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STARTED
WITH

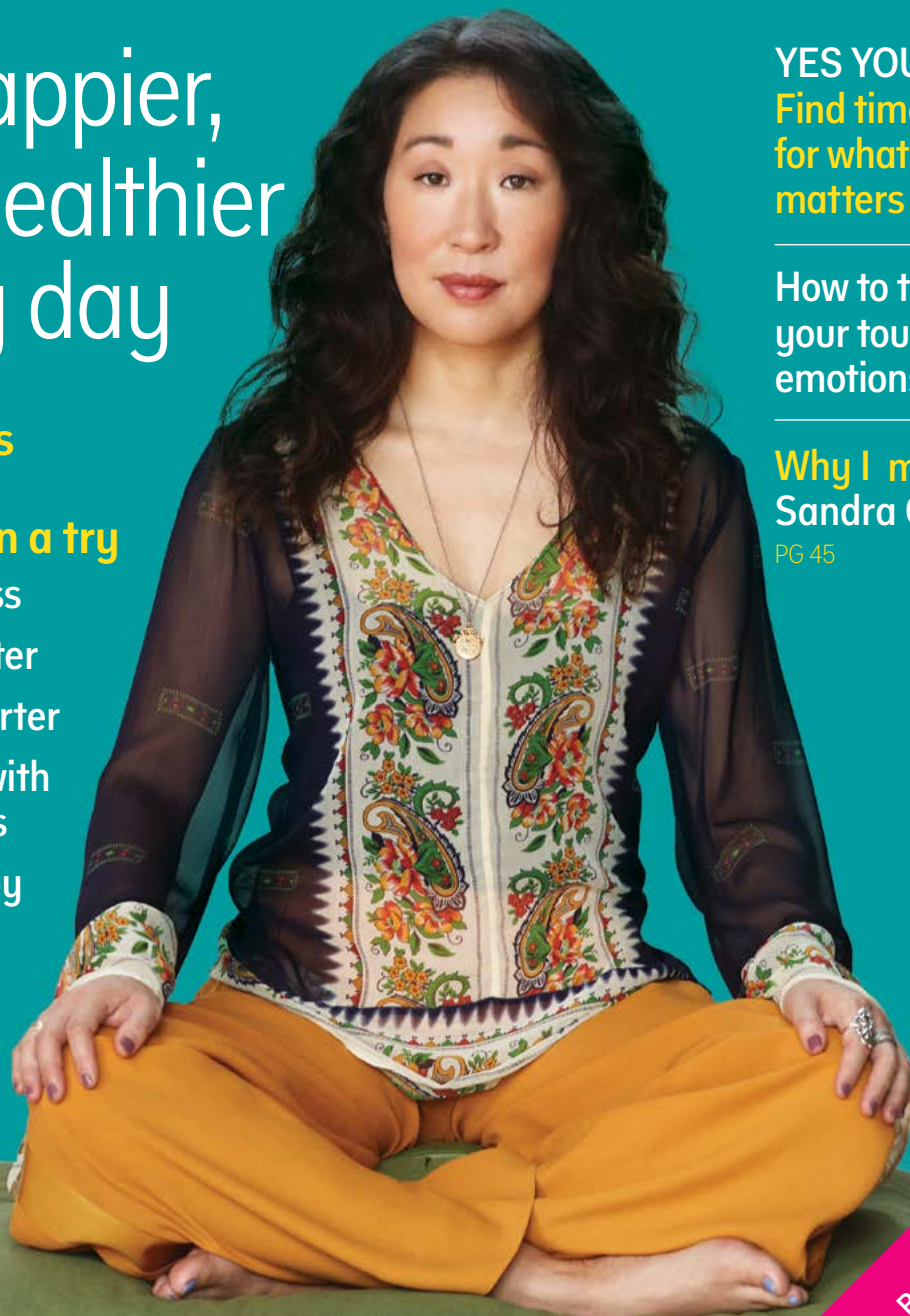
mindfulness

mindful
SPECIAL EDITION

Be happier,
feel healthier
every day

5 reasons to give meditation a try

- Ease stress
- Focus better
- Work smarter
- Connect with loved ones
- Tap into joy



YES YOU CAN!

**Find time
for what
matters most**

**How to tame
your toughest
emotions**

**Why I meditate
Sandra Oh**

PG 45

**Back by Popular
Demand**



Center for Mindfulness

in Medicine, Health Care, and Society

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Welcome to mindfulness

On behalf of *Mindful* magazine and mindful.org, I'm happy to welcome you to *Get Started with Mindfulness*.

We've created this guide to help you learn what mindfulness is, how it can benefit you, and how to begin practicing it in your everyday life.

Why give mindfulness a try?

Because it's a simple, accessible way to live a richer and happier life. It can bring better performance at work and at play, more harmony in personal relationships, and improved health.

Mindfulness does these things by bringing you back in touch with yourself, with your loved ones, with the people you encounter each day, and with the lovely world surrounding you.

Cultivating your mindfulness is a rewarding, lifelong journey. The way to start is by taking a few simple steps. In this case, you only need to turn the page!

Barry Boyce
Editor-in-Chief
Mindful magazine & mindful.org

IN THESE PAGES, YOU'LL FIND:

- Expert advice and instruction from top mindfulness teachers
- Answers to the common questions that come up when you're new to meditation
- Encouragement from other meditators and stories about how mindfulness has made their lives better
- Try-it-now techniques for using mindfulness at work, at home, in traffic, at mealtimes, and more
- Resources for taking mindfulness practice further.

If you like what you find here, and want to know more, please visit us at mindful.org or write to us at mindful@mindful.org.

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FROM LEFT: SHELLY PERRY/STOCKSY, JOSHUA SIMPSON



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AILA IMAGES/STOCKSY



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Actor and longtime meditator Sandra Oh.
Photograph by Lever Rukhin





why meditate?



RONNIE COMEAU/STOCKY

Mind shift

Meditation will change your life in subtle ways, like ripples that alter the surface of water. Expect the unexpected.

If you tell an experienced meditator that you're considering taking up the practice, one response you may hear is, "It will change your life."

That's true—changes are pretty much guaranteed. But it's hard to predict just what kind of changes you're likely to experience.

You've no doubt heard about the many benefits of meditation. In this section, longtime teacher Sharon Salzberg explains how it can deepen the qualities of concentration, mindfulness, and compassion that we already have within us.

But the truth is, the benefits will be a little different for each person. As you'll discover in "Does why you meditate matter?" (page 24), a lot depends on you—who you are, what your life is like, and what draws you to meditation practice.

In the beginning, you may simply notice small quiet shifts in your awareness. You may find that your everyday life feels more spacious. And within that new space, you might start to notice possibilities that you weren't aware of before. Your life may open up in ways that surprise you.

Beginning a meditation practice can be like tossing a stone into a pond, or like raindrops falling into water. You'll see ripples moving over the surface of the water; at first, you don't know exactly what shape those ripples will take or how far they will reach. But you can be sure that the ripples will be there. They will follow a unique pattern created by the person you are in your life right now, and by the particular way that you practice.

What is mindfulness?

The word seems to be everywhere these days. Just what, exactly, are people talking about?

Mindfulness. It's a pretty straightforward word. It suggests that the mind is fully attending to what's happening, to what you're doing, to the space you're moving through. That might seem trivial, except for the annoying fact that we so often veer from the matter at hand. Our mind takes flight, we lose touch with the body, and pretty soon we're engrossed in obsessive thoughts about something that just happened or fretting about the future. And that makes us anxious.

Yet no matter how far we drift away, mindfulness is right there to snap us back to where we are and what we're doing and feeling.

If you want to know what mindfulness is, it's best to try it for a while. Since it's hard to nail down in words, you will find slight variations in the meaning in books, websites, audio, and video. Here's an all-purpose definition that treats mindfulness as a quality that every human being already possesses, rather than something we have to conjure up.

Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive to or overwhelmed by what's going on around us.

While mindfulness is innate, it can be cultivated through proven techniques, particularly sitting, walking, standing, and moving meditation; short pauses we insert into everyday life; and merging meditation practice with other activities, such as yoga or sports.

When we meditate it doesn't help to fixate on the benefits, but rather to just do the practice, and yet there are benefits or no one would do it. When we're mindful, we reduce stress, perform better, gain insight through observing our own mind, and increase our attention to others' well-being.

Mindfulness meditation allows us to suspend judgment and unleash our natural curiosity about the workings of the mind, approaching our experience with warmth and kindness, to ourselves and others. But don't take our word for it—try it for yourself.

ROB AND JULIA CAMPBELL/STOCKSY



Debunking the myths of mindfulness

Some of the popular images and ideas surrounding mindfulness are just plain wrong. When you begin to practice it, you may find the experience quite different from what you expected. There's a good chance you'll be pleasantly surprised.

5 good reasons to meditate

It's all too easy to come up with excuses for why we can't meditate, but there are lots of excellent reasons to do it. Here are just a few.

It's about stopping thoughts

Meditation does not involve ending the thought process. It isn't about trying to achieve a particular state of mind. It is simply taking the time to become familiar with how your thought process actually works, since you have the best vantage point to view what's going on in your own mind. Once you see that, you don't stop thoughts, but they might not control you quite so much.

It's an escape from reality

Nothing could be farther from the truth. Far from being an escape, mindfulness takes you right into the heart of reality, where you get to see how your thoughts shape your perceptions of what you experience, how the activities in your mind cause yourself and others pain and suffering, and what motivates you to do what you do. It's not an escape, or even a vacation. It's a journey within, which helps you see reality better—to more readily distinguish what's real from what you fabricate.

It's only for laid-back people

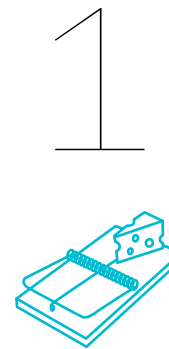
Here we go again—another complete misconception. Everyone, no matter what their lifestyle is, needs time to recharge and regroup and reflect. Mindfulness practice is one of the best ways to give your mind a true rest—and emerge refreshed to take on new challenges.

It's selfish

It's true that meditation practice, even when you do it in a group, is time alone, but it's not selfish. The relaxation and clarity that come with mindfulness practice can help you to listen better, pay more attention to the needs of others, and be present with your loved ones with less distraction. Your mindfulness can be a gift to others in your life.

You lose your edge

The myth here is that meditation involves a fuzzy state of mind, like sleeping while you're still awake. But practicing mindfulness is not about zoning out. You train yourself to pay closer attention than usual and become more focused throughout your life. Meditating can actually help you to get into "the zone" and stay there longer.



1 Understand your pain

Mental pain and anxiety are a background noise that can underlie much of what we do. Here's a chance to see firsthand what's causing it.



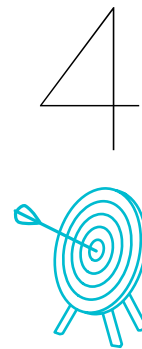
2 Lower stress

There's lots of evidence these days that excess stress causes many illnesses and makes other illnesses worse. Mindfulness decreases stress.



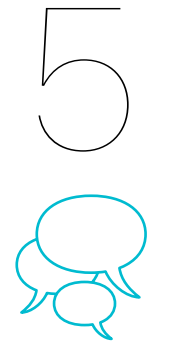
3 Connect better

Ever find yourself staring blankly at a friend, lover, child, and you've no idea what they're saying? Mindfulness helps you give them your full attention.



4 Improve focus

It can be frustrating to have our mind stray off what we're doing and be pulled in six directions. Meditation hones our innate ability to focus.



5 Reduce brain chatter

The nattering, chattering voice in our head seems never to leave us alone. Isn't it time we gave it a little break?



We're told to 'just be in the present moment,' but how do we do that? Mindfulness is a tool, a technique, that teaches us how to actually do it."

Diana Winston, Director of Mindfulness Education, UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center

JASON LEE

Meditation: Yes you can

Practicing meditation doesn't involve a whole new set of skills. The reason it works so well is because it enhances the life skills we already have.

By Sharon Salzberg

The most common response

I hear these days when I tell someone I teach meditation is: “I’m so stressed out. I could really use some of that.” I am also amused to hear fairly often, “My friend should really meet you!” I’m happy to see that meditation is known more and more as something that could be directly helpful in our day-to-day lives. Anywhere stress plays a role in our problems, meditation can have a potential role in its relief.

Meditation practice need not be tied to any belief system. The only necessary belief is not a dogmatic one, but one that says each of us has the capacity to understand ourselves more fully, and to care more deeply both for ourselves and for others. Its methods work to free us of habitual reactions that cause us great unhappiness, such as harsh self-judgment, and to develop wisdom and love. Meditation gives anybody who pursues it an opportunity to look within for a sense of abundance, depth, and connection to life.

Rather than an ornate, arcane set of instructions, basic meditation consists of practical tools to deepen three core qualities: concentration, mindfulness, and compassion. →

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ADRIAN JOHNSON



1

Concentration

Concentration is the art of gathering all that energy, that stormy, scattered attention, and settling, centering.

Concentration steadies and focuses our attention so that we can let go of unhealthy inner distractions—regrets about the past, worries about the future, addictions—and keep from being seduced by outer ones. Distraction wastes our energy, but concentration restores it.

We often experience our attention scattering to the four winds. We sit down to think something through or work through a dilemma, and before we know it, we're gone. We're lost in thoughts of the past, often about something we now regret: "I should have said that more skillfully." "I should have been less timid and spoken up." "I should have been wiser and shut up." We aren't thinking things through to find

a means to make amends. Instead, we're just lost.

Or our distractedness propels us into anxiety-filled projections about the future. Imagine you are sitting in an airplane at one of the New York City airports. Suddenly you start thinking, "Oh no, I think this plane might leave late. I'm sure it will be late. Now I'm going to miss my connection. What will that mean? That means I'm going to arrive in Portland, Oregon, after midnight. There won't be any cabs! What's going to happen to me?" It's as though Portland were famous for having people vanish if they land after midnight!

Without concentration, our minds spin off into the future in a way that isn't like skillful planning but more like exhausting rumination. When I see my own mind beginning that arc of anxiety, I have a saying I use to help restore me to balance: "Something will happen." There will be a bus. I'll spend the night in the airport. Something will happen. I can't figure it all out right now.

Concentration is the art of gathering all of that energy, that stormy, scattered attention, and settling, centering. Someone came up to talk to me recently when I was teaching, protesting my use of the word concentration. He said it reminded him of repression, as if he were squeezing his attention onto

something, resisting and resenting anything else that came up to pull his attention away. I asked him if steadying or settling would be good replacements; he happily accepted them. That's what concentration actually means. It's not a forced, tense, strained effort. It's letting things settle on what is at hand.

PRACTICE

Sharpen your focus

Try this 5-minute exercise to explore the power of a focused mind.

Take a relaxed seated position. Locate something in your field of vision and start putting your focus on it. As thoughts carry you away—including thoughts about the object itself—return to placing your bare attention on it. Now, let your gaze be looser. Still take in the object but also a little more of what's around it. Then tighten your focus on the object again. Notice the power you have to choose what to center your attention on.

2

Mindfulness

Mindfulness refines our attention so that we can connect more fully and directly with whatever life brings. So many times our perception of what is happening is distorted by bias, habits, fears, or desires.

Mindfulness helps us see through these and be much more aware of what actually is.

Imagine you're on your way to a party when you run into a friend who mentions an earlier meeting he had with your new colleague. He says, "That person is so boring!" Once at the party, who do you find yourself stuck talking to but that new colleague! Because of your friend's comment (not even your own perception), you end up not really listening carefully to them or looking fully at them. More likely you are thinking about the next 15 emails you need to send or fretting as you gaze about the room and see so many people you'd rather be talking to. Everything this person is saying increases your ire and frustration.

But if you realize what's going on, it might be that you drop the filter of your friend's comment and

determine to find out for yourself, from your own direct experience, what you think of your new colleague. You listen, you observe, you are open-minded, interested. By the end of the evening you might decide, "I concur. I find that person really boring." But perhaps not; life also provides many surprises. What's important is that we're not merely guided by what we've been told, by the beliefs of others, by dogma or prejudice or assumption. Instead, we shape our impression with as clear and open a perception as possible.

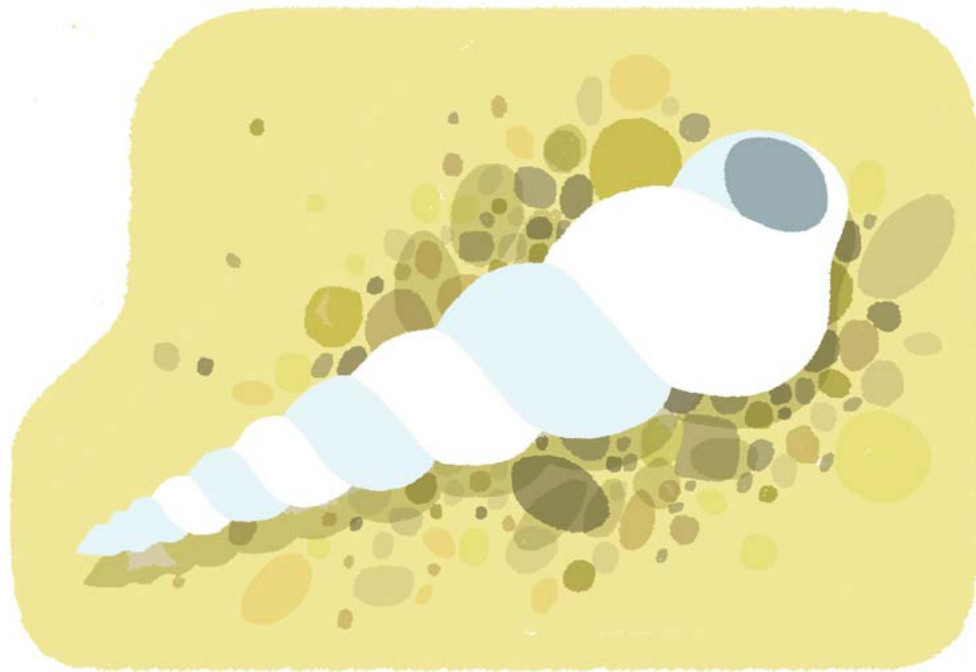
Mindfulness does not depend on what is happening, but is about how we relate to what is happening. That's why we say that mindfulness can go anywhere. We can be mindful of joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, beautiful music and a screech. Mindfulness doesn't mean these all flatten out and become one big blob, without distinction or intensity or flavor or texture. Rather, it means that old habitual ways of relating—perhaps holding on fiercely to pleasure, so that, ironically, we are actually enjoying it less; or resenting and pushing away pain, so that, sadly, we suffer a lot more; or numbing out, disconnecting from ordinary, not-very-exciting experiences, so that we're half in a dream a lot of the time. All of these limiting, self-defeating reactions don't have to be there.

We can easily misunderstand mindfulness and think of it as passive, complacent, even a bit dull. I was teaching somewhere recently and began the formal meditation instruction, as I often do, with the

suggestion to simply sit in a relaxed way and listen to the sounds in the room. Someone raised his hand right away and asked, "If I hear the sound of the smoke alarm, should I just sit here 'mindfully,' knowing I'm hearing the smoke alarm go off, or should I get up and leave?" I responded, "I'd 'mindfully' get up and leave!"

I understood his question. When we hear phrases commonly used to describe mindfulness, like "just be with what is," "accept the present moment," "don't get lost in judgment," it can sound pretty inert. But the actual experience of mindfulness is of vibrant, alive, open space where creative responses to situations have room to arise, precisely because we're not stuck in the well-worn grooves of the same old habitual reactions. In mindfulness, we don't lose discernment and intelligence. These qualities, in fact, become more acute as stale preconceptions and automatic, rigid responses no longer rule the day.

Mindfulness does not depend on what is happening, but is about how we relate to what is happening.



3

Compassion

Compassion opens our attention and makes it more inclusive, transforming the way we view ourselves and the world. Instead of being so caught up in the constructs of “self” and “other” and “us” and “them” that we tend to see the world through, we see things much more in terms of connection to all. This fundamental transformation from alienation begins with more kindness to ourselves.

