

Touch the Grass and Smell the Air: Mindfulness and Meditation Practices

What is mindfulness?

- Mindfulness is a holistic and science-based practice that brings body, mind and spirit together.
- Mindfulness encourages a non-judgmental, accepting, and curious attitude toward life experiences, helping individuals break free from automatic, unhelpful thinking patterns.
- Mindfulness can be practiced without equipment during daily activities and meditation practices.

What is meditation?

- Meditation is a mind-body practice in which an individual uses specific techniques to focus or clear the mind
- Meditation helps to detach from ruminating thoughts
- Meditation cultivates a calm and stable mental state
- Meditation develops awareness, concentration, and emotional balance

What is mindful meditation?

- Mindful meditation is mental state that involves being fully focused on "the now".
- Mindful meditation teaches acknowledging and accepting thoughts, feelings, and sensations without fostering reaction or judgment.
- Mindful meditation combines mindfulness and meditation approaches as means to work towards these goals.

What are some of the science-based benefits of mindfulness and meditation practice?

- Reduces stress and lower cortisol levels
- Improves emotional regulation and resilience through greater brain density and neural integration
- Enhances focus, attention, and memory
- Supports mental health by alleviating anxiety, depression, insomnia and reducing symptoms of PTSD and ADD
- Improves function of the brain and autoimmune system
- Aids in managing chronic pain and other health conditions

What of the science-based benefits presented might support you?

Signs that mindfulness and meditation may be helpful in your life:

- You find yourself being clumsy, breaking and spilling things
- Doing several things at once instead of focusing on the task at hand
- Eating without awareness
- Being preoccupied with the past or future
- Reacting with emotions that “came out of nowhere”
- Running on autopilot
- Distracting yourself with shopping, eating, alcohol, and binge watching TV
- Not really listening to someone because you are distracted by thoughts
- Forgetfulness - names, places, where you last place items

Do you see yourself in any of the signs that mindfulness and meditation may be helpful?

Nine Attitudes of Mindfulness

1. Non-Judging - Observing experiences impartially without labeling them as good or bad. This helps reduce automatic reactions and increases clarity.
2. Patience - Allowing experiences to unfold in their own time. Patience supports calmness and reduces the urge to rush through moments.
3. Beginner’s Mind - Approaching each moment with openness, curiosity, and without preconceived notions. This reveals the richness of the present.
4. Trust - Developing confidence in your own inner wisdom and intuition rather than relying solely on external authority.
5. Non-Striving - Letting go of the need to achieve or change anything during mindfulness practice. The goal is simply to be present.
6. Acceptance - Recognizing and allowing things to be as they are, which creates space for clearer understanding and intentional response.
7. Letting Go - Releasing attachment to pleasant or unpleasant experiences, allowing the present moment to unfold naturally.

Which of these might you find challenging in your daily life?

The Space Between

By Billy Jack Brawner

time

always measured, always quantified

sometimes labeled; good times, bad times, happy times, sad times

sometimes identified by the big, monumental

mark-it-on-the-calendar kinda times

but then other times feel in-between

the pending time

the not-yet time

the patiently waiting time.

the time that is the space between

the beginning and the end of something.

planting the seed and reaping the harvest

casting the line and reel in the big one

grinding the beans and taking the first sip

having the dream and seeing its magic played out

charting the course and reaching the summit

paddling out and riding the waves

starting the oven and buttering the bread

saying hello and living happily ever after

reading the first line and finishing the story.

it is here, in the mundane and in the not yet and in the unknown

as we patiently wait for what's to come

when things begin shifting

the stories we'll someday tell are being written

life is unfolding and lessons are being learned.

and I bet you more times than not, when we look back

it'll be this space—this moment in time—we waited for all along.

What is worth slowing down for?

How can being present make an impact?

Simple Mindfulness Meditation Exercise - 5-4-3-2-1

Grounding technique that creates calm by distracting the mind and bringing awareness to surroundings.

The best way to begin practicing is just to start. Here is an easy, unstructured mindfulness exercise to try to anchor yourself in the present moment.

Sit in a comfortable position in a quiet, comfortable place.

Pay attention to the environment around you with all your senses.

Be present and try to keep your focus on what you're experiencing in the moment.

Focus on your breathing, feeling the inhale and exhale. Use your breath to keep from being distracted.

5. Things you can see

4. Things you can touch

3. Things you can hear

2. Things you can smell

1. Thing you can taste

Accept yourself in the moment and be kind to yourself.

Try to set aside time when you can be in a quiet place without distractions or interruptions.

