Shifting your attention outwards

Practice in moving your attention from yourself to what is around you.

When you are anxious, attention turns inwards: to your heartbeat, your thoughts, how you are coming across. The more you watch yourself, the worse you feel and the less you take in of what is really happening around you.

Attention is like a torch. You can learn to point it where you choose.

Practice 1: sounds (5 minutes, at home)

1. Sit quietly. Pick one sound and give it your full attention for a minute.
2. Switch to another sound, perhaps further away. Stay with it for a minute.
3. Move between three or four sounds, one at a time.
4. Finally, open your attention wide and take in all the sounds at once.

Practice 2: everyday tasks

Choose something ordinary: washing up, a shower, a walk. Put your attention fully on the task. What can you see, hear, feel and smell? Each time your attention slides back to yourself or your worries, notice it and return to the task.

Practice 3: with people

In a conversation, focus on the other person. What exactly are they saying? What colour are their eyes? What is their mood? When you catch yourself checking how you are doing, turn the torch back to them.

When	What I practised	Where my attention went	How well could I bring it back? (0 to 10)

Your mind will wander back to you many times. That is expected. Noticing and returning is the exercise.

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