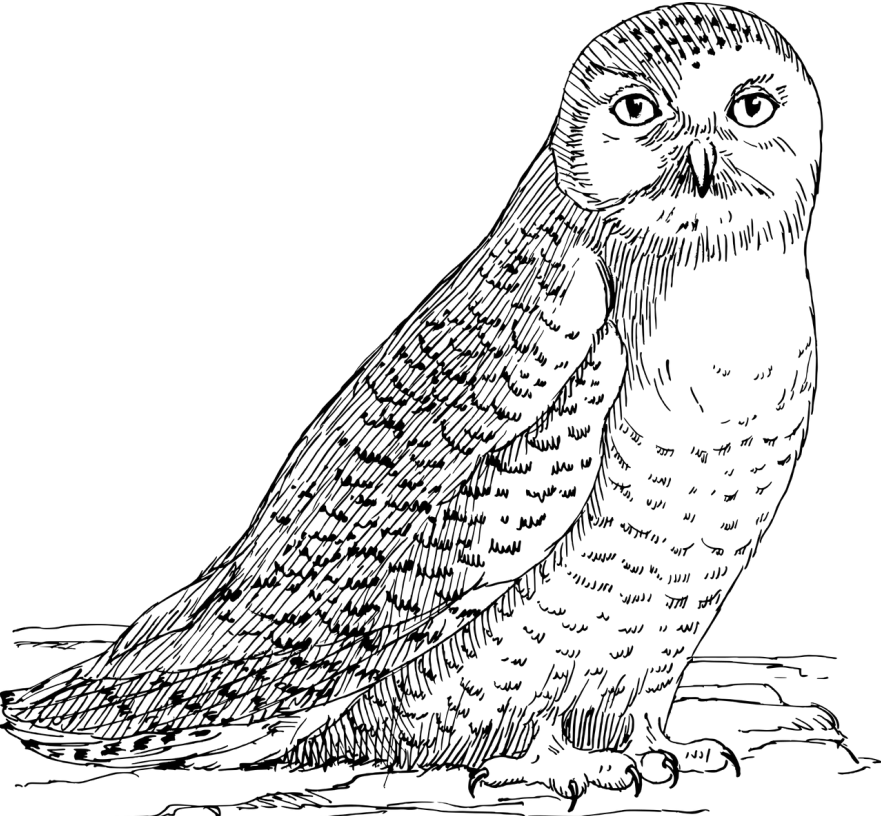
who am i meditation



This meditation practice is not for everyone! It is advanced, should be done for only short time periods, and as part of a longer different mindfulness practice. This practice is best done with the guidance of a teacher, as it can lead to misunderstandings. In this practice, sit quietly and ask yourself “Who am I?” Note the answers that come up without judging or thinking about them. Ask again, again noting the answers that come up. Note the noting. Note the thoughts that come up about the noting. Ask again, “Who am I?”



