

One Point of Focus

In this exercise we use details within artworks to practice attentiveness and focus, by choosing a small point to concentrate on.

By narrowing our focus, we experience increasing layers of detail within an artwork, which often evokes a different type of appreciation.

This exercise can be useful for people who find it difficult to focus on one thing. It is also useful for those who become overwhelmed by big tasks, when noticing that each artwork is composed of many small actions or layers.

The exercise can be repeated multiple times with a different detail each time, offering a new perspective on each viewing.

- Choose an artwork with a good level of detail, it could be a painting, sculpture, or if your options are limited it could be everyday objects or the view from your window.
- Take a comfortable, stable stance or seat, with a relaxed body.
- Close your eyes.
- Breathe in through the nose for a mental count of four. Breathe out through the nose for a mental count of four. Repeat this cycle four times.
- Open your eyes. Look at the artwork.
- Keeping the eyes open, breathe in through the nose for a mental count of four. Breathe out through the nose for a mental count of four. Repeat this cycle four times.
- Bring your focus to the first area that grabs your attention. You can move in closer to look at it, if it helps.
If a painting, it could be something specific like a tree in a landscape or person in a crowd. In a sculpture, it could be a

facial feature, a fitting, a wire.

- Maintain focus on your breathing, start to fix your gaze entirely on this point. Start to notice all the details.

What is the shape like? What are the colours like? The texture? How does the light hit this point? Are there shadows and highlights? Tones? What is the subject? Are there marks, layers, scratches, dents? Notice everything you can.

- Continue to focus on your breathing, whilst keeping your gaze fixed.
- Once you feel you can notice everything, keep your gaze fixed on this point and come into another breathing cycle. Breathe in through the nose for a mental count of four. Breathe out through the nose for a mental count of four. Repeat this cycle four times.
- Close your eyes. Breathe in through the nose. Breathe out through the mouth.
- Open your eyes. Take in the artwork as a whole. Take note of any changes in yourself, your mood or your thoughts.

What was your response? Were you able to focus? Was it difficult? Did you find the breathing helped you to focus? Did it make it harder? Do you feel relaxed, calm, focused, tense, alert? Did you learn anything new about the artwork?