



A Mindfulness Guide for Neurodivergent Individuals

Presence Practice Workbook

Based on the Fourfold Axis: Body · Breath · Attention · Space

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Introduction

Who Is This Guide For?

This guide is for those who feel disconnected — for those whose mind races without pause, whose body is in constant alert, and for whom peace feels like a foreign language.

It is a tool for people experiencing the impact of trauma, neurodivergence (such as ADHD), or simply the chronic pressure of modern life.

! You do not need to "fix" anything in yourself, because nothing is broken. The goal is to learn to return — gently and kindly — to your living presence.

A Note on the Wisdom of the Body

The mind has no sense of "now". It travels constantly between memories of the past and projections of the future.

The body, on the other hand — through the undeniable reality of gravity and breath — is always here. For those of us who have felt disconnected, the return to the present is not merely a psychological exercise, but an embodied journey of reconnection.

Personal Note — A Journey, Not a Theory

This guide was not born in a laboratory or academic office. It was born from personal need. When my son was diagnosed with ADHD, I realized that I too am neurodivergent.

What we needed was a method of self-relaxation and self-regulation that did not require us to "fight" our brain — but to cooperate with it, embracing the scattered attention instead of seeing it as an enemy.

"My mind did not stop racing, but it stopped carrying me away."

How We Define Mindfulness

Mindfulness is not a mysterious "something" to be achieved. It is the natural experience that arises when the four main centers of consciousness function simultaneously and harmoniously.

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| BODY | The sense that we inhabit a body that touches, feels, and connects to the earth through gravity. |
| BREATH | Awareness of our rhythm of living — the continuous flow of inhale and exhale that connects us to the world. |
| ATTENTI ON | The ability to direct the light of our awareness — to focus, to open, or to observe. |
| SPACE | The sense of the open field within and around us, in which thoughts, feelings, and sensations appear and disappear. |

When we are under pressure or scattered, these centers may function separately or even in conflict. The method that follows is simple: come into contact with each center individually and then regulate them to function in parallel. We do not change ourselves. We attune and make space for what is already present.

How to Use This Guide

- The practices have the quality of play. There are no mistakes, only experiments.
- Presence does not need to last hours. It begins with victories of a few seconds.
- The instructions are clear, but do not hesitate to adapt them to your needs.
- Consistency in small doses is more important than duration.

If during the exercises emotions overwhelm you or cause intense discomfort, the support of a therapist can prove valuable. The practice of presence has compassion at its core.

PART 1

The Core of the Method The Fourfold Axis

Body · Breath · Attention · Space

The next four chapters introduce you to the four centers of consciousness that form the core of this practice. Each chapter includes theoretical background, practical exercises, and space for reflection.

Chapter 1

Body: The Stability of "Here"

In this chapter

The body is the undeniable foundation of the present moment. We learn to perceive gravity, our posture, and our contact with space — as the starting point of every practice.



Grounding through gravity — our stable foundation

The Beginning: Relaxation and Grounding

The practice of the Fourfold Axis always begins with the body. The body is our stable foundation, the undeniable "Here" that connects us to the present time.

We begin with conscious grounding, because relaxation precedes awareness. The body is not simply a vehicle. It is a living archive of our experiences. The posture we have formed often carries rejection, disappointment, and the tension we

experienced for feeling different. These experiences become "locked" as chronic tightness in the shoulders, back, pelvis, and jaw.

Gravity: The Undeniable "Here"

Gravity is not merely a force — it is proof of "Here". It shows us, beyond any doubt, exactly the point at which we can exist in space, at this specific moment. Grounding is the first act of relaxation.

! True grounding (Body) is achieved only within a space that we feel holds us. The body and space work together.

Our Goal

- NOT to achieve a specific, perfect posture.
- NOT to stop our thoughts.
- To be at ease, grounded, and relaxed within our body.

The Body, Space, and the Sense of Safety

Deep relaxation within the body is never an isolated act. It always presupposes awareness of space. Our body, through the sense organs, continuously informs us of our position in space.

When space is perceived as open and receptive, the body receives permission to release the tightness and relax. True grounding is achieved only within a space we feel holds us.

! Note on time: Changing posture and tension takes considerable time — the habit has been built over years and our body has been molded. Do not rush or push yourself. Persisting in gentleness is the greatest act of self-regulation.

