**Mindfulness of the Breath—For Depressive Rumination**

*(Used as a skill to disengage from rumination.  Standard length is 5 minutes.  Pause as you see fit.  We tend to do shorter pauses at the beginning, so clients know the instruction and we lengthen the pauses as the meditation progresses.  It’s helpful to record the meditation so clients can listen to it as part of the Action Plan. Beginning meditators often have trouble meditating without some type of guide.*

***Important note****: This exercise should not be used with actively suicidal clients because it can increase their depressed mood and sense of hopelessness.*

*For rumination induction:* Prior to beginning, ask clients what they have been ruminating about that results in a moderate level of emotion--usually 3-7 on a 10-point scale).  Typical examples from clients are negative thoughts about themselves (e.g., “I’m stupid”), other people (e.g., “No one likes me”), poor decisions (e.g., “Why did I do that?”), or feeling depressed (e.g., “Why do I feel this way? I wish I felt better").

*Script Begins:* Sit back in your chair and close your eyes.  I want you to start ruminating about the thoughts that we just went over.  Try to get the thoughts going in the same way that they occur outside of session. (Check emotional intensity after about 15 to 30 seconds.  If it’s not at least a 3, keep having them ruminate.  If it doesn’t get to a 3 after 30 more seconds, it’s ok to proceed with the induction because the main goal is for clients to learn how to disengage from rumination and emotion reduction is just a bonus if it occurs).

*Begin recording (or you can begin recording at the induction which serves as an exposure to the thoughts as well):* Now, I want you to keep your eyes closed and focus on the sensations involved in breathing.  For instance, notice how the air feels going in and out of your nostrils; how your lungs, chest, and abdomen feel as they expand and contract.  You can notice the sensations as a whole or focus on a specific sensation like the air going in and out of your nostrils.  As you do this, you’ll notice that your mind is going to wander, or you’ll get caught up in rumination from a minute ago.  As you become aware of this, gently bring your focus back to the breath.  If you notice any other sensations or emotional experience, you don’t have to try to avoid or control them, all you have to do is notice and allow them, as you focus on what it feels like to breathe.  No matter how many times your mind wanders, every time, just become aware that it’s happened, and gently bring that focus back to the breath.  There’s no need to criticize yourself or get frustrated when your mind wanders because that’s what our minds do; all you have to do is notice it’s happened, and gently bring that focus back to the breath.  It’s ok if you notice thoughts in the back of your mind, as long as you bring the breath to the front of your mind.  Now you can open your eyes.

Standard follow-up questions:  If emotion was high to start, ask about emotional intensity now.  How was that for you?  What kind of things did you notice?  Did your mind seem to wander?  Were you able to bring your attention back to the breath?  Was that helpful?  Do you think it would be helpful to practice this for your action plan?  How do you think you could use this in your day-to-day life?

Standard action plan assignments are to practice the mindfulness exercise by listening to the recording daily at a specified time, and then have the client use the skill of disengaging from rumination throughout the day as it shows up.  They can also write down any difficulties that show up with practice or applying mindfulness to their lives, which can be an agenda item at the following session.