



# FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH TUSCALOOSA

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## From FUMCT Wellness - The Basics of Mindfulness Practice

**Mindfulness** means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and experience with our surroundings. It involves a gentle and nurturing acceptance; we pay attention to thoughts and feelings without judging them or labelling them as the “right” or “wrong” response for that moment. Here’s how to tune into mindfulness throughout the day:

1. **Set aside some time and find a quiet space.**
2. **Observe the present moment as it is.** Do not try to quiet the mind or achieve a state of calm. Notice and pay attention to what is happening right now.
3. **Let your judgments roll by.** When we notice analytical thoughts arise during our practice, we acknowledge them, and then let them pass.
4. **Return to observing the present moment as it is.** Expect to get distracted. Practice returning your focus, again and again, to the present moment.
5. **Be kind to your wandering mind.** Don’t judge yourself for whatever thoughts crop up, just practice recognizing when your mind has wandered off, and gently bring it back.

## How to Meditate: a Simple Practice - Using the Breath as an Anchor

1. **Sit comfortably.** Find a spot that gives you a stable, solid, comfortable seat. Use a chair or sit on the floor.
2. **Notice what your legs are doing.** If on a cushion, cross your legs comfortably in front of you. If on a chair, rest the bottoms of your feet on the floor (or a stool).  
**Straighten your upper body**—lift and lengthen it, but don’t stiffen. Your spine has natural curvature. Let it be there.  
**Notice what your arms are doing.** Situate your upper arms parallel to your upper body. Rest the palms of your hands on your legs wherever it feels most natural.
3. **Soften your gaze.** Drop your chin a little and let your gaze fall gently downward. Close your eyes if that helps you center yourself. If closing your eyes is a distraction, keep them open, but do not focus on a specific point.
4. **Feel your breath.** Bring your attention to the physical sensation of breathing: the air moving through your nose or mouth, the rising and falling of your belly, or your chest.
5. **Notice when your mind wanders from your breath.** Inevitably, your attention will leave the breath and wander to other places. Don’t worry. There’s no need to block or eliminate thinking. When you notice your mind wandering gently return your attention to the breath. Just sit and pay attention. As hard as it is to maintain, that’s all there is. Come back to your breath over and over again, without judgment or expectation.
6. **When you’re ready, gently lift your gaze** (if your eyes are closed, open them). Take a moment and notice any sounds in the environment. Notice how your body feels right now. Notice your thoughts and emotions.

### **Mindful Hand Awareness Exercise**

Tightly grasp your hands and hold for 5 to 10 seconds. Release them and pay attention to how your hands feel. Focus your attention on the feeling for as long as you can.

### **Melting Exercise**

Sit, breathe deeply, relax, and imagine yourself melting into everything around you. Visualize yourself becoming part of the chair.

### **Olfactory Sense Exercise**

Smell something strong like coffee beans or perfume and pay close attention to what happens in your nose, and then how your body reacts and what feelings or sensations these scents evoke.

### **Mindful Eating for Four Minutes**

Pay attention to the piece of food that you are holding. Look at the color and shape. Then notice how it feels in your hands - its texture and weight. Next, bring your awareness to the smell. Finally, move on to eating slowly with concentrated attention. Notice the taste and its texture against your tongue. Try this with a food that you love but usually eat quickly or take for granted.