pain meditation



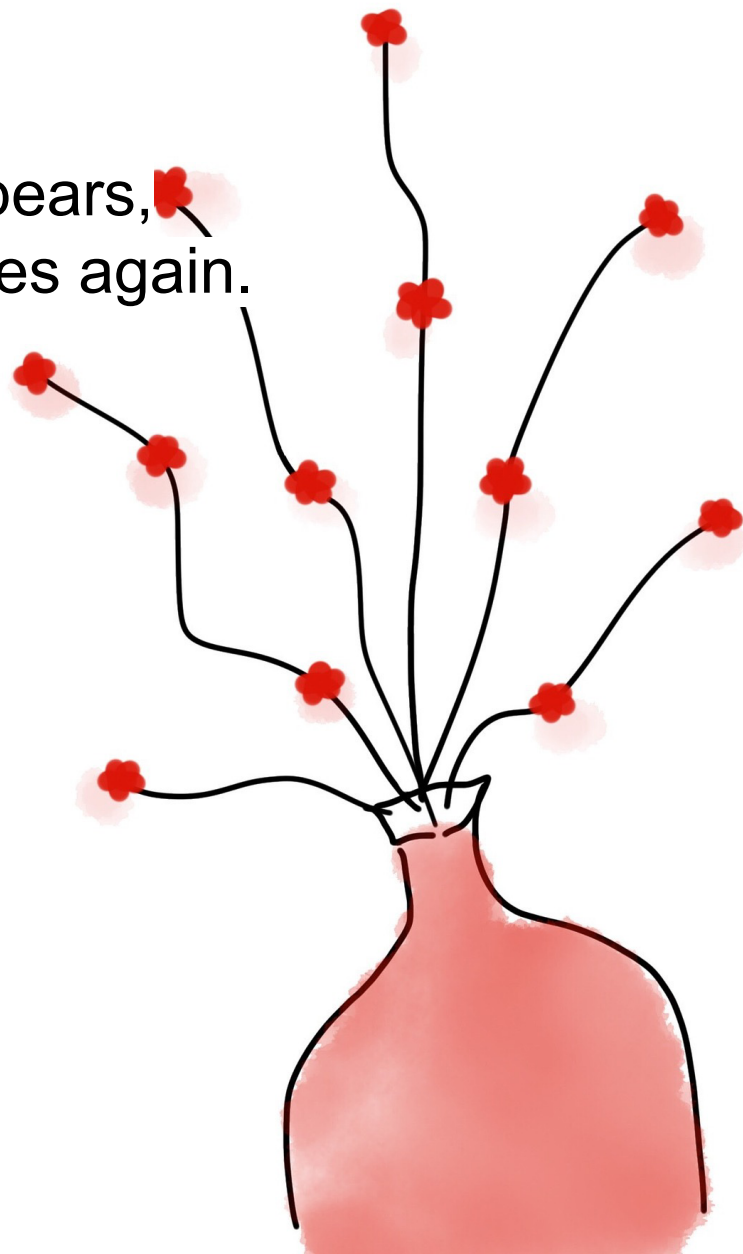
This practice is harder to do. Start with a small pain or something like sitting still for 20 minutes.

When the pain arises, focus very intently on it.

Pay attention to every detail about it. When your mind starts belly-aching about how much it hurts, refocus your mind on the pain.

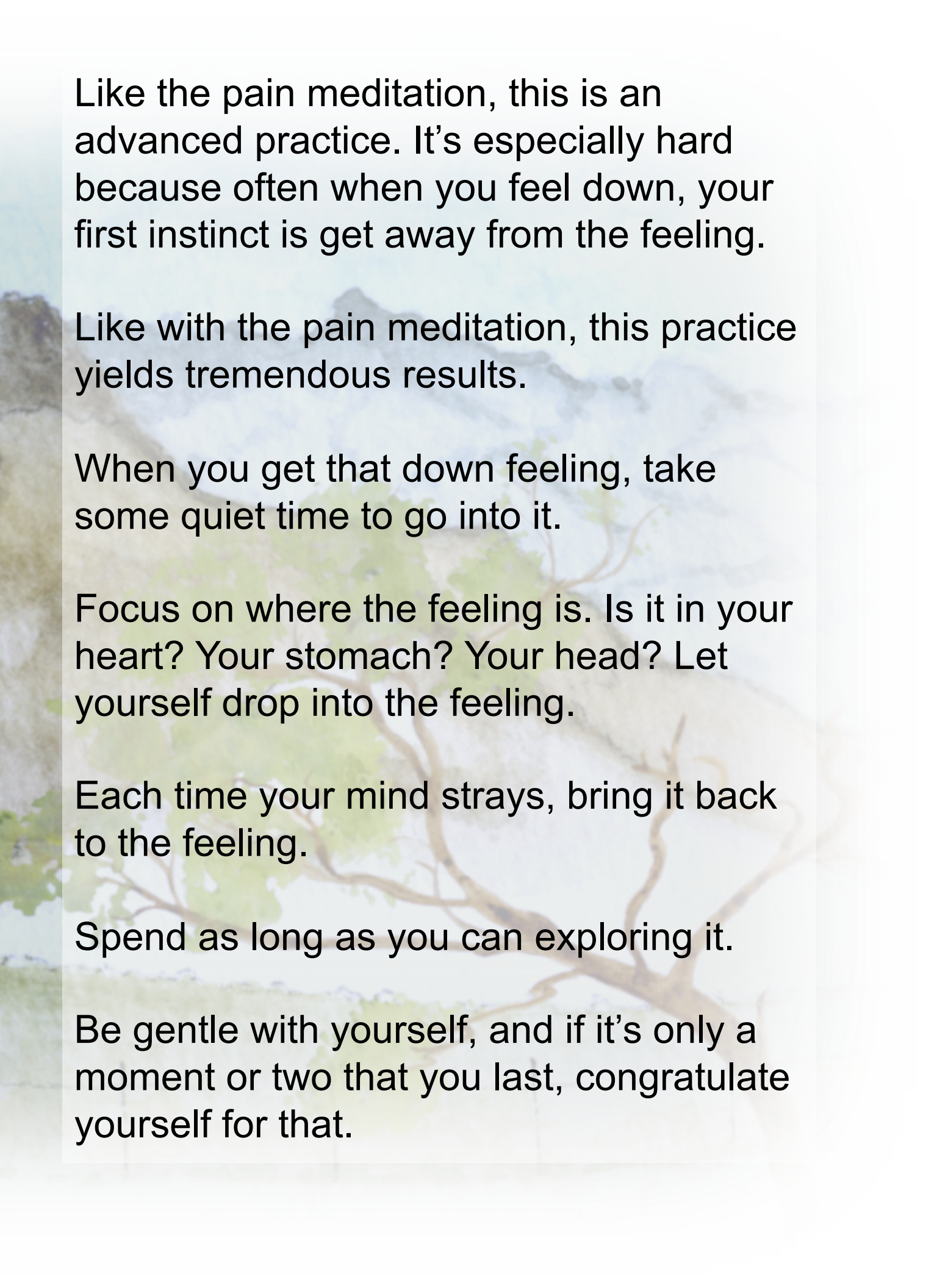
Notice when it disappears, and then when it arises again.

