

Mindfulness

How to Practice Mindfulness?

Mindfulness can be practiced in two ways: formally and informally.

Formal practice means taking the time to intentionally sit, or lie down and focus on your breath, bodily sensations, or thoughts, and emotions.

Practical Exercise - Formal Practice

1. Take a few moments to be still and enter the world of being rather than doing.
2. Begin this exercise by focusing on your breath and feeling into your body and mind and simply allowing any thought, emotion, or physical sensation to just be.
3. You don't need to judge, analyze, or figure things out. Spend about three minutes simply checking in with yourself.

Informal practice means bringing mindful awareness to daily activities, such as doing chores, eating, exercising, relating to others, and any other action, whether at work, at home, or anywhere else.

Practical Exercise – Informal Practice

1. Choose a task that you normally do on a daily basis, like brushing your teeth or taking a shower.
2. Try to focus your attention on the task, bringing all of your senses to the experience.
3. If you're taking a shower, feel and listen to the water pouring against your skin, and smell the shampoo you're using, and visual details you don't usually notice, such as the iridescence of the bubbles.

Practicing Mindfulness Throughout Your Day

You can practice mindfulness from the moment you wake up to the moment you lay your head on the pillow at the end of your day.

This will help you stay present, appreciate whatever situation you find yourself in, and feel more calm and at peace

1. As you open your eyes in the morning, stop yourself from checking your phone or jumping out of bed, and instead take a few moments to do a mindful check-in. Notice your thoughts, emotions, and body sensations.
2. As you shower, notice the smell of soap, feel the sensation of the water on your body, and listen to its sound.
3. If you live with others, take a few moments to listen and connect with them mindfully.
4. As you head for your car, walk more slowly, check in with your body sensations, and notice any tension. Try to soften it before you start your drive.
5. On your way to work, find opportunities to notice your breathing and body sensations.
6. Throughout your day at work, do mindful check-ins from time to time. If you can, turn off your email and social messaging as you focus on the task at hand.
7. If possible, have a meal by yourself in silence, try eating slower than you usually do and tune in to the taste and texture of your food in your mouth.
8. When you get home, do a mindful check-in and notice if your body is tense. Soften those muscles by breathing deeply and bringing your awareness to your muscles.

#1. Mindful Eating

Mindful eating has been shown to reduce stress and prevent weight gain even without dieting.

It helps individuals recognize sensations of fullness and taste satisfaction, which helps you distinguish between emotional and real, physical hunger

Mindful eating also helps increase your awareness of triggers that make you want to eat, even when you're not hungry.

By becoming aware of your triggers, you can create a space between your response and them, which gives you the time and freedom to choose how to react.

Formal Practice

1. Place a few blueberries in your hand, or any other kind of fruit.
2. Imagine looking at this fruit for the first time in your life and try to explore it with all of your senses.
3. Notice what color it is and where the surface reflects light or becomes darker.
4. Notice how its texture. Feel any softness, hardness, coarseness, or smoothness.
5. Acknowledge any thoughts you might have at this moment. You might find yourself thinking "Why am I doing this weird exercise?" or, "How will this ever help me?" Let these thoughts be and bring your attention back to the object.
6. Notice the smell of the object.
7. Bring the object to one ear. Roll it around or squeeze it and notice any sound that might come from it.
8. Take the object to your mouth and become aware of your mouth watering.
9. Explore the sensations of this object in your mouth, before biting down on it.
10. Notice the tastes it releases, while slowly chewing this object.

11. When you're ready to swallow, notice the intention to swallow, then notice the sensations of swallowing the fruit, notice it moving down to your throat and into your esophagus on its way to your stomach.

Informal Practice

Eating is something we do every day, yet most of us do it while distracted by something else, like reading, or watching TV.

Eating is a good way to practice mindfulness. You can extend the approach in the formal practice above to any eating experience.

All you need to do is to give the experience of eating your full, undivided attention and observe the mind and body with curiosity and objectivity, and without judgment.

#2. Mindful Breathing

Your breath is the best way to bring your attention back to present and become mindful.

