

SWIM TO LIVE

Swimming
and Mindfulness
Program



Co-funded by
the European Union

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SWIMMING STRATEGIES/GOALS

Welcome swimming enthusiasts and swimming coaches!

During a two-year Erasmus+ Sport project, we have prepared swimming and mindfulness strategies for teaching swimming and mindfulness to each and every one. We have prepared the drills for everyone - beginner, intermediate or advanced level.

Skills are described in two ways.

If you are a swimmer, read the blue descriptions of the exercises.

If you are a coach, read the yellow ones.

At the end of each strategy, you will see a QR code containing a link to a video of each exercise.

Have fun, enjoy yourselves and use the knowledge to the maximum.

The Swili team



Beginner Level

The first step in the long process of learning to swim is adapting to the water. This means that the person has to feel comfortable in the water first. To adapt to water, we use various drills described below. The exercises should be done in the suggested order but it can vary from person to person, follow all of them or just pick out some, or mix the order.

The basis of swimming is gliding, which means that regardless of the technique, the swimmer must submerge their head underwater. For this, we initially teach two sets of skills:

First skill: the swimmer is not afraid to have their head submerged.

Second: when their head is submerged, they need to exhale. This means that the swimmer slowly exhales underwater – blowing bubbles.

Once swimmers have mastered the exercises and games of adapting to head submerged and exhaling by blowing bubbles, we can begin adapting to the buoyancy.

All swimming techniques require the body in a horizontal position, which is why it is necessary to teach swimmers to float, glide and turn on the surface of the water.

We can combine teaching these skills with mindfulness activities.



Beginner Level

Swimming skill: Adaptation to the water

Body awareness while walking in the water

The explanation for the swimmer:

- take a walk around the pool
- experience different depths of the water
- focus on balance and feel the resistance of the water.

The explanation for the coach:

Walking in the water strengthens the muscles and is good for balance training. Swimmers should focus on the sensation of water resistance. When they start to learn to swim, they should first understand that water has different physical properties than air. Through various games in the water, they learn about the resistance of water. We can use games that include walking, running, and different movements. Students relax and warm up, familiarising themselves with the water and the surroundings of the swimming pool.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=83Vstlufgrg>

Feeling the water on the body and adjusting to feeling the water on the face

Sit at the poolside, mimic washing with the water and splash the water on different body parts. Then wash your face. Feel the splashing of the water on your face and open your eyes.

Play with the swimmer and try to “wash” thoroughly with water in the swimming pool. Describe to them that they should allow the water on the face, that it is like daily washing routine, only today we are doing it in the swimming pool.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9ccRXrfC74>



Beginner Level

Swimming skill: Breathing

Holding the breath in the water and concentrating on exhaling

Stay at the edge of the pool or float easily, put your whole face in the water and exhale through your mouth or nose or both.

The swimmers focus on relaxing, gaining confidence in submerging the head and having full control of their breathing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wNIsDWRbiTI>

Breath control

Float on your belly, use a floating tube if needed, hold the wall of the pool with your hands and try to relax. When you are relaxed and floating, focus on the feeling of holding your breath.

The swimmer should be relaxed with floating first, then their focus should go to the submersion, holding their breath or exhaling slowly. Exercising breathing control is good to gain confidence being under the water. Challenge the swimmers with timing how long they can hold their breath.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZu9S1cou6w>

Rhythmical exhalations

Exhale through the mouth or nose or both, exhale as fast as possible.

The swimmer exhales through the mouth or nose or both at the same time. They should be able to do at least 10 repetitions. We suggest that they do it in a slow tempo. They should be relaxed while doing the drill.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MRrpurxKoeg>



Beginner Level

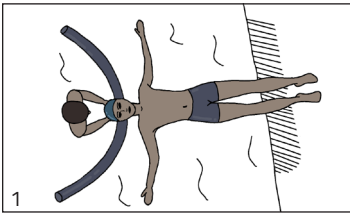
Swimming skill: Floating

Mindful floating in a relaxed wall-supported supine position (1)

Float on your back with your feet on the poolside, use a floating tube if needed, relax and focus on the body position. Hold your breath for a few seconds, then start to breathe slowly, observing how the body buoyancy changes with breathing.

