

Being Mindful in a Busy World

What is mindfulness?

Basically, mindfulness is paying purposeful attention to the present moment. Mindfulness researcher Jon Kabat-Zinn says that mindfulness is “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment.” (Zinn, 2003). Another researcher in the field, Ellen Langer says “Mindfulness is the process of actively noticing new things, relinquishing preconceived mindsets, and then acting on the new observations.” In other words, pay attention! Obviously it is more complicated than that, but it begins there. It also includes an openness to new ways of looking at things, and in Langer’s definition, be willing to change based upon the new perceptions.

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction

Kabat-Zinn is called the father of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). He developed this program back in 1979 at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center with the focus of helping patients cope with chronic pain. His idea was to teach patients mindfulness meditation techniques to refocus their attention so they could change their response to pain and reduce their overall suffering. Zinn wanted to focus on what is now called the biopsychosocial model of illness, meaning that we look at physical, psychological and social elements, not just biological causes. Consider the influence of this way of thinking – it seems obvious now that our minds and our social connections are related to how we feel physically and how we heal, but that has not always been the case. Zinn’s program has been so successful that there are now currently 1000 certified MBSR instructors teaching these techniques in almost every state and in more than 30 countries. Also more than 20,000 people have completed the MBSR 8-week program.

Benefits of Mindfulness Practice

Generally speaking, being mindful can:

- Give people more appreciation for life
- Assist with focus and attention
- Assist people in handling emotions
- Combat multitasking

Research shows that practicing mindfulness can:

- Reduce stress levels
- Improve working memory, emotional regulation and well-being
- Enhance coping with distress and disability
- Reduce symptoms of anxiety, depression, substance abuse, eating disorders and chronic pain
- Lower cortisol levels and blood pressure
- Increase immune response
- Decrease mind-wandering



How long before you see benefits?

Research has shown that the benefits of mindfulness can be seen in as little as a 15 minute session.

Mindfulness Techniques

There are several ways to practice mindfulness. Since being mindful is the act of focusing on and experiencing the present, this can be applied to just about anything you do in life. If you need a little guidance at first, there are several types of scripts available on the internet for everything from paying attention to smell, to sounds, when you walk, and even washing dishes!



Considerations for Older Adults

Mindfulness meditation has been proven to be beneficial for people of all ages, but there are researchers that recognize the need for adaptations to be made for certain populations.

A few suggestions for older adults who want to practice mindfulness meditation include:

- Practice meditation by sitting on a chair or lying on the couch/bed. Sitting on the floor can be uncomfortable for older adults and they may have difficulty getting up from a sitting or lying position.
- Those with hearing loss should sit close to the instructor or face them to read their lips.
- Balancing poses should be done near a wall or behind a chair for support.
- Walking meditation should be done using a normal pace since slower than usual paces contributed to loss of balance. A wall or other aid may also be used to provide support.

Quotes

“Few of us ever live in the present. We are forever anticipating what is to come or remembering what has gone.” [Louis L'Amour](#)

“Be happy in the moment, that's enough. Each moment is all we need, not more.” [Mother Teresa](#)

“I am the master of my mind and fate.” [Lailah Gifty Akita](#)

“Feelings come and go like clouds in a windy sky. Conscious breathing is my anchor.” [Thích Nhất Hạnh](#)

“The present moment is filled with joy and happiness. If you are attentive, you will see it.”

[Thích Nhất Hạnh](#)

“Mindfulness isn't difficult, we just need to remember to do it.” [Sharon Salzberg](#),



“Distraction wastes our energy, concentration restores it.” [Sharon Salzberg](#)

“Meditation trains the mind the way physical exercise strengthens the body.” [Sharon Salzberg](#),

“This is today! What will tomorrow bring? Life arrives and departs on its own schedule, not ours; it's time to travel light, and be ready to go wherever it takes us.” [Meg Wolfe](#)

“We are too busy listening to our thoughts that we don't hear the wonderful sounds surrounding us...”
— [Alina Radoi](#)

The best way to capture moments is to pay attention. This is how we cultivate mindfulness. Mindfulness means being awake. It means knowing what you are doing.”

