



EVERYDAY MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness exercises come in a bounty of styles, as it isn't a 'one-size-fits-all' practice. We want to empower you to leave with a better understanding of how mindfulness can function in unexpected places, suiting your day-to-day experience.

What Is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is emotional and physical presence. It is the practice of bringing awareness to your thoughts and feelings. It is accepting the present moment without judgement – enjoyable and uncomfortable moments.

Why Might Someone Consider Practicing Mindfulness?

Using mindfulness to increase the mind-body connection can bring more intention to current situations and improve behavioral health. Being intentional with how you treat yourself during life experiences as well as how you treat other people, is the essence of practicing mindfulness. It may be something you decide to include into your personal mental health tool kit.

How Do I Start Being Mindful?

How do we do this when life is moving by so fast? Mindfulness might look like a 10-minute meditation or reading instead of turning to technology, for others it may be bringing awareness to a workplace situation thoughtfully. Mindfulness begins by deciding, "I want to be more mindful!" It allows you to think about the type of person you want to show up as each day and take small steps to achieve that goal.

Benefits

- Improves mental health, including stress, anxiety, PTSD and depression
- Insights into our many emotions
- Increases concentration
- Improves relationship-building skills—and conflict resolution
- Improves physical health, how the body handles stress and it may lower blood pressure

My 'Best Self' Activity

Try making a list of three important characteristics you would want others to use to describe you. For example, your three characteristics might be: kind, patient, good listener, etc.

I want others to describe me as:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Stimulate the Senses Activity

Take a moment to review each of your five senses: smell, taste, touch, sight and sound. This is an activity you can do any time, anywhere to bring awareness to your physical being. It can help reduce the effects of current anxieties by bringing yourself to the present moment and simply observing your surrounding and how your body feels in this moment.



What can you smell right now? Take a deep breath and inhale what is around you.



What are you touching? Where are your feet planted? Notice how the rest of your body feels as you continue to move your body. How is your physical alignment? What do your clothes feel like?



What are you looking at? Do you notice any details of light or shape?



What do you hear? Is there anything you can hear farther in the distance? Label the sound and move on to allow your ears to hear new sounds.



What can you taste right now? Eating allows us to slow down and build a better connection with our food. Slowing down to observe how the food was cooked and where it came from may increase gratitude. Observing the textures, the smells, how we chew the food allows us to slow down and consider the process. In 2018, the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, found mindful eating may support in healthy weight management due to improved eating behaviors. When eating, what does the food taste like? Can you notice any specific spices or flavors?





Mindfulness on the Road

Can you let someone in? Mindfulness is recognizing the vehicle trying to merge in front of you may have something important to tend to as well. It is taking a deep breath, noticing the traffic is causing you frustration, accepting it is out of your control, all that you can control is how you respond. According to the United States Department of Transportation, over 3,000 deaths were recorded due to distracted driving in 2020. Avoiding phone use and being conscious of your surroundings is mindful driving.

Social Gatherings, Holidays, Big Events

If you are feeling anxious or overwhelmed in social settings, practicing mindfulness is knowing when you have hit your social battery limit and planning accordingly. Mindfulness might look like thanking the host and leaving when you feel you need to.



Mindfulness in Parenting

By practicing mindfulness in parenting, you are passing along a positive tool for your children to continue to use as they develop. In 2021, Stanford Medicine found that mindfulness practices have been shown to improve children's REM sleep (dream sleep and important for quality of sleep cycle), adding over an hour on average. So not only will these practices increase mindfulness skills in children, but it might give them (and you) an extra hour of sleep to maintain overall wellbeing, too. Practicing breathwork, mindful listening, addressing/labeling emotions, positive affirmations, and random acts of kindness are a few ways to practice mindfulness with your family. Check out some of our hands-on activities to give you more ideas:

- Glitter Jar: Watching the glitter swirl in the jar helps kids calm down, regain control and process current emotions and sensory input.
- Bubbles: You can focus on inhaling through the nose and out with the mouth, and point out the different colors and sizes that form from the activity.
- Kinetic Sand: This is another sensory activity that allows kids open-ended exploration and play in the present moment. It can be a lot of fun for parents or caregivers, too! Use the activity to talk about the different senses they might be experiencing or ask them to describe what they feel.



Mindfulness in the Workplace

When you are starting to feel your energy fall, try taking a mental vacation. Taking short breaks between projects or tasks encourages the mind to rest. This helps us regain focus and remain present on the current task and avoid operating on autopilot.

- Try the 20/20/20 Rule = For every 20 minutes you spend looking at something, look at something that is 20 feet away for 20 seconds. This helps your eyes shift to far sight and gives them a rest to reset.
- Closing the eyes and trying breathwork methods may help to increase focus. The mind might wander, and when it does, remind yourself to focus back on your breathing patterns. This is something great to practice in between meetings or at the start of your workday. When taking this microbreak, try to check your physical posture, bringing awareness to any stress you may be holding in your shoulders or your jaw.
 - 4-7-8 Breathwork: Breathe in through the nose for four seconds, hold your breath for seven seconds, then breathe out for eight seconds. Repeat this strategy for at least three rounds.
 - Circle Breathing: Close your eyes and visualize yourself moving your breath along a circle. Inhale starting at the bottom of the circle and move up the left side, hold once you get to the top, and complete the right side of the circle on your exhale. Try slowing your breath down to match your inhales and exhales.
- Is there something you can do to support your workspace positioning and ergonomics? How does your body feel physically? Make adjustments to optimize your comfort and focus.
- Communicating mindfully with others in the workplace can improve relationships and allow you to navigate disagreements respectfully. Try thinking about that email you are planning to send. Taking an extra moment to reflect then respond rather than reacting immediately could make all the difference in your connection with your colleagues. You might also try active listening to enhance workplace mindful communication. Active-listening prompts to gain insight in your conversations:
 - Reflecting: "What I'm hearing you say is..." or "It sounds to me like..."
 - Affirming: Smiling, nodding or brief verbal affirmations like "I see." and "mm hmm."
 - Encouraging: "And then?"
 - Pay attention; withhold judgement; reflect and clarify; summarize and share.
- To bring even more mindfulness into your workday, try practicing gratitude. Building a culture of gratitude and recognition can be contagious! Focusing on the positives and overcoming obstacles can improve resilience skills. Take a moment to reflect:
 - What is going well this week at work?
 - What obstacles have you overcome?



Changing our thoughts through mindfulness during the workday is a practice and a muscle. Adopting the mindset of mindful labor to give more purpose to your workplace may help you dig deeper with your personal purpose.