

### **Be Where You Are Exercise: (Adapted from Hayes & Smith, 2005; 10-15 minutes to complete and discuss)**

*Assume a comfortable position with your back straight, letting your shoulders drop and relax. Close your eyes or find a spot on the floor to focus on. We are going to start by focusing on your breath. Bring attention to your stomach, feeling it rise or expand gently on the in-breath and fall or recede on the out-breath. Keep focusing on your breath, “being with” each breath for its full duration. Every time that you notice your mind wandering from your breath, notice what it was that took you away, and then gently and without judgment, bring your attention back to your breath. You may have to bring your attention back multiple times and that’s ok.*

*Now, become aware of the chair you are sitting in. See if you feel exactly where the chair touches you and you touch it. Mentally try and see if you can color in the shape of where your body touches the chair. Take a minute to feel the chair- grasp the arm handles and notice the connection your hands have to them. Notice the cushiness of firmness of the seat below you. Next, take a moment to notice any sounds that you can hear in this room right now. Spend a moment just observing them. Remember, if you get distracted, just observe that and gently redirect yourself.*

*Next, gently open your eyes and spend a moment noticing the light in the room. How bright is it? Where is the light hitting the room?*

*Next, look around and notice the colors, furniture, and people in the room. You may have been in this room or with these people before, but look at it all as if you were an alien entering a new environment. Spend a few minutes being aware.*

- Discuss veteran experiences. If a veteran says they felt like they didn’t do it right, help them observe and label that as a thought they are having. Anything that comes up is a part of their experience and should be highlighted as such.
- Validate any comments about awkwardness or trouble staying focused. Share that even providers with experience in mindfulness found it difficult at first and that some days are still more difficult than others. Validate resistance by noting that often the last thing that veterans with PTSD want to do is sit still with their experience because that is often a time when painful thoughts or emotions come up.
- Make sure to point out that while mindfulness often results in relaxation, the goal is not relaxation. Veterans will often feel that mindfulness didn’t go well or that they did it wrong if they are not relaxed afterwards or if it was difficult.

### **Wrap-up and Homework (5-10 minutes)**

- Review group content. Ask members what the take-home point was for them today. Ask them how that might affect how they approach their week.