

I-SITE



I-SITE is a mindfulness acronym I developed to support the ability to check in on a few key components of your present moment. This exercise develops an inner “eyesight” to your experience. I offer thanks to the researchers and practitioners before who have created other acronyms, which helped clarify the components I found most helpful for my clients and myself.

One of the things that is unique about this particular mindfulness “check-in” is the inclusion of the first “I”: impulses. For some people, they are overwhelmed and burdened with impulses. For others, they rarely have any inkling what their impulse is, and have the experience of not having an impulse. I believe that every living being has an impulse at all times, but for some complex reasons, they can be difficult suckers to experience. Regardless, noticing (or making space for the possibility for noticing) your impulses builds your awareness and self-control when needed. And it kicks off the exercise...

I	=	Impulses
S	=	Sensations
I	=	Images
T	=	Thoughts
E	=	Emotions

Getting started...

1. It may be helpful to take one to three breaths prior to entering the exercise.
2. At your own pace, allow yourself to “rolodex” through the acronym. Notice what you notice. And when there is a letter that does not lead to any apparent observations (for example, “I don’t have any images right now.”), that, in itself, is plenty to observe! Simply move along to the next letter.
3. Think of “I-SITE” as a camera that takes a snapshot of five layers of one moment in your life. This is particularly important as it helps prevent you from getting caught on the roller coaster of any one of the checkpoints. For example, if your thought is, “I really wish I hadn’t done that,” that’s enough. Watch out for getting sucked down rabbit holes of your thoughts. Here’s an example: “I really wish I hadn’t done that. How stupid of me! I always screw this kind of thing up. But you know, if she hadn’t said that, this never would have happened. She’s always saying the most irritating things. Why is she here anyway? And wearing that stupid blouse! That color looks horrible on her and it’s not even a good color for the season...” When this happens in your I-SITE check-in, just notice that your awareness has been sucked down the rabbit hole and go on to the next

letter! There's nothing wrong with following your thoughts in this way; it's just not the exercise at hand.

4. After checking your "I-SITE," you may simply return to what your activity was prior. In some cases, you may find that the experience of checking in on yourself in this way may change the quality or direction of your actions moving forward. It doesn't matter. The goal of the exercise is its process – so you "win" either way.

Variations

1. Sometimes it may not be realistic to go through all five checkpoints. This may occur either because of time, or perhaps you are feeling so overwhelmed that it is not realistic to go through so linearly. If this is the case, simply check in where you are able. Any one of the checkpoints is a doorway to mindfulness, and can therefore help bring you back into your present reality.
2. Keeping an I-SITE journal is a great way to build momentum, commitment to being aware of yourself in the moment, and to notice patterns. For example, in regards to patterns, you may notice that you routinely are not aware of having any emotion, or that the range of your emotions is limited to one flavor (i.e. mad, irritated, angry, upset). These are wonderful things to notice and bring to session! Writing down your I-SITE also may help you notice other things of interest, or to reflect more deeply on one of the checkpoints after you've reviewed the whole snapshot.