► Practice: The Book / Box

Position:

Stand upright comfortably.

Tool (Optional):

Take a book or box and place it on your head.

Focus:

Notice how you need to stand so it does not fall. Feel how the weight descends smoothly through the neck, spine, and pelvis.

Sensation:

Feel the weight, the touch of your soles on the ground, and the sense of the axis that keeps you upright.

Reflection:

What did I notice...

Reflection: After the practice, note what you observed in your body:

★ Key Point

Gravity is always here. The body is always here. This is enough to begin.

Chapter 2

Breath: The Rhythm of Life

In this chapter

Breath connects us to the rhythm of life and teaches acceptance of impermanence. Each inhale and exhale is a small rehearsal of beginning and ending.

Ὅταν η αποδοχή της παροδικότητας. Καθε εισπνοη και εκπνοη ειναι μια | πρόβα αρχής και τέλους.



Breath as a bridge between body and world

If the body connects us to the earth, the breath connects us to the sky and the unceasing flow of the world. It is the rhythm that accompanies us from birth to the end.

The Rhythm of Existence

Observing the breath teaches us the natural rhythm of existence and acceptance of impermanence. Each inhale is held for a moment and then released with the exhale.

| | |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|
| INHALE | The Beginning — birth, receiving |
| PAUSE | The Moment — existence in the now |
| EXHALE | The End — release, acceptance |

! This is crucial for the neurodivergent mind: When we feel an intense emotion, the mind interprets it as permanent. By observing the rhythm of breath, we learn that every state is transient.

The Act of Observation — Inner Touch

The first step is acceptance. You do not need to control your breath. It is enough to observe it as it is: deep or shallow, slow or fast, free or constricted.

- The sensation of air touching the nostrils
- The expansion and contraction of the chest
- The movement of the belly
- The small change in body posture with each inhale and exhale

! Breath as Indicator: If it is constricted or shallow, it shows tension. If it is slow and deep, it shows relaxation. The breath is the indicator of our mental state.

Regulation During Intense Anxiety

In moments of intense anxiety or overwhelm, breath can become an immediate regulation tool. We allow the exhale to come out of the mouth, a little slower and more extended. We allow the belly to soften and gently contract inward.

► Practice: The Active Return

Grounding (Body):

Stand or sit comfortably. Feel gravity, contact with the ground.

Awareness (Breath):

Turn attention to the inhale and exhale. Feel the air touching the nostrils.

On the exhale:

Allow the belly to gently contract inward, as if releasing all tension with the air.

Acceptance:

Do not try to change the breath. Awareness is enough.

Regulation (Optional):

If you feel a lot of anxiety, allow the exhale to come from the mouth, slower and extended.

Reflection: How was my breath during the practice? (fast/slow, shallow/deep, constricted/free)

★ Key Point

I observe without intervening. Every breath is a new beginning.

Chapter 3

Attention: The Lens of Consciousness

In this chapter

Attention is the lens of the mind — it can focus, open, or become scattered. We learn to recognize where it is and return it gently, without self-criticism.

— να διασπαται. Μαθαινουμε να αναγνωριζουμε που βρισκεται και να επιστρέφουμε απαλά, χωρίς αυτοκριτική.



Attention as the lens that illuminates the present moment

Attention is the third center of consciousness and the tool that determines where the mind will rest. The body is the foundation, the breath the rhythm, and attention is the lens that illuminates the present moment.

The Three Forms of Attention

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Narrow Attention | The beam gathers at one point. Useful for concentration. E.g. you look steadily at an object. |
| Open Attention | The beam opens and illuminates many things at once. You hear sounds, feel the body, breathe — everything fits within the same awareness. |
| Scattered Attention | Attention is like a monkey jumping from branch to branch. The goal is not to "kill" it but to gently rein it in. |

The Trap of Hooked Attention

Beyond narrow and open attention, there is a third state worth special attention: Hooked Attention. The beam gets stuck on an external object or mental content — a thought, a worry. Excessive self-referentiality ("why do I feel this way? what does this mean?") is a characteristic form of hooked attention.