Even in techniques that don’t particularly emphasize kindness or compassion, these qualities are inevitably being developed in meditation. If we go back and look at the foundational exercise I described, developing concentration, we find that it is often done by choosing an object such as the feeling of the in-and-out breath, then settling our attention on it. What we discover at first, sometimes to our shock, is that it usually isn’t 800 breaths before our minds wander. More commonly, it is one breath, maybe two or three, then we are lost. Maybe very lost in a fantasy or memory.

Then comes the moment we realize we’ve been distracted. Our common response is to feel that we’ve failed, to rail against ourselves. What we practice, though, is letting go gently rather than harshly and returning to the breath or object of concentration

with kindness and compassion for ourselves. Thus, the qualities of compassion and kindness deepen even if we don’t give voice to those words.

And what we do for ourselves, we can also begin to do toward others. A few years ago I was on my way to Tucson, but my plans were challenged when I found myself in an airplane sitting on a runway for four-and-a-half hours at La Guardia Airport. Looking back on it, I sometimes refer jokingly to those hours as “the breakdown of civilization.” It was hot, and got hotter. After a point, people starting yelling, “Let me off this plane!” The pilot resorted to getting on the PA system and saying sternly, “No one is getting off this plane.”

I wasn’t feeling all that chipper myself. I couldn’t get in touch with the people in Tucson who were supposed to pick me up at the airport, and I

If we can see the good within ourselves, kindness begins to flow.

was concerned about them. I had an apartment to go to in New York City and kept thinking, to no avail, “I can just go back there and try again tomorrow.” I was hot. I felt pummeled by the people shouting around me.

Then I recalled an image that a good friend of mine, Bob Thurman, author of *Infinite Life: Seven Virtues for Living Well*, uses to describe the flow of kindness and compassion that comes from seeing the world more truthfully. He says, “Imagine you are on the New York City subway, and

these Martians come and zap the subway car so that those of you in the car are going to be together...forever.” What do we do? Well, if someone is hungry, we feed them. And if someone is freaking out, we try to calm them down. We might not like everybody or approve of them, but we are going to be together forever. So we need to respond with the wisdom of how interrelated our lives are—and will remain.

Sitting on that airplane, I recalled my friend’s story. I looked around the cabin and thought, “Maybe these are my people.” I saw my worldview shift from “me” and “them” to “we.” The claustrophobia eased.

In terms of meditative understanding (in contrast to our usual way of thinking, which might regard these qualities as gifts we can do nothing to cultivate or as immediate emotional reactions we enjoy but can’t stabilize), kindness and compassion are indeed skills we develop. Not in the sense of forcing ourselves to feel, or pretend to feel, an emotion that is not there. Instead, if we learn to pay attention in a different, more open way—seeing the good within ourselves instead of fixating on what we don’t like, noticing those we usually ignore, letting go of categories and assumptions when we relate to others—we are creating the conditions for kindness and compassion to flow.

We practice meditation in the end not to become great meditators but to have a different life. As we deepen the skills of concentration, mindfulness, and compassion, we find we have less stress, more fulfillment, more insight, and vastly more happiness. We transform our lives. ●

Does why you meditate matter?

Don't let meditation become just one more thing on your to-do list. Reflecting on your intention gives you a reason to continue—and brings life, energy, and direction to your practice.

By Shauna Shapiro

Sebene
Selassie,
meditation
teacher
and former
executive
director
of the New
York Insight
Meditation
Center



Often when we begin a meditation practice, the focus is on the *how*: How do I practice? What are the instructions? The *why* is often passed over. But knowing the *why* behind what we are doing is just as important as understanding the *how*.

Traditionally, the study of meditation begins with explicit reflection on one's intention and motivation for beginning a practice. The process of deeply examining and developing our intentions can transform the practice, giving it life, energy, and direction. As Jon Kabat-Zinn, the founder of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, puts it, "Your intentions set the stage for what is possible. They remind you moment to moment of why you are practicing...I used to think meditation practice was so powerful...that as long as you did it at all, you would see growth and change. But time has taught me that some kind of personal vision is also necessary."

Intention helps motivate you

Our intention creates the context and motivation that fuels our desire to practice meditation. It supports us in facing the anxieties, confusions, and doubts that often accompany meditation. We remind ourselves why we are practicing, and this gives us the courage, desire, and energy to continue.

Intention is not a static, fixed quality, but a continually evolving exploration. The insights gained during practice inform our intentions, and these new intentions bring new motivation and clarity to our practice. As a clinical psychologist who uses meditation in my practice, when I begin work with my clients, I always ask, "Why are you here? Why do you want to learn to meditate?" This is a

Intention supports us in facing many of the challenges of meditation, such as anxiety, confusion, and doubt.

question we return to again and again, because the clients' intentions change as a result of what they discover through therapy.

For example, one of my patients, a divorced father with a young son, began meditating to decrease his anxiety and panic attacks. His intention was clear: "I hope this practice will reduce my anxiety." Before sitting, he reminded himself: "I'm practicing so I can become less anxious." As he continued to practice for some months, he

noticed his relationship to anxiety beginning to shift. He still felt the sensations in his body of fear, tension, and worry. He still noticed the anxiety about the future, and yet he was able to see all this clearly, with some objectivity and, in certain moments, even equanimity.

As his practice continued, he began to see the way his mind reacted and created stories. He realized the many ways he experienced suffering and contributed to the suffering of others due to these unexamined reflexive processes of mind. In one session, out of the blue, a wellspring of compassion arose for his six-year-old son. He saw how confused and afraid his son felt because of his parents' divorce and understood the origin of his son's acting out. My patient realized meditation was helping him become a better father, and his motivation to practice deepened. His intention expanded to include becoming a more compassionate father.

Note, though, that intention is not about starting a treadmill of self-improvement. Our intention is simply a guide, connecting us with what we most cherish and reminding us of the direction we want to take. We must be careful to not make meditation practice one more way to beat ourselves up when we do not meet our "goals."

Once an intention is set, let it go

Paulo Coelho uses an apt metaphor: shooting an arrow. "The arrow is a projection of the intention into space." Once it's shot, the archer can do nothing but observe the arrow's flight with ease and calm, then let it go. Once an intention is set, we can let it go and rest into the practice itself. Intention will carry us as we travel the vast space in meditation practice between here and there.

Our intention connects us to what is of greatest value and importance in our life. It can also help connect us to something larger than ourselves, expanding beyond our personal desires and recognizing the possibility of meditating for the benefit of all beings.

At the deepest level, intention does not demand spiritual beliefs or ideology; it is simply a reflection on why we are practicing. Intention is not about getting somewhere, but about recognizing the direction we want to head. As meditation teacher Jack Kornfield says, "Intention is not a destination; it is a direction." ●

PRACTICE

Connect with your vision

The key in meditation is to get in touch with what you value most. When your motivation for practice is clear, it gets easier to dedicate the time you need.

1

Feel the body

Begin by feeling your body, connecting with both feet, your legs, your seat, hips, tailbone. Sensing your spine, straight and upright, relax the shoulders down and allow your awareness to travel down through both arms and to the palms of the hands and fingers. Bring the awareness into the belly, the chest, the throat, and then, resting your awareness on your face, release any tension in your jaw, eyes, forehead. Sense the whole body as you sit here. Feel the breath moving through the entire volume of the body. And from this place of connection and presence, inquire into why you are meditating. What is your hope, vision, intention?

2

Listen closely

Listen deeply. Thoughts will arise. Note them, and let them go. Listen deeper still. What feels most compelling, most true in your body? Try not to think about your intention, or to analyze or cognitively discern it. Instead, see if you can listen from a deeper place, a still abiding awareness that is always already there. Listen with your body, with your whole being.

3

Note the intention

Perhaps, for now, there is no clear answer, and your intention is simply to be present, to stay open, to be curious, allowing whatever arises to be here. Or perhaps a clear felt sense of your intention arises. Either way, hold your intention clearly in your consciousness, regardless of whether it is strong and clearly formed or amorphous and tentative.

4

Let your intention go

Silently repeat your intention, anchor it in your mind and body. And once you feel that it is clear and stable, let it go. And rest back into the body, into the awareness that is enveloping you. The intention simply guides. It is not a goal that we fixate on, but a direction that we incline our hearts and minds to follow.

Tip

Don't worry if your intention is fuzzy—you can choose to simply pay attention to whatever thoughts or sensations arise.

A woman with long, wavy blonde hair is shown in profile, facing right. She has her eyes closed and a serene expression, suggesting she is meditating. She is wearing a dark grey, textured coat and a thick, light-colored knitted scarf. Her hair is blowing in the wind. The background is a soft-focus view of a coastline with a green hill and the ocean under a bright sky.

start
your
practice
here

how to meditate

DOUGAL WATERS/GETTY IMAGES

Meditation 101

The path to a regular mindfulness practice begins with a few small steps. Here's how to get started.

W

Wanting to start a meditation practice is one thing, but actually doing it can be daunting. How do you carve out the time? Where should you practice, and for how long? What if you're someone who just can't meditate?

Fear not. In this section, we've gathered material to guide you step by step through starting your practice. This is where you'll find clear instructions on how to sit, plus tips on posture, props, and more.

You'll also see that there are many ways to begin a practice. If sitting still on a cushion seems overly intimidating, you might want to try walking meditation—indoors or out, with shoes or barefoot. (See “Take a walk,” and “Walking practice variations,” pages 48-49.) You can practice yoga meditatively (pages 50-51), whether on its own or along with sitting meditation. There's even a mindfulness practice you can do lying down (“Body language,” page 52).

You'll also find reassuring guidance from experienced teachers. When you're getting started, it's natural to have a million questions about what you're doing. Some of them might feel silly or trivial. But our experts have undoubtedly heard every variety of query that might occur to you. (What if you have to pee while you're meditating? What if you get sexually aroused?)

So as you begin, it's a good idea to keep this quotation from poet Rainer Maria Rilke in mind:

*...try to love the questions themselves...
Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then
gradually, without noticing it, live along...
into the answer.*

How to do it

Mindfulness meditation practice couldn't be simpler: Take a seat and pay attention to the breath. When your attention wanders, return. By doing this, you can get to know yourself up close and personal.

Find a good spot in your home or apartment, ideally where there isn't too much clutter and you can find some quiet. Leave the lights on or sit in natural light. You can even sit outside if you like, but choose a place with little distraction.

At the outset, it helps to set an amount of time you're going to "practice" for. Otherwise, you may obsess about deciding when to stop. If you're just beginning, it can help to choose a short time, such as five or ten minutes. Eventually you can build up to twice as long, then maybe up to 45 minutes or an hour. Use a kitchen timer or the timer on your phone. Many people do a session in the morning and in the evening, or one or the other. If you feel your life is busy and you have little time,

doing some is better than doing none.

When you get a little space and time, you can do a bit more.

Take good posture (see the facing page for instructions) in a chair or on some kind of cushion on the floor. It could be a blanket and a pillow, although there are many good cushions available that will last you a lifetime of practice (see page 34). You may sit in a chair with your feet on the floor, loosely cross-legged, in lotus posture, kneeling—all are fine. Just make sure you are stable and erect. If the constraints of your body prevent you from sitting erect, find a position you can stay in for a while.

When your posture is established, feel your breath—or some say "follow" it—as wit goes out and as it goes in. (Some versions of the practice put more emphasis on the outbreath, and for the inbreath you simply leave a spacious pause.) Inevitably, your attention will leave the breath and wander to other places. Don't worry. When you get around to noticing this—in a few seconds, a minute, five minutes—just return your attention to the breath.

Don't bother judging yourself or obsessing over the content of the thoughts. Come back. You go away, you come back. That's the practice. It's often been said that it's very simple, but it's not necessarily easy. The work is to just keep doing it. Results will accrue.

Posture

6 steps to being upright and at ease

1 Take your **SEAT**. Whatever you're sitting on—a chair, a meditation cushion, a park bench—find a spot that gives you a stable, solid seat; don't perch or hang back.

2 If on a cushion on the floor, cross your **LEGS** comfortably in front of you. (If you already do some kind of seated yoga posture, go ahead.) If on a chair, it's good if the bottoms of your feet are touching the floor.

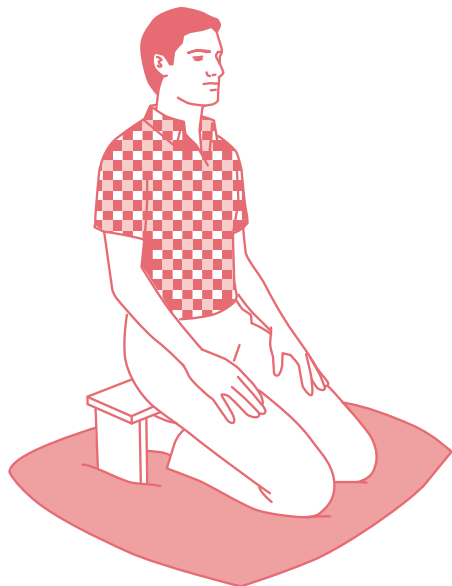
3 Straighten—but don't stiffen—your **UPPER BODY**. The spine has natural curvature. Let it be there. Your head and shoulders can comfortably rest on top of your vertebrae.

4 Place your upper arms parallel to your upper body. Then let your **HANDS** drop onto the tops of your legs. With your upper arms at your sides, your

hands will land in the right spot. Too far forward will make you hunch. Too far back will make you stiff. You're tuning the strings of your body—not too tight, not too loose.

5 Drop your chin a little and let your **GAZE** fall gently downward. You may let your eyelids lower. You can lower them completely to close your eyes, but this is optional. If you choose to leave your eyes open, simply let what appears before your eyes be there without focusing on it.

6 Be there for a few moments. **SETTLE**. Now you can follow the next breath. You've started off on the right foot—and hands, arms and everything else.



Take your seat

Comfortable meditation for every body

Images of meditation usually feature someone sitting cross-legged on a round cushion. That's one good way to practice seated meditation, but it's certainly not the only way. These days, you'll find plenty of other products that can help you maintain a comfortable sitting position for practice. Check out the props on these pages for ideas. As you're getting used to meditation, you might also experiment with everyday items like a rolled-up towel or a folded blanket to add support where you need it.

Support

Before you pick your cushion or bench, you may want to choose a *zabuton*, a floor mat that relieves pressures in the lower body and helps delineate your personal sitting area. Also available are smaller cushions and bolsters to help you maintain your posture with less physical stress. Eco-friendly organic versions are available, too.



Rectangular

This simple block, or *gomden*, is one option for comfortable cross-legged sitting. Offered in various heights and degrees of firmness, it's usually stuffed with foam, though some are filled with buckwheat hulls. It's a good choice for big and tall people, and those who find a zafu or bench restrictive.



Round

The classic meditation cushion, the *zafu*, is usually filled with buckwheat hulls or kapok, a firm natural fiber that will conform to your body over time. For cross-legged postures, sit with your bottom on its forward third. Alternately, you can place the zafu on its side, between your legs, and sit in a kneeling posture.



Bench

If typical zafu postures are a problem, a *seiza* bench could be the solution, allowing you to sit in a more relaxed cross-legged or kneeling position. They're available with folding legs in different heights, with or without a cushion, and some are made entirely from recycled materials.



Inflatable

They're ideal for traveling meditators—just deflate to fit inside any bag. But even if you're going no farther than a corner of your home, you may want to consider one of these. Hint: only blow it up to about half full; this allows the cushion to expand under your legs when you sit, minimizing torque and knee pain.



Chair

Meditating in a chair is definitely *not* cheating. It's fine. But make sure you resist the urge to rely too much on the chair's back, unless you really need to. Doing so can cause you to let your spine go soft, making your breathing less open and inviting distraction and discomfort. Make sure you keep your feet flat on the floor.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARVIN MOORE. CUSHIONS AND BENCHES COURTESY OF DHARMACRAFTS (DHARMACRAFTS.COM) AND SAVADHI CUSHIONS (SAVADHICUSHIONS.COM)



Am I doing this right?

Answers to the top 9 questions
that everyone asks about meditation

By Tara Healey, Jonathan Roberts, and Steve Hickman

1 Is there a wrong way to meditate? A right way to meditate?

People think they're messing up when they're meditating because of how busy the mind is. We get caught in the trap of thinking that meditation is supposed to be giving us a whole new magical device, like they sell on late-night television: "Get NewBrain. It's does all the thinking for you, except better!" But, nope, it's just the good ol' human nervous system and brain. So, when we find that meditation acquaints us further with our same old brain and its same old ways, we're convinced we must be doing it wrong. We want that shiny new thing.

Getting lost in thought, noticing it, and returning to your chosen meditation object—breath, sound, body sensation, or something else—is how it's done. That's about it. If you're doing that, you're doing it right!

Yes. There are guidelines/instructions. Much like learning anything new. There are

numerous meditation techniques. Each will have its own nuances. What all mindfulness techniques share, though, is use of an anchor or support for the wandering mind. When you wake up from the trance of thought, you have a choice. You can continue to nurse the current storyline (*Days of Our Lives*, *The Edge of Night*, *The Young and the Restless*, *The Old and the Restless*, whatever melodrama you choose), or you can let it move on, and begin again. The instruction is to begin again, and again, and again. Watch the mind's tendency to milk a thought for all it's worth, to cling to it for dear life. Especially if it is enjoyable! If it's not enjoyable, maybe you'll be watching a mental gymnastics match, as the mind twists and turns. When the drama has played out—20 seconds or 20 minutes later—the beauty is you can go right back to whatever anchor you're using, and you've done nothing wrong. →

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GWENDA KACZOR

2

How will I ever find the time to do this? And how much time is the right amount?

The long-distance French swimmer Ben LeCompte once described how he managed to swim across the entire Atlantic Ocean: “I never jump into the water thinking about the entire ocean, I just cut it into small pieces. When I am in the middle of the ocean, I think about being in a pool and the pool moves with me.”

When you’re getting into meditation, it’s easy to get psyched out if you begin by imagining that a whole ocean lies between you and the goal you’ve set for yourself: reduced stress, better relationships, more focus, world peace. Try to put your goals in a mental safety deposit box and forget about them, along with the ocean of breaths that separate you from them. Instead, commit to concentrating on just the breath in front of you.

Decide how big the “pool” of breaths you want to move within should be. This will change over time and be different for everyone. It may start as five minutes a day, three times a week. Or ten minutes a day,

five times a week. While more practice is inevitably going to result in more depth, setting aside an amount of time that seems reasonable is essential to building your confidence so you don’t become frustrated, resulting in mindfulness becoming the fad toy that ends up on the shelf once it loses its newness. With greater confidence comes a greater willingness to pledge more and more minutes to practice. →



“You can begin to benefit...with your first mindful breath, in the first six seconds.”

Chade-Meng Tan, author of *Search Inside Yourself*, writing on hbr.org, the website of the *Harvard Business Review*

More questions? Not to worry.

When you’re new to meditation, it’s natural for questions to pop up often. These answers may ease your mind.

- **If I have an itch, can I scratch it?**

Yes—however, first try scratching it with your mind before using your fingers.

- **Should I breathe fast or slow or in between?**

Only worry if you’ve stopped breathing. Otherwise, you’re doing fine.

- **Should my eyes be open or closed?**

No hard-and-fast rules. Try both. If open, not too wide, and with a soft, slightly downward gaze, not focusing on anything in particular. If closed, not too hard, and not imagining anything in particular in your mind’s eye.

- **Is it possible I’m someone who just CANNOT meditate?**

When you find yourself asking that question, your meditation has officially begun. Everyone wonders that. Notice it. Escort your attention back to your object of focus. When you’re lost and questioning again, come back again. There’s no limit to the number of times you can do that. Meditating is not a race to perfection.

- **Is it better to practice in a group or by myself?**

Both are great! It’s enormously supportive to meditate with others. And, practicing on your own builds discipline.

- **What’s the best time of day to meditate?**

Whatever works. Consider your circumstances: children, pets, work. Experiment. But watch out. If you always choose the most convenient time, it will usually be tomorrow.

- **What if I get sexually (and physically) aroused by thoughts in my head?**

No big deal. Meditation stokes the imagination. In time, every thought and sensation will pop up (so to speak). And come back. Same old story. Release the thought, bring awareness and receptivity to body sensations, bring attention back to your chosen object. Repeat.

