

10 Ways to Practice Mindfulness

Practicing mindfulness is a great way to bring our attention back to the present moment.

Many of us spend too much of our precious lives worrying about the future or thinking regretfully about the past when, in reality, all that exists is the here and now.

Here are a few simple ways to cultivate mindfulness and bring more peace and ease back into each day:

- 1 **Morning routine:** Mindfulness can start as soon as we wake up, by gently stretching our muscles and breathing in fully. Savour a few moments in the shower, enjoying the warmth or coolness of the water, the sensation of the water on your skin, and the feel of your towel as you dry your body.
- 2 **Walking:** Take in the wonders of nature by walking along the beach, in a garden or down the streets of your neighbourhood. Admire the beauty of nature and allow it to still your mind. Whenever you can, slip off your shoes and connect to the earth to ground yourself.
- 3 **Focus on doing only one thing at a time:** Allow yourself time to work through one task at a time, without distractions. This will enable you to immerse yourself in the activity and create some flow, which will help you complete it more easily and quickly too.
- 4 **Just breathe:** Take time out, even if just for a few minutes, and notice your breath without trying to control it or change it. This is something anyone can do anytime to tune in and quieten the mind chatter. If you have more time, try a breathing technique called CHANDRA BHEDA. This practice cools the body, reduces blood pressure and calms the nerves. It also helps with indigestion and insomnia. Start by sitting comfortably and make a mudra with the fingers of your right hand (press the index and middle finger of your hand towards your palm). Now use your right thumb to close the right nostril. Inhale slowly and deeply through your left nostril until your lungs fill with maximum air. Then, close your left nostril with the ring finger. Retain your breath for as long as you can. Release the right nostril and exhale slowly through the right nostril. Your exhalation should be longer than your inhalation. Repeat this process around 10 times.
- 5 **Immerse yourself in your favourite activity:** A great way to achieve a state of mindfulness is to immerse yourself in any activity you love - a yoga class, something creative like painting or writing, gardening, cooking, singing or playing a musical instrument. In doing so, you'll soon quieten a busy mind and feel more relaxed.
- 6 **Acceptance:** A key element to mindfulness is accepting the moment you are in. This includes any negative thoughts or feelings that come up and any less than ideal situation you might be experiencing. Choose to recognise them without resisting or trying to change them, even if they are uncomfortable. Remind yourself that these things do not define you or your life.



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- 7 **Loving kindness:** Much scientific research shows that directing kind and loving thoughts toward ourselves and others can be extremely beneficial and can provide relief from suffering. Take a few moments now to send yourself or someone else some loving, compassionate thoughts. You can also listen to a beautiful Loving Kindness Meditation here by Liana Taylor of the Australian Institute of Applied Mindfulness.
- 8 **Live in the moment:** Find ways to be appreciative of, and relax into, the present moment – without wishing you were somewhere else. Allow life to naturally unfold around you without worrying about controlling all the details. Make use of all of your senses to help you be present. I find inhaling essential oils a great way to relax my mind and emotions and bring myself back to the present moment.
- 9 **Disengage from disturbing thoughts:** Always remember that you are not your thoughts! Don't allow disturbing thoughts that come into your mind to derail you. Notice them without judging them, and then allow them to pass. Don't engage with your negative thoughts; don't fight them or resist them; just practice disconnecting them from yourself. A good way to disengage from thoughts, especially when they've emanated from someone or somewhere else (like the TV or newspaper) is to repeat several times, silently or out loud, 'return to sender.'
- 10 **End the day with thoughts of gratitude:** Before going to bed, remind yourself of all that you're grateful for – the situations, people and moments that bring joy to your life.

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