

# Module 4

## The 5 senses exercise

Sometimes we get caught up in the moment so caught up in our head, worrying about everything under the sun, that we lose touch with what's going on around us. When you do the five senses exercise you come back to the present and can feel more 'grounded' or centred.

### How does it work?

The five senses exercise brings you back to reality, so that you're less likely to get caught up in worried thoughts. It also helps you to slow down, and calm down.

The five senses exercise can also help you to enjoy your experience more. I have heard a Buddhist monk say that you only ever get 20 cents worth out of each coffee you buy, because your mind is so caught up in other thoughts, like what you have to do next. The five senses exercise can help bring your attention back to what's actually happening in the moment.

### Gen talks about the 5 senses exercise

Once I learnt about the five senses I started using it whenever I could. I use it down the beach and when I go to the park to chill out. I always make sure I use it in the morning, like in the shower, which stops me worrying about my day and lets me enjoy the feeling of warm water on my body. I use it when I'm eating (food tastes so much better when you're paying attention to it). I got a bit freaked out when I realised how much my mind wandered, but now I just accept that that's what my mind does and leave my thoughts running in the background. Oh, and I also use the five senses when I'm feeling a bit overwhelmed – it helps to bring me feel more centred and calm.

### How do you actually do this?

In this exercise you focus your attention on various senses. You could try this while sitting or walking in the park, but you can practice it anywhere. You can do this with your eyes open or closed.

**Step 1 - Breathing.** Pay attention to your breathing, noticing the feeling of the air coming into the body, the rise and fall of your stomach, the rise and fall of your chest, and the air moving into and out of your nostrils. You could also pay attention to the sense of smell.

**Step 2 - Sound.** Pay attention to sounds, listening for sounds near and far, or the absence of sound. Pick out five sounds in your environment, to help focus your attention.

**Step 3 - Touch.** Pay attention to the feelings in your body, the feeling of the ground beneath your feet, the feeling of the air around you. Bring your awareness to the position of your hands, sensations in your head or neck, chest, legs or feet. Note the feeling of any bodily movement.

**Step 4 - Sight.** Take a look around you and note five things in your environment – whatever happens to grab your attention. Do this without analysing or judging, and instead with an attitude of curiosity. Whenever you notice that you have become distracted by a thought, accept that you have become distracted, take note of what distracted you, and gently refocus your attention to the senses. Do this even if you find yourself becoming distracted over and over again. Do not judge yourself for having become distracted; it happens to everyone.