THE MINDFUL PATH

FREE PHYSICIAN-DESIGNED GUIDE

5 Grounding Practices to Help You Feel Safer

Support for moments of fear, overwhelm, and uncertainty throughout the cancer journey.

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A PLACE TO BEGIN

When the moment feels like too much

A cancer diagnosis can bring waves of fear, uncertainty, physical discomfort, waiting, and exhaustion. In those moments, you may not be able to think your way into feeling better. A brief practice can give your attention somewhere steady to rest.

These exercises draw from mindfulness and relaxation approaches used in supportive cancer care. You do not need to complete all five. Choose the one that feels most accessible today. Thirty seconds still counts.

The goal is not to force calm

The goal is to meet this moment with a little more space, support, and choice.

Before you begin

- Sit, stand, or lie down in a position that is safe and comfortable for your body.
- Keep your eyes open if closing them feels uncomfortable.
- Skip any practice that increases distress, dizziness, breathlessness, or pain.
- These practices can support you alongside medical and mental health care; they do not replace it.

1

A BRIEF PRACTICE

Let the exhale be a little longer

A slower, easier exhale can give the body a simple rhythm to follow. There is no need to take a very deep breath or hold your breath.

1. Let your breathing remain gentle and comfortable.
2. Breathe in for a count of four, or for any count that feels easy.
3. Breathe out for a count of six, allowing the exhale to be slightly longer.
4. Repeat for three to five breaths, then return to your natural breathing.

Words to carry with you

For this breath, I only need to breathe.

Important: If breath-focused practices feel uncomfortable, especially when you are short of breath or nauseated, stop and try Practice 2 instead.

2

A BRIEF PRACTICE

Orient to the room you are in

Fear can pull attention into an uncertain future. Orienting uses the senses to reconnect with what is actually around you now.

1. Slowly look around the room without searching for anything in particular.
2. Name five things you can see: a colour, a shape, a window, a familiar object.
3. Notice three sounds, including quiet or distant sounds.
4. Choose one object and let your eyes rest on it for a few seconds.

Words to carry with you

Right now, I am here.

3

A BRIEF PRACTICE

Feel where your body is supported

You do not have to relax your whole body. Begin by noticing the places already being held by the floor, bed, or chair.

1. Notice the contact between your feet and the floor, if that is available to you.
2. Feel the weight of your body against the chair or bed.
3. Let your hands rest somewhere comfortable and notice warmth, pressure, or texture.
4. Stay with one steady sensation for three breaths.

Words to carry with you

I do not have to hold all of myself up right now.

4

A BRIEF PRACTICE

Name what is here

Putting simple words to an experience can create a small amount of distance from it. Use language that feels honest rather than positive.

1. Ask quietly: What is most present right now?
2. Name the experience: ‘Fear is here,’ ‘This is uncertainty,’ or ‘My body feels exhausted.’
3. Notice where you feel it in the body without needing to change it.
4. Add one grounding fact: ‘I am waiting for results,’ ‘I am in the treatment room,’ or ‘My appointment is tomorrow.’

Words to carry with you

This is a hard moment. I can meet one part of it at a time.

5

A BRIEF PRACTICE

Choose the next kind step

Overwhelm asks you to solve everything at once. Steadiness often begins by choosing one small action that supports the next few minutes.

1. Place a hand on your chest, arm, or another place that feels comfortable. You can also simply imagine a kind presence beside you.
2. Say: ‘This is difficult, and I do not have to do it perfectly.’
3. Ask: What would support me in the next ten minutes?
4. Choose one step: drink water, write down a question, rest, message someone, or begin a five-minute meditation.

Words to carry with you

I only need to choose the next kind step.



Continue with The Mindful Path

A free, physician-designed six-week mindfulness program for anyone navigating cancer.

Inside the free program

Short physician-led teaching videos, guided meditations, reflection guides, and practices you can return to during diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship.

Scan to begin, or visit themindfulpath.com

A note on support

This guide is for education and general support. It is not medical advice and does not replace care from your oncology team. If distress feels unmanageable, you feel unsafe, or you are thinking about harming yourself, contact your health-care team, a local crisis service, or emergency services now.

Evidence informing this resource

Carlson LE, et al. Integrative Oncology Care of Symptoms of Anxiety and Depression in Adults With Cancer: Society for Integrative Oncology-ASCO Guideline. Journal of Clinical Oncology. 2023;41(28):4562-4591. doi:10.1200/JCO.23.00857

National Cancer Institute. How to Relax Your Mind and Body. Updated April 11, 2024.