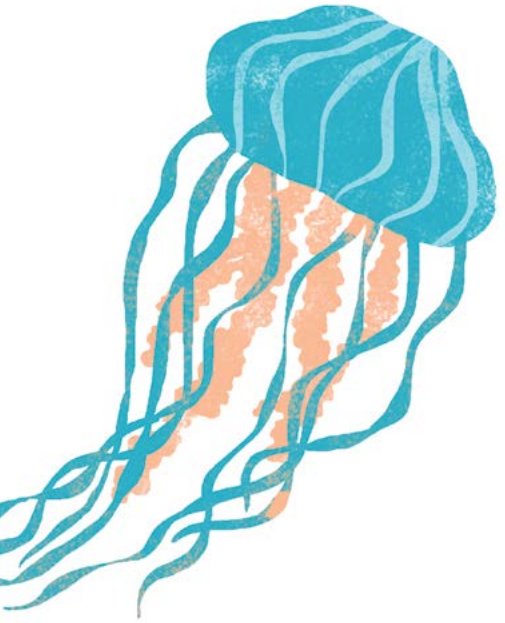
- **Do you have any tips on integrating pets into meditation practice?**

While meditating, we don’t have to fight off distractions like a knight slaying dragons. If your dog or cat comes into the room and barks and meows and brushes up against you or settles down on a part of your cushion, no big deal. Let it be. What works less well is to interrupt your session to relate to them. If that’s what’s going to happen, try to find a way to avoid their interrupting your practice.

What if I have to pee while meditating? Should I hold it, or go? Meditation experts weigh in at mindful.org/gottago

3

If I meditate a lot, am I going to lose my edge and turn into a passive, unproductive jellyfish? Ew.



Hey, let's not dump on jellyfish. They're stunningly colorful and alluring—like living lava lamps—and they're the sea's most efficient movers. They've been around for over 500 million years, which suggests they must be doing something right. By contrast, we humans have been around for 200,000 years. Maybe we have something to learn from the humble jellyfish.

Instead of becoming passive, then, let's say the “danger” of meditation is in becoming receptive—developing the habit of becoming responsive and alert to emerging situations, as opposed to reactive. You see what needs to be done and leap into it. This includes knowing when not to do something, when inaction, or attentively listening and probing, letting situations unfold, is really the best response. Mindfulness practice can strengthen our natural instinct to see when active engagement will only run us into a corner—after all, the world isn't always in need of a better mousetrap. Mindful jellyfish do not lose their ability to sting, but they less frequently get tricked into stinging motorboat rotors.

4

Can I meditate standing or lying down? I don't want my family looking at me like I'm doing some woo-woo weirdo thing.

First off, let your family know you're trying something new, why, and what it might look like. At first, you may experience a strong temptation to dodge all prying eyes. (This is natural, because what you're doing does look a lot weirder than it really is.)

Sit in a way that is comfortable and supportive. A chair is absolutely fine! Here are the basics. Sit upright with a straight-but-not-stiff spine. Relaxed and at ease yet engaged and alert. Walking, standing, and

lying down are also ways to practice, though lying down can be sleep-inducing. What matters most is the quality of awareness you bring to whatever practice you choose.

It helps if you can set up a spot within your home that will be yours for the duration of your daily practice. If you have children, maybe you can get them to help you set it up. If all else fails, give them money and send them to the movies.

5

Is meditating while doing something like gardening as good as meditating while paying attention to my breath?

Perhaps we should refine your question.

If you really mean “meditating while gardening” then you are talking about multi-tasking and not mindfulness practice. And while this might be efficient, I doubt that it will serve a useful purpose otherwise. Maybe you're thinking that gardening mindfully might instead be a great way to kill two birds with one stone, because it would save you the hassle of actually having to carve out a separate time to sit.

Well, sure, you could do that. When this sort of question comes up, I like to rely on the athletic workout analogy. Let's say you're a marathon runner. Your question might be similar to the marathon runner asking “Could

I just prepare for running marathons by running marathons?” and skip all that sweaty weightlifting and boring healthy eating? You could—but would you really want to? How do you think that would work out?

Consider instead setting aside time to sit on a cushion, pay attention for its own sake, and invite your mind to open like a morning glory and your body to fidget into the stillness of a daisy patch. Let your thoughts of fertilizer, weeds and flowers come and go. And then, when you finish your formal meditation practice and head out into your sunny garden, noticing the rich dark soil and the scents of those gorgeous flowers, you will truly reap the fruits of your practice. →



For more resources on meditation basics, go to mindful.org/gettingstarted.

6

What should I do when I start to get a lot of pain in my legs or my neck or my feet get tingly and go to sleep?

If you find yourself experiencing discomfort, squirminess, or outright pain—congratulations! You have a body!

First, evaluate. Ask: How likely is it that I will actually require medical attention as a result of these signals I'm receiving? Have my legs actually separated from my body? Are any bones visible outside the skin? Will I ever be able to play the piano again? Was I ever able to play the piano in the first place?

If the pain or discomfort is not too intense, before adjusting for comfort, see what it's like to rest within the physical sensations you find yourself experiencing. Unpack them. They may be like a drawer overloaded with stuff, so that everything inside is tangled up and bewildering. What's in there—tingling? Take it out and place it aside. Heat? Pulsing? Pressure? Take them out and place them aside, too.

See how these micro-sensations behave when they're placed neatly side by side one another in your mind's eye. Body sensations, like thoughts and emotions, have rich lives all their own but eventually get up and move along to different things. Getting to know the shapes and textures, and even personalities, you might say, of our bodily sensations is a gift that meditation gives

us. Acting upon that knowledge, we may be less inclined to grip tightly to how we wish things were, so that in the future, we can meet head on how things are—up to and including pain—with greater ease and less resistance.

If you're experiencing a lot of pain, it's a good idea to move to a more comfortable posture or simply make a minor adjustment.

Then begin again. It's inevitable that no matter how comfortable you may feel in a particular posture, pain or discomfort will set in at some point. If it's not too intense, before moving for comfort, see if you can be with the physical experience, and investigate it, as I was saying above. Let yourself hang in there with it for a while and see what happens. Does it change, get worse, get better, or something else?

And if your feet get tingly and go to sleep, it's perfectly fine to wake them up.

But once again, try being with the physical sensations for a moment or so before moving to wake them up. For most people, over time, you'll need to do this less often.



7

Should I be trying to stop my thinking and clear my brain?

You've hit on the greatest of all urban legends related to mindfulness (and one that resists repeated debunking): that the goal is to "clear the mind," as if meditation were the top-of-the-line Dyson vacuum for the brain.

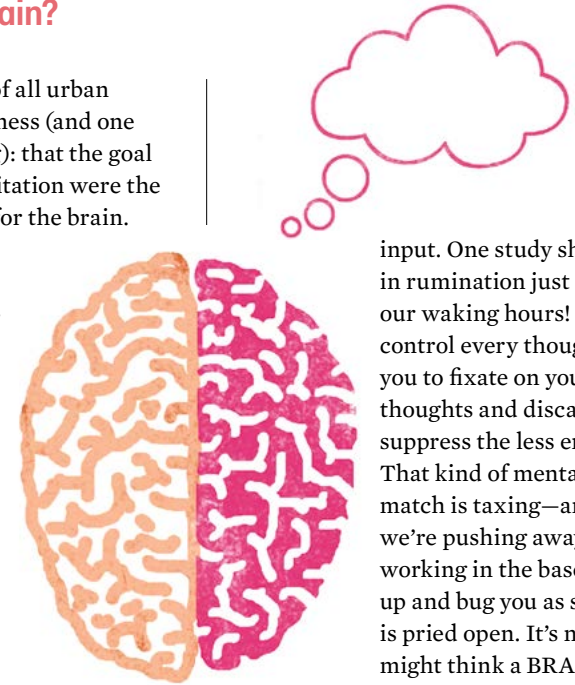
"Look," the spiffily dressed engineer with the plummy accent would say, "there's nothing whatsoever left in there, not like those *inferior* mind-cleaning devices!"

This is, though, a misconception that's completely understandable. Meditators know that trying to stop thoughts is like trying to stop a steamroller with a feather. On your mind's LinkedIn page, its expertise is listed as *thinking*.

And yet, to buy into the idea that the mind is always thinking—even when we're not aware of it—you have to admit that you're not in complete, conscious control of yourself at all times. This can be a truly frightening proposition.

Yet, one of the great insights of mindfulness is recognizing that your lack of total control over your mind's wanderings doesn't necessarily make you weaker. Face facts: Thoughts tend to happen in a torrent without our conscious

When you meditate, you realize trying to stop thoughts is like trying to stop a steamroller with a feather.



input. One study shows we are lost in rumination just shy of 50% of our waking hours! Trying to control every thought encourages you to fixate on your favorite thoughts and discard, ignore, or suppress the less enjoyable ones. That kind of mental wrestling match is taxing—and the thoughts we're pushing away are busily working in the basement to come up and bug you as soon as the door is pried open. It's no wonder we might think a **BRAIN TOTALLY CLEARED OF THOUGHTS**

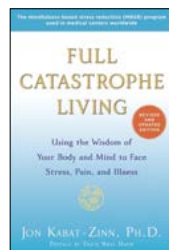
would be desirable.

In meditation, we're making a gentle effort to maintain focus on a particular object such as the breath as a support or anchor for the wandering mind. Each time the mind wanders—as it most assuredly will—as soon as you notice, you actively, kindly, disengage from the thought and return to the breath. There's no need to judge ourselves for thinking. It's all part of practice. Each time we notice we have engaged a thought and we release it and return to the breath we strengthen the muscle of concentration and focus. In this way, you gradually steady the mind, and each time you notice the thought and let it move on, you learn a little bit more about the workings of your mind, and the relentless voice in your head is slightly more tamed. →

8 I have a lot of cool thoughts. Why would I want to just let them go?

Because instructions for meditation include “letting thoughts go,” you might legitimately worry about “losing” thoughts during meditation that may otherwise have solved global warming, made recreational time travel possible, or composed the next game-changing hit single. One way to deal with this anxiety about the speeding train of genius leaving you behind is to turn toward the fear of losing that great idea. As usual, explore how it really feels instead of letting its storyline become a momentous great big deal. If it’s really important, write it down. No one will arrest you. Or, you can bend the rules altogether and write down every single thought you have during a meditation session. If you examine the list after the fact, do you imagine you’ll find that the thoughts are unlikely to ever be repeated? If they were truly important, don’t you think they might return later in the day of their own accord?

NEED
GUIDANCE?



Full Catastrophe Living

By Jon Kabat-Zinn

As you continue to practice, you’ll no doubt have new questions from time to time. For answers, we recommend you turn to this wise, accessible guide from one of the leading experts on mindfulness meditation. The book includes instructions, explanations of the benefits of mindfulness, stories of people who started practicing at midlife, and much more.

9 Should I try to log in as many weekly meditation minutes as I can? Or is it more important to pay attention to the quality when I do find the time?

Uh-oh! There’s no definitive answer. You really need both. After all, if you rush to squeeze meditation in, and just end up spacing out, what’s the point? Yet, if you wait for the perfect time, you’ll never do it.

Try this tip for balancing both elements of practice: If you can learn to have short, high-quality spurts, that may whet your appetite for longer periods of practice. ●

Sandra Oh: The joy of being mindful

For actor Sandra Oh of *Grey’s Anatomy*, meditation has become essential for easing stress and enhancing creativity.

What inspired you to start practicing mindfulness meditation?

I think, like many people, I had been thinking “I should meditate” for years. But, no surprise, shaming myself into it wasn’t doing the trick. I was looking to make a change in my life, and my dear friend who had just had a baby said meditation had really helped her during her pregnancy and delivery. Hearing that really moved me.

What do you think of meditation now that you’ve been doing it for a while?

It has become a necessary part of my life, and I make it a priority to find time to fit it in.

How do you find it benefits you?

It has helped me through some very difficult times in my life and increased the joy of living. It helps me deal with stress—and there’s plenty of that to go around. It helps me to focus, and it helps me to have creative breakthroughs. Doing meditation practice has also challenged me to become a better person, to broaden my mind and remain curious.

It’s a slow process, though, a gradual, organic process. It’s not like you sit for 20 minutes and suddenly your life is peaceful. But you can find ways to deal with life better as you learn how to



sit and just be there on the cushion with your mind and your surroundings.

Does mindfulness have any effects on your work as an actor?

Deeply. Mindfulness and creativity go hand in hand. Around 2006, I simultaneously found my acting teacher (Kim Gillingham) and started doing some meditation, and I discovered that they sort of lived together in the same space. Being present is the actor’s job. Being aware of your body, in space, and the emotions that are occurring inside, is essential. Well, quite simply, the more aware you are—of yourself, of your surroundings, of other people—the more likely you are to respond truthfully.

Get up & move

From walking around in a circle in a meditation hall to going for a walk in the park to running or yoga, mindful movement gets us out of our heads and into our bodies—and the world around us.



One of the greatest challenges in daily life is moving from Point A to Point B and remaining aware of where you are. Simple, right? But honestly, how often do you find yourself a little bit lost in the middle of rushing around? Mindful movement practices—ranging from walking meditation to running to yoga, qigong, and martial arts—can provide a good bridge between still, seated meditation and the hectic activity of daily life.

Sitting meditation can tend to draw us inward. Getting up and moving—while still maintaining meditative attention—can turn our focus more outward. It can remind us that mindfulness is not something that simply happens in a little space around our chair and all from the neck up. Moving while meditating helps us develop awareness *throughout* our body, which is why, for example, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction includes walking meditation and a series of simple yoga postures as a vital part of the program.

Maintaining even a little awareness as we move through the world can enrich our daily experience and anchor us during emotional storms. Steady practice enables us to manage increased intensity—a difficult conversation, a crisis, a challenging campaign—more skillfully. Instead of responding to highly charged situations by tensing up our body, we can learn to handle emotional situations with more ease and grace. Generations of yoga and martial arts practitioners attest to the value of gaining more mastery of how energy moves through our body.

In these pages, we begin with the most basic type of mindful movement: walking. It's the first move from still meditation to meditation-in-action. Because it's such a core practice, we present not only the details of a classic walking meditation, but also several variations you can try in different environments. After that, you'll find a series of simple yoga moves you can do along with sitting meditation. Finally, to check in with your physical self in a quieter way, there's a body-scan practice.

PRACTICE

Take a walk

The most basic form of mindful movement, walking meditation is a well-established form for bringing attention into action.

Walking is one of our greatest gifts, and when early in life we start using our legs to get around, it's cause for celebration. The very fact that walking—or whatever form of ambulation you use to get around—is so central to our lives makes it a ready focus for mindful, meditative attention.

Here is a set of instructions for a classic form of walking meditation used in formal meditation sessions. The key is to focus on the sensations of movement. When we place our attention on the foot, for example, it's not on the thought of our foot, rather the actual sensation.

The variations at the right offer ways of doing walking meditation that are more tightly or broadly focused, which makes it easier for mindful movement to spill over into our everyday habits.



1

A basic walking practice

Stand up **STRAIGHT** with your back upright but not stiff. Feel your feet touching the ground and let your weight distribute evenly.

Curl the **THUMB** of your left hand in and wrap your fingers around it (see diagram, below left) Place it just above your belly button. Wrap your right hand around it, resting your right thumb in the crevice formed between left thumb and index finger. (This creates balance and keeps your swinging arms from distracting you.)

Drop your **GAZE** slightly. This helps you to maintain focus.

Step out with your left **FOOT**. Feel it swing, then feel the heel hit the ground, and now the ball, and now the toes.

FEEL the same as you transfer your weight and the right foot comes forward.

Walk at a **STEADY** pace, slightly slower than in daily life but not too slow. When your attention wanders, bring it back to the sensations of your feet touching the ground.

Steps for making hand position for walking meditation



Stride length for basic walking meditation



JASON LEE

Walking practice variations



2

<< Very slow

In this more closely focused variation on the practice at left, be like a cat stalking its prey. Maintain a steady gaze. Inhaling, shift weight to the left foot. Exhaling, slowly advance the right one half step, heel then toes. Grip the floor. Continue.

3

Normal: urban

Meditation right in the middle of your world! At a normal pace, let your arms swing naturally, follow a set path to keep focus, and limit interaction with others. Open your senses.

4

Normal: nature

Who needs encouragement to walk in nature? We just forget to do it. Same as the urban walk, except the sensory environment is more restorative. Try it barefoot.

5

Aimless wandering

Find a field or meadow, preferably not too populated. The point here is to walk without a fixed destination. You may stop from time to time to take in something that catches your eye or ear or nose or skin.

6

Wheelchair >>

If you use a cane, walker, or wheelchair to get around, simply shift your full attention to the sensations of movement: the grip of your hands, the movement of your arms, the feeling of being propelled.



PRACTICE

Mindful
yoga

Here's a series of simple postures and movements you can use as part of a sitting meditation session—or anytime. *By Cyndi Lee*

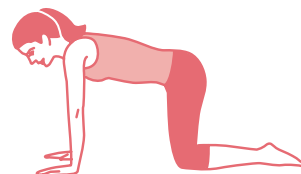
This sequence emphasizes balance: on your hands, hands and knees, and standing on one leg, as well as when moving the spine in all directions—forward, backward, and sideways. It's great to do whenever you want to cultivate balance and presence in your body/mind: first thing in the morning or last thing before going to bed or anytime in between. It takes about five minutes, but feel free to repeat the entire sequence or any section as much as you like.

As you move through it, notice when your mind strays, and return to the sensation of the breath or any other physical sensation, such as stretching, quivering, or your muscles tiring. That's how you'll know when you need to push and when to back off.

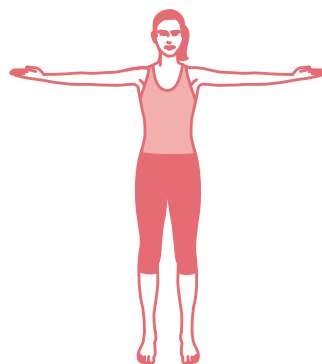
It's particularly useful to do this sequence before meditation practice as it will create both strength, flexibility, and stamina that will support the physical effort that's required for sitting.



1 HAND WALKING MEDITATION Place right hand on the floor. Then, left hand on the floor. Walk the right hand a little bit forward. Then the left hand.



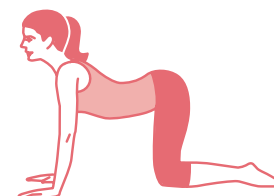
2 FINDING BALANCE ON ALL FOURS Take your time; move forward and notice how your weight shifts to your hands. Shift weight to the right hand and right knee, then the left, forward and back. Slowly settle into equal weight on all fours.



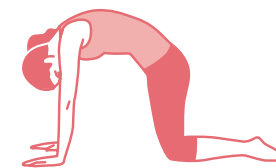
6 SHOULDER ROTATIONS Extend your arms out to the side. Inhale and roll your arms with palms facing up. Exhale and roll arms in, palms back. Begin the action from the shoulders and let your pinky fingers move last.



7 SIDE BENDS Inhale arms up. Exhale, bend to the right. Inhale up and exhale as you bend to the left. Pay attention to the movements from side to side, as well as the position of your head.



3 COW POSE On an inhaling breath, lift up your seat and and your chest, while you simultaneously drop your spine toward the earth and into your belly.



4 CAT POSE Exhale, reversing this curve. Lift your waist; drop your head and tail.
Repeat 3 & 4, moving with the breath, 5-10 times. Go slowly and try to feel every part of your spine as it curves one way and rounds the other way.



5 STANDING UP Step back your right hand, then step back your left hand, and then shift onto your feet and stand up. As always, as your attention strays come back to attending to the physical sensations.



8 CHAIR POSE Inhale arms up and bend your knees into a chair pose—two movements at the same time!
Is your mind still in your body? In the room? Gently let it come back.



9 LEG BENDS As you exhale, stand up on your left leg, with your right leg bent. Return to chair pose and repeat on the other side. Go right and then left, 5-10 times.



10 STAND QUIETLY Remain still, keeping your eyes open. Notice what you are seeing. Ground yourself in your environment. Feel your feet on the floor and observe your breath moving.