This practice yields strong results, but is hard to do.



depression meditation





Like the pain meditation, this is an advanced practice. It's especially hard because often when you feel down, your first instinct is get away from the feeling.

Like with the pain meditation, this practice yields tremendous results.

When you get that down feeling, take some quiet time to go into it.

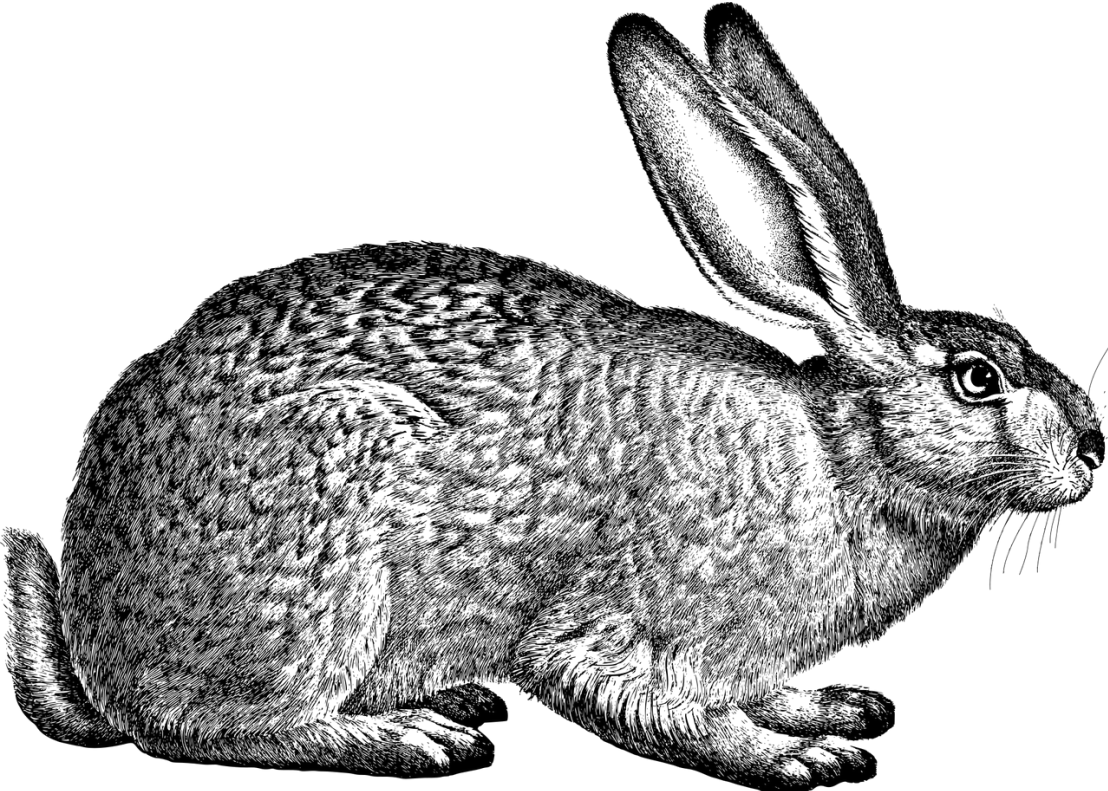
Focus on where the feeling is. Is it in your heart? Your stomach? Your head? Let yourself drop into the feeling.

