

# How I Help Myself Now to Handle What's Next

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If I can become aware, in the moment, of what I am giving my **attention** to, what I am **feeling**, what I am **thinking**, and what **physical sensations** I am experiencing, and do so without judgment, I can use this information to help myself decide what would be most helpful for me to say or do next – or not say or not do.

## ATTENTION

*“To what am I giving my attention right now?”*

Here are ways to help myself become more aware of to what I am giving my attention:

- Try an [Awareness Check-in](#).
- Watch the [Headspace YouTube videos](#) about basic meditation.
- Use the Basics pack in the [Headspace app](#).
- Take a [sensory tour](#) of where I am living. Ask myself, “What was the most notable sight, sound, touch, smell, taste (if available), and motion I noticed on my tour today?”

## FEELINGS

*“What am I feeling right now?”*

*“On a scale of 1 to 10, what is the intensity of that feeling?”*

Here are ways to help myself become more aware of what I am feeling, and to adjust the intensity of my feelings to a range that feels stable to me:

- Identify and name my feelings using the [Feelings Wheel](#) or other online source.
- Imagine an inner volume control on my feelings. Imagine myself matter-of-factly dialing down the volume if my feelings are ramped up too high for me to feel stable, or dialing up the volume if my feelings get so low that I feel unmotivated.



## THOUGHTS

### *What am I thinking right now?*

Here are ways to help myself become more aware of what I am thinking:

- State my thoughts to myself in simple sentences: "I am thinking \_\_\_\_\_."
- Imagine two piles for my thoughts, one pile for "helpful" and one pile for "unhelpful." As I become aware of my thoughts, I name them "helpful" and "unhelpful" and mentally place them into one of the two piles.
- While I might want to label my thoughts "good" or "bad," "right or wrong," "sensible" or "crazy" – and I might be right that they are one or the other! – I simply shift my attention to one question: "Is this thought 'helpful' or 'unhelpful'?"
- I acknowledge that my attention will be drawn to both piles. When my attention shifts to the "unhelpful" pile, I simply disengage my attention, shift it, and re-engage it with the "helpful" thoughts. No harm, no foul, no judgment, just disengage and shift.
- I shift and re-shift my attention to the pile of helpful thoughts, rank order them in importance, and give my attention to the most important thoughts.

## PHYSICAL SENSATIONS

### *What physical sensations am I experiencing right now?*

Here are ways I can help myself become aware of the physical sensations I am experiencing, and separate them from what I am feeling, from what I am thinking, and from who I am:

- I say to myself, "I am not what I am sensing."
- I do a quick body scan. I start with the top of my head, move through my body to my toes, and become aware of what is going on within my body.
- I identify which parts of my body are feeling comfortable and which are feeling uncomfortable.
- To help myself feel more comfortable and more stable, I consciously move or breathe.

Regardless of what is going on in my life, or what kind of distress or stress I might be experiencing, I can pause, become aware, and collect specific information about what's going on with me. I can practice a few skills to kindly steady myself, then I can continue to take helpful, skillful action on my own behalf.

*Photo: "Self-hug" of Casey Sapienza by Mia Sapienza*

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