To practice mindful breathing, there is no need to count, visualize, or manipulate the breath in any way. All you need to do is to be mindful when you breathe in and out – breathe naturally and be aware of breathing in and out.

You can notice your breath in your nose, chest, belly, or even your entire body as you breathe in and out.

Abdominal Breathing

Abdominal breathing refers to breathing from the belly, rather than only into the chest.

It is the way we all naturally breathe, especially when we're lying down.

It helps calm anxiety and reduce stress and moderate irregular breathing patterns, as it represents the opposite of the shallow, upper chest breathing that is part of the typical **stress** response.

To practice abdominal breathing, place your hand on your belly and feel it expands as you inhale and contracts as you exhale.

#3. Mindful Walking

Walking usually consists of going from point A to point B.

Mindful Walking, on the other hand, is deliberate and serves a different purpose. It is an excellent way to reduce stressful and anxious thoughts and feel your feet on the earth.

Mindful Walking involves slowing the process and noticing the movement of each foot as you lift it, move it forward, and place it back down with each step.

1. Begin by standing while you take a moment to feel your body. Feel the ground or the floor under your feet.
2. Become aware of your surroundings. Take in any sights, smells, tastes, sounds, or other sensations around you.
3. Notice any thoughts and emotions and let them be without judgment.
4. Begin to mindfully focus upon walking as you shift the weight to one leg and begin to lift the other foot up, move it forward, then place it back down on the ground.
5. Notice how your body moves as you walk with your arms swinging back and forth.

#4. Body Awareness

Body awareness refers to the body scan meditation in which you deeply observe the moment-to-moment experiences of the body.

By bringing awareness to whatever you feel or sense in the body along with any evoked thoughts and emotions, you reduce stress, anxiety, and physical pain.

These sensations and physical pain might be related to anxiety. You may notice tightness in the chest, tension in the shoulders or back, or cramping in the stomach.

Body awareness can help alert you that you might be anxious, allowing you to work with that emotion before it snowballs.

1. Gently begin to focus on your breath.
2. Breathe normally and naturally while focusing on the tip of the nose or the abdomen.
3. When your mind wanders away from awareness of breathing, acknowledge wherever you went and gently come back to the breath.
4. Gently withdraw awareness from mindful breathing and shift to the body scan. As you go through your body, allow tight or tense areas to soften. If you can't, just let the sensations be. This also applies to emotions.
5. when you finish going through every area of your body, expand the field of awareness to the entire body from head to toe to fingertips.
6. Breathing in, feel the whole body rising and expanding on an inhalation and falling and contracting on an exhalation.

Informal Practice: Minding Your Pain

When you experience tension or pain in an area of your body, instead of getting away from the unpleasant feeling, choose to adopt the attitude of mindfulness – ride the waves of sensations and let them be.

Bring attention to physical sensations in your body and curiously notice how you're feeling.

Allow yourself to feel these physical or emotional sensations as they are, without resistance or judgment.

To help you remember to practice, you can schedule a reminder in your phone that says something like “How is my body?”

#6. Mindful Self-Inquiry

Mindful self-inquiry is a deep look into the nature of one's own mind and being – physical sensations, emotions, and thoughts.

Mindful self-inquiry is a great way to self-reflect and bring awareness and acknowledgment to any stressed or anxious feelings in the body and mind and simply allow them to be, without analyzing, suppressing, or encouraging them.

This may seem scary in and of itself, but it's the only way to help these difficult thoughts and emotions dissipate.

When you don't deal with your pain, it gets larger, until eventually it gets too heavy to carry any further.

Instead of expending energy fighting or turning away from your difficult thoughts and emotions, through self-inquiry you begin to create the opportunity to gain insight into what's fueling them and begin to understand the underlying causes that needs to be addressed.

Informal Practice

1. Notice any strong emotion and allow it to be present.
2. Feel into the sensation, be curious about it, and ask yourself, “What am I needing right now?”

By understanding what you need, you'll gain a sense of self-reliance and confidence.

Resources

Apps like [The Mindfulness App](#), [Headspace](#), [Calm](#), and [buddhify](#) can help introduce you to mindfulness and silent meditations.