WORKSHEET 16 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

The three-minute breathing space

A brief mindfulness exercise to step out of autopilot

AIM

Offer a brief exercise, usable several times a day, for noticing what is going on inside, focusing on the breath and then widening attention to the whole body.

WHO IT IS FOR

Rumination, diffuse anxiety, very busy people. Adults and adolescents.

DURATION

3 min; 2-3 times a day and when anxiety rises

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Introduce the image of the hourglass: wide (what is there), narrow (the breath) and wide again (the whole body).
2. Guide the breathing space in session, one minute per step, and ask what the person noticed.
3. Suggest three fixed times a day (linked to a habit: coffee, the commute, the end of a meeting).
4. Also encourage an “on demand” pause when anxiety or rumination appears.

POINTS TO WATCH

> Mindfulness is not a relaxation technique: feeling restless during the exercise is not a failure. With people who have traumatic experiences, keep the eyes open and offer an external anchor (sounds, feet on the floor).

REFERENCES

Segal, Z. V., Williams, J. M. G. & Teasdale, J. D. (2013). Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression (2nd ed.). Guilford.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness. Delacorte.

PSYCHOLOGIST’S NOTES

© 2026 Gonzalo Garzo, clinical psychologist · gonzalogarzo.com · CC BY-NC-ND 4.0: free to share, no commercial use or modifications

WORKSHEET 16 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

The three-minute breathing space

Three minutes to step out of autopilot. It is not about relaxing, but about noticing what is there. You can keep your eyes open.

1. Minute 1: notice what is there. What thoughts? What emotions? What sensations? Without changing anything.
2. Minute 2: bring your attention to your breath, in your abdomen. When your mind wanders, gently come back.
3. Minute 3: widen your attention to your whole body, your posture, the space around you.
4. Then carry on with what you were doing.

Day	Pause 1	Pause 2	Pause 3	What I noticed

What changes, even a little, after a pause?

These exercises do not replace therapy. If you are in distress or having suicidal thoughts: 112 (European Union), 3114 (France) or the emergency number of the country where you live.

© 2026 Gonzalo Garzo, clinical psychologist · gonzalogarzo.com · CC BY-NC-ND 4.0: free to share, no commercial use or modifications