

Session 1. Welcome to Inner Resources for Stress

You are about to embark on a wonderful journey! Inner Resources for Stress (IR) is a program of mindfulness and meditation (MM) that you can use to:

- Reduce stress
- Remain calmer even when things aren't going well
- Let go of upsetting thoughts and feelings as they come up, rather than dwelling on them
- Pay attention to thoughts, feels, and experiences in the present moment
- Pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them

IR is a mindfulness, meditation, and mantra program. By participating in this program, you can easily begin a regular daily meditation practice that will renew and nourish you.

How Does Meditation Help?

How can meditation help renew and nourish you? The idea is simple. Most of us have habitual patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving that are deeply ingrained. They are so ingrained, in fact, that they have become our reality. Meditation gives us a chance to step back from our usual patterns and make other choices for ourselves.

MM practice help to develop resilience to stress and trauma by developing natural capacities for regulating attention, positive and negative emotions, and thoughts. MM practices can be used in daily life to help with stressors as they come up. In addition, the MM practices in IR are designed to be used to help identify and resolve responses to stress and trauma. Resource Pages 1–3 at the end of this IR Participant Guide give details about how and why to use MM for stress and trauma.

What Is Involved in IR?

IR is a secular program. It is designed to be used by people in all walks of life, from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, who want an introduction to a classical form of meditation. MM are basic human abilities, just like paying attention or falling asleep are natural abilities. This program is intended to help you develop your natural ability for MM.

IR usually includes weekly group meetings led by an experienced meditation therapist and between-session practice of the meditation techniques, though you can use this guide even without an ongoing class.

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Session 1 (continued)

Aims of Weekly Group Meetings

- Learn and practice mindfulness, meditation, and mantra techniques
- Talk about how to use these techniques in everyday life
- Talk about ways to apply the meditation practice to problems with stress and trauma
- Discuss ways to set up a daily practice of meditation, both at home and in daily life

Taking the Practice with You

Many people go to meditation or relaxation sessions and wish they could take home some of the good feeling they get. So often, that centered, relaxed feeling is gone by the time they drive off into traffic or get back to their busy routines.

This IR Participant Guide contains the information and materials you need to bring mindfulness with you wherever you go by starting a regular daily MM practice. A session-by-session description of the program is given in Resource Page 4 in this Appendix.

Using the IR Participant Guide

Each section of this IR Participant Guide includes:

- An essay about the theme for the session
- Frequently asked questions (FAQs) about that session's practice
- Suggestions for your between-session practice for that week
- A journal page where you can reflect and record your journey to renewal
- Practice tracks (audio recordings) to help with your practice (available on the companion website; see the box at the end of the table of contents)

Getting started with your MM practice is easy! Here's all you do:

- Pick a time and place to practice.
- Read the essay, FAQs, and the suggestions for your weekly practice.
- Listen to the practice audio track and do the other practices assigned for that week.
- Record your practice time on the Daily Practice Log (available on page 245).
- You can record your experiences and goals on the journal page included for each week. You may wish to do this once a week or more often.

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Session 1 (continued)

Why Practice MM?

Any new skill requires practice. If you wanted to learn to play basketball, you'd spend a lot of time dribbling the ball, playing one-on-one, and shooting free throws. The more you practiced those skills, the better you'd play during games. Likewise, the more you practice meditation, the easier it gets and the more skillful you become. You can use the skills you learn in meditation to deal with stress in your everyday life. As you master the meditation skills in this program, you will find that the difficulties and stresses of everyday life become great opportunities to practice meditation in action. By using meditation in everyday life, you can master situations that previously seemed difficult. It's a bit like learning to surf. As you become good at it, those big waves don't grind you into the sand so often but become exciting opportunities to soar higher than you ever have.

Types of Practice in IR

There are two main types of practice in IR: Sitting Practice and Practice in Daily Life. This program gives you the information and materials you need to get started on both these types of practice right away.