→ You can repeat this entire sequence. Feel free to do it as often as you like.

PRACTICE

Body language

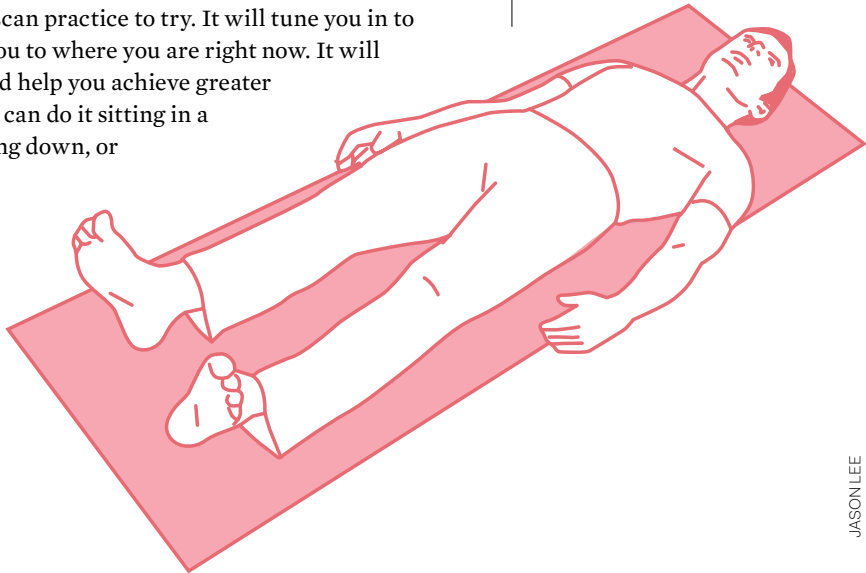
Mindfulness isn't all about the mind. Listen to what your body can teach you with this simple body-scan practice. *By Susan Bauer-Wu*

When was the last time you noticed how your body was feeling? Not just when you have a headache or you're tired or you have heartburn after that spicy taco you ate for lunch. But just noticing how your body is feeling right now, while you're sitting or standing or lying down. How about noticing how your body feels while you're sitting in an important meeting or walking down the street or playing with your children?

In our busy, high-tech, low-touch lives, it's easy to operate detached from our own bodies. They too easily become vessels we feed, water, and rest so they can continue to cart around our brains. We don't pay attention to the information our bodies are sending us or the effect that forces such as stress are having—until real health problems set in.

Let's take a small and simple step in the direction of paying our body the attention it is due. Consider spending just a few minutes—every day, if you can—to notice your own physicality. Not to judge your body or worry about it or push it harder at the gym, but to *be* in it.

Here's an easy body-scan practice to try. It will tune you in to your body and anchor you to where you are right now. It will heighten your senses and help you achieve greater levels of relaxation. You can do it sitting in a chair or on the floor, lying down, or standing up.



JASON LEE

1

Settle yourself into a comfortable position, so your body feels supported and relaxed.

2

Close your eyes if you wish or leave them open with a soft gaze, not focusing on anything in particular.

3

Rest for a few moments, paying attention to the natural rhythm of your breathing.

4

Once your body and mind are settled, bring awareness to your body as a whole. Be aware of your body resting and being supported by the chair, mattress, or floor.

5

Begin to focus your attention on different parts of your body. You can spotlight one particular area or go through a sequence like this: toes, feet (sole, heel, top of foot), through the legs, pelvis, abdomen, lower back, upper back, chest, arms down to the fingers, shoulders, neck, different parts of the face, and head.

6

For each part of the body, linger for a few moments and notice the different sensations as you focus.

7

The moment you notice that your mind has wandered, return your attention to the part of the body you last remember.

Tip

If you fall asleep during this body-scan practice, that's OK. When you realize you've been nodding off, take a deep breath to help you reawaken and perhaps reposition your body (which will also help wake it up). When you're ready, return your attention to the part of the body you last remember focusing on.



make
mindfulness
a habit

bring it
into your
life

SHELLY PERRY/STOCKSY

Seeds for life

The results of a mindfulness practice may turn up in many places, including your workplace, your home, your relationships, and your body.

Mindfulness isn't just about what happens when you're sitting on a cushion or a chair, practicing meditation. It's something you can benefit from, and actively practice, in every part of your life.

Mindfulness can help you slow down to get more done at work, ease stress, build better relationships, and be happier and healthier every day.

As you spend time practicing—whether by working with awareness of your breathing, or using other techniques—you'll probably find yourself feeling kinder, calmer, and more patient. These shifts in your experience are likely to generate changes in other parts of your life.

It's a bit like when you used to blow dandelion seed heads when you were a kid. You take a deep breath, blow the seeds, and watch as they scatter and take root in many different places.

In this section, you'll find practical tools and tips for using mindfulness to enhance many aspects of your everyday experience. There are specific practices you can do at work; while spending time with your loved ones; and during activities like driving, exercising, and eating. You'll also find out more about how to use mindfulness techniques to handle difficult emotions like anger and jealousy.

In truth, any activity that you practice with intention and awareness can be a form of—or an opportunity for—mindfulness.

You'll also discover that having a mindful life goes beyond coping better with challenges. Mindfulness can also help you become more playful, maximize your enjoyment of a delicious meal on a sunny summer afternoon, then wind down for a relaxing night's sleep. What's not to like?

Take a mindful moment: 5 simple practices for daily life

Your day-to-day activities offer ample opportunities to call up mindfulness in any moment. These practices will breathe space into your daily routines.

How often have you bolted your breakfast without even noticing how it tasted? Or rushed out the door and into your day without even thinking about how you'd like it to go? Maybe you often react automatically and impatiently during your commute or while driving your kids to school. In other words, you find yourself acting in ways you never intended.

You don't have to be stuck in these patterns. Pausing to practice mindfulness for just a few minutes at different times during your day can help your days be better, more in line with how you'd like them to be. The practices on the following pages offer lots of opportunities for moments of ease.

1 Wake up with awareness By Parneet Pal

Intention refers to the underlying motivation for everything we think, say, or do. From the brain's perspective, when we act in unintended ways, there's a disconnect between the faster, unconscious impulses of the lower brain centers and the slower, conscious, wiser abilities of the higher centers like the prefrontal cortex.

Given that the unconscious brain is in charge of most of our decision-making and behaviors, this practice can help you align your conscious thinking with a primal emotional drive that the lower centers care about. Beyond safety, these include motivations like reward, connection, purpose, and core values.

Setting a daily intention—keeping those primal motivations in mind—helps you to strengthen this connection between the lower and higher centers. Doing so can change your entire day, making it more likely that your words, actions and responses—especially during moments of difficulty—will be more mindful and compassionate.

This practice is best done first thing in the morning, before checking phones or email.

1 ON WAKING, SIT ON YOUR BED OR A CHAIR IN A RELAXED POSTURE. With spine straight, but not rigid, close your eyes. Connect with the sensations of your body.

2 TAKE THREE LONG, DEEP, BREATHS—breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth. Then let your breath settle into its own rhythm, as you simply follow it in and out, noticing the rise and fall of your chest and belly as you breathe.

3 ASK: "WHAT IS MY INTENTION FOR TODAY?" Use these prompts to discover your response. Ask yourself:

- How might I show up today to have the best impact?
- What quality of mind do I want to strengthen and develop?
- What do I need to do to take better care of myself?
- During difficult moments, how might I be more compassionate to others and to myself?
- How might I feel more connected and fulfilled?

4 SET YOUR INTENTION FOR THE DAY. For example, "Today, I will be kind to myself, be patient with others, give generously, stay grounded, persevere; have fun, eat well," or anything else you feel is important.

5 THROUGHOUT THE DAY, CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF. Pause, take a breath, and revisit your intention. Notice, as you become more conscious of your intentions, how the quality of your communications, relationships, and mood shifts.

2 Enjoy every mouthful *By Carley Hauck*

It's easy enough to reduce eating to a sensation of bite, chew, and swallow. Yet eating is one of the most pleasurable experiences we engage in as human beings, and doing it mindfully can turn eating into a far richer experience, satisfying not just the need for nutrition, but more subtle senses and needs. When we bring our full attention to our bodies and what we are truly hungry for, we can nourish all our hungers. Try this:

1 BREATHE BEFORE EATING. We often move from one task right to the other without pausing or taking a breath. By pausing before eating, we slow down and allow for a more calm transition to our meals. Before you start your next meal, bring your attention inward by closing your eyes, and begin to breathe slowly in and out of your belly for 8 to 10 deep breaths.

2 LISTEN TO YOUR BODY. After breathing, bring your awareness to the physical sensations in your belly. On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being that you don't feel any physical sensation of hunger and 10 being that you feel very hungry, ask yourself, "How hungry am I?" What physical sensations tell you that you are hungry or not hungry (emptiness in stomach, shakiness, no desire to eat, stomach growling, etc.)? Try not to think about when you last ate or what time it is, and really listen to your body, not your thoughts.



3 EAT ACCORDING TO YOUR HUNGER. Now that you're more in touch with how hungry you are, you can more mindfully choose what, when, and how much to eat. This simple practice can help you tune in to your real needs.

4 PRACTICE PEACEFUL EATING. At your next meal, slow down and continue to breathe deeply as you eat. It's not easy to digest or savor your food if you aren't relaxed.

5 DON'T LOVE IT? DON'T EAT IT. Take your first three bites mindfully, experiencing the taste and textures of the food. Make a mindful choice about what to eat based on what you really enjoy.

PLAINPICTURE/LUBITZ + DORNER

3 Give your fast brain a break *By Kyra Bobinet*

It's estimated that 95% of our behavior runs on autopilot—something I call “fast brain.” That's because neural networks underlie all of our habits, reducing our millions of sensory inputs per second into manageable shortcuts so we can function in this crazy world. These default brain signals are like signaling super-highways, so efficient that they often cause us to relapse into old behaviors before we remember what we meant to do instead.

Mindfulness is the exact opposite of these processes; it's slow brain. It's executive control rather than autopilot, and enables intentional actions, willpower, and decisions. But that takes some practice. The more we activate the slow brain, the stronger it gets. Every time we do something deliberate and new, we stimulate neuroplasticity, activating our grey matter, which is full of newly sprouted neurons that have not yet been groomed for the fast brain.

But here's the problem. While my slow brain knows what is best for me, my fast brain is causing me to shortcut my way through life. So how can we trigger ourselves to be mindful when we need it most? This is where the notion of “behavior design” comes in. It's a way to put your slow brain in the driver's seat. There are two ways to do that—first, slowing down the fast brain by putting obstacles in its way, and second, removing obstacles in the path of the slow brain, so it can gain control.

Shifting the balance to give your slow brain more power takes some work, though. Here are some ways to get started.

1 TRIP OVER WHAT YOU WANT TO DO. If you intend to do some yoga or to meditate, put your yoga mat or your meditation cushion in the middle of your floor so you can't miss it as you walk by.

2 REFRESH YOUR TRIGGERS REGULARLY. Say you decide to use sticky notes to remind yourself of a new intention. That might work for about a week, but then your fast brain and old habits take over again. Try writing new notes to yourself; add variety or make them funny. That way they'll stick with you longer.

3 CREATE NEW PATTERNS. You could try a series of “If this, then that” messages to create easy reminders to shift into slow brain. For instance, you might come up with, “If office door, then deep breath,” as a way to shift into mindfulness as you are about to start your workday. Or, “If phone rings, take a breath before answering.” Each intentional action to shift into mindfulness will strengthen your slow brain.



PLAINPICTURE/WIRA

4

Activate your mind & muscles By Cara Bradley

Riding a bike, lifting weights, sweating it out on a treadmill—what do these exercises have in common? Each can be a mindfulness practice. Instead of simply working out to burn calories or master a skill, you can move in a way that shifts you from feeling busy and distracted to feeling strong and capable.

Ready? The following steps, good for any activity, will help you synchronize body, mind, and nervous system. As you do, you'll strengthen your ability to bring all your energy to the task at hand.

1 BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR AIM. As you tie your laces or pull on your gardening gloves, bring purpose to your activity by consciously envisioning how you want to guide your session. As you climb on your bike you might say, "I am going to breathe deeply and notice the sensation of the breeze and the sun." As you enter the pool, you might say, "I'm going to pay attention to each stroke, and the sound and feel of the water surrounding me."

2 WARM UP (5 minutes). Try any simple moves—jumping jacks, stretching—and concentrate on matching the rhythm of your breath to your movement. By moving rhythmically, your brain activity, heart rate, and nervous system begin to align and stabilize.

3 SETTLE INTO A RHYTHM (10 to 15 minutes). Pick up the intensity, but continue to coordinate

your breath and movement. If you have trouble doing this, then simply focus on your breathing for a few minutes. Don't worry—eventually you'll find your groove.

4 CHALLENGE YOURSELF (10 to 15 minutes). Try faster speed, more repetitions, or heavier weights, depending on what you are doing. Notice how alert and alive you feel when pushing yourself.

5 COOL DOWN (5 minutes). Steadily slow down your pace until you come to a standstill. Notice the way your body feels. Drink in your surroundings.

6 REST (5 minutes). Quietly recognize the symphony of sensations flowing in and around you. Practice naming what you feel and sense. Chances are you'll feel awake and alive from head to toe.

JACOB LUND/STOCKSY

5

Drive yourself calm, not crazy By Elisha Goldstein

There's nothing like heavy traffic and impatient drivers to trigger the "fight or flight" response. That's why road rage erupts and stress levels soar, while reason is overrun. The worse the traffic, the worse the stress. Los Angeles, where I live, has some of the worst traffic around, and some of the most unserene drivers. Emotions run high, tempers flare, tires squeal.

But it doesn't have to be like that. In fact, the snarliest traffic jam can provide an excellent opportunity to build your mindfulness muscle, increase your sense of connection to others, and restore some balance and perspective.

Here are the steps to a simple behind-the-wheel practice I've been doing for a while. I've found it can work wonders.

1 FIRST, TAKE A DEEP BREATH. This simple, yet profound advice helps bring more oxygen into your body and widens the space between the stimulus of the traffic and your heightened stress reaction. In this space lies perspective and choice.

2 ASK YOURSELF WHAT YOU NEED. It may be in that moment that you need to feel safe, at ease, or you just need some relief. Understanding what you need will bring balance.

3 GIVE YOURSELF WHAT YOU NEED. If ease is what you need, you can scan your body for any tension (not a bad thing to do while driving in any case) and adjust your body as needed. You can sprinkle in some phrases of compassion for yourself, such as, "May I be at ease, may I feel safe, may I be happy."

4 LOOK AROUND AND RECOGNIZE THAT ALL THE OTHER DRIVERS ARE JUST LIKE YOU. Everyone on the road wants the same thing you do—to feel safe, have a sense of ease,

and to be happy. Chances are you'll see a number of fellow drivers who look a bit agitated, but you might also catch that one who is singing or actually smiling, and this will dissipate some of your own stress immediately. You can apply to all of them what you just offered to yourself, saying, "May you be at ease, may you feel safe, may you be happy."

5 TAKE ANOTHER DEEP BREATH. In 15 seconds or less, you can turn around your mood by applying these simple tips. When you feel the frustration of traffic rising, choose whatever you need to work on, and offer that condition to others. If you need to feel safe, say, "May I be safe, may you be safe, may we all be safe." Breathe in, breathe out; you've sowed a seed of happiness. ●

PLAINPICTURE/JOHNER/PETER CARLSSON

PRACTICE

Find your balance

This practice can connect you with stability amid change. To get ready, sit comfortably, close your eyes, and take a few deep breaths.

By Stefanie and Elisha Goldstein

1

Be the mountain

Imagine yourself as a mountain, with the forest covering the mountain and all its foliage. Do your best to get in touch with this visualization.

2

Feel the changes

Experience the seasons unfolding. The fall brings beautiful colors; the winter, snow and storms. In spring, flowers emerge, while summer brings heat and potentially fire.

3

Connect with stability

Now ask yourself, “Has the mountain itself actually changed?” Feel how the mountain remains the same: solid and stable.

4

Breathe and balance

Say to yourself, “Breathing in, I imagine myself as the mountain; breathing out, I am grounded and solid.” Feel the natural balance that is there.



“There is nothing so stable as change”

Bob Dylan

Friends help you see what you can't

As executive director of the New York Insight Meditation Center, Sebene Selassie learned what can help us keep going with meditation practice—and the benefits of having fellow travelers on the path.

What do you say to someone with “no time to meditate”?

We're all disciplined about something, even if it's just brushing our teeth. If you're busy, let go of one thing—skip an episode of *House of Cards*. You need to make the space for space.

As a seasoned meditator, what's still difficult for you?

I'm amazed I can still perceive challenging experiences as “mistakes” and want them to be different from what they are.

How has being part of a meditation group made a difference in your life?

It's helpful to have fellow travelers on the path, people interested in exploring the same questions. If you're a bird-watcher, others might notice a bird you're not familiar with. In this case, they might notice something in the mind. And if you're sitting in a group, you're less likely to fidget or get up and leave, because you've made the commitment to be there. It can foster deep friendship. Countless times, fellow practitioners have supported me emotionally.

Do you recommend that people connect with a teacher?

Yes. Most of us benefit from guidance when learning something new. We're not practicing

to become super-meditators. We're practicing to gain some insight and wisdom. So, I've found it's definitely helpful to have some insightful and wise people around.

Would you suggest beginners try a retreat?

Very much so. I enjoy the space and time to develop and sustain spaciousness and ease long enough for deeper insights to arise. Then I can tap into that more readily in daily life.

What do you do to promote diversity at your center?

We need to understand that the way we teach and who is teaching will have an impact on people looking for something that mirrors their own experience, so having a diverse body of leaders, teachers, and volunteers is vital. But it does take time.



JOSHUA SIMPSON

Ease stress at work

Working faster, smarter, cheaper is good business. But how do we also keep our collective sanity intact along the way? *By Michael Carroll*

Work seems to have only one agenda: success. We work to achieve results and in turn get rewarded. Pretty straightforward. But work, like all of life, is never so simple. If we examine our pursuit of success we'll notice it always comes with another agenda: a need for emotional well-being.

Too often, we ignore this “well-being agenda” and the results can be disturbing: 50% of us say we were insulted at work within the last 24 hours, often by our bosses. Many switch jobs because of such workplace incivility.

The result: We may be getting the job done, but too often we go home feeling demoralized and frustrated.

Enterprises that attend to both success and emotional well-being tend to foster truly distinctive and inspiring cultures. And when we witness such health and well-being we know it. Whether it's being served coffee at Starbucks or receiving packages from a UPS truck driver, when human hearts are aligned with work, success is both a challenge and a joy.

Creating a better work culture, both for ourselves and for those around us, starts with paying attention. Learning to become more mindful of our own intentions and behaviors, and practicing ways of working that promote clarity, respect, and well-being, is the path to real success.



IVO DE BRUIJN/STOCKSY

PRACTICE

3 steps to detoxify conflicts

Say that one of your employees, John, is upset that management put his plan on hold. In a situation like this, following the three-step practice below could help him feel valued—and allow you both to move on in a positive way. *By Michael Carroll*

1

Attune to the “emotional agenda” and model emotional well-being

Acknowledge what the person feels. Listen unconditionally. Appreciate their aspirations and concerns.

TRY “John, you worked hard on that plan, it took guts, and it hurts to have it sidelined.”

2

Reframe problems constructively

Negative emotions can transform simple problems into threats, challenges into ordeals. Invite people's creativity to reshape challenges, redefine goals, rethink roadblocks, and generally place problems in constructive frames.

TRY “I'm not sure you should give up on this project so quickly. There's lots to learn here. Have you thought of a thorough ‘debrief’ of the plan? Good ideas could come out.”

3

Set a tone for future collaboration

Finally, make working constructively together more likely in the future.

TRY “While this has been tough news, John, I appreciate our work together and want you to know you can count on me in the future.”