Use this exercise any time you need to center your thoughts or get in touch with your feelings. In fact, you can practice simple mindfulness exercises anywhere and at any time.

Research indicates that engaging your senses **outdoors** in nature is especially beneficial.

Simple 3 - Step Mindfulness Meditation Breathwork

Belly Breath – creates pause, calms the mind, slows the breath for task focus.

1. Step out of autopilot

Bring your awareness to what you are doing, thinking about the task, sensing emotions that come with it.

Pause. Take a comfortable relaxed upright posture. Breathe in and out gently. What thoughts come to mind? What feelings?

Mentally acknowledge thoughts and feelings then come back to the moment.

2. Become aware of your breath

Right now, your only focus is your breath.

Place one hand on your belly and one on your chest and take a breath. How does your body move with each breath in and out?

Feel how your belly moves in and out and how your chest rises and falls.

Do you feel the wave of your breath as it moves through the diaphragm between your belly and chest?

Find the pattern of your breath. Stay aware of the pattern and breathe for six breaths or one minute.

3. Expand your awareness outward

Let your awareness spread to your body, then your surroundings.

What physical sensations are you experiencing?

Note the physical feelings like tightness, aches, lightness. Now state mentally, “I let go of the physical feelings in this moment”

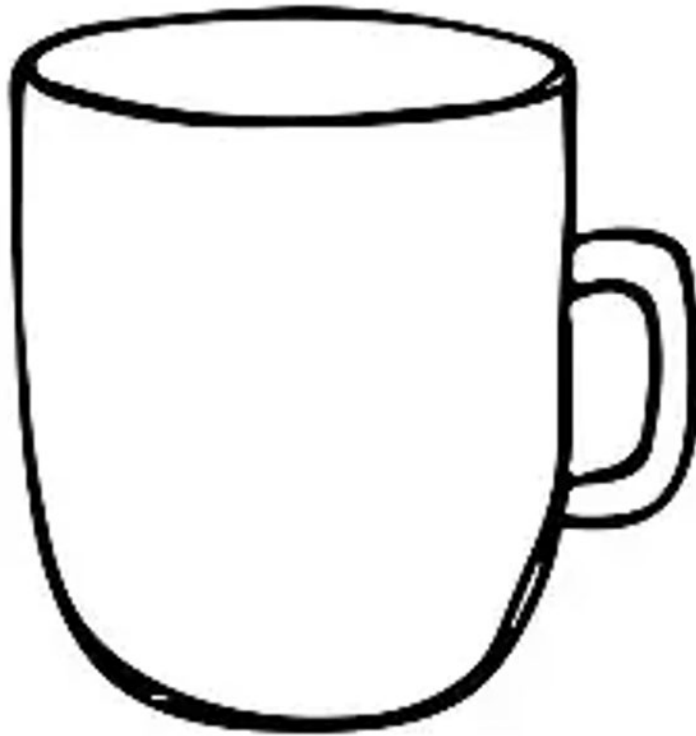
Begin to notice your outward surroundings. Colors, shapes, textures, people, sounds.

Take one last deep breath in through the nose and out of your mouth.

Bring your attention to the task in front of you.

How full is your cup?

Color in/fill the cup as it best represents you.



What emotions come with this task?

What fills your cup?

What empties your cup?

OUT OF MY CONTROL - IN MY CONTROL

other's opinions of me	outcomes
the future	aging
other's beliefs/behaviors	
my boundaries	my response
my energy	
words I choose/how I speak	who I choose to give my time
how people speak to me	how I treat others
my attitude	
how I process emotions	time
external events	self-talk
the way people treat me	

How have these tasks helped you to see yourself?

Body Scan Meditation

- Enhances mind-body connection, fostering greater bodily awareness & emotional regulation.
- Regular body scans can improve concentration, reduce anxiety & support overall mental wellbeing.
- Get comfortable in your chair.
- Close your eyes.
- Breathe normally for a few breaths.
- Allow your body to settle, making comfortable contact with the seat and back of the chair.
- Begin the scan with a cleansing breath. Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose and exhale through your mouth.
- Breathe normally as you continue to focus on each area of your body.
- Use your breath to bring in the oxygen on the inhale and help you relax on the exhale.
- Let each inhale and exhale support your attention, helping you stay present and focused on the body area being scanned.

Start at the feet: Bring gentle awareness to feet, the toes, balls of the feet arches and heels. Notice sensations like warmth, tension, or relaxation as you scan the body.