The Fourfold Attention

At this stage, attention becomes fourfold — we maintain simultaneous awareness of four levels:

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Body | Which gives foundation and stability to the present moment. |
| Breath | Which gives rhythm and returns us to now. |
| Attention Itself | Which learns to stabilize, to observe where it goes. |
| Thoughts | Which are recognized without carrying us away — simply observed. |

The Power of Thought Labelling

When a thought pulls you, simply returning to breath can be difficult. The labelling technique gives you an intermediate step: instead of engaging with the content of the thought, give it a simple single-word label and then return to the stable point.

| Thought | Label |
|---|---|
| You are thinking about what you need to do tomorrow: | " <i>Planning</i> " |
| You are thinking about something you said that was wrong: | " <i>Criticism</i> " or " <i>Past</i> " |
| You are worried about something in the future: | " <i>Worry</i> " or " <i>Scenario</i> " |

► Practice: Stabilising the Lens

Body & Breath:

Stand or sit comfortably. Close your eyes. Feel your body and the rhythm of your breath.

Stable Point:

Open your eyes and choose a point of focus (visual, auditory, or physical).

Fourfold Awareness:

Hold attention there, maintaining parallel awareness of body, breath, and thought-forms.

Gentle Return:

If you get carried away, acknowledge it (with a label if needed) and return gently: body -> breath -> stable point.

Reflection: Where does my attention tend to "get stuck" or "race"?

★ Key Point

The return of attention is not failure — it IS the practice. Every "gentle return" builds new neural pathways.

Chapter 4

Space: Open Awareness

In this chapter

Space is the last — and perhaps the most liberating — center. We learn to open awareness like a sky that holds everything without being overwhelmed by anything.

 **Κεντρο.** Μαθαίνουμε να ανοιγουμε την επιγνωση σαν ουρανο που χωράει τα πάντα χωρίς να κατακλύζεται από τίποτα.



Space gives us the capacity to hold everything

The Body gave us stability, the Breath gave us rhythm, Attention gave us the ability to return. Space gives us Vastness — the ability to hold everything without being overwhelmed.

The Antidote to Overwhelm

Open Awareness is the most powerful tool against overwhelm. When we experience intense anxiety, the mind adopts narrow focus, as if looking through a tunnel. This narrowing increases the sense of danger. Opening attention acts as a

safety signal to the brain.

"The space of the sky remains always open, undisturbed and vast, just as the space of awareness. Our identity is not the clouds, but the space that holds them."

► Practice: The Expansion of Space

Grounding:

Stand or sit comfortably. Close your eyes. Feel the body with gravity and the breath with its rhythm.

Focus (Narrow Attention):

Concentrate on a stable point (sight, sound, sensation) for a few seconds.

Widening (Open Attention):

Allow attention to slowly spread — as if embracing the entire field around you.

Acceptance:

Listen, see, feel without focus and without judgment.

Return:

If you get lost in thoughts, remember the sky: thoughts come and go. Return to the open field.

Reflection: *What changed in my sense of things when attention opened?*

PART 2

Applications & Transformation

Strategies for daily life

Chapter 5

The Neurodivergent Mind: Racing and Locking

In this chapter

The neurodivergent mind is not broken — it has a different way of functioning. We understand the two main states (racing/locking) and explore practical tools for each.

The mind of a neurodivergent person is rarely static. It usually moves between two extreme states: it "races" or it "locks".

| MIND THAT RACES | MIND THAT LOCKS |
|--|--|
| Scattered Attention / Overwhelm The world becomes a chain of small hooks. Many stimuli arrive simultaneously without a filter. | Hooked Attention / Hyperfocus Like a tunnel of intense focus. Can become a trap if the object is an anxious thought or obsession. |
| Tool: Body (Grounding) + Breath (Rhythm) | Tool: Space (Release) + Attention (Return) |

! Strategy for Obsession: Use Open Awareness (Space). Remember that your thoughts occur within a broader space. You can recognize their true dimensions and gain freedom without being suffocated by them.

The Role of the Mechanical Mind

Locking (Hyperfocus) is often fueled by the Mechanical Mind — that part of the mind that constantly analyzes the past and plans the future, without having a stable base in the present. The Mechanical Mind is not an enemy — it is a tool that has "overheated" without the stabilizing influence of presence.

The practice does not try to stop the Mechanical Mind, but to complement it with an Open Mind — a mind that observes without analyzing, that embraces without judging, that sees beyond the scenarios and perceives the causes.

Reflection: *When does my mind tend to "race"? When does it "lock"? What situations trigger this?*

Chapter 6

In Daily Life: Self-Regulation

In this chapter

Practical tools for noisy spaces, social situations, and moments of anxiety or tension in everyday life.