Swimmers should first focus on the body position, and then on their breathing. They can work on breathing control and rhythm while they are in a safe supine position. The instructor should be near at all times.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCKJIAZChW8>

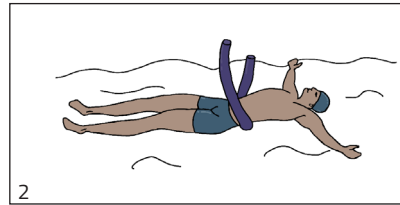


Mindful floating in the relaxed supine position without the support (2)

Float on your back, use a floating tube if needed, slowly relax and just feel your body floating. Focus on breathing.

Help the swimmers to lie on the water on their back, if they need it, use a floating tube. Swimmers should focus on their breathing while staying in a safe supine position. Support the swimmers at the beginning then let go and allow them to relax.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kqm6eLZYQ34>



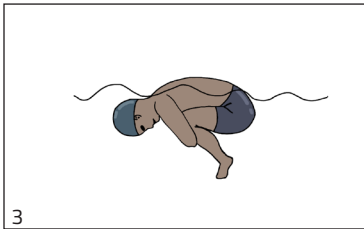


Mushroom floating (3)

Submerge your head, float and bring your arms and legs as close as possible to your body, create a ball shape with your body, hold the breath. Find balance if you start to roll from side to side, be calm. You can also try and exhale when you feel that you are calm. Feel what is happening with your buoyancy.

This drill is good for adaptation to the water. Focus your swimmers on the feeling of the floating, how they are gaining confidence, how they feel buoyancy and balance.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UhMkoXWlh20>



Star floating position in prone and supine position (4)

Push gently off the floor and lie on your back. Lay on the water as you would in bed with your limbs spread wide. Hold your breath while controlling your balance, then exhale. Repeat the exercise on with your face downwards., lying on your belly.

The swimmers should focus on body position, feel how they control their floating and stay confident, and control their breathing.

<https://youtu.be/Xb80zhc1yJM>

<https://youtu.be/zNUGyfHfwas>





Beginner Level

Swimming skill: Gliding and Propelling

Push off the wall and glide as an arrow (1)

Propel off the wall and glide as far as you can, maintaining the balance of the body, keeping the position tight. Hold your breath and keep the position for at least 5 seconds.

The swimmers should be in a horizontal position and maintain a good gliding position.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ph9Zp4wmti0>

Kicking with floating tube (2)

Lay on your back with a floating tube if needed, start slowly with the backstroke kick. Hold your legs as straight as possible. Try to swim the whole length of the pool and feel your movement in the water.

With this drill we train leg muscles while trying to keep the balance. Everything must be balanced: breathing, keeping the body in a horizontal position and keeping the kicks consistent. The movement should be similar to walking, keep the kicks short and rhythmical. The hips must stay high on the water, do not let them fall down in a sitting position.

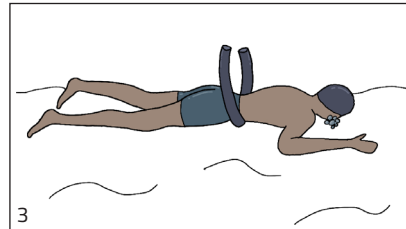
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7YqTCHCDCKQ>

Prone position sculling (3)

Float on your belly with a floating tube if needed, start paddling with the arms, use both arms. Hold the body as high as possible on the water.

With this exercise we train arm muscles while trying to keep the balance. Everything must be balanced: breathing, keeping the body in a horizontal position and keeping the paddling consistent. Challenge the swimmers to swim the whole length of the pool and feel their movement in the water.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OgMbBc4hn-c>





Prone position sculling while exhaling in the water (4)

Float on your belly with a floating tube if needed, start paddling with the arms, use both arms. Hold the body as high as possible on the water. Put the face in the water and exhale then inhale on one side. Sculling, combined with breathing, develops better propulsion and body position.

With this drill we train different muscles while keeping the balance and coordination with breathing. Keep the paddling consistent. Challenge the swimmers to swim the whole length of the pool and feel their movement in the water.