Move systematically: Slowly scan up through the legs. Ankles, calves, knees and thighs. Bring awareness to the mid-section, glutes, hips and belly. Focus on the back, moving up towards the neck and down through the shoulders, arms, and hands. Pausing at each area to observe sensations, accept them and move on without judgment or reaction. Bring attention to the head letting the tongue fall from the roof of the mouth and slightly parting the lips. Continue with eyes closed for a few more breaths.

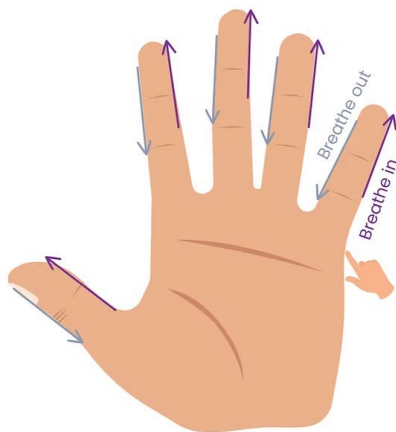
Return when distracted: If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to the body part you were focusing on and look to your breath.

Duration: Sessions can range from 5–30 minutes, depending on your schedule and experience.

Let's Practice: Meditative Breathwork Techniques

We breathe in and out about 22,000 times a day without even being aware of it! Calm brings slower, deeper breathing with better oxygen intake. Slower breathing creates calm, lessens anxiety, energizes, unleashes endorphins and makes our immune system stronger. Learn to tap into your breath as an anchor and use it to your advantage. Here are a few of many techniques to get started. Aime to practice one of these techniques each day to build a routine. It takes 21 days to develop a habit. Make this one of the good ones!

Five Finger Breathing

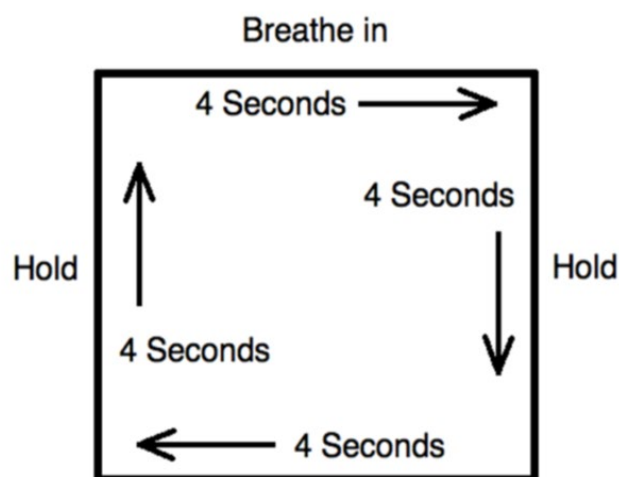


4-7-8 Breathe for Sleep

Inhale deeply for a count of 4, hold for a count of 7, exhale for a count of 8. Repeat 2-4 times.

Candle Breathe for Cleansing Toxins and Building Lung Capacity

Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose as if smelling a flower. Exhale deeply, pursing lips as if blowing out a candle.



Box Breath or Tactical Breathing – used by Navy Seals to regulate stress, sharpen focus, and stabilize the nervous system under pressure.

The **World Health Organization** defines health as a "**state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity**".

Physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health are not separate “lanes” — they influence each other constantly.

Mindfulness — being intentionally present and nonjudgmental — acts as a bridge across these domains.

- **Physical health** (nutrition, movement, sleep) provides the biological foundation for mental and emotional stability. Ninety percent (90%) of the stimulation and nutrition to the brain is generated by the movement of the spine!
- **Mental health** (cognitive clarity, stress management) supports emotional regulation and decision-making.
- **Emotional health** (self-awareness, resilience, authentic connection) shapes how you experience and respond to life.
- **Spiritual health** (purpose, meaning, connection) predicts longevity and well-being, and can buffer stress and illness.

Mindfulness is not just a mental exercise — it’s a holistic practice that nurtures the body, mind, emotions, and spirit together through breathwork, meditation and self-care practices.

Which area(s) of overall health presented need more focus for you?

Mindful Movement: Intimate awareness of how the body feels

- Engages multiple brain networks simultaneously.
- Enhances interoceptive awareness (sensing internal states).
- Promotes physiological self-regulation (heart rate, breathing, hormone balance).
- Builds resilience against chronic stress and disease

Upward stretch — Like a first morning stretch, raise your arms above your head and lock your fingers together with your palms facing up. Try to elongate your spine until you feel a stretching sensation in your arms and rib cage. Hold for 10 seconds, then move your arms a few inches to one side and stretch your side body and torso. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat on the other side.



