

STEP 4 – 5 SENSES EXERCISE



Sometimes our thoughts start racing, doubts start flying around, and find it hard to focus. It is just your mind doing what it does. But, to play well you want to be in the here and now. The exercise below is a quick and easy method for centering and getting back to the here and now. It is also a great tool to use on a regular basis even when feeling great as it is a tremendous tool for improving our focus skills and our awareness skills.

It is COMPLETELY normal when unwanted thoughts jump into your mind at times. Our brains are thought factories and we cannot turn them off. But we can learn to refocus and redirect our attention. Take this as an opportunity to practice accepting without judging and redirecting back to the present moment without wasting time fighting thoughts.

1. Sit in a comfortable upright position with your feet planted flat on the ground. Rest your hands on your thighs or on your desk.
2. Notice your breath. No need to breathe in any particular way. Just bring attention to each part of the breath- the inhale, exhale, and the pause in between.
3. Bring awareness to each of your 5 senses, one at a time, for about one minute each. The point here is to focus on the present moment and how each sense is being activated in that moment. The order in which you pay attention to each sense does not matter.

Hear: Begin to notice all of the sounds around you. Try not to judge the sounds- just notice them. They are not good or bad, they just are. Sounds might be internal, like breathing or digestion. Sounds might be close by or more distant like the sound of traffic. Are you now hearing more than you were before you started? You may begin to notice subtle sounds you did not hear before. Can you hear them now? Move your attention from sounds close to you to sounds at a distance. Come back to the sounds near you.

Smell: Now shift your attention to notice the smells of your environment. Maybe you smell food. You might become aware of the smell of trees or plants if you are outside. You might notice the smell of books or paper. If at the rink might smell the ice, the locker room, gloves!

See: Observe your surrounding and notice the colors, shapes and textures. If you really look, you may notice things that have gone unnoticed. Look at the small details. You might see the wall in front of you and then notice a tiny spot. What colors? What shapes? What items? Be detailed.

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Taste: You can do this one even if you don't have food in your mouth. You may notice an aftertaste of a previous drink or meal. You can just notice your tongue in your mouth, your saliva, and your breath as you exhale. We have tastes in our mouth that often go unnoticed. You can run your tongue over your teeth and cheeks to help you become more aware.

Feel/Touch: Bring your attention to the sensations of skin contact with your chair, clothing, and feet on the floor. You can notice the pressure between your feet and the floor or your body and the chair. You can observe temperature like the warmth or coolness of your hands or feet. You might take time to feel the textures that you noticed by sight a moment ago.

When finished, pause to notice how your body feels in this moment. Compare how you feel now with how you felt 5 minutes ago - what has changed?