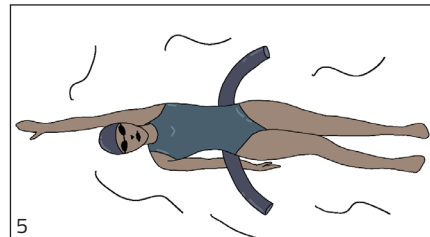
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMUo8IOiCDc>

Backstroke with floating tube (5)

Float on your back, use a floating tube if needed, use both arms alternately, keep the body horizontal and move through the water with your arms. Focus on the arms, use kicks to maintain the body position and balance.

With this exercise we train different muscles while keeping the balance and coordination. Keep the paddling consistent. Challenge the swimmers to swim the whole length of the pool and feel their movement in the water. When the swimmers are confident in their ability, remove the tube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t61gvaif1E>





Beginner Level

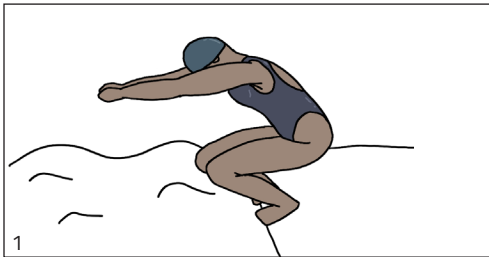
Swimming skill: Diving

Jump from the squatting position (1)

Put your toes over the edge of the pool, squat and stretch your arms above your head. Roll over slowly from your feet with your arms stretched above your head. Let gravity pull you into the water. While you are falling, stretch your legs and maintain a gliding position. Jump in the water from a deep squat or a kneeling position. When you dive, maintain a good gliding position.

Jump in the water from a deep squat position, dive and maintain a good gliding position. Gain confidence and understand the body position.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TxSt1bJH9ho>

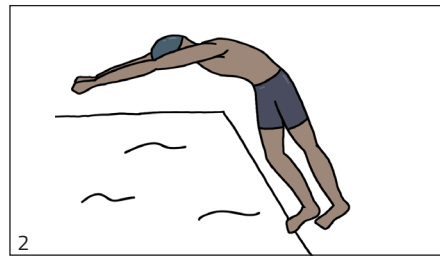


Jump from the standing position (2)

Stand on the edge of the pool and put one foot in front of the other. Stretch your arms above your head and bend forward. To start your fall, you can use the back leg to add a little upward push, but mostly just let gravity pull you into the water. While falling, straighten your legs and maintain a good body position.

The head should be tucked away below the extended arms. The back leg should do a little kick to the back and the front leg should join the back leg during the jump. Gliding after the jump is very important.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3gDjNdCRF1A>





Beginner Level

Swimming skill: Body Rotations

The following exercises should be executed in pairs, with a swimming instructor or assistant. Don't forget that swimming should be fun and swimming knowledge should be acquired through play. When teaching, be relaxed and patient.

Rotation in longitudinal axes (over the shoulder and hip) while floating

(same instruction for the coach and the swimmer)

Swimmers can do this drill in 3 different ways.

1. Float on your back, put your hand on the opposite shoulder, follow the arm with your eyes and that's when the turning of the body should start.
2. You can also start the movement by crossing one leg over the other, starting from the pelvis, the shoulder, then head will follow.
3. Extend your arm towards the ceiling, the weight of the arm will start turning your body in the direction of the lifted arm.

https://youtu.be/UU5rWO_yGek

Rotation around the longitudinal axes in upright position

Stand in the water, lift your legs until you start floating, use your arms to turn around. Move slowly and feel how your body turns. The instructor can help swimmers do the turn.

<https://youtu.be/bKTOHrMr5Hc>

Rotation around the sagittal axis

The swimmers are in an upright position, the instructor is helping either by holding arms or hips, while the swimmer moves the body to left and right. Swimmers can also do bicycle movement with feet.

<https://youtu.be/dgtVqsBgSBE>



Advanced Level

Learning the basics of swimming includes learning backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle (front crawl). First, we explain and teach easier, more elemental movements. Then we do drills that demand more coordination. Use different swimming props (swimming tubes, fins and kick-boards). When swimmers have mastered the individual elements, we can move to teaching coordination which means that we integrate arms movements, kicking and breathing.



