

**Coping**

Meditation



2-10 min



Client



Yes



Meditation on the Soles of the Feet

Using mindfulness or meditation to regulate emotional responses can be a challenging task. Especially when emotions are strong, being able to observe the emotion while resisting the impulse to act upon that emotion is often more easily said than done. In some cases, using mindfulness and meditation with individuals with lower mental abilities becomes difficult. This tool was designed for individuals with lower mental abilities to enhance their ability to cope with aggressive responses.

It must be noted that most studies on the effects of this meditation on aggression have used small numbers of participants (1-18 participants). However, the results of 13 studies have been reviewed and suggest that mindfulness practices, like this exercise, can help reduce anger and aggressive responding (see Fix & Fix, 2013).

Goal

This exercise aims to help clients effectively regulate the urge to be physically or verbally aggressive.

Advice

- Although the tool has often been used with individuals with lower mental abilities, it may also work well for children who may find it difficult to grasp concepts like observing, decentering, and the like. Rather than using abstract language, this tool can easily be delivered in a language that resonates with the lower than average level of understanding of the target population.
- Note that anger can be justifiable and necessary, depending on the context. Therefore, we do not want to eliminate anger entirely. Anger can be a strength because it provides us with information about the situation in which we find ourselves and alerts us to do something positive to change the situation.
- Do not ask the individual to stop angry thoughts actively. The thoughts stop by themselves when the focus of attention shifts fully to the soles of the feet. Remind the client to breathe naturally. It is not necessary to take deep breaths.
- This type of meditation can be done while standing, sitting, or walking slowly. Of course, with some modifications, it can be done while lying down, but this may not be convenient in the rush of daily activities.

- This meditation can also be used in role plays. The practitioner can take the role of the offender, evoke anger in the client, and let the client respond to this.
- For instance:
 1. Responding to someone who is saying something that offends you.
 2. Responding to a peer who threatens to hit you.
 3. Responding to a staff member or co-worker who is not nice to you.
 4. Responding to someone who pushes you around.



References

- Fix, R. L., & Fix, S. (2013). The effects of mindfulness-based treatments for aggression: A critical review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 18*, 219-227.
- Singh, N., Wahler, R., Adkins, A., & Myers, R. (2003). Soles of the feet: A mindfulness-based self-control intervention for aggression by an individual with mild mental retardation and mental illness. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 24*, 158-169.
- Singh, N. N., Lancioni, G. E., Singh, J., Subhashni, D., Winton, A. S. W., & Sabaawi, M., et al. (2007). Adolescents with conduct disorder can be mindful of their aggressive behavior. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 15*, 56-63.
- Singh, N. N., Lancioni, G. E., Singh, A. D. A., Winton, A. S. W., Singh, A. N. A., & Singh, J. (2011). Adolescents with Asperger syndrome can use a mindfulness-based strategy to control their aggressive behavior. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders, 5*, 1103-1109.



Meditation on the Soles of the Feet

Instructions

1. If you are standing, assume a natural rather than an aggressive posture, with the soles of your feet flat on the floor. If sitting, relax with the soles of your feet flat on the floor.
2. Think about a time when something caused you to experience strong anger. Try to reconnect to that experience. Try to relive the experience that caused anger.
3. You are feeling anger, and angry thoughts may arise. Let the thoughts flow naturally without pushing them away. Stay with anger. You may have physical reactions that display anger, including an increased heart rate, increased breathing rate, and tension in the jaw, neck, and/or shoulders.
4. Shift the focus of your attention to the soles of your feet.
5. Slowly, move your toes, feel your shoes covering your feet, the texture of your socks or hose, the curve of your arch, and the heels of your feet against the back of your shoes. If you do not have shoes on, feel the floor or carpet with the soles of your feet.
6. Keep breathing naturally and focus on the soles of your feet until you feel calm.
7. Practice this exercise until you can use it wherever you are and whenever an incident occurs that may cause you to feel the urge to be verbally or physically aggressive.
8. Remember that once you are calm, you can walk away from the incident or situation with a smile on your face because you regulated your anger. Alternatively, if you need to, you can respond to the incident or situation with a calm and clear mind and without verbal threats or physical aggression.