Self-regulation is the ability to return your nervous system from overstimulation or under-functioning to a state of balance. It begins with contact at four levels:

| | | |
|---|-------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Contact with Body | You feel the earth, your weight, the axis. |
| 2 | Contact with Breath | You see if the rhythm is fast, shallow, or calm. |
| 3 | Contact with Attention | You see where the mind has got stuck (scattered or hooked). |
| 4 | Contact with Space | You feel whether there is openness and safety. |

Practical Applications

1. In Noisy Spaces (Sensory Overload)

- Feel your feet on the ground — immediate grounding into the chaos.
- Take 3 quiet breaths with exhale from the mouth.
- Open peripheral vision — soften your gaze instead of focusing.
- Use headphones or a fidget toy if needed.

2. In Social Situations (Overstimulation & Fatigue)

- Choose a neutral point (e.g. a plant) as visual reference.

- Feel your feet steady — if you feel tension in your jaw, release it with an exhale.
- Use peripheral vision to remain present.

3. With Anxiety or Tension (Immediate Regulation)

- Ground yourself: feel the weight and the axis.
- Take 10 breaths: inhale through nose, exhale through mouth, slowly.
- Walk with mindful awareness (mindful pacing) — rhythmic movement "burns" anxiety.

Chapter 7

When the Wave Rises: Anxiety, Overwhelm

In this chapter

Two practical protocols — for intense anxiety and for overwhelm. Simple steps that can become automatic when the wave rises.

Protocol 1: Immediate Response to Intense Anxiety

Intense anxiety is a "fight or flight" state that requires immediate safety signaling to the nervous system through body and breath.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Grounding (Body) Feel the weight of the body, its posture, its tensions — without verbal analysis. Simply notice where you are holding tension. |
| 2 | Regulation (Breath) Close your eyes and take 3 deep inhales. Allow the exhale to come out slowly from the mouth, as if gently blowing a flame. |
| 3 | Labelling (Attention) If the mind gets stuck on a scenario, use a label ("Worry", "Scenario") and return to the breath. |
| 4 | Opening (Space) Open peripheral vision and notice the space around you. The widening reduces the sense of being trapped. |
| 5 | Movement & Axis If you can, walk a little feeling your soles. Maintain the sense of the vertical axis. Open gaze and awareness of space. |

Protocol 2: Managing Overwhelm

When everything falls on you at once, the goal is to find space to hold the stimuli without reacting. Instead of focusing on reducing anxiety, you focus on expanding awareness.

| | |
|----------|--|
| | Grounding (Stage 1) |
| 1 | Feel your soles, your weight. Zero your position, as if pressing the reset button of your body. |
| 2 | Breath (Stage 2) Stay in its flow. Exhaling from the mouth is optional but recommended if you feel constriction. |
| 3 | Attention (Stage 3) Keep attention forward. Instead of being drawn by every detail, choose a stable point as your anchor. |
| 4 | Opening (Space - Stage 4) Soften your gaze (peripheral vision). Remember the sky: all stimuli — sounds, lights, thoughts — are clouds passing in the open space of your awareness. |

! Hold the distance: Remember — you are not the clouds. You are the space that holds them. Simply recognizing this immediately reduces the sense of danger.

Reflection: What are the first signals of my body when overwhelm begins?

Chapter 8

Presence Worksheet

Goal: To return to "now" in a few seconds. Do them in sequence or choose what you need.

BODY / FOUNDATION**1**

Observation: I am standing / sitting. I feel my weight. I notice tensions (e.g. jaw).

Tool: I imagine an axis from my head to the earth. I relax jaw and shoulders.

What did I feel in my body now?

BREATH / RHYTHM**2**

Observation: How is my breath? Fast, shallow, constricted? Tool: Exhale from mouth, a little slower. Feel the belly gently contracting.

How did my breath change?

ATTENTION / STABILISATION**3**

Observation: Where is my attention? Is it racing? Is it stuck somewhere? Tool: I return to a stable point. I label the thought and return.

Where was my attention?

SPACE / EXPANSION**4**

Observation: Do I feel trapped? Is attention like a tunnel? Tool: I soften my gaze. I allow attention to spread. Thoughts = clouds.

What changed when space opened?