Each time your mind strays, bring it back to the feeling.

Spend as long as you can exploring it.

Be gentle with yourself, and if it's only a moment or two that you last, congratulate yourself for that.

mindfulness snacks

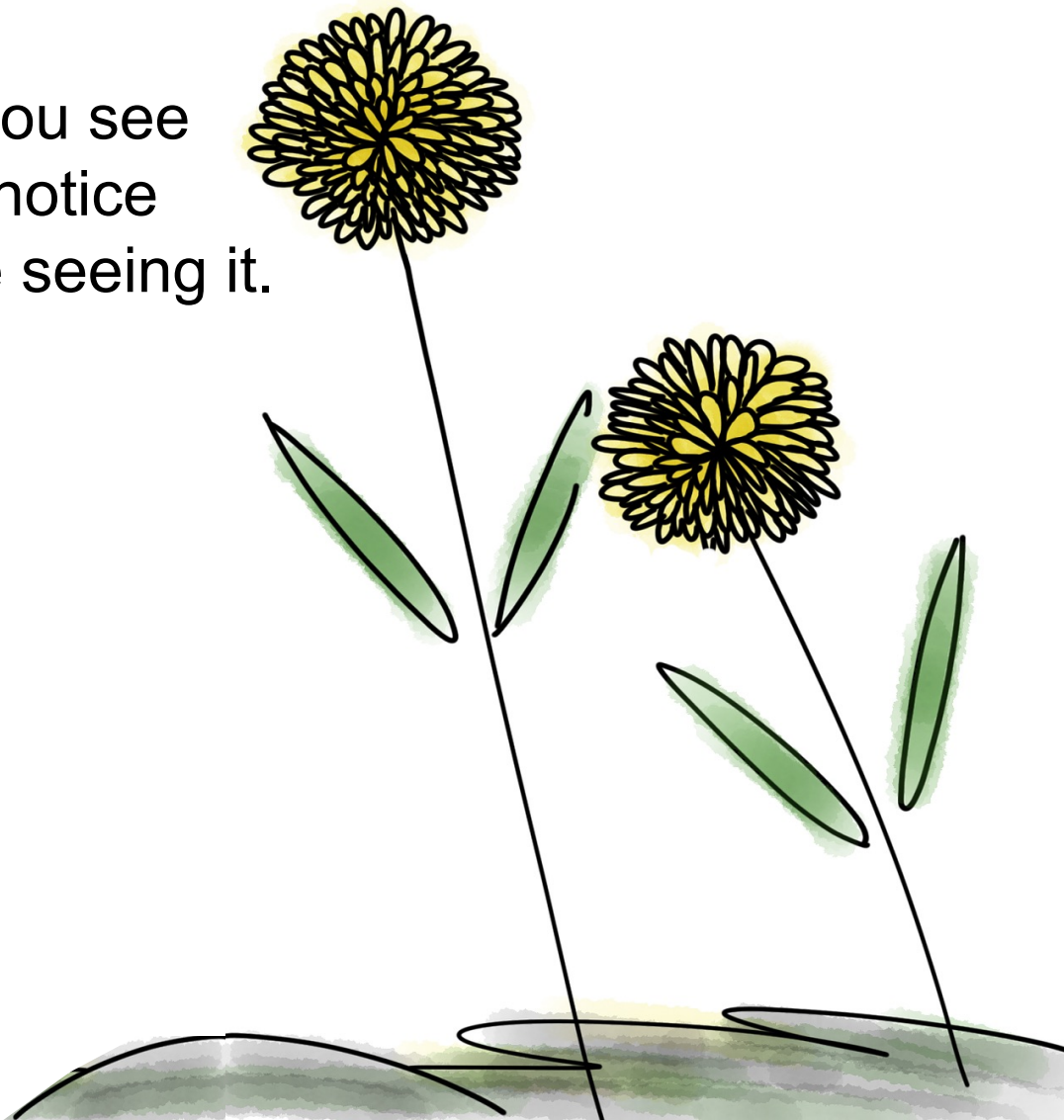


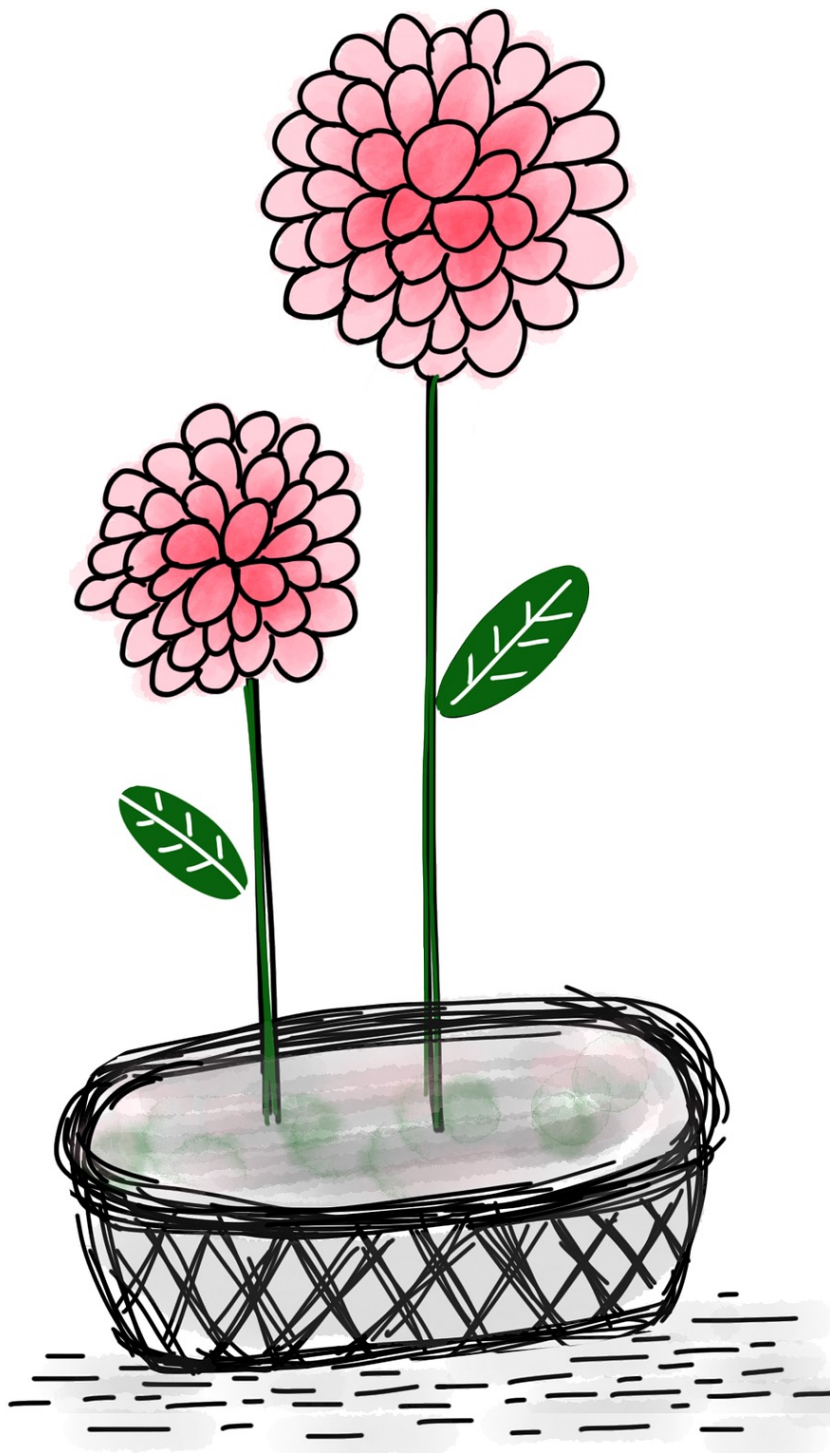
In this practice, you aim to bring little moments of mindfulness into your everyday life.

Gather several small pieces of paper and tape or blank stickers, write down a word such as “aware” or “notice” on each one.

Place them on everyday objects, like your laptop screen frame, the microwave door, the bowl where you keep your keys.

Each time you see the sticker, notice that you are seeing it.





Mindfulness is a tool from Happiness Alliance's How to Be Happy © 2015 Laura Musikanski

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