Advanced Level

Swimming skill: Kicking on the Back

Start on your back, look at the ceiling, float or push from the wall, then start kicking and feel how you glide through the water. Legs should be straight but not too rigid. You can use fins, so you feel the propulsion well. Fins also help loosen stiff ankles. After a length or two, do the same without the fins.

Swimmers start on their back, their gaze should be directed at the ceiling. Their kicks should be done from the hips. While swimming, remind them to keep their hips high and feel the gliding. Legs should be straight, but not too tense. With fins they move faster and it is easier to focus on gliding and feeling of water. Check swimmer's knees, they should not break the surface of the water and encourage the swimmer to breathe through the mouth. Swimmers should stay in this position for at least 1 length of the pool.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipCm2k2-Jb8>



Advanced Level

Swimming skill: Double Arm Backstroke

Start on your back, look at the ceiling, float or push from the wall, then start to scull with both arms simultaneously. Feel the propulsion, observe the sensation of gliding. You can make slight sculling movements under the water by your sides (imitate a bird's wings) or you can move your arms the whole circle in and out of the water.

Swimmers start on their backs, float or push from the wall. Beginners start to move their arms in small circles like a bird would move its wings. They can use a floating aid. Guide them to push the water with their hands, from their head towards their feet. For better swimmers, the goal is to enter and exit the water with both arms in unison. The focus is on the catch and pushing the water straight down to their feet. When done correctly, swimmers should be able to feel the propulsion from each stroke driving them forward in the water.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yssA9I9tngY>

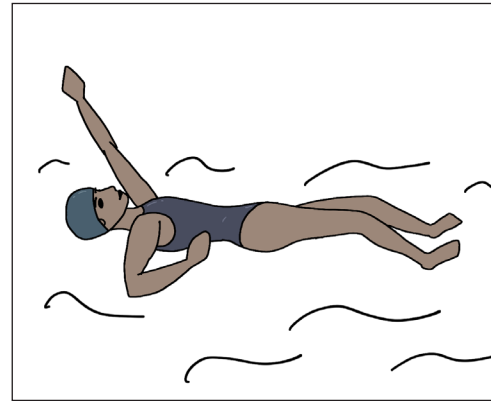


Advanced Level

Swimming skill: Backstroke with alternating hand pull with assistance

Start on your back and start to scull, first with one arm and then the other. Use a floating aid if necessary. When one arm is moving (doing the whole circle), the other waits by the side. Keep the body straight, but not rigid.

Swimmers start on their backs, float or push from the wall, the body should be horizontal and streamlined. By looking at the ceiling, it is easier to remain on the water's surface. Do the strokes alternating the arms. The stroke should start with an extended hand over the head, followed by the push of the water towards the feet. Feel the gliding, keep good position in the water and do not let your hips sink. Later, if you want to swim backstroke, just leave out the pause after each stroke. The arms should be moving continuously and the legs kicking at all times. Ensure that one arm begins to pull as the opposite arm exits the water. Keep the body straight, but not rigid.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfwXa5rMDFw>



Advanced Level

Swimming skill: Flutter kick

Start with the glide on your belly. Hold the legs as straight as possible, but not stiff. Move the legs up and down. Keep a good head position and balance. When you start kicking, the body should be flat with the head in the water. First, just do a short distance without breathing. And then, when the propulsion is good, add an inhale. To breathe, start to turn from the shoulder and look towards the ceiling, then breathe in through your mouth. Variation one: swimming on the side, the lower arm is extended in front and the upper arm is relaxed and on the flank. Variation two: without fins.

The flutter kick moves the swimmer forward, keeps the legs up and assists body rotation. The legs are extended backwards in line with the body. One leg kicks downwards as the other leg moves up. The knees are slightly bent, toes are pointed. Always remind the swimmer to remain straight, but not stiff. Use fins to improve the movements and to feel propulsion and acceleration. Variation: without fins