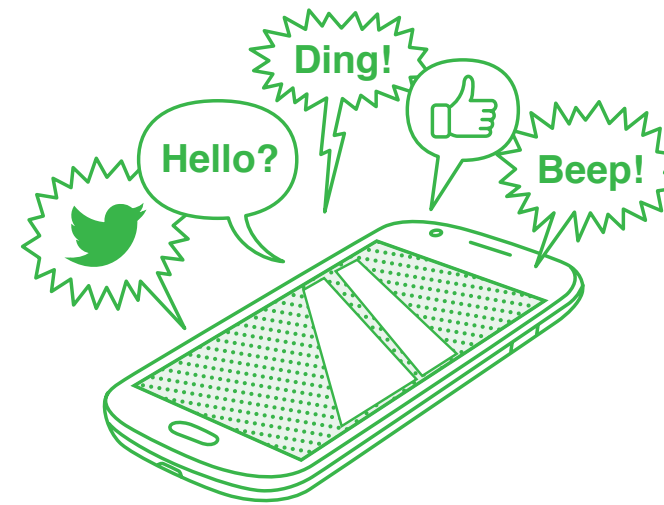
“My work started to change, my luck started to change.”

Actor Mark Ruffalo on starting to meditate

PRACTICE

5 practices for creating a balanced workplace

Work can be chaotic, with emotions flying all over the place. That makes it a perfect place to hone your emotional intelligence. Here's how. *By Michael Carroll*



Be smarter than your phone

Get your face out of your device—without banning it from your life. *By Stephany Tlalka*

Put that phone away! It's driving you crazy. Admit it. It is. At least a little, and maybe a lot.

It's tough to take control of your phone, though. That's because when a behavior feels good—e.g., checking to see who's "liked" your latest social media post—"our brain lays down a memory so it will remember to do that again," says addiction psychiatrist Judson Brewer. So every time your phone buzzes to let you know about a tweet or text or email, the automatic impulse is to check it right away. This, of course, pulls your attention away from what you're doing, and can become a huge source of distraction at work. (For a more detailed look at this kind of "action addiction," see the story that begins on page 70.)

Making use of a few simple device habits—think of them as "device hygiene"—can keep your phone from hijacking your work life.

JASON LEE

PRACTICE

When you're working on a project, **put your phone in another room**—or turn off notifications. A Florida State University study found that even if people didn't check their phones when they buzzed, their minds still wandered.

In a meeting? **Don't use your phone to finish a task just assigned to you** (unless you're asked). It may seem helpful and efficient, but can lead to meeting bloat. Also, you ignore your colleagues who probably wanted you to participate in all aspects of the meeting.

Don't slide your phone under the meeting table to text or email. Everyone knows what you're up to.

Set some "email off" times.

Shonda Rhimes, creator of the TV series *Scandal*, has an email signature that reads: "I don't read work emails after 7 p.m. or on weekends, and if you work for me, may I suggest you put down your phone?" Rhimes told Terry Gross on NPR's *Fresh Air* that while she gets 2,500 work emails a day, since she set her email policy, "there's never been a thing so urgent that I regret having my phone off." If you think a policy like this might work for you, consider asking your boss about trying it office-wide.

- ### 1 Train your mind

The basis for healthy emotions in the workplace is self-awareness and self-regulation. There is no better way to cultivate these talents than with regular mindfulness meditation. Often we want our colleagues to behave better at work, but by training our minds with meditation, we take a vital step toward promoting health and well-being by first offering it to others.
- ### 2 Learn the art of feedback

By learning how to skillfully solicit, receive, and offer feedback, we equip ourselves with critical tools for managing emotions in the workplace. Regularly asking for advice fosters a socially intelligent work atmosphere. And respectfully offering suggestions to others can build trust and collegiality.
- ### 3 Model respect and trust

Trust is the basic currency of healthy workplaces, and respect is how we earn it. Offering respect to others—especially in the midst of conflict and difficulties—is how we build much-needed political capital at work, fostering a fabric of mutual trust that can endure through success as well as failure.
- ### 4 Remember to say thanks

There is so much we take for granted at work, from having a reliable email system to receiving an accurate paycheck to getting quick follow-ups from our vendors. Show appreciation at work by regularly exploring what works well, marveling at what is remarkable, and just plain saying "thank you."
- ### 5 Make friends with conflict

Work, by its very nature, is often messy, unruly, and problematic. But such seeming chaos does not require panic or unneeded resistance. In fact, maybe what appears to be messy at work is the very invitation we have been looking for in order to lend a hand. Learn to be graciously curious about workplace conflict rather than offended by it.

Are you addicted to doing?

If you're busy every minute, it may be time for a closer look at what you're really getting done.

By Rasmus Hougaard and Jacqueline Carter

Perhaps you're familiar with this experience: After a long week of work, the weekend finally arrives. It's time to wind down, relax, and do nothing. However, before 9 a.m. Saturday morning you've organized three social appointments, ordered a new IKEA closet, and set in motion four other plans that will keep you active for the rest of the weekend.

Or maybe something like this has happened to you: It's 8 a.m. and you're in the office. On your desk is a clear list of the four important priorities of the day. But then your phone rings, you answer it, and, before you know it, suddenly it's 5 p.m. and time to go home. Your list is still there, untouched and unfulfilled.

Both cases are examples of action addiction, a deep-rooted human condition caused by imbalances in the chemicals of our brain. The hormone dopamine is the key player. Dopamine is a highly addictive, naturally produced reward-drug that, when released in the brain, provides us a short-term

sense of enjoyment, relaxation, and gratification. Dopamine is one of the main drivers behind our constant busyness.

When we're doing things like organizing those three social appointments, ordering that new IKEA closet, or checking our Facebook page, dopamine gets released. We feel good. For a moment. But then the brain craves another kick. More actions ensue. And over time we wind up caught in a vicious circle of action and reward. Action addiction is in the making.

Does this sound familiar?

Busyness is modern laziness

Action addiction is an advanced sort of laziness. It keeps us busily occupied with tasks. The busier we keep ourselves, the more we avoid being confronted with questions of life and death. As we keep ourselves occupied with tasks, important or not, we avoid facing life. We keep a safe and comfortable distance to the issues that are sometimes hard to look at. Have we chosen the right career? Are we present enough with our children? Is our life purposeful?

With all our activity we believe we get closer to something bigger. We might not know what it is, but we keep working at it. It's like climbing a ladder as fast as we can, hoping to get to the

top. And someday we get there. We reach the top in the form of a job promotion or a newly acquired house. But what's the point of reaching the top of the ladder only to realize it's leaning against the wrong wall?

Over the years I've spent a lot of time with people who made it to the top of the ladder. One CEO—who was not much different from the others I've met—has stuck in my mind. He had decades of action addiction on his

curriculum vitae. He had made it to the top

of an international insurance company. He had worked hard for years—hard enough to have suffered two strokes. But he was willing to take a beating to secure his retirement and family. Sadly, his health began to fail him and he wasn't sure he'd make it to retirement age. And in the process of securing the future, he'd lost his family. Action addiction had kept him from noticing his family pulling further and further away.

This is all not to say activities are not important. Working, cooking, cleaning, and caring for our families and friends are mandatory for us all. But we can choose to write some space into our to-do lists. →

With action addiction we're constantly chasing short-term wins. We keep ourselves busy chasing details, thereby losing sight of larger goals.



PRACTICE

Test your action addiction

The consequence of action addiction is that we are constantly chasing short-term wins. We keep ourselves busy chasing details, thereby losing sight of larger goals. If you are reading this, and not really sure if it applies to you, here is a little test you can do to find out.

Next time you get to your office in the morning, just as you are about to get in action, sit down, and look out the window or at your computer screen. Don't act. Don't talk. Don't solve a problem. Just sit. Do nothing. For three minutes.

If you are challenged by the inactivity and get restless and experience an urge to be busy—you are experiencing some degree of action addiction. Fortunately, there's a way out. The practice on page 77 can help you break the cycle.

TRINETTE REED/STOCKSY

“Lots of activity, but not busy”

The Dalai Lama was coming to town. More than 10,000 people were coming together to see him. Over 500 volunteers, dozens of security people, and masses of journalists had to be coordinated. The man behind it all, Lakha, was a little man in his late 70s and an old friend and study mate of the Dalai Lama.

I arrived at the venue early, to meet friends and be there to greet the Dalai Lama. There was intense activity setting up security, managing the crowds, and taking care of the press. In the middle of it all Lakha was standing in his suit. I walked straight up to him and asked him the default question we all tend to ask each other when we meet. I have never asked anyone the question since then. “Hi, Lakha, are you busy?” Lakha turned to me, looked at me calmly and said, “There is lots of activity, but I am not busy.” His presence spoke louder than his words. Lakha was overseeing a massive project with numerous deadlines and details to manage. There was lots going on, but it did not get to him. He was not busy.

Busyness kills the heart

On that day I realized clearly that busyness is a choice. We may have deadlines, projects, and activities, but we have the freedom to choose whether we become action addicts and busy-lazy, or just observe the experience of many activities. It’s a choice. And the ability to make that choice comes from developing a clear mind, free of action addiction.

Nowadays we tend to all be busy, overburdened, and perhaps stressed. It is part of our identity. If we are busy we are important. If we are stressed, it’s because we are committed and working hard. It’s in the DNA of our modern societies. If we are not busy and stressed, we are not trying hard enough. Something is wrong with us. But Lakha showed a clear alternative; having many activities and being highly effective and productive, but maintaining

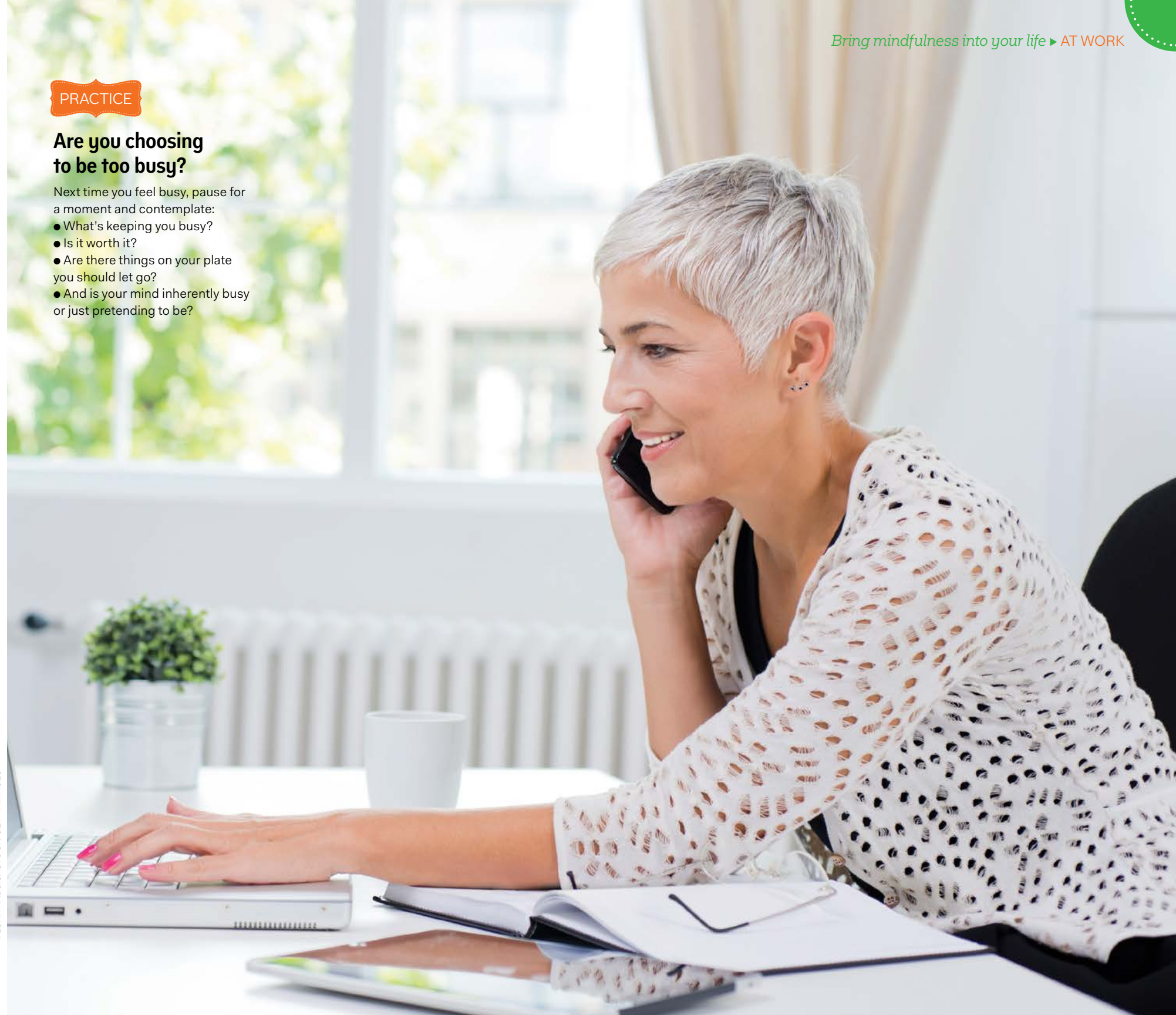
PRACTICE

Are you choosing to be too busy?

Next time you feel busy, pause for a moment and contemplate:

- What’s keeping you busy?
- Is it worth it?
- Are there things on your plate you should let go?
- And is your mind inherently busy or just pretending to be?

YESNA ANDJIC/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES



mental clarity and calm—not giving in to action addiction. Not being existentially lazy.

There are good reasons to overcome action addiction and thereby better avoid busyness. In addition to keeping us from seeing the bigger picture, busyness kills the heart. In Chinese, the word “busy” consists of two syllables, one meaning heart, the other death. More explanation is not needed. The busier we get, the more energy flows to the head and away from the heart. The busier we get, the more we tend to distance ourselves from others and their emotions. Action addiction keeps us busy and away from asking why. And the less we ask, the further we get removed from purpose, meaning, and love. We become effective robots that achieve more. But more is very often much less. Because the heart is not in it.

Speed up by slowing down

To avoid killing our hearts through busy action addiction, we must slow down before we speed up. We must live smart and work smart. Do the right things, not a lot of things. A great analogy to this is the cheetah.

You have likely watched animal movies and seen a cheetah hunt. It’s impressive. It’s the fastest land-living animal on the planet and reaches speeds faster than some highway limits, in seconds. Despite its amazing body, it does not just set off and sprint when it spots prey. Instead it slows down. Really slow. It crouches down and for minutes moves in slow motion while all muscle

fibers in its body warm up. Then, when ready, everything explodes and in seconds it accelerates faster than a sports car and catches its meal.

The trick of the cheetah is to slow down to speed up, and we can learn from that in our pursuit of overcoming action addiction and busyness. Just as the cheetah doesn’t run around constantly trying to catch mice, we can learn to focus on the real important tasks and goals in life and at work—rather than doing things just for the sake of doing them.

When we slow down momentarily and let go of doing things, we allow the brain to let go of the immediate urge for dopamine and we can focus and choose our actions out of clarity and freedom, rather than impulses. That way we can better pursue the larger goals in life like kindness, happiness, or whatever it may be. By slowing down, we can speed up. ●

We may have deadlines, projects, and activities, but we have the freedom to choose whether we become action addicts.



PRACTICE

Slow down. Get more done.

You can take a systematic approach to slowing down by implementing awareness breaks in your life. These are 45-second breaks performed once an hour. They function like a reset button, helping you reset your mind, get out of wheel spinning, and increase your focus. Set a timer to notify you.

When you get the notification, stop what you are doing, let go of thoughts, and direct your attention to your breath. At the first breath cycle, relax your body and mind. At the second, focus your attention. At the third, ask yourself, “What am I doing right now: Chasing mice or going after bigger prey?” ●

Is “office” a state of mind?

The rise of tech has turned “office” into a mindset rather than a physical place for many modern workers. In the midst of this increased flexibility, here’s how you can bring some stability to your worklife.

By Jae Ellard

It used to be when someone talked about being “at the office” they meant they were at an actual physical space. With the rise of workplace flexibility, global work teams, and technology to support a slew of telework options, “office” has become an elusive concept.

The number of “mobile workers” in the US will reach 105 million by 2020, estimates market intelligence firm IDC. That means almost three-quarters of our workforce will find themselves with flexible office situations.

Depending on what you do for a living and how you like to work, you will have your own unique definition of “office.” For some, office still means a physical space—like a desk or a cubical (or, for the free-spirited, their favorite café). For others, office means a device, like a tablet or phone. For these people, they’re “at the office” whenever their device is on and in their general vicinity.

For others still, office is a state of mind—it’s whenever you have work thoughts, which for many people is a lot of the time. It’s easy to see how nontraditional work situations can take on a life of their own, and lead to more stress

rather than more flexibility. That’s why it’s important to define just what “flexible work” means to you.

A recent study in the *American Sociological Review* found that workers with well-designed flexible work situations are less stressed, experience less burnout, and have increased job satisfaction compared to their peers in a typical workday situation. It turns out that simply giving employees more control over their schedules and shifting emphasis to results rather than hours logged allows employees to be effective *and* happy. Go figure.

What’s imperative is that managers and employees work together to establish what is acceptable within their particular company or team culture. This is a huge opportunity to build trust and prevent confusion by discussing upfront what “office” means from the employer’s perspective. Then everyone can work together to construct what a workday at the office ideally looks like.

In order to have a balanced, mindful approach to flexible work situations, make a habit of the practices on the opposite page.



Define your space

If your office is a physical space, notice what you need there. If you work from home, is there a well-defined place in your house where “office” happens, or do you “office” a little bit everywhere? If “office” means a device, ask yourself when you engage and disengage with it: At a set time, like 7 p.m., or when you reach a specific physical destination?

Own your mindset

If your office is a mindset, think about how you can intentionally tap into and let go of work thoughts. Perhaps you can establish a “stop work thoughts” mantra that helps you bookmark a thought like “Thank you, I will come back to this later.” Or you could intentionally take a few deep breaths to redirect your energy, or try to set a concrete time when work thoughts are just not welcome.

Choose your hours

When does “office” begin and end for you? Flexibility is about choice, and if the choice is to be always on, then the power of flexibility is diminished. Embrace and enjoy the flexibility to work wherever and whenever by being intentional about how, where, and when you decide to “office.”

Tip

Find time for face-to-face meetings and schedule them regularly.

MARKO MILANOVIC/STOCKSY

The power of “no”

It pays off to be realistic about what you can
(and can't) do at work.

By Jae Ellard

Have you ever said yes to a request at work when you knew deep down you had no intention of actually doing it? Maybe you said you'd meet a colleague for coffee, take someone out to lunch, or participate on a committee, but you really didn't have the time or desire to follow through.

That's OK. We've all said yes to things we knew weren't really going to happen. In fact, this happens a lot, all over the world, in both personal and professional life. Why do we do this, and how can we shift our responses so they reflect our true intention and capacity?

The behavior of saying yes to things we know we either don't want to or are unable to do is called “hedging.” It consists of using phrases like “I don't know,” “maybe,” and “we'll see,” when really your answer is, clearly and unequivocally, *no*.

When we hedge like this, our intentions (most of the time) are good. At work, we most often hedge to avoid disappointing others—like our customers, our managers, and our coworkers. It's easy to feel that if you say “no” to a request at work you'll be perceived as selfish or rude, or that it might have a negative impact on your performance review. It's natural to want to be liked and accepted, and to be considered a team player. That said, hedging can have many negative consequences.

For instance, when we commit to too many projects, assignments, and “five-minute favors” and we know we will be unable to complete them, we wind up creating false expectations, and can become the bottleneck in the system—which is the exact opposite of what most people intend when they say yes. Hedging also tends to create more work (that may or may not be part of your role), causing stress, resentment, and frustration. At the team level, hedging erodes trust, damages reputations, and can cause widespread role confusion.

Break the hedging cycle

Start by paying attention to when you hedge and get clear on what you really can, and cannot, do. “No” doesn't have to be dismissive. A strategic “no” can, in fact, be a powerful productivity tool and a way to set clear priorities. It can mark the beginning of a thoughtful, intentional conversation about workload, role definition, and office dynamics. When you give a mindful “no,” you contribute even more to your team by being clear about what is realistic, which allows the organization to better understand needs, plan for resources, and set priorities. This is especially important for companies operating with limited resources.

