**Mindfulness**

**The coping Three Stage Breathing Space**

You can practice the Breathing Space regularly in your day or whenever you need it. If you feel troubled, and there are thoughts, feelings or physical sensations present in your experience that are hard to be with, you practice this:

# Awareness

Bring yourself into the present moment by deliberately adopting an upright and dignified posture and then ask “what is going on in this moment?” and noticing what is happening in your thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations.

Now, you might find it helpful to describe, acknowledge and identify what is arising – to put experiences into words, for example, say in your mind: “self-critical thoughts are here” or “feelings of intense irritation are arising” or “anxiety is here” or ‘’tightness in the neck is here’’

# Re-directing attention

Gently redirect your full attention to the breath.

Follow the breath all the way in and all the way out for about one minute (or more or less depending on your preference.)

If it helps, keep your focus on your breath when there are strong thoughts or feelings present. In addition you could count the breaths in the back of your mind e.g. “breathing in… breathing out one, breathing in … breathing out two” then starting over when reaching 5 breaths.

# Expanding Attention

Allow your attention to expand to the whole body and hold in awareness all the sensations in your body right now – just as they are. In the case of any difficulty, any sense of discomfort or pain, tension or resistance, then taking your awareness there by “breathing into them” on the in-breath and then, breathe out from these sensations, softening and opening with the outbreath. Say to yourself on the outbreath:

 “It’s OK to feel what I am feeling.” or “It’s OK not to feel OK - let me feel it.”

Become aware of and adjust your posture and facial expression and as best you can, bring this expanded awareness to the next moments of your day. In this way we are simply allowing things to be just as they already are and allowing us to hold difficult experiences in a wider field of awareness, letting them be rather than engaging in a battle with them. The Breathing Space can give us a way to step out of automatic pilot mode when dealing with difficulties and to reconnect with the present moment in a way that allows new and creative responses.