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xEhxL8pr5Z4>



Advanced Level

Swimming skill: Freestyle Superman Drill

The Superman drill improves the body position of the front crawl stroke. Pausing the stroke encourages you to lengthen your body position and stay streamlined. Start from the wall in the superman position, do a freestyle stroke and stop the arms, one in front, the other at the hip, turn on the side and breathe, while kicking non-stop. Count 6 kicks, and make a stroke with both arms, so they switch. While staying on the side, the shoulder must be out of the water. There must be a clear pause between breathing and pulling. The drill is good for correcting coordination mistakes. When the automatic pilot tries to take over and the swimmer starts to swim without pauses, stop the swimmer, explain and try again.

https://youtu.be/U0-VB4x_mgg



Advanced Level

Swimming skill: Freestyle combined with backstroke

This amazing swim drill is perfect for creating a body alignment in the water. Use a combination of backstroke and freestyle strokes (the most common version of this is with 3 strokes freestyle, then 3 strokes backstroke). This drill improves both freestyle and backstroke. In a proper freestyle and backstroke, your hands enter directly in line with your shoulders. With 3 freestyle strokes and then flipping around to do 3 backstrokes, the swimmer can align correctly and strengthen important core muscles. Movement and the change of technique should be seamless with no stopping or pause. Inhale while swimming backstroke and exhale slowly while swimming freestyle, kicking constantly.

<https://youtu.be/9tYTkMSH5Cs>



Advanced Level

Swimming skill: Breaststroke two kicks one pull

Two kicks and one pull is a classic breaststroke drill that lets you focus on your kick and improve your streamlined position underwater. To do this drill, you execute the movements of the regular breaststroke cycle, but instead of kicking once with your legs and pulling once with your arms per stroke cycle, you kick twice with your legs and then pull once with your arms per cycle. Feel the water and the glide between each move. Swim slowly and glide at least for 3 seconds between each move. Use it for practising good gliding and balance in the water.

<https://youtu.be/MufUg-nrLjQ>



Advanced Level

Swimming skill: Breaststroke pull-out

The pull-out is an underwater part of swimming, after the start and after the turn, before the swimmer starts swimming breaststroke. Push off the wall in a streamlined position, then make one long pull all the way, from the overhead position to the hips, glide, return the arms as close to the body as possible and at the same time make a strong kick. Glide again, break through the surface and swim on.

<https://youtu.be/HjN6c8WNm0A>



Advanced Level

Swimming skill: Breaststroke extended glide

In this drill, we attempt to extend the gliding phase of breaststroke. The glide phase occurs just after the legs kick back and the arms extend forward. Wait and glide for 3 to 5 seconds in a streamlined position. Feel the water while gliding. Concentrate on finding a good time for the next stroke and glide as long as you can, but do not stop completely. Count the strokes per lane and make as few as possible. The position of the body in the water is very important, pay attention to the head and the hips. The head goes down when the arms go forward, arms stay in an arrow position. At the end of the kick, activate the core muscles and feel the position of the hips.

<https://youtu.be/ovB3e8Co6mk>



Advanced Level

Swimming skill: Breaststroke two pulls one kick

Two pulls and one kick is a drill with a focus on the sensation of the pulling. After the glide, make one stroke while you concentrate on the muscles in your arms, do not breathe, your head stays down in the water, follow the move by extending the arms over your head and glide, exhale. Then, you make one full breaststroke cycle with the inhale. Swim slowly the whole length of the pool and feel the glide between each move. Focus on the pull and sense the movement and strength of your arms while you are pulling.

Highlight that the first pull should be done submerged, focus just on the arm movements and do it without any kick or leg motion. Small undulation (butterfly) movement from the hips is allowed to align the body, activate the core muscles and observe the position of the hips.

When you feel confident in the exercise combine the pull without legs with breathing.

<https://youtu.be/C4iMqjYXWpg>



Advanced Level

Swimming skill: Breaststroke kicks with freestyle pull

Move arms in freestyle and kick breaststroke with legs. Try this drill and learn something different. Focusing on two different techniques you experience increased awareness and better focus on swimming coordination.

This is a coordination exercise and reaches the movement part of the brain. We combine two techniques with the goal to enrich the swimmers' movements. Watch for coordination. The kicking must be non-stop, and arms should move in coordination.

