
S.I.F.T. (B) YOUR EXPERIENCE

What we pay attention to is what we remember and what we remember is how we will anticipate our future.

This fundamental neurobiological truth can hold equal parts hope and discouragement. Our brain's bias toward attending to difficulty, pain, and threat often creates a cycle of over-attending to that which incites fear, anxiety, depressed mood, and agitation and under-attending to those things that create a sense of joy, peace, and center. While we certainly do not want to eliminate our ability to attend to threat and potential harm, there are strategies we can employ to assist our mind with slowing down enough to make a choice versus simply reacting. The process of slowing our conscious process and "paying attention to what we are paying attention to" is hugely influenced by the information we take in through our senses. As we process from bottom to top in our bodies (nervous system to brain stem) and right to left (in the hemispheres of our brain) this exercise allows us to notice the nuance of what our bodies are taking in and to follow the course of processing that follows.

PRE-INSTRUCTION

Developing the capacity for a sacred pause is very helpful for creating a pattern of self-attunement and reflection. In order to create space for the SIFT(B)ing process to become habit, begin by working to pause and breathe throughout the course of your day. One suggestion is setting an alarm on your most used device to go off each hour or half hour prompting you to pause for 30 seconds and focus on the sensation of breathing. This will become a helpful gateway for new patterns of mindful awareness throughout your day.

*The conceptual tool S.I.F.T. was developed by Dr. Daniel Siegel in his work *Mindsight*, 2010. The following is an adaptation of his work. This and other concepts can be found at www.drdansiegel.com/about/mindsight. The addition of the "B" for Behavior is credited to Dr. Curt Thompson in his work which can be found at www.beingknown.com*

S.I.F.T. (B.) DESCRIPTION & PROMPTS

Sensations

What embodied sensations are present as you attend? See "*Sensations List*" below for assistance with naming.

Images

What colors, memories, images, objects come to your mind's eye?

Feelings

What emotions are present as you attend to your experience? See “Feelings Wheel” below for assistance with naming.

Thoughts

What messages, ideas, or thoughts come to mind?

Behaviors

What are you aware your body wants to do as you attend?

INSTRUCTIONS FOR S.I.F.T.(B.)ING YOUR EXPERIENCE

Begin by pausing and taking a deep filling breath. Connect to the sensation of breathing as a way of anchoring your experience and connecting to your body. Begin to scan your experience following the progression of S.I.F.T.(B.). Do your best to answer the questions listed above as you sit with your experience from a place of open observation with as much objectivity as possible. You are invited to suspend judgment, evaluation, and analysis as much as possible during this process and simply attend to your experience. Once you have completed the SIFT(B)ing process, it is highly recommended that you take notes and do your best to describe each of the areas of attunement. It may make the most sense to depict your sensations in a non-verbal form such as drawing a shape like this one and indicating with color or symbols what and where you sensed your experience prior to labeling with words:



Finally, you are invited to share your experience with a trusted other to the degree that would be helpful and formative to your experience.

If you have questions or concerns about this exercise, be sure to ask your therapist.

ADDITIONAL TOOLS

Sensations List

PRESSURE	AIR CURRENT	TENSION	PAIN	TINGLING	ITCH
even	gentle	solid	ache	pricks	mild
uneven	cool	dense	throbbing	vibration	angry itch
supportive	warm	warm	sharp	tickling	irritating
crushing	from right	cold	twinge	numb	moving
cutting off circulation	from left	inflamed	slight	pins & needles	subtle
heavy	stimulating	protective	stabbing	restless	small
twisting	rush	constricting	dull	edgy	large
light	like a feather	angry	choking		
heart racing	like mist	twisting	burning		
		fatigued/tired			

TEMPERATURE	SIZE	SHAPE	MOVEMENT	TASTE/SMELL	ABSENCE
warm	small	flat	circular	pungent	blank
hot	large	circle	erratic	sweet	empty
burning	tiny	blob	straight line	like rain	numb
cool	enormous	like a mountain	fast	like leaves	void
cold	growing	like a cylinder	slow	sour	
clammy	shrinking	long	still	bitter	
chills		short	sinking	sweet	
icy			pulling in		
frozen, like snow			opening		
like a hearth			closing		
like an oven			uplifting		
like a fire			buzzing		
like sunshine					