Sitting Practice

Sitting Practice is something you set aside time to do. You are doing Sitting Practice when you are meditating and not doing other things at the same time. The recommended practice time is 30 minutes per day. There are many different types of sitting practice. The main types of sitting practice in IR are included in practice audio tracks. The four primary practice audio tracks are each about 30 minutes long. In addition, there are Bonus Audio Tracks, ranging from 1.5 to 15 minutes in length, that you can use to try out the practices for a shorter length of time.

Types of Sitting Practice

- Breath-focused attention (included as part of all forms of practice)
- Body–Breath Awareness
- Guided Body Tour
- Complete Breath
- Hum Sah
- Tension Release

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Practice in Daily Life

Practice in Daily Life is practice that you do at any time during your regular daily activities. One of the greatest benefits of developing a sitting meditation practice is that you will learn skills that you can bring into your life, to renew and nourish you wherever you are.

Some Types of Practice in Daily Life

- Breath Awareness
- Body–Breath Awareness
- Repeating Hum Sah
- Letting Go

How to Start Meditating Every Day

Humans are creatures of habit, so when you have a daily routine, it will become easier to practice every day.

What Types of Practice Are There?

- **Practice in Daily Life:** You can practice during all your daily activities by noticing your breathing
- **Sitting Practice:** You are engaging in sitting practice when you are doing your practice and not doing other things at the same time
- **Watching your breathing** as you inhale and exhale is an effective sitting practice

Choose a Time to Practice

- Pick a regular time to practice every day
- Many people like to practice either first thing in the morning or last thing at night
- You can try different times to see what works for you

Choose a Place to Practice

- Choose a comfortable spot where you can sit up and be alert
- You may want to place pleasant objects, such as a flower, rock, or candle, near you
- Best not to place anything in your meditation area that has strong emotions or memories associated with it, such as a photo—that might be distracting

How to Sit for Meditation

- Choose a firm chair with good back support

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Session 1 (continued)

- Place both feet flat on the floor
- Sit with a relatively straight spine, with your shoulders directly over your hips
- You can place your hands on your thighs or simply fold your hands in your lap
- Your head should be centered over your shoulders: Try tipping your head forward and backward and from side to side until you find that centered spot
- You should be as comfortable as possible so that your body does not distract you too much

What Should I Do If I Don't Have Time to Meditate?

- The more practice a person does, the more benefits they receive
- Start with 5–10 minutes and build up to a daily practice of 20–30 minutes
- Use practice in daily life to keep the practice going throughout the day
- Even a few minutes count

FAQs for Session 1

Do I have to read all the materials in the IR Participant Guide and write in the journal pages?

“No.” The reading and writing exercises in this guide are optional, but highly recommended. The information in this IR Participant Guide will be covered in your group sessions, and you may find it helpful to read the essays and FAQs so that you can review what was covered. The journal pages are designed to help you reflect on how the practice is going for you so that you can discuss it in the group each session.

How do I use the Daily Practice Log?

The Daily Practice Log is for recording how many minutes you spent each day doing each of the practices. You will not need to record the time that you were in the group meetings.

The Practice Log is divided into rows and columns. The rows correspond to the days of the week. For each day of the week, write down how many minutes you did each of the types of practice listed in the columns (such as listening to practice audio tracks, sitting meditation, and so forth).

You will not usually have something to record in each column every day. For example, during Session 1, you may have only used Track 1 of the practice audio tracks and not done any practice without the audio tracks. In that case, just write down how many minutes you listened to Track 1 that day. In the Comments section at the bottom of the page, you might want to note how your practice went. There is an example Daily Practice Log at the end of this section.

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If I don't remember how much practice I did, can I estimate?

Certainly! In our experience, these estimates are accurate. The information in the column marked "Practice in Daily Life" is usually difficult to record: How long does it take to breathe consciously in the supermarket line anyway? Give it your best guess! The important thing is to remember to bring your practice into your everyday life.

Should I feel bad if I don't have something to record on the Daily Practice Log every day?

By all means no; don't feel bad! The Daily Practice Log is a great chance to practice simply observing yourself without judging. It isn't homework you do for a grade, but a chance to see how you are progressing. In the first weeks of the program, you may experiment with different times and places to practice. The comments you write on each log will help you remember what your experience was like.

What if I need to miss a session?