Say it right

It's not all about just saying “no”—the way you say no is also important. Use a respectful tone and provide as much context as possible to the person making the request. Explaining why you're unable to oblige a coworker's request can go a long way—not just in increasing efficiency, but also in building trust. A phrase to experiment with is “that's not going to work for me, because...”

If you know you can get to the request, but just not right now, set expectations up front on timeframe. Try saying something like “That's not going to work for me right now, can we talk again in three weeks?”

Another option is to offer help in whatever way you can: “I know this is important to you, but right now the core priorities for my job are x, y, and z, and I'm not able to support this request. Can I help you find someone else who might be able to help?”

Most times, when people feel respected, they are willing to work together to find a solution that is realistic and supports the team and organization—even if the conversation begins with “no.”

A strategic “no” can mark the beginning of a thoughtful, intentional conversation about workload, role definition, and office dynamics.

PRACTICE

Shift your perspective

Looking through a different lens creates insights. By Michael Carroll

People frame the workplace from many perspectives: The financial vantage point of a CFO; the sales manager's passion for closing a deal. Too often such perspectives can become rigid mindsets, and we find ourselves “arguing” with our work and pushing a point, rather than offering insight. The agility of mindfulness permits us to explore various viewpoints, so we can shift, arrange, and blend views in order to get a complete picture and skillfully shape workplace circumstances.

On-the-job exercise:

When approaching a difficult workplace conversation, first make a case for your opponent's view: Write down their perspectives, arguments, and goals. Make this exercise a routine of knowing and listening to your colleagues' points of view *before* resolving conflicts and problems.

PRACTICE

Watch what you're typing

Here's why you might just want to take a breath before clicking *send*. By Mirabai Bush

Have you ever sent an email and immediately wanted to take it back? Who hasn't! We can churn out emails at such lightning speed, it's easy to write something that accidentally offends someone or is easily misunderstood. Emailing feels *almost* like a conversation, but we lack the emotional signs and social cues of face-to-face or phone interactions. If there's any challenging content to convey—and if you're sending it out to more than one person—it's easy for problems to arise. Also, when we senselessly send too many messages to too many people, it clogs up everyone's inboxes. Some companies are taking steps to encourage more conscious emailing, and asking people to try a routine like this for important email messages.

1

Compose an email

When you do, try using the Enter key more. Shorter paragraphs are easier to read on screens.

2

Stop, and enjoy a long deep breath

Put your hands in front of you and wiggle your fingers to give them a little break. Now, lace your fingers together and place them behind your head. Lean back and give your neck a little rest. Now you're in a good position to take the next step.

3

Think of the person, or people, who are going to receive the message

How do you want them to react? Do they get what you're saying? Should you simplify it some? Could they misunderstand you and become angry or offended, or think you're being more positive than you intend when you're trying to say no or offer honest feedback?

If there's a power dynamic (for example, you are writing to somebody who works for you or who reports to you), you need to take into account how that affects the message. In an email, a suggestion coming from a superior can easily sound like an order.

4

Look the email over again and make some changes

A few guidelines:

- Some messages are just too touchy, nuanced, or complex to handle by email. You may have to communicate in person, where you can read cues and have some give and take. Then, you can follow up with a message that reiterates whatever came out of the conversation.
- Fewer words usually leads to more clarity and greater impact. Your message can easily get lost in the clutter.
- If there's emotional content, pay close attention to how the shaping of the words can create a tone. If you have bursts of short sentences, for example, it can sound like you're being brusque and angry.

5

Don't send your email right away

Leave it as a draft, compose some other messages or do something else, and then come back to it.

6

Let it go

Take one last look, press *send*, and wish yourself good luck.



JASON LEE

Make the connection

Mindfulness practices can help you create deeper bonds with the people in your life. *By Sharon Salzberg*



It's easy to feel separate from other people and other forms of life. There can be a sense of “us” and “them,” or “self” and “other.” Yet most of us want to connect more strongly with the people in our lives and build better relationships with them. We'd like to listen better, fully enjoy the times we share, and not get pushed apart when difficult emotions arise. Practicing the loving-kindness meditation on the opposite page can be an excellent first step

toward these aspirations. It can help you approach others with an attitude of warmth and well-wishing. Cultivating this attitude is likely to move your relationships with family, friends, co-workers and even strangers in a more positive direction. Building on this practice, you can explore other ways to use mindfulness to bring greater awareness and presence to your interactions with others.

SIMONE BECCHETTI/STOCKSY

PRACTICE

Wish others well

Offering loving-kindness, we see how our lives are linked. *By Sharon Salzberg*

1

Start easy

Begin with someone who has helped you; maybe they've been directly generous or kind, or have inspired you from afar. When you think of them, they make you smile. Bring an image of the person to mind, or feel their presence. Silently say their name to yourself, and offer them these phrases, focusing on one phrase at a time.

- *May you live in safety.*
- *May you have mental happiness (peace, joy).*
- *May you have physical happiness (health, freedom from pain).*
- *May you live with ease.*

Don't struggle to fabricate a feeling. If your mind wanders, simply begin again.

JASON LEE

2

Focus on a friend

After a few minutes, move on to a friend. Start with a friend who's doing well right now, then switch to someone who is experiencing difficulty.

3

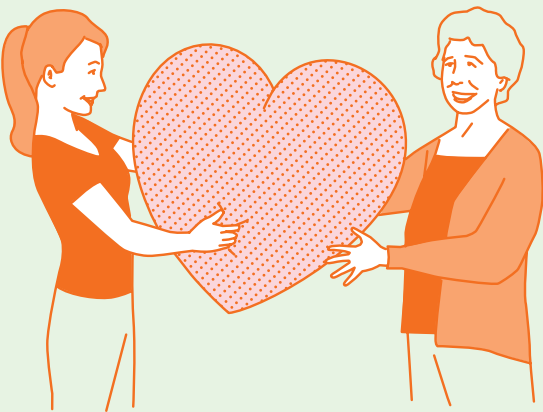
Move outward

Offer loving-kindness to a neutral person, who you don't feel a strong liking or disliking for: a cashier at the supermarket, a bank teller, a dry cleaner. When you offer loving-kindness to a neutral person, you are offering it to them simply because they exist—you are not indebted to or challenged by them.

4

Now for the hard part

Offer loving-kindness toward a person with whom you have difficulty. Start with someone mildly difficult, and slowly work toward someone who has really hurt you. It's common to feel resentment and anger; don't judge yourself for it. Recognize that anger burns within your heart and causes suffering, so out of the greatest respect and compassion for yourself, simply practice letting go and offering loving-kindness. Finish by offering loving-kindness to anyone who comes to mind—people, animals, those you like, those you don't—in an adventurous expanse of your own power of kindness.



PRACTICE

Hear this | How often do you feel really listened to? And how often do you really listen to others? (Be honest.) By David Rome

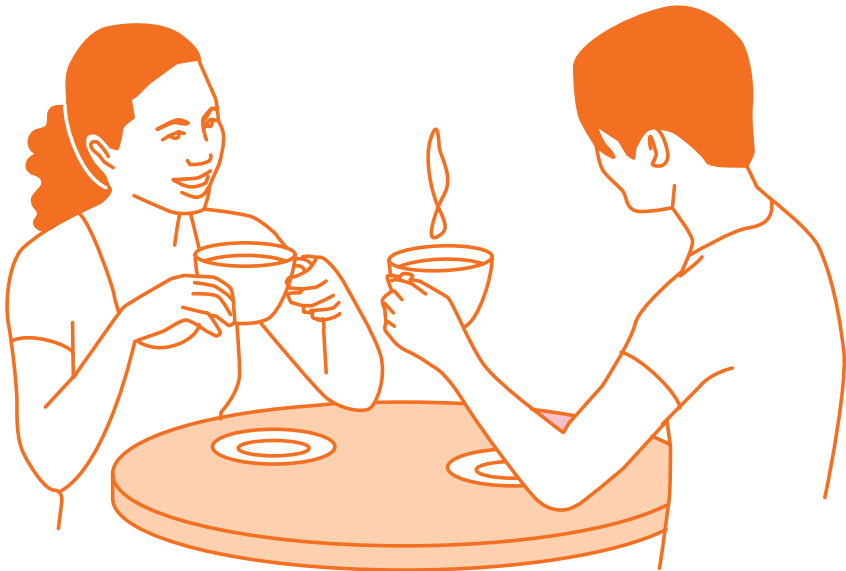
We know we're in the presence of a good listener when we get that sweet, affirming feeling of really being heard. But sadly it occurs all too rarely. We can't force others to listen, but we can improve our own listening, and perhaps inspire others by doing so.

Good listening means mindful listening. Like mindfulness itself, listening takes a combination of *intention* and *attention*. The intention part is having a genuine interest in the other person—their experiences, views, feelings, and needs. The attention part is being able to stay present,

open, and unbiased as we receive the other's words—even when they don't line up with our own ideas or desires.

Paradoxically, being good at listening to others requires the ability to listen to yourself. If you can't recognize your own beliefs and opinions, needs and fears, you won't have enough inner space to really hear anyone else. So the foundation for mindful listening is self-awareness.

Here are some tips to be a good listener to yourself so you can be a good listener for others.



JASON LEE

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

- Check inside**
Ask "Is anything getting in the way of being present for this person?" If so, decide if it must be dealt with first or can wait.
- Extend yourself**
Open yourself to the other person with the intention to listen fully and with interest, empathy, and mindfulness.
- Notice your responses**
Silently note your reactions as they arise: thoughts, feelings, judgments, memories. Then return your full attention to the speaker.
- Listen actively**
Reflect back what you are hearing, using the speaker's own words when possible to paraphrase. Help the other person feel heard.
- Ask and affirm**
Use friendly, open-ended questions to clarify your understanding. Affirm before you differ. Acknowledge the other person's point of view before introducing your own.

Listen mindfully—by yourself

You don't need to be talking with another person to build your listening skills. When you pay close attention to different kinds of sound, it can improve your ability to listen better to the people in your life. Here are two practices to try.

WAKE UP LISTENING. In the morning, instead of reaching for your phone or turning on the radio first

thing, be still and listen. You may notice birdsong, or your neighbor getting into her car. Rest your full attention on one sound until it fades away, then let another come to you. If thoughts come, just return your attention to the sound.

GET IN THE GROOVE. In the evening, put on some music, maybe classical or slow-tempo. Notice the sound and vibration of the notes, the sensations in your body, and the feelings the music stirs. When thoughts arise, gently bring your attention back to the music. Breathe.

PRACTICE

Lift your gaze

Our time gets so chopped up these days. How do we find the time to really be with our loved ones? *By Stefanie and Elisha Goldstein*



Our world is more connected now than ever, yet paradoxically many of us feel more disconnected than ever. How is this possible? Have texts, tweets, FaceTime, Instagram posts, and Snapchats replaced actual face-to-face human connection? How do we find the time to really be with our loved ones in such a fast-paced world?

We don't find it. We make it.

We make the choice, over and over again, to show up and be present in our interactions, whether brief and casual or for a family meal. Intimate relationships take effort, and a deep connection takes the willingness and courage to be vulnerable.

That said, being vulnerable can be scary and it can feel easier to communicate behind the veil of a smartphone, but all of these electronic modes of communicating give us a distorted sense of connection. Nothing can ever replace looking into someone's eyes and feeling the touch of a loved one. See if you can make the choice, even just once, to put any distractions aside and connect with your loved ones.

It can feel easier to communicate behind the veil of a smartphone, but electronic communication can distort our sense of connection.

JASON LEE

Create a family ritual

It would be great to truly connect with your partner or family once a day. That's not always possible, but it is possible to set aside time for something special once a week.

1

Decide and commit

As a family, decide how you would like to spend time together in a meaningful way: a weekly game or movie night, taking a walk in your neighborhood after dinner, sharing what each of you are grateful for over a meal, going to the park or for a hike—the possibilities are endless.

2

Unplug and connect

What is most important about whatever ritual you choose is that everyone understands that this is a time to unplug from their devices and connect with each other. It's not uncommon to get some initial resistance (especially to the unplugging from devices part) but if you can keep the family time playful and engaging even the strongest dissenters can come around.

3

Be firm but flexible

You're trying to form a new habit, so consistency is important. Try to be determined in honoring the ritual at its weekly time. But do take into account that schedules can go awry, so if you have to push it a day one week, fine. But don't let it slip into oblivion.

4

Revise and refresh

A ritual may get old or children outgrow it. Find a new one.

How meditating helps you with difficult emotions

Meditation is not all calm and peace. It opens up a space for you to see what's going on in your mind, including the vivid and powerful movement of your emotions—up, down, and sideways. You can learn to fight with them less, and make friends with them more.

By Barry Boyce

Stop being so emotional!

When you hear something like that, what can you really do? You can try to push down on your insides and get them to change, but that's like playing inner whack-a-mole. Whatever you push down in one place just pops up somewhere else. You work hard to calm yourself down about a snub at work only to find yourself yelling at your daughter later, for essentially no reason.

Emotions are challenging, but why would we want to stop being emotional? It's our lifeblood. It's what causes us to get up in the morning and cross the street. Even if it were desirable to get rid of them, we'd have no choice. They're part of our system of sensing and responding to the world. Without them, we'd be automatons. Music would not move us. Loss would not affect us. Nothing would bring us to tears. Nothing would make us fall down laughing. →

JAN WOLAK-DYSZYŃSKI/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES

Meditation gives us a chance to examine our feelings at a deeper level. It can give us the room to fully experience an emotion for what it is.

Nevertheless, emotions can wreak havoc and spread pain throughout our lives. And that's where meditation comes in. Contrary to what some people believe, meditation does not make us emotionless, nor does it convert all emotion into fluffy-minded bliss. When we're doing mindfulness meditation, if we feel jealous, we feel it: the pain, the guilt, the whole enchilada. What also happens, though, is that we have a little space around the emotion. We can see it for what it is.

For one thing, emotions combine thoughts ("John just said something very nasty") with feelings (a clenched jaw, a grimace). And the thoughts come in rapid combinations and gather momentum. As we meditate, we notice this process.

We notice how the emotion feels. We're a bit like a scientist, though. Our primary job is not to judge it or try to change it. It is to watch, stay with it, and let it be.

We can see that the emotions are not permanent, that they come in waves. Going deeper, we see complex layers. While jealousy may appear completely negative and undesirable, we can discover an underlying energy there that can provide the fuel for inspiration and emulation.

If we strip away the damaging, aggressive ingredient in the emotion, something powerful and beneficial can remain. This is what it means to tame our emotions through meditation. We see the possibility of riding their power without harming others or ourselves. We also can choose how to act, rather than be driven to act. There's an art to it, and as the photographer Annie Liebovitz recently pointed out, "Art is messy. It is hard."

In the next several pages, we look at five emotions and some meditative practices to work with them more creatively.



For a selection of audio and video and other resources on meditative practices for emotions, go to mindful.org/gettingstarted

Anger

It can be one of the ugliest emotions. It can ruin any situation. If it lurks deep inside and curdles, it can make us sick. It also has awesome power.

Anger is a complex and fascinating emotion. We can be sitting quietly, apparently calm, and then the trigger comes—"You know, you never..."—and before you know it, Mount Vesuvius erupts. Lava is spewing everywhere. People are running for the hills. Or maybe your anger is the slow-burn style that seethes and bubbles below the surface, only erupting in tiny bursts of snarkiness.

Anger is fiery. Even when it's cold, it requires a lot of energy, like a refrigeration system. When we pay attention to how it feels in our body, we might notice a knotty stomach, a clenched jaw, tightness in our chest. We may notice that the state of anger can strongly tint our thoughts, and we interpret the world through the lens of our rejecting state of mind. We are sending the message: "Get out!"

Deep within the anger, we may be storing feelings of inadequacy that cause us to see threats and injustices where none exist. It helps to uncover and uproot these feelings and deeply held false views. At the same time, anger can have beneath it a wise and powerful protectiveness, like the hovering presence of a mama bear. But it's usually hard to defend what's right or necessary without throwing a little resentment into the mix. We can say "no" when a child throws some food in a sibling's face, but maybe (under our breath) we mutter, "You little brat." Refining our emotions can involve shaving things pretty fine. The old song got it right: "It's a thin line between love and hate."

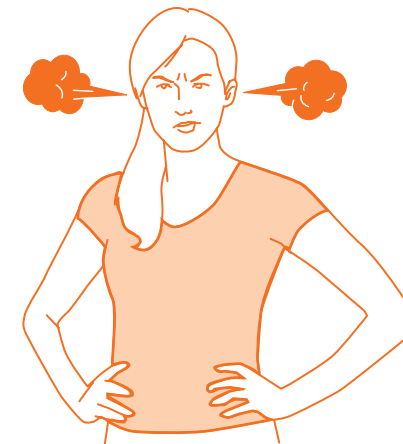
Rich, complex, and powerful, anger benefits from contemplative time and investigation. There's lots to learn about what's going on beneath our angry outbursts.

PRACTICE

Exploring aggression

- 1 In a moment when you **NOTICE** yourself feeling angry and aggressive, turn your attention to the feeling.
 - Where is it in your body?
 - What is going on?
- 2 Breathe mindfully for a few breaths as you notice your body sensations changing. **LISTEN** for your thoughts without adding to the inner dialogue going on, or trying to silence your thoughts.
- 3 What are your thoughts saying? When you're offended, you're usually holding onto a rigid definition of yourself and what you can accommodate, so ask yourself "who" is offended. **WHY?**
- 4 It can take some patience to stick with the unpleasant feelings, but remind yourself to **COME BACK** to observing the anger in this moment with self-compassion. This will help you discover what your anger has to teach you.

- 5 If you like, you can finish with an **ASPIRATION** for yourself, something that will also take out some of the self-involvement. You might say to yourself silently, "May I find the resources to understand and transform my anger," or "May I take care of the pain I'm feeling and care for the pain in others." →



JASON LEE

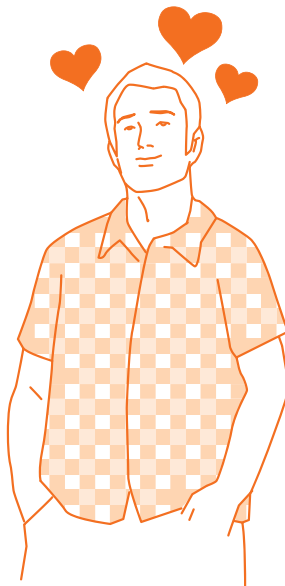
Love

Feelings of passion and love can make us so joyful. But when they bring intense attachment along with them, they can also turn very painful and destructive.

Love is such a sought-after feeling that entire industries are built around it. Love is a TV genre, a movie genre, a book genre. Magazines obsess over and feed the ideal of romantic love. And yet so much of what passes for love leads to disappointment and pain. It's these two sides of love—the joy of connection and the pain that comes from attaching and clinging—that meditation works with.

When we fall for someone or something (face it, human beings are so easily lovestruck we can fall for a car, a cell phone, or a brand of body wash), we feel pulled in the direction of the love object. When it's a person, we feel a little lightness in our head, and warmth in various parts of our body. We can literally become weak in the knees. We are pulled out of ourselves and want to connect, so we flirt or touch or dance—or more.

The connecting part seems so natural. We form bonds with all sorts of people with degrees of connection varying from the mildly warm to the wildly passionate. But sometimes the power of the passion can be so great that we don't just want to play and interact with the object of our love. We want to possess it, and own it. We grasp and cling, and we become uncomfortable—in the worst case scary. We are stalking prey. When the game of love is played for keeps, it can take everyone involved into some unpleasant emotional territory.



PRACTICE

Awareness of feelings

The main meditative practice for love—as with anger—is to shine the light of **AWARENESS** on your thoughts and feelings, so you can discern the differences between openness and clinging. Keep noticing, without judging, what's happening in your mind and body.

Wishing everyone well

Another beneficial practice is to broaden our love and caring to encompass more people. This kind of **“UNIVERSAL LOVE”** is beneficial to our own well-being and to those around us. It can reduce clinging in all kinds of relationships—from the love for a child, sibling, or parent to the passionate love for a sexual partner—by shifting the focus from me...me...me.