— [Jon Kabat-Zinn](#),

Mindfulness Techniques and Scripts

The Basics of Mindfulness Meditation

- 1) Have a seat on the floor or in a chair making sure to keep your back straight. Begin by taking a deep breath and close your eyes.
- 2) Breathe normally and focus on your breathing. Feel the air moving in and out of your lungs.
- 3) You will probably experience thoughts or distractions, but as you do, don't give them too much attention. Acknowledge that your mind has wandered and then move your focus back to your breathing.
- 4) Start by doing this a few minutes each day and then gradually increase your time, staying at a comfortable level.



The following mindfulness techniques are from Sung Yang at www.learnmindfulness.org (Mindfulness Techniques, 2010)

Mindfulness of Smell

- 1) Be aware of the dominant smell whether it is sweet, floral, fruity, spicy, burned, paint-like or something else.
- 2) Be aware of the intensity of the smell whether it is weak, strong or intolerable.
- 3) Be aware of the source of the smell, for instance, a flower.
- 4) Be aware of your nose.
- 5) Be aware of feeling whether the smell is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

Mindfulness of Sounds

- 1) Select a sound among all different sounds in your surroundings, for example, a dominant sound or most distinctive sound.
- 2) Be aware of pitch—whether sound of frequency is high or low.
- 3) Be aware of a pattern in the sound. Otherwise be aware of the absence of patterns if there are no patterns in the sound.
- 4) Be aware of the direction—where the sound is coming from.
- 5) Be aware of distance—how far the distance the sound is coming from.
- 6) Be aware of whether the source of sound is moving or not.
- 7) Be aware of duration of the sound whether short or long or if it is a continuous sound.
- 8) Be aware of gap or silence in between sound if it is a continuous sound.
- 9) Be aware of an echo if there is any.
- 10) Be aware of harmonic effect of sound if it is being combined with another sound.
- 11) Be aware if any quality of the sound changes.
- 12) Be aware of the source of the sound, for example, a refrigerator, a car, a bird.
- 13) Be aware of the factors that allowed the sound to come into existence.



Mindfulness of Washing Dishes

- 1) Be aware that you are washing dishes.
- 2) Be aware of the object that you are holding in your left hand, for example, a plate, a cup
- 3) Also, be aware of specific washing movements of your right hand. For example, left and right, up and down or circling.
- 4) Be aware of the dominant experience while washing dishes, for example: rainbow colors in soap bubbles; the speed of movements of your hands; sensations you experience in your hands such as pressure, slipperiness, and temperature; changing of sensation while washing, rinsing, and drying; sound of running water; temperature of the water; fragrance of your soap; your body posture; awareness of washing dishes; your breath; and feelings or thoughts.



The following is a guided walking meditation by Tara Brach (www.tarabrach.com)

Begin by choosing a place—an indoor or outside walking path about 10-30 paces long. Start by standing still and sensing the weight of your body at your feet, feeling your muscles supporting and stabilizing you. Your hands can be in whatever position is most comfortable—resting easily at your sides, folded gently in front of you, or at your back. In the stillness, remain relaxed and alert.

As you begin walking, start at a slower pace than usual, paying particular attention to the sensations in your feet and legs: heaviness, lightness, pressure, tingling, energy, even pain if it's present. For the walking practice, this play of sensations—rather than the breath or another anchor—is often the home base for our attention.

Be mindful of the sensations of lifting your feet and of placing them back down on the floor or earth. Sense each step fully as you walk in a relaxed and natural way to the end of your chosen path. When you arrive, stop and pause for a moment. Feel your whole body standing, allowing all your senses to be awake, then slowly and mindfully—with intention—turn to face in the other direction. Before you begin walking, pause again to collect and center yourself. If it helps, you can even close your eyes during these standing pauses, often called “standing meditation.”



As you're walking, it's quite natural for your mind to wander. Whenever it does, you might mentally pause, perhaps noting inwardly the fact of thinking, or even where your mind went: planning, worrying, fantasizing, judging. Then, gently return your attention to the sensations of the next step. No matter how long you've spent lost in thought, you can always arrive right here, bringing presence and care to the moment-to-moment sensations of walking.