Neck/shoulder stretch — Sit with your legs crossed in a comfortable position. Take a deep breath to relax. Roll your shoulders backward a few times, then roll them forward. Lift them up to your ears, then drop them completely. Roll your shoulders up, back, then down, and hold them down. Tilt your left ear and head toward your left shoulder and hold for about 10 seconds. With your head tilted, raise your right shoulder up, back, and then down, and hold there. Repeat this to stretch the muscles on the left side of the neck. This is a good yoga stretch for increasing health and fitness.



Cat/cow — Sit upright in a sturdy chair with feet flat on the floor, hip-width apart, hands resting on knees or thighs. Come into Cow pose (inhale) and arch your back, lift your chest, drop your chin slightly, and open your heart. Cat pose (exhale) – Round your spine, tuck your chin to your chest, draw your belly in, and feel the stretch in your upper back. Repeat smoothly, coordinating movement with breath, for several rounds.



What do you do to “move” on a regular basis?

What might be an obstacle that prevents you from exercising regularly?

Mindful Eating Experience

- Use your five senses to bring awareness and increased enjoyment to your food/meals.
- Read through these questions before and answer them as you slowly eat your Energy Bite...one small bite at a time.
- You may want to close your eyes so you can concentrate on the tastes and textures.
- Chew thoroughly before swallowing to savor each morsel.

What do I see? Color, Shape, Visual Texture, Patterns.

What do I hear? Crunch? Squish? Slosh? The sounds of chewing.

What do I smell? Does the food have a smell, aroma? Does the room have a smell that adds to the food/ meal?

What am I tasting? Is the initial taste Sweet? Salty? Sour? Bitter? Savory? Tangy? Is there an aftertaste?

What am I touching or feeling? Using a utensil or hands? Is the food dry or moist? Hard or chewy? Squishy?

Hot or Cold? Grainy or smooth?

How did this activity provide awareness to your eating habits?

EMOTIONAL HEALTH: What are boundaries?

Another foundation of our well-being is boundaries. Personal boundaries are limits we set for ourselves in the relationships in our lives. Healthy boundaries with others are rooted in communication, respect, and understanding. They are important because they help to avoid burn-out, promote balance, and ensure relationships are mutually respectful and supportive. By setting boundaries for ourselves we feel empowered to say “NO” when needed but are still open to growth. Someone with too rigid boundaries may keep others at a distance or have difficulty remaining flexible. Alternatively, someone with porous boundaries may become over involved with others or put outside factors ahead of their own needs.

Relationship mutually agreed upon with partner, family, friends.	Conversational created around topics you are open or not to discussing	Time created around how much time you spend with someone or doing something
Physical around physical proximity, sexuality and your space shared with others	Personal those you have with yourself based on awareness of your own unique needs.	Content things you will/will not consume or consume in moderation on social media, TV, etc.

Ways I practice healthy boundary setting:



**Healthy
Boundaries**



**Limited or
non-existent**



Rigid

***Varied cultures may have different expectations for boundaries.**

SELF-CARE TRACKER

Daily/Weekly Affirmation:

My Self-Care

	Emotional	Physical/ Nutritional	Spiritual
Morning			
Afternoon			
Evening			
Night			

What went well today?

Something I am grateful/joyful for:

Activities To Support Your Journey

- Put yourself first and calendar in self-care.
- Enlist a friend to hold you accountable and check-in on your self-care goals.
- Meditate to promote awareness, lessen stress.
- Move your body every day. Walk the Hopelands Labyrinth or walk in nature to promote positive emotions and connect to the world.
- Be artistic to promote self-awareness and self-exploration.
- Listen to music to release endorphins and aid in the healing process.
- Focus on areas that align with your goals, values, and beliefs.
- Journal to reflect and express your deepest thoughts and feelings.
- Find time for gratitude each day. Celebrate the small wins.
- Read inspiring stories, essays, or listen to podcasts that inspire.
- Make connections through groups of like-minded individuals.
- Unplug from technology.
- Take time to rest, recharge and sleep.
- Eat healthy, mindfully and for satiety.
- Carry a water bottle to stay hydrated and monitor your intake.
- Keep up with health and wellness visits.
- Learn to say “NO” and have clear boundaries.
- Get a massage to release oxytocin, improve circulation and lower heart rate.
- Do something that contributes to the greater good.
- Cut the negative self-talk.
- Enlist the help of a good therapist.

Reflect on the activities listed.

Are there any listed that you can start right now?

Which of those listed will help support your journey?