<https://youtu.be/U1jy-5D15k0>



Advanced Level

Swimming skill: Butterfly with one arm combined with breaststroke

Swim butterfly with one arm, make one left and one right stroke, then seamlessly change to breaststroke. Do two cycles, the first breaststroke cycle is without breathing, focus on the strong pullout then continue with the second cycle of breaststroke combined with the inhale. Repeat 2 times and mind the timing, the stroke change should be seamless. The hips of the swimmer should stay as high as possible all the time.

<https://youtu.be/eEK0-4wDgUU>



Advanced Level

Swimming skill: Butterfly pull with breaststroke kicks, combined with breaststroke

Do the butterfly stroke with the arms and combine it with the breaststroke kick. After three butterfly pulls, seamlessly continue with 3 breaststroke pulls. All movements and changes should be seamless, with no stop or delay. The hips of the swimmer should stay as high as possible while changing between arm pulls.

<https://youtu.be/TC30gRvFTJM>

MINDFULNESS

Health-enhancing benefits of mindfulness

Mindfulness can be defined as paying attention to one's inner and outer experiences in a non-judgmental manner from moment to moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). By adding mindfulness to physical activity, we learn new skills easier and we make stronger mind-body connections.

Scientific evidence has shown a link between exercise and a positive mood. After exercising, people report being more optimistic and relaxed and knowing that, we create a positive loop for working out. This means that the impact of exercising on the mood is detected immediately after the workout, while physical benefits can be detected later in time.

When we combine swimming with practising mindfulness, the benefits are even more promising. One can start practising mindfulness by focusing on breathing, the feeling and sound of exhaling fully underwater, inhaling air in when the mouth exits the water. Or one can experience the rhythm of the stroke, the comfort of gliding on the water and the sound of the water when their head is submerged. One can practice attention by gently drawing their mind back to the experience. This is the start of learning how to focus, of learning how to channel your attention and energy where it needs to be, and when it needs to be there (Peter Haberl, senior sport psychologist for the U.S. Olympic Committee).



Bringing 5 basic senses to a mindfulness practice

The key in incorporating daily mindfulness practice is to turn yourself into the observer. Using the five senses (sound, smell, sight, taste, and touch) to ground yourself in the present moment, can enhance your experiences with the world around you. Focus on each sense separately, what you see, smell, hear, taste and feel. Bring awareness to all of the senses: sight, sound, smell, taste and touch.

https://youtu.be/F80MbdxOM_8



Mindfulness

Practising non-judgmental observation

Being non-judgemental is becoming an observer of life and not deciding if things around you are right or wrong. While practising non-judgemental observation, it is easier to start by observing an object outside of yourself. To start with, the sight is the easiest to use out of our primary sense. Use progressions, start with simple exercises and continue with more complex ones when learning to meditate. The idea of a non-judgemental observation can be applied to the external or the internal world. Start with the external and continue on to the internal world.

https://youtu.be/BmGg-Aa2_Fc





Mindfulness

External non-judgmental observation

To do this, forget everything you know about an object and observe it as if you see it for the first time in your life. Detach from the chosen object and make a mental list of everything you notice about the object (surface, texture, colours, shapes, etc.)

https://youtu.be/fwl5_IOMxCI





Mindfulness

Internal non-judgmental observation

Experience your internal world using only your breath. Observe and notice the body sensations with the inhale and the exhale. Notice tension or relaxation within your body. Observe the sensations inside your body and notice the feelings in the abdomen while breathing.

<https://youtu.be/HIO9imD7KFc> V





Mindfulness Thoughts labelling

Assigning categories to your own thoughts interrupts your usual thought process and gives you an opportunity to change it. It is a great technique to prevent the debilitating effects of overthinking. This exercise helps to detach from one's thoughts and helps to lessen overthinking. It also brings awareness to thought patterns and enables more empowered thinking and optimistic thoughts.

<https://youtu.be/IDFB4FC8JkM>





Mindfulness Observing emotions

This exercise encourages you to find connections between thoughts, emotions and body sensations. Physical sensations may be directly reduced during this exercise. In the long term, this exercise can help you with recognizing physical sensations that accompany certain thoughts and emotions. Noticing these connections can help you change unwanted behaviour patterns. The goal of the exercise is to refocus your attention from overwhelming states, bringing you more “into” the body, reducing unpleasant body sensations and preventing their escalations.

https://youtu.be/YAsMKwgCm_o