During the walking period you might alter your pace, seeking a speed that allows you to be most mindful of your experience. In this way, you'll move back and forth on your pathway, discovering that you are not really going anywhere, but are arriving again and again in the aliveness that is right here. As Thich Nhat Hanh teaches “The miracle is not to walk on water. It is to walk on this earth with awareness.”

Rapid Relaxation Script by Dr. Christopher Lloyd Clarke from www.The-Guided-Meditation-Site.com

Find yourself a quiet place to relax. Let your hands rest loosely in your lap, or by your side. Now close your eyes. Take a long slow deep breath in through your nose, all the way down into your stomach. Hold the breath for just a moment, and then exhale through your mouth. Allow your breath to carry away all stress and tension as the air floods out of your lungs.

Take another slow breath in through your nose. Fill your lungs completely. Hold it for a moment...and release the breath through your mouth. Empty your lungs completely with your out-breath.

Feel that the tension in your body has begun to loosen and subside.

Take a third deep breath in. Hold it for a moment, and then let it go.

Feel yourself relaxing more and more deeply with each breath.

Bring your awareness to your feet and toes. Now breathe in deeply through your nose, and as you do, gradually curl your toes down and tense the muscles in the soles of your feet. Hold your breath for just a few seconds and then release the muscles in your feet as you breathe out.

Now bring your awareness to your calf muscles. Breathe in deeply and as you do, point your toes up towards your knees and tighten these muscles. Hold for just a moment, and then let those muscles go limp as you exhale.

Now take a deep breath in, and tense the muscles in your thighs. Hold for just a moment, and then release all those muscles. Focus on letting them go limp and loose.

Draw in a nice deep breath and gradually tighten the muscles in your buttocks. Hold this contraction for a few seconds, and then release your breath. Feel the tension leaving your muscles. Feel them relaxing completely.

Draw in a nice deep breath and then tighten your stomach muscles. Hold for a moment. Now release your breath and let your muscles relax.

Bring your awareness to the muscles in your back. As you slowly breathe in, arch your back slightly and tighten these muscles....Now release your breath and let the muscles relax.

Pull your shoulders up towards your ears and squeeze these muscles as you breathe in deeply. Now breathe out completely. Let your contracted muscles to go loose and limp.

Feel the heaviness in your body now. Enjoy the feeling. Breathe in again. Clench your fists and tighten all the muscles in your arms. Squeeze the muscles as you hold your breath...now release and gently breathe all the way out. Let your arms and hands go loose and limp.

Now tighten the muscles in your face by squeezing your eyes shut and clenching your lips together.

Breathe in fully. Hold this for a moment...and now breathe out and relax all your facial muscles. Feel your face softening.

Take a deep breath in, and then open your mouth as wide as you can. Feel your jaw muscles stretching and tightening. Now exhale and allow your mouth to gently close.

Take one final deep breath in, filling your lungs completely...hold for just a moment, and then release and relax. Let all that air carry away every last molecule of tension.

You are now completely relaxed from the tips of your toes to the top of your head. Enjoy this feeling for as long as you like. Take your time, and when you are ready, open your eyes.

Mindful Eating—The Pleasure of a Kiss Script

- 1) Do not eat the kiss right away!
- 2) First, admire the shape and color of the chocolate kiss.
- 3) Take a deep smell of the chocolate through the foil wrapper.
- 4) Anticipate how the kiss will taste.
- 5) Slowly unwrap the chocolate.
- 6) Now take another deep smell of the chocolate. Is the aroma stronger now?
- 7) Slowly place the chocolate in your mouth.
- 8) Do Not Bite!
- 9) Let the candy melt slowly in your mouth and savor the flavor and note the changing texture.
- 10) Close your eyes and pretend this is the first piece of chocolate you have ever tasted.



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Resources:

www.the-guided-meditation-site.com

www.tarabrach.com

www.learnmindfulness.org

www.thecenterformindfuleating.org

<http://health.ucsd.edu/specialties/mindfulness/Pages/default.aspx>

<http://www.elephantjournal.com>

<http://www.mindful.org/>

<http://www.psc.illinois.edu/mindfulness/> U of I psych services

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