VISUALIZE OTHERS and repeat phrases of well-wishing. You can start with yourself (be kind to yourself), then think of a loved one, then someone neutral, then someone difficult, then, if you like, the whole world. Repeat the phrases a few times with each type of person.

- May (I/they) be unharmed.
- May (I/they) be happy.
- May (I/they) be healthy.
- May (I/they) be at ease.

JASON LEE

Sadness

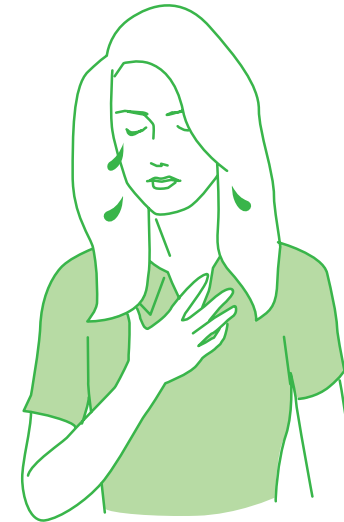
When we're separated from or lose someone we love, when things don't go our way, sadness naturally occurs. Unchecked, it can be deeply unhealthy.

Discussions of sadness, depression, and meditation have become controversial, because severe depression has become so common. It is difficult to draw a bright line between depressions that are treatable with self-care and therapy and major depression requiring medication. We caution you that meditation does not instantly cure deep-seated difficulties. If you're suffering from depression that is having a significant effect on your ability to lead a productive life, you need to seek guidance from a mental health professional.

A common form of sadness that we'll all experience is grief over the loss of someone close to us. It's well known by all who counsel the grieving that accommodating and healing feelings of loss is a process that can't be rushed. It has its own clock, and the longer we were close to someone, the longer that time is likely to be.

Meditation can be helpful because when we get used to spending time with our own minds and not trying to rush things, we become more patient. We can also come to appreciate the necessity of sadness, how it grounds us and keeps us from becoming superficially cheery—glossing over real pain.

Paying attention to the physical sensations of sadness can help us to discover the tendency to withdraw. We're like a plant in winter: cold, dark, dormant. If we can accept this feeling as a natural part of having a human heart, we can give it the attention and love it needs. It may be painful, but being with the sadness without trying to do much with it is the best way to let the winter pass of its own accord.



PRACTICE

Reduce me-time

One of the most helpful ways to let sadness be there without trying to fix it right away is to counteract the withdrawing tendency that sadness brings. First simply **CONTEMPLATE OTHERS** who have felt sadness, grief, and loss. For instance, think of how your mother felt when her father died or the loss a parent felt when their beloved child moved away. You can also

simply think of the sadness generated by war or oppression. In this way, rather than *my* sadness, it can become *the* sadness.

Take a walk

Another practice that helps to moderate sadness and grief is walking meditation in a natural setting, perhaps with other people. Find a place, like a woodland trail, where you can **WALK IN NATURE SILENTLY** and semi-slowly for 30 to 90 minutes.

1 Take a friend, agree on the basic route and length of time, and walk quietly. Feel the sensations in your body, take in the sounds and sights, while still keeping a steady pace and looking mainly ahead. Try not to engage anyone else you meet.

2 When you're finished, do something nice with your friend, and try not to dwell too much on the darkness.

JASON LEE

Fear

It's hard to imagine life without fear. Its raw power can save lives. It can also paralyze us and invade every part of our life. Taming it and directing it is one of life's greatest challenges.

Fear is primal. And essential for survival. It's highly energetic, even exhilarating. Lots of people love horror movies, and kids (young and old) get a huge kick out of scaring each other. But fear is no joke. It can be a highly aroused state that overtakes us in response to a perceived threat, causing us to either fight, flee, freeze, or faint. It can be a deeply unpleasant feeling.

As with all emotion, the practice of meditation can stabilize us enough in the midst of fear to help us see more clearly—to distinguish a false threat from a real threat that needs to be acted upon. The type of fear meditation can have the most effect on is the fear (and fears) that we continually generate in our own minds, the product of our rich imagination and our desire to control everything, rather than be tossed around in the risky and stormy world.

As our fear rises, we can start yammering in our heads to reinforce the size and shape of the threat: "They're not going to like me...they'll think I'm stupid...I'll never get another job...I'll lose my mind...and all my friends...and my apartment..." By now, our palms are sweaty and we're in a total panic.

The good news: This is all natural. The very intense energy of fear, when we're able to let it dissipate, can become a powerful driving force. It's nothing other than the energy of life.



PRACTICE

Name the fear

Being able to recognize that fear is present can be hugely important in not allowing it to control you.

1 As you **NOTICE** your heart pumping more, your chest tightening, your back stiffening, let an imaginary alarm bell go off in your head.

2 Take 3 or 10 or 20 deep breaths, however many you need to **SLOW** your body down. Place your hand on your heart if that will help. Acknowledge to yourself, "I'm scared. I'm afraid." **NAME THE FEAR** so you automatically create a bit of distance between yourself and the intensity of the emotional reaction.

3 Say a few phrases of **WELL-WISHING** toward yourself and for others:

- May (I/others) see the source of our fear.
- May (I/others) be safe and free from fear.
- May (I/others) be happy and at ease.

Lean in to fear

Whenever you feel the energy of fear, **DON'T AVOID** the feeling. Sit with it.

1 As fearful thoughts of dread and worry continue to arise, approach them with **FRIENDLINESS**. Don't treat them as a threat.

2 Be kind toward yourself for being afraid. Pay attention and see what happens when you hold your ground and let the fear rise in your mind. You might **FIND CONFIDENCE** within.

JASON LEE

Jealousy

Wanting what others have. Protecting what we have. These feelings are not fun. But on closer examination, we can see an underlying drive to aspire and emulate.

Ah, where would great literature be without jealousy? Many of Shakespeare's plays turn on jealous motives, and library-loads of novels mine the hearts of jealous lovers and envious climbers.

In the mind of jealousy, we are caught up in comparing, and in one sense we loom large and others fade into the background. Yet, in another sense, we see ourselves as small and what others have as big. We push and we pull.

Feelings of jealousy can be mixed up with love (the clingy part), and anger, the feeling of wanting to push another away, to hurt them or lessen them. At first glance, there would seem to be nothing of value within jealousy and envy. It just seems like a big bundle of I...me...mine.

But curiously, if we can let go of the self-involved part—the dark side—on the bright side of jealous feelings can be a quality of admiration that could lead to sympathetic joy (feeling good at others' good fortune and well-being) and emulation (wanting to cultivate the same good qualities of another or follow in their footsteps).

Jealousy and envy stripped of their aggressiveness can become a drive to go beyond oneself. The sense of inadequacy becomes simply a phase to pass through. All the energy we put into comparing and contrasting, finding the other better and ourselves wanting, can be channelled into reaching beyond ourselves.



PRACTICE

Letting go

A way to practice with jealousy and envy (and also greed, which is closely related) is to do a reflective meditation on a highly desirable object that you will nevertheless never possess.

1 **FIND SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL** and desirable—in a store, a store window, or in a museum.

2 Sit or stand and **ADMIRE** the object for five minutes or more. Let the feelings of desire increase. Feel the longing to grasp and possess it. Now let those feelings go.

3 **EMBRACE** the object for what it is, brilliant, without needing to be possessed or protected by you. ●

JASON LEE

PRACTICE

5 ways to bring mindfulness home

Connecting with your family is crucial for everyone. Keep these things in mind as you make the effort. *By Elisha and Stefanie Goldstein*

1

You do have time

Balancing all of life's demands can be stressful and time-consuming. It can often feel like there isn't enough time to really connect with your family—it can even feel like another chore on your to-do list. See if you can slow down enough to find small moments in each day to make a connection with each other—from saying “good morning” to your children in a loving way or doing something thoughtful, there are so many small moments ripe for connection.

2

It's not all about you

It's hard not to take things personally when someone speaks to you in a rude or unkind way, but often these behaviors are coming from a place of discomfort within the other person. When you can take their action as a message that the other person is having a difficult time rather than as a personal attack, you can begin to relate to him/her differently. Doing this can open you both up, releasing defenses and leading toward communicating and connecting in a different way.

3

Really listen

We often confuse hearing for listening. Hearing is just perceiving the sounds around you. You can hear someone while typing a text on the phone. Listening is the intentional choice to fully pay attention to the other person—from the tone and texture of their voice to their emotional state and body language. Next time you ask your loved ones how their day was, make sure that you really listen. Take in what they're saying without projecting what you feel or expect onto their words. Remember how you feel when someone is actually listening. Offer that to others.

4

Keep in touch with loved ones

Families need to be in touch with each other, literally. Not everyone is “touchy-feely,” but touch can be soothing and communicate both a feeling and a sense of connection that words alone cannot convey. From a gentle hand on a shoulder to lingering in a hug a bit longer, see if you can reach out and touch your loved ones a little more.

5

Have an attitude of curiosity

Close family members often see each other as having a fixed identity and assume they know how the other is going to act in any given moment. By doing this you become closed to seeing each other as you really are in the moment—it prevents you from having the ability to see the change that's happening as those around you grow. We're constantly changing and evolving, especially in small, subtle ways, so rather than assuming you know the other person completely, see if instead, it's possible to be open and have an attitude of curiosity. See what's new.

Tip

When time is really tight, try to create at least one micro-moment of true connection this week. If distractions arise, just notice them and recommit to your intention.

Phones down!

Don't let your device keep you from communicating face to face.

In our plugged-in world, you'll probably have your phone on when interacting with loved ones. But checking it too often can keep you from truly connecting. Use these phone etiquette practices for a better real-time experience.

- If you're not using your device to look up something that came up in conversation, or if it seems to bother someone you're with, **AVOID DROPPING OUT MID-CONVERSATION TO CHECK YOUR PHONE**. If you must, find a space away where you can scroll with abandon.
- If one person takes out their phone, can you **RESIST THE URGE TO PULL YOURS OUT?**
- Plan an amazing Saturday for you and yours. **DON'T CHECK SOCIAL MEDIA** to see how amazing everyone else's Saturday is.
- If there's one person you talk to a lot online who lives nearby, **INVITE THEM OUT**.
- **BINGE ON SOME OTHER SCREEN FOR A WHILE**. Watch Netflix. Do it with your family. Make it a double feature.

Be happy and healthy

From head to toe and morning till night, treat yourself with the kindness that everyone deserves. *By Sharon Salzberg*

People often have some difficulty in caring for themselves, in receiving love, in believing they deserve to be happy.

Imagine for a moment the amount of energy you expend brooding over the future, ruminating about the past, comparing yourself to others, and worrying about what might happen next. That is a huge amount of energy. Now imagine that energy gathered in and returned to you. Underlying our usual patterns of self-preoccupation, stinging self-judgment, and fear is the universal, innate potential for love and awareness.

Loving-kindness meditations point us back to a place within, where we can cultivate love

and help it flourish. Developing care toward ourselves is the first objective. Practicing loving-kindness toward yourself can be the foundation for developing healthy self-care habits that allow you to flourish.

In the pages that follow, you'll find ideas for using mindfulness to bring more joy and playfulness into your life, savor the food you eat, laugh more, sleep more soundly, and wake up refreshed.

Sound good? Start by trying the meditation on the opposite page, silently repeating phrases that offer good qualities to yourself. See what it feels like to cultivate loving-kindness toward the person you know best.



PLAINPICTURE/IMAGE SOURCE/STEVEN C. DE LA CRUZ

PRACTICE

Befriend yourself

It's usually easier to be kind to others than to oneself. This loving-kindness meditation turns a little tenderness back to you. *By Sharon Salzberg*

1

Find your good

Start by taking delight in your own goodness, recalling some of the things you've done out of good-heartedness. Then silently recite phrases that reflect what we wish most deeply for ourselves. Try:

- *May I live in safety.*
- *May I have mental happiness (peace, joy).*
- *May I have physical happiness (health, freedom from pain).*
- *May I live with ease.*

Or you can use phrases that are more meaningful to you. Relax and let the phrases emerge gently from your heart rather than be a pounding insistence in your head.

2

Wish yourself well

Repeat the phrases with enough space and silence between so they fall into a rhythm that is pleasing to you. Direct your attention to one phrase at a time.

4

Get centered

After some time, visualize yourself in the center of a circle made up of those who have been kind to you, or have inspired you because of their love. Perhaps you've met them, or read about them; maybe they've existed historically or even mythically. That is the circle. As you see yourself in the center of it, experience yourself as the recipient of their love. Gently repeat the phrases of loving-kindness for yourself.

3

Practice some more

Each time you notice your attention has wandered, be kind to yourself and let go of the distraction. Come back to repeating the phrases without judging or disparaging yourself.

5

Finish and let go

To close the session, let go of the visualization, and simply keep repeating the phrases for a few more minutes. Each time you do so, you are transforming your old, hurtful relationship to yourself, and are moving forward, sustained by the force of kindness.

PRACTICE

Stop mourning the morning

Beginning your day with a few mindful moments helps you get up on the right side of the bed. *By Shelby Freedman Harris*

We've all been there. It's morning, the dreaded alarm clock goes off, and you groan, because you just can't muster the will to sit up and start the day.

Sadly, most of us are sleep deprived these days, so any extra minutes of shut-eye seem far too precious to readily give up. Our brains and bodies have been asleep for hours, and the shift from sleep to wake isn't easy. Oftentimes a busy

day lies ahead, so we must struggle to get a grip on our immediately racing thoughts upon awakening.

Keeping a routine morning mindfulness practice can help awaken the brain and bring stability and focus to your morning. You may even find that, with regular practice, you begin to enjoy awakening just for the period of quiet you experience at the start of your day.



JASON LEE

1

Let the sun shine in

You may not want to give up your weekend lie-in, but keeping a consistent bedtime—and, especially, wake-time—seven days a week is key to getting up with less trouble each day. Morning light helps set the body's sleep-wake pattern, signaling an end to melatonin (a sleep-inducing hormone) production at night and bringing about wakefulness in the morning. Open the shades and soak in the natural light. Even a cloudy day will do the trick.

2

Find a comfort-able spot

Once you have opened up all the shades in your room, find a spot near a window to sit (the edge of the bed, a chair).

3

Observe your breath

Feel your breath as it moves into your body and then out. Focus on this breath and allow your mind to travel with it as you inhale and exhale. If your mind wanders to something else—like how you'd love to crawl back into bed and sleep for the rest of the day—simply note that it happened and nonjudgmentally bring your focus back to the breath.

4

Check the weather

Look out the window and bathe your face in natural light. Take a moment to observe the weather outside as you gaze out your window from your comfortable, seated position. Is it sunny outside? Cloudy? Rainy? What do the clouds look like, what color is the sky? Become aware of your feelings, positive or negative, about the current weather situation. Notice what arises in your mind as you allow yourself to experience the weather as a nonjudgmental observer.

5

Stand up to start your day

Plant your feet firmly onto the floor and notice the texture, temperature of the floor. Is it carpeted and warm? Cold and concrete? Stand straight up, stretch your arms up high, take a deep breath, and get moving.



Play on!

Children play. Nobody has to tell them to make time for it. But as adults, we can forget what play is, how vital it is, and even how fun it is! Here are tips to bring play into your daily life and refresh your outlook.

By Elisha and Stefanie Goldstein

Take a play history

Drum up those old playful feelings you've lost over years of adulthood by taking a moment to reflect on how you played as a kid: Did you play mostly by yourself, or with friends (or furry friends)? What made you feel free, so you'd lose track of time and truly engage in the moment? Maybe you created imaginary worlds or had invisible friends or built

sandcastles on the beach. As you think about this, notice if the feeling of play arises. If you notice a smile, let it linger.

Be a playmaker

Having a playful life means choosing right here, right now to actively engage in play on a regular basis. What we choose to do makes a big impact on our health and happiness. Do you

explore, learn, look for new experiences, travel, or spend time with people who nourish you? If you choose to be an active playmaker, you'll not only have a lot more fun—science shows you may be tapping into the fountain of youth.

Collect your toys

Playing the game *Trouble* may not feel as playful now as it did

when you were a kid (then again, it might). So it's important to think about what things bring *you* joy. Consider activities that take very little effort, and some that take more effort. Maybe it's cooking new foods, doing yoga, riding horses, visiting a trendy neighborhood, kissing, hiking, flying kites, playing a musical instrument, putting on sexy clothes, or looking through art books. Collect a list of your toys and then plan a playdate.

Make a playdate

Why should kids get to have all the fun?! Play isn't a habit for most adults, so it's important to intentionally make time for it in our lives—and that means scheduling playdates for ourselves, whether solo or with a friend. Just like you schedule your days with responsibilities, workouts, meditations, and to-do lists, playdates equally deserve a recurring space on your calendar.

Find a playmate

For many of us life is more fun when we have someone to do things with. Who can you recruit to be your partner in your mission to bring play back?

Bring some attitude

Steve Gross' title at the Life is Good Kids Foundation is "Chief Playmaker"—how cool is that? His entire job revolves around play because research has found play to be one of the

greatest resiliency factors for kids. "Play is not reserved for the sandbox, it's not reserved for flip flops, beer pong, or Frisbee golf," Gross says. "We can bring it into everything we do." Bring a playful mindset to whatever you're doing and you can make even the hardest of work feel fun.

Don't sweat the small stuff

And as the late Richard Carlson famously said, "It's all small stuff!" With that said, being playful can be difficult when faced with all of the very real responsibilities we deal with every day. Without minimizing the weight of these issues, we can begin relating to them differently. We spend so much of our sacred time worrying and stressing about what happened or what might happen and we become so tightly wound that even in quiet moments it can feel nearly impossible to settle and relax into them. See if you can keep coming back to your present moment experience—returning to what you know is real and true right now.

Laugh more

No, seriously. Laugh! More! Not only does it actually feel good, it also releases the good-feeling vibes of our old friend cortisol. Some say it even helps strengthen your abdominal muscles. Watch a comedy, find a laughter yoga class near you, tell some jokes, and if you can't seem to find anything funny then think of something that made you laugh in the past and let yourself relive it. Or you can just smile—but be careful...smiling has been known to lead to laughter.

Be a kid again

Studies show that when you put yourself in youthful environments it impacts your mind and body. Fly a kite, swing on swings, play tag, throw the ball around. It may seem silly (and even uncomfortable at first) but if you surrender to the experience you might just find yourself smiling!

Take time for yourself

Many of us put ourselves last on our priority list, and setting aside time to do things you enjoy can feel indulgent. But taking time each week to do something YOU enjoy—that's just living a happy, mindful life.

“Recapturing your childlike curiosity for all things natural and untamed, you can recharge and reinvigorate yourself in the very next moment.”

Donald Altman, author of The Mindfulness Toolbox

PRACTICE

Eat, drink,
be mindful

Even if you usually slow down to savor your meals, mindful intentions can vanish when it's time to grab a snack. *By Jean L. Kristeller, PhD*

Let's face it: **We all eat mindlessly** at times, whether we're yakking with friends, in a hurry, watching TV, or finishing all the food on the plate just because it's there. Or we might be eating to handle stress, gobbling down some comfort food but not really tasting it after the first few bites.

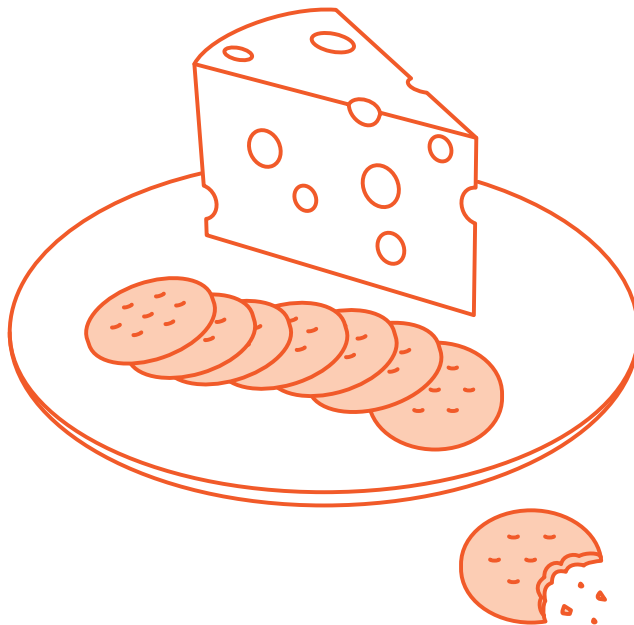
Mindfulness is a powerful way to bring balance into every aspect of how we eat. It cultivates *inner wisdom*—awareness of how our body and mind are reacting—and combines it with *outer wisdom*—making wiser use of

nutritional information to satisfy your needs and preferences.