Even if you miss a session, you can still follow along with the group by reading the essay and the FAQs for that session. Then look at the practice suggestions for that week. You can use the practice audio track for that week to guide your practice. Go ahead and record your minutes of practice each day on the Daily Practice Log. You can record your experiences on the journal pages.

Attendance at the sessions is important. In our experience, those who attend more sessions get more from the program. If you do need to miss a session, please call and let your facilitator know.

Session 1 Practice

Tasks for the Next Week

This week, you can begin your daily practice by trying different times and places to practice. See whether practice in the morning, evening, or some other time of day is best. It is helpful to set up a regular place to practice, so arrange a space that is conducive to practice. A meditation space does not have to be large. It can be a small place where you will not be distracted by work or other factors. Choose a posture that will be conducive to meditation, such as sitting relatively straight in a chair. Any place or posture, such as lying down, which is associated with sleeping will probably not be helpful as you may spend your time sleeping or resting rather than meditating.

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Practice in Daily Life

Take one conscious breath at any time during the week and notice what happens. A conscious breath is one that you are fully aware of. You can report the results in the group next week. This is a relatively easy practice that you can do anywhere or at any time. Record the experience in your Session 1 Journal.

Sitting Practice

Find a comfortable spot with access to a way to play the practice audio tracks. Try to sit with your back relatively straight so you can breathe easily. If you get sleepy, you can raise your chin a little bit. Your body may relax, but keep your mind awake for the best results.

Listen to Track 1, “Guided Body Tour,” at least 6 days this week. You can get started by trying one of the Bonus Audio Tracks, which offer briefer versions of the practices. You can also try any of the 30-minute practice tracks, though it is helpful to follow along with the sequence of tracks, as the skills build on each other. The emphasis should be finding a practice that fits you, not making yourself fit the practice.

Daily Practice Log

Write down the number of minutes you have spent each day on each practice. You will probably not do all the listed practices every week. You can just list the times for the practices you’ve used. It is important to record time spent doing practice in daily life, even if it is only a few minutes. Any amount of practice is helpful. Most people begin with shorter practice periods and work up to longer practice periods over time. You could bring your Daily Practices Log to the sessions for the therapist to review.

● Inner Resources for Stress Daily Practice Log (Example) ●

Name: Ja'Nia Session: 1 Starting date: 2/21/22

Record the number of minutes each day of each activity.

Number of minutes using each technique →	Track 1: Guided Body Tour (with audio)	Track 2: Complete Breath (with audio)	Track 3: Hum Sah (with audio)	Track 4: Tension Release (with audio)	Bonus Tracks (with audio)	Sitting Meditation/ Breathing Practice (without audio)	Practice in Daily Life (Breath Awareness, Hum Sah, Letting Go)	Daily Total (minutes per day)
Monday 2/21/22	Attended group							
Tuesday 2/22/22	30							30
Wednesday 2/23/22	30						5	35
Thursday 2/24/22	22						15	37
Friday 2/25/22	30						10	40
Saturday 2/26/22	30						5	35
Sunday 2/27/22	30							30

Comments: I was able to watch my breathing while stuck in traffic Friday. It really helped. Next time, I think I will practice before I drive in the morning to reduce my stress.

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● Session 1 Journal ●

List three goals for participating in **Inner Resources for Stress**. Be sure that the goals are reasonable and that you will have some way to tell when you have accomplished them. For example, someone's goal might be "I want to stay calmer when driving my car."

Goal 1: _____

Goal 2: _____

Goal 3: _____

List any obstacles that you may have to overcome to accomplish your goals. For example, if your goal is "develop a daily practice of meditation," then an obstacle might be "having enough time." Finally, list possible solutions to each obstacle, such as "Wake up half an hour earlier to practice."

Obstacles to Goal 1: _____

Solutions: _____

Obstacles to Goal 2: _____

Solutions: _____

Obstacles to Goal 3: _____

Solutions: _____

Debriefing the Practice: How did the practice go this week? What parts of it were easy? What parts were more difficult? What did you feel when you were practicing, that is, how did your mind, body, and emotions feel? Did you remember to take a conscious breath this week? If so, what happened?

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