

5 MINUTE EXERCISE - STILLING

1. Why?

We are more than our anxious thoughts, we are a complex and inter-related bundle of 'body, mind, soul, and Spirit', that list of course includes our will and emotions.

Slowing down and being present allows us to connect with ourselves, be open to each other, and for many people also to encounter God. This slowing down, being more than our sped-up thoughts and distractions, benefits us as human beings enormously.

2. Teacher Instructions

Relax. This is not all down to you; in fact, you are part of the receiving.

Think about creating a space where the group can relax into this. It will probably be best to have pupils sitting on chairs where possible. If pupils are seated on chairs, it would be wise to face the chair so that it is not angled towards another person and they are not tempted to distraction. (This will be important for the children in the class).

Ask everyone to clear the desks of stationery and books, so that you create a calm and peaceful space. Make sure technology is off and out of reach for all. Breathe deeply for yourself, and smile.

Now, gather the group.

3. Script

a) AWARENESS EXERCISE

and/or

b) THANK YOU, SORRY, PLEASE EXERCISE

AWARENESS EXERCISE

Smile, breathe and make eye contact with each person in the group.

We are going to be practicing stillness together as it is a fantastic thing to do! It reduces our stress and our anxiety, and it opens us up to connecting with ourselves, with others. For those who would like to, it is an ancient way that people have connected with God through millennia and in different faiths. It is a deeper, happier way of being.

[You might like to use the illustration of the bottle of muddy water at this point, particularly when introducing the exercise in the early stages]

Please sit on a chair if possible. If not, please sit cross-legged on the floor.

We are human beings not human doings. You are special and beautiful in a way that only you can be.

PAUSE and once again, Smile, breathe and make eye contact with each person in the group.

Could I invite you all to sit comfortably and in a way that is balanced and upright leaning neither forward nor backwards. Place the soles of your feet on the ground. Push your bottom back in the seat. Try to hold your back straight. Release your shoulders and imagine the cares of the world sliding off them and dropping to the floor. Balance your head on your neck so that it neither drops

forward nor falls backwards. This is important to stop you feeling drowsy. Place your hands in your lap, fingers lightly touching each other, or palms up on your knees. Close your eyes.

PAUSE

Start becoming aware of your breathing. Is it rapid? Is it slow? is it regular? Is it deep or shallow? As you breathe out, imagine exhaling all that feels difficult, heavy, or difficult about the day. Let it go. As you breathe in, inhale the sweet air, and you might like to ask God for the gift of his Holy Spirit.

Breathe slowly: IN: 1... 2... 3... OUT: 1... 2... 3...

PAUSE

Now become aware of the noises around you in the room. What are they like? Loud or quiet, sharp, or gentle. What about the noises beyond the room in the world outside? Are they man-made noises of cars, trains, or voices? Are they the voice of nature: birdsong, the wind in trees?

PAUSE

What about the noise in you? Try to become aware of what you are thinking about and feeling today. What is on your mind? Are you worried or concerned? Are you relaxed and peaceful? Are you thinking about the past, or the future, or are you caught up in the present? Notice but don't judge yourself. Just let the sediment fall quietly in your mind. Be still.

PAUSE

We are human beings not human doings. You are special and beautiful in a way that only you can be.

PAUSE

Open your eyes, come back into the room, have a stretch.

[If the group can handle this then encourage everyone to smile, and to make eye contact with the room, if not then you as the leader pause, smile and make eye contact.]

PAUSE

Thank you for participating.

THANK YOU, SORRY, PLEASE EXERCISE

Could I invite you all to sit comfortably and in a way that is balanced, leaning neither forwards nor backwards.

(We create a lot of strain on ourselves when we are using muscles to support the head rather than our head being supported down through the spine).

Place your hands on your knees palms upwards. Close your eyes.

We are human beings not human doings. The Bible says, "Be still and know that I am God" (pause)

Now, simply smile and breathe

PAUSE

Be aware of your breathing, feel the breath coming in, and your breath going out. Try and lengthen the in breath breathing not just from your chest, but from your belly. Try and lengthen the out breath too (pause) and repeat.

When you are ready, you might like to place your hands facing palms upwards on your knees. Think about the good things you have received from today, from the weekend, from the last week. You are invited to thank God for these gifts which he has placed into your hands.

KEEP SILENCE 1 minute

Next place your hands facing palms down on your knees. Imagine you are now dropping things. These might be things which feel heavy, tiring, shameful, burdensome, difficult, or awkward to carry.

Let go of them and you might like to ask Jesus to take them for you, to share them with you or to free you from them.

Let go and let God carry your burdens. This is a meaning of the cross.

KEEP SILENCE 1 minute

Finally turn your hands palms upwards on your knees, ready to receive. What would you like to receive in the rest of the day, or the days ahead? What do you long for in the deepest core of your being?

You are invited to bring this to mind, or to offer it to God.

KEEP SILENCE 1 minute

We are human beings not human doings. The Bible says, "Be still and know that I am God" (pause)

Open your eyes, come back into the room, have a stretch.

[If the group can handle this then Encourage everyone to smile, and to make eye contact with the room, if not then you as the leader pause, smile and make eye contact.]

Thank you for participating.

4. To be aware of

Feel what is happening in the room, if it was too much for the group, that is OK. If a quieter space/time is needed, that is OK. If the group need to break the tension with laughter or silliness, that is also OK and is perfectly normal in the earlier stages of practising this technique.