The three-stage breathing space

*1. Become aware*

If possible close your eyes, and……

Notice what thoughts are present. See if you can acknowledge *thoughts as thoughts.* You might even say to yourself “I’m thinking about such-and-such”. See if you can notice whether your thoughts are rushing or sluggish. Are you caught up in familiar self-talk?

 Turn towards how you feel right now, noticing any pleasant or unpleasant feelings. Very often we’re not feeling anything very much, so see if you can feel what “nothing very much” feels like.

 Then notice what body sensations are present – perhaps briefly scan through your body, starting with your feet and rising up to your head and face.

*2. Gathering*

Then focus on the physical sensations of breathing. You might especially focus on the feeling of the breath in your belly. See if you can follow the whole breath in and out. This will help anchor you in the present tense.

*3. Expanding*

Now try expanding your awareness around your breathing to include your body, your posture, even your facial expression. See if you can include more and more of the body while maintaining contact with the breath. If you feel areas of discomfort or tension, see if you can focus in on them and breathe into them.

Okay, now open your eyes. If possible stay in touch with the mindfulness you’ve developed as you go about your business.

*Remember……*

You’re not trying to change anything; you’re not even trying to relax (which will just set you up to fail). Just go through the stages *as best you can* – without any big expectations. All you’re doing is experiencing the inner weather of your thoughts, feelings, and body sensations.