Chapter 9

The Four Stages: Step-by-Step Guide

This is the complete, sequential practice of the Fourfold Axis. Best performed in a quiet position, but the steps can be applied at any moment.

Stage 1 Feel the Earth (Grounding)

- Sit or stand comfortably. Back upright but not stiff.
- Feel the points of contact: soles, back against the seat.
- Allow the weight to sink into the earth.
- With each exhale, relax neck, jaw, shoulders.
- Goal: Feel the vertical axis — your foundation.

Stage 2 Feel the Breath (Regulation)

- Close or half-close your eyes.
- Feel the journey: inhale through nose -> lungs -> belly, exhale in reverse.
- In tension: exhale slowly from the mouth, as if blowing a candle.
- Goal: Natural unbroken rhythm — calming the nervous system.

Stage 3 Focus Forward (Concentration)

- Open your eyes. Choose a quiet point in front of you.
- Look at it with a soft, steady gaze.
- If thoughts come: recognize -> label -> return gently.
- Goal: Training attention to stabilize.

Stage 4 Open into Space (Open Awareness)

- Soften your gaze. Open peripheral vision.
- See the entire visual field: right, left, above, below.

- Feel simultaneously: body, breath, earth below, sky above.
- Goal: Immediate sense of presence without words or effort.

Reflection: Which stage feels most natural to me? Where do I struggle most?

Chapter 10

The Foundation — Science and Wisdom

Part A: The Scientific Foundation

Grounding & Interoception

Focusing on Gravity enhances Interoception (awareness of internal sensations) and the function of the Cerebellum, improving the sense of bodily safety.

Breath & Vagus Nerve

Slow, deep exhalation sends safety signals through the Vagus Nerve, reducing the "Fight or Flight" response and bringing immediate calm.

Attention & Prefrontal Cortex

Learning to control attention and using thought labelling strengthens the Prefrontal Cortex — responsible for impulse control and decision-making.

Space & Default Mode Network

Open Awareness reduces the activity of the DMN, responsible for chronic over-analysis and obsessive thoughts, providing cognitive distance.

Neuroplasticity

Our brain can change. Continuous practice creates new neural pathways, making calm and presence more easily accessible.

Part B: The Spiritual Foundation

Mahasatipatthana Sutta

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Body, Feelings, Mind, Mental Phenomena) correspond directly to the four stages of our method.

Dzogchen

Traditions such as Dzogchen speak of recognizing the "open space" of consciousness, in which thoughts and emotions appear and disappear without restricting us.

Sufism

Sufism reminds us of the importance of grounding and the heart as center — the connection of spirit and body.

! Conclusion: Science and spirituality agree — balance begins in the body, is regulated by the breath, stabilized by attention, and extends into a sense of vastness.

Resources & Further Reading

- **Open Focus:** openfocus.com/home/
- **Short Moments of Open Intelligence:** holybooks.com
- **Lama Lena — Dzogchen:** lamalenateachings.com
- **Merigar — Dzogchen Community:** merigar.it/en/dzogchen-community/
- **Sufism:** sufi.gr

7-Day Practice Journal

Note each day what you practised, what the experience was like, and what you observed. It does not need to be perfect — it only needs to be true.

Day 1 · Monday

Date: _____

[] Body

[] Breath

[] Attention

[] Space

What I noticed today:

Day 2 · Tuesday

Date: _____

[] Body

[] Breath

[] Attention

[] Space

What I noticed today:

Day 3 · Wednesday

Date: _____

[] Body

[] Breath

[] Attention

[] Space

What I noticed today:

Day 4 · Thursday

Date: _____

 Body Breath Attention Space*What I noticed today:*

Day 5 · Friday

Date: _____

 Body Breath Attention Space*What I noticed today:*

Day 6 · Saturday

Date: _____

 Body Breath Attention Space*What I noticed today:*

Day 7 · Sunday

Date: _____

 Body Breath Attention Space*What I noticed today:*

Epilogue

This path has no end. It is a way of standing within life, consciously choosing acceptance at every step.

Every moment can become a small return to gentleness and openness.

Mindfulness, ultimately, is to remember that already within you there is an open space that holds you as you are.

This space asks for nothing and rejects nothing — it simply reminds you that you are present, alive and whole.

Keep returning.

Consistency in small doses is your greatest act of self-care.

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