

5 Ways To Practice Mindfulness

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Mindfulness exercises that take very little effort and can be done pretty much anywhere at any time:

1. Mindful Breathing

This exercise can be done standing up or sitting down, and pretty much anywhere at any time. All you must do is be still and focus on your breath for just one minute.

- Start by breathing in and out slowly. One breath cycle should last for approximately 6 seconds.
- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth, letting your breath flow effortlessly in and out of your body.
- Let go of your thoughts. Let go of things you must do later today or pending projects that need your attention. Simply let thoughts rise and fall of their own accord and be at one with your breath.
- Purposefully watch your breath, focusing your sense of awareness on its pathway as it enters your body and fills you with life.
- Then watch with your awareness as it works its way up and out of your mouth and its energy dissipates into the world.

If you are someone who thought they would never be able to meditate, guess what? You are halfway there already!

If you enjoyed one minute of this mind-calming exercise, why not try two or three?

2. Five-finger breathing

This simple practice is easy to remember and is often taught to children to help them calm themselves in times of high stress. It works by engaging multiple senses at the same time.

- Hold your hand in front of you, fingers spread.
- Using your index finger on the opposite hand, start tracing the outline of your extended hand, starting at the wrist, moving up the pinkie finger.
- As you trace up your pinkie, breathe in. As you trace down your pinkie, breathe out. Trace up your ring finger and breathe in. Trace down your ring finger and breathe out.
- Continue finger by finger until you have traced your entire hand. Now reverse the process and trace from your thumb back to your pinkie, making sure to inhale as you trace up, and exhale as you trace down.

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3. Mindful Observation

This exercise is simple but incredibly powerful because it helps you notice and appreciate seemingly simple elements of your environment in a more profound way.

- Choose a natural object from within your immediate environment and focus on watching it for a minute or two. This could be a flower or an insect, or even the clouds or the moon.
- Do not do anything except notice the thing you are looking at. Simply relax into watching for as long as your concentration allows.
- Look at this object as if you are seeing it for the first time.
- Visually explore every aspect of its formation and allow yourself to be consumed by its presence.
- Allow yourself to connect with its energy and its purpose within the natural world.

4. Mindful Awareness

This exercise is designed to cultivate a heightened awareness and appreciation of simple daily tasks and the results they achieve.

- Think of something that happens every day more than once; something you take for granted, like opening a door, for example. At the very moment you touch the doorknob to open the door, stop for a moment and be mindful of where you are, how you feel in that moment and where the door will lead you.
- Similarly, the moment you open your computer to start work, take a moment to appreciate the hands that enable this process and the brain that facilitates your understanding of how to use the computer.
- These 'touch point' cues do not have to be physical ones.
- For example: Each time you think a negative thought, you might choose to take a moment to stop, label the thought as unhelpful and release the negativity.
- Or perhaps each time you smell food, you take a moment to stop and appreciate how lucky you are to have good food to eat and share with your family and friends.
- Choose a touch point that resonates with you today and, instead of going through your daily motions on autopilot, take occasional moments to stop and cultivate purposeful awareness of what you are doing and the blessings these actions bring to your life.



5. Mindful Immersion

The intention of this exercise is to cultivate contentment in the moment and escape the persistent striving we find ourselves caught up in daily.

Rather than anxiously wanting to finish an everyday routine task to get on with doing something else, take that regular routine and fully experience it like never before.

- For example: if you are cleaning your house, pay attention to every detail of the activity.
- Rather than treat this as a regular chore, create an entirely new experience by noticing every aspect of your actions:
- Feel and become the motion when sweeping the floor, sense the muscles you use when scrubbing the dishes, develop a more efficient way of wiping the windows clean.
- The idea is to get creative and discover new experiences within a familiar routine task.
- Instead of labouring through and constantly thinking about finishing the task, become aware of every step and fully immerse yourself in the progress. Take the activity beyond a routine by aligning yourself with it physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Who knows, you might even enjoy the cleaning for once!