Here's a mindful-eating technique you can use when you want a snack. It could be late afternoon, when you're tired, hungry, and perhaps have had a stressful day, or anytime you end up eating mindlessly. It's a good idea to try this approach at a snack time that occurs regularly and when you are alone, so you can fully focus on your experiences. You can then use these practices almost anytime you have an urge to eat.

Tip

Novelty is the spice of life, so when choosing a snack, try a new-to-you food once in a while. You're more likely to pay close attention to the flavors and sensations.



JASON LEE

1

Stop for a moment and bring awareness to your breath

Slow down by taking two or three deep breaths. Tune your awareness in to what's making you want to eat. Are you physically hungry? How do you know? Or are you stressed or bored? Perhaps you just got home and saw a box of crackers out. There may be several triggers to your urge; notice them. And if you're physically hungry, go ahead and have a snack.

2

Choose your snack mindfully

Consider what is calling you. What would really be satisfying? What would you enjoy—to help you relax, bring comfort, or hold you over until dinner? Do you want something sweet, crispy, or savory? Are those crackers still calling you, perhaps with a little cheese? Or do you really want ice cream? Give some thought to this—you will be more satisfied and less likely to overeat than if you had just grabbed the first thing in front of you.

3

Use outer wisdom to consider how much to eat

One good rule is to eat about 100 calories per hour to sustain you until the next time you eat. That's about how much your body will burn during this time, and it allows you to enjoy your snack, rather than feel guilty about it. So if the crackers are calling you, and there are two hours until dinnertime, figure out about how many crackers would equal 200 calories.

4

Combine it with inner wisdom

Savor the food, eating it slowly and without doing anything else. Pay attention to enjoyment and the pleasurable signals your mouth and taste buds are sending you. You'll be surprised how satisfied you are with a smaller amount of food, both because you are fully paying attention (rather than also, say, opening the mail) and because you are giving yourself permission to enjoy this amount of food.

5

Be flexible

Another day or another time you may want to try different techniques. Be curious and accepting of yourself. Bring these practices to other snack times. Explore how the quality of your experiences of food and eating shift when you bring a mindful, accepting, and open awareness to them. ●

PRACTICE

Wind down
your mind

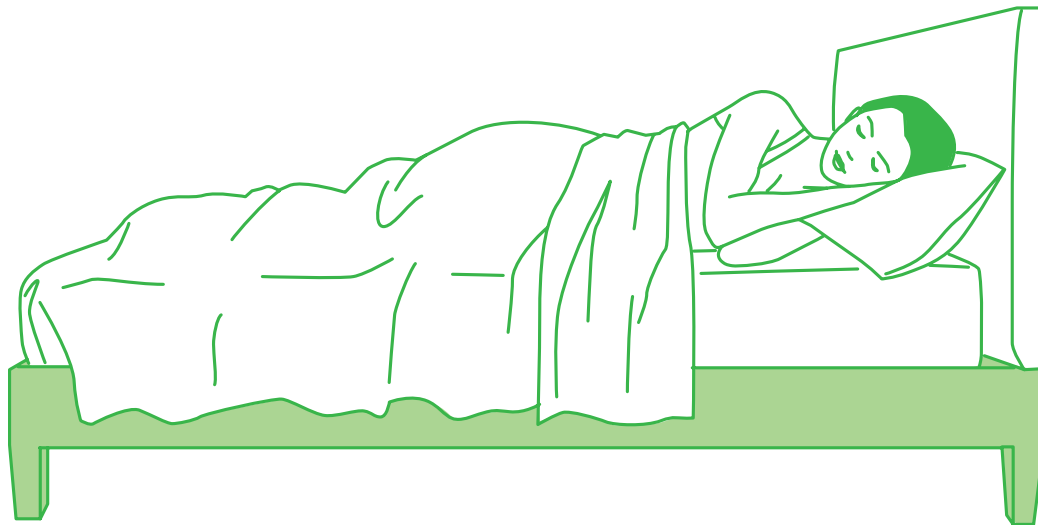
Following this calming routine before bedtime can ease your path to a good night's sleep. *By Shelby Freedman Harris*

As someone who works every day with patients struggling with insomnia, the most common thing I hear is that once the head hits the pillow, the brain just doesn't stop. My patients know that sleep should come, but their brains want to keep thinking about both pressing and mundane things, such as reviewing the day's events and all the tasks that need to be completed.

When we lose awareness of the present moment, our minds get stuck in maladaptive ways of thinking. For example, you might be trying to go to sleep but your mind gets lost

thinking about the groceries you need to buy. Deep, relaxed breathing is forgotten. And once you realize sleep isn't happening, your muscles tense and your thought process quickly shifts to "I'm not falling asleep! I have XYZ to do this week and I won't be able to function tomorrow." The body seizes up, breathing and heart rate can both quicken, and falling sleep becomes more difficult.

Newer models of insomnia treatment are beginning to incorporate mindfulness. Here's a grounding exercise to help you get some quality shut-eye.



JASON LEE

1

Dim the lights one hour before bedtime

Start winding down the brain and body by dimming the lights. Engage in relaxing activities outside the bedroom that pass the time quietly.

2

Avoid looking at anything with a screen

Stow away your tablet, phone, computer, and TV for the night—the light can keep you awake and alert.

3

Ten minutes before bedtime, try a mindfulness exercise

Sit in a comfortable chair in the dimly lit room. Imagine your body's outline; trace it in your head. Notice the pressure you feel against the chair. Does your head feel heavy? Then slowly move attention to your ear, shoulder, arm, and leg. Work down to your feet, then back up the other side of your body. Take about five minutes for this.

4

If your mind begins to wander, notice that it wandered and get back on track

Try to avoid judging yourself—your mind will indeed wander; the skill lies in getting it back on track.

5

Get in bed and focus on your breath

If you are unable to fall asleep, get up, sit in the comfortable chair again and repeat the exercise. Don't get back into bed until you're sleepy—and don't sleep in the chair!



*stick
with it*

deepen your practice

MICKY WISWEDEL/STOCKSY

Keep on keeping on

Want to take your practice further? We've got you covered.

If you've made it this far in this guide to getting started with mindfulness, congratulations!

By now, chances are you're convinced that meditation is a good idea for you. Maybe you've been inspired by a friend or colleague who took up the practice and seems calmer and more at ease. Perhaps you've already begun to practice mindfulness yourself, and have noticed positive changes—whether in interactions with your family and friends, on the job, or in your experience of your physical self.

The stories in the following pages are intended to help you along the path to making meditation an essential and non-negotiable part of your life. You'll hear from experienced meditators and teachers about the habits, practices, and attitudes that help them keep going when things get rocky. You'll learn about practical, proven techniques for navigating around the obstacles that are bound to come up for any meditator. Whether you find yourself feeling bored, antsy, isolated, or simply uncertain about the best way to continue your practice, you'll find plenty of good ideas for finding your way forward.

As you may already suspect, seeking support from others is a great way to deepen and strengthen your practice. To that end, we've included lots of information about resources to help you connect with the ever-growing community of meditators. There are all sorts of programs and meditation centers you can check out, online guides and apps that can enhance your experience, and classes, groups, and teachers who can offer you encouragement and help you stick with meditation, wherever you are in your journey.

Ask the experts

Sometimes it's the little things that trip you up. Here, two mindfulness experts address a few pesky practice questions. *By Tara Healey and Jonathan Roberts*

I start to fall asleep sometimes. Fighting it drives me crazy. What should I do?

Brace yourself for the following truth-bomb: If you find yourself consistently falling asleep during meditation, you may not be getting enough sleep. Meditation is important. Sleep is also important. In fact, meditation can help you notice when you're skimping on sleep or exercise or not eating well. Maybe it can spur you to check into whether there's something in your life you can cut back on. (Spoiler: There's a good chance it involves the internet or your so-called smartphone.)

And that fighting you're doing? Take the opportunity to bring it right into the practice. Allow the experience of resistance to be seen through the lens of mindfulness: Be curious, receptive, open. What's behind your feistiness? Why are you fighting with such vigor? Trying hard to win the prize for best meditator?

Sleepiness is a common experience for meditators, and it can happen even when you're pretty adequately rested. It may not be merely a warning sign that you're spending too much time on YouTube watching cat acrobatics;

sometimes it is a pouty response to the very act of meditating. Let's not mince words: Relative to the experience of reality typically demanded of us, meditating is boring. Have you ever felt sleepy when you were bored? Exactly. But on an encouraging note—when you forced yourself to pay attention to something you thought would be boring, did you ever find that you got something unexpected out of it?

So, let's say you're sitting in meditation and your head starts nodding. The moment you become aware of it you can begin to work with it. What's actually happening? What sensations are you aware of? You can also try widening your lens of attention from, say, breath sensation to whole body awareness. Widen even more to include sound—in the room and outside of it. You can try standing meditation (if it won't distract others) and opening your eyes if they are closed. If none of this works, stop and take a mini-nap. If you acknowledge the need for sleep and give into it for a while, you'll be surprised at how much replenishment you can get. Fighting it just saps your energy. Then, you can pick up where you left off: just sitting there doing nothing!

And while getting your butt onto a cushion or chair to meditate is a notable achievement, it's likely you'll find greater satisfaction if you're sitting there when you're feeling alert. Right before bed may not be the right time for you to meditate, unless you're using the practice as a way to slide into sleepiness.

GWENDA KACZOR



What should I do when I get really bored? Or really anxious and scared?



Our culture conditions us to be busy and distracted. We tend to look for what's novel and exciting. Meditation—especially in

the beginning—doesn't seem novel or exciting in the least. In fact, it's an ideal laboratory for studying boredom, because at first blush, meditating is going to seem like the most boring thing anybody's ever tricked you into doing. You may feel like you've been buried alive in your own body. But go with this. Examine how boredom feels in your body, especially if it spills over into feelings of anxiety and fear. You may notice a line of sweat breaking on your forehead; a feeling of coiled, pulsating energy in your calves; or shallow breathing. Take note of these sensations—recognize and respect them—but try not to feed them. Don't struggle to find an explanation for it all. Simply let the feelings be there.

This may be incredibly hard at first, like lying in bed and trying to will yourself to go to sleep. But in the same way that nobody ever lies awake forever, it's equally true that boredom, anxiety, and fear will inevitably mellow and fade—not in spite of your attention to them, but because of it.

I use meditation apps and audio guides mostly. Is that OK or should I try it without?

Guided meditation on audio can be great support for meditation practice. For some, it's a long-term part of their practice life. For others, it's something they do for a while and then leave aside, like training wheels. As usual, there's no rigid rule about it.

If you're someone who really likes using audio guidance, it might be interesting to explore practicing silently for a while. The quiet that comes with silent meditation can bring a lot of relief in our noisy world. You may come to appreciate the sound of your own mind. You might also consider finding ways to meditate with others, by joining a class or a group. Practicing together with others often turns out to be a great way to get silent support from others in the room. It's also nice to share your insights with new friends who are going through similar experiences.



How to stick with meditation for the long haul

Meditation is easy to learn, hard to maintain. But whoever you are, wherever you are, you can do it. The best strategies involve getting a little help from friends.

By Karin Evans

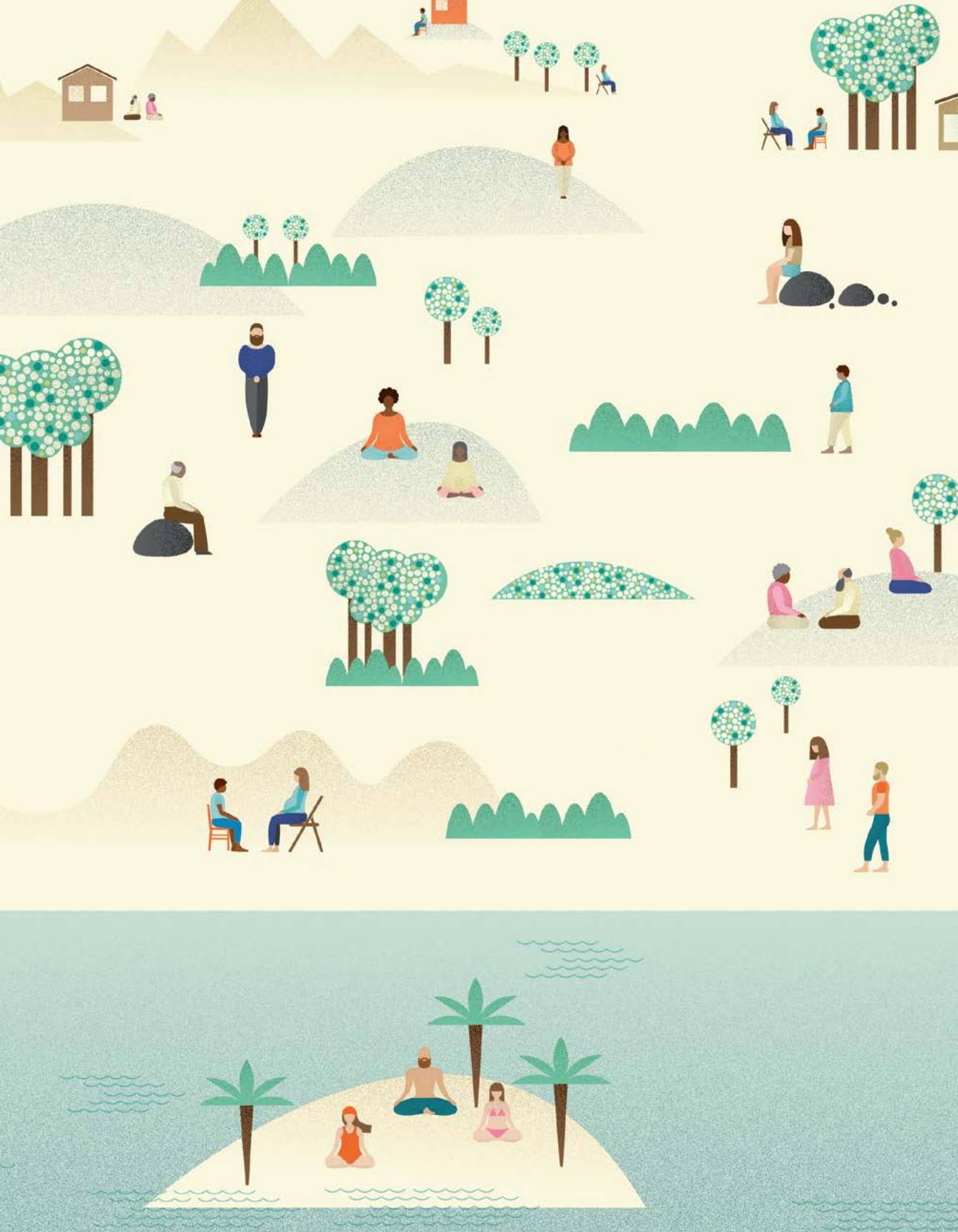
Jeany Duncan got interested in meditation five years ago. A big-city paramedic, she found it helped with the stress of her job. Today she works in clinical research at the University of California, San Francisco. She still faces stress, but she has a place of calm to turn to—her meditation stool. “I sit down and I bring my little timer over and I think, ‘Whew, I am home,’” says Duncan.

But it took a while. In the beginning it was really hard because she felt so antsy. She kept at it, though, and today it’s an important part of her life. “What I get from staying with it is a completely calm, safe place to go,” says Duncan. “You just have to get through the uncomfortable part.”

“I set the bar at a something I know I will do,” she says, “say 20 minutes in the morning, and if I do more that’s wonderful. If I don’t have time, I just do it for five minutes.” She’s found that meditation stays with her. “If I notice myself revving up inside, I can stop and take a couple of breaths. I can get back to that calm place. It’s really a minor commitment for so much benefit.”

A human being takes around 20,000 breaths in a day. Meditation requires that we pay attention to just a tiny fraction of them. How hard could that be? Remarkably easy—at first. You sit still, breathe, and be aware of your breathing. If your thoughts wander, and they will, bring your attention back to your

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ASIA PIETRZYK





All you need to meditate is a mind, body, and a little bit of oxygen. **BUT WHAT IF YOU START FEELING ISOLATED?** Too far away from other meditators? Find a group class online or start a regular meditation session with a friend or two on Skype, Zoom, or Google Hangout.

breath. It's as if you put a little leash on your mind and when the mind strays, you gently pull it back, breathing in, breathing out.

But while meditation is easy to learn, it's hard to maintain. Keeping it up is the bigger challenge. You start out and get in a groove and then one day you feel too lazy. Or you sit down to meditate and you become restless. You remember a recent slight by a friend and mull that over, forgetting to return to the breath. You decide meditation isn't doing anything for you. The next day you forget all about it.

Yet daily practice, even for a few minutes, can strengthen resolve. "One of the keys is

regularity, committing to something every day, even if it's 10 minutes," says Florence Meleo-Meyer, who is a leader in the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program pioneered by Jon Kabat-Zinn. It can help, she adds, to have some guidance. That could be a recorded practice, it could be a class, just so there is some structure to support your intention.

Patricia Mushim Ikeda, who teaches at the East Bay Meditation Center in Oakland, California, likes to keep it simple. She begins her classes by loading up a table in front of the class with meditation aids—including bells, books, little statues, cushions, CDs, and flashcards. "There is lots of gear," she says. "People get curious. Then I invite a volunteer to come to the front of the room and I hand the student a bag. One by one, I take the items off the table, name them, and drop them into the bag. When the table is emptied, I say, 'You don't need any of this to meditate.'"

"So what do you need?" Mushim asks the class. "You need a body. You need to be alive, and if you're alive you're breathing. That's all you need."

Expect to hit a wall

Ask a random group of people if they meditate and you are likely to get answers like I did: "It's a great idea but I just can't find time." "I used to do it, but I guess I forgot." "It felt lonely." Or, as one woman told me, "Frankly, I used to do it, but now I find a glass of wine gets me there faster."

Such responses are not uncommon, says Meleo-Meyer. "At the start we feel 'I am going to change my life.' We have big expectations, and there is something about the everydayness of meditation that is not quite so sexy." Hitting a hard patch is inevitable, she says. "It's important to know that a lull will happen, that it is not a sign to discontinue."

That's a sentiment echoed by mindfulness leaders around the country. "The one challenge with meditation is having it become a systematic ongoing activity," says Steve Hickman, a clinical psychologist and founder and executive director of the University of California San Diego Center for Mindfulness. If you can just keep sitting, even if you miss a day now and then, you're on the right track.

Peg Bogle took up meditation 28 years ago, on her own, and she has kept at it. No matter what. "I may not exercise, I may not wash my face, but I always meditate," says Bogle, an educational therapist in Northern California. "I just started," she says. "My practice evolved to 15 minutes in the morning and 15 minutes at night and that's how it's stayed."

"It never gets easy and it never gets perfect," she adds. "I have had experiences that truly felt awakened and wonderful and I have had plenty of dry times when I am totally distracted." She found a piece of advice from meditation teacher Jack Kornfield very useful: When he experiences resistance, he makes himself stay just five more minutes.

Gather support

Many of us, though, find it hard to stay. "Meditation ultimately is a do-it-yourself endeavor in the same sense as exercise," says Hickman. "We don't need anyone or anything to go for a run. Yet do we always exercise as much as we intend to? Of course not. Most of us need a bit of scaffolding to help build the practice into our routine, to have guidance from others who have been where we are." That can range from reading an article to going online, enrolling in an MBSR class, or attending a silent retreat.

Today there is more help available for beginning meditators than ever before—books, magazines, classes, retreats, video chats, virtual communities, and innovative apps and websites. So how to keep going? Here are a few basics: →

Starting meditation is pretty easy, but one day you're really irritable. You decide it's too boring. You get up and give up and don't go back. Until much later, when you recall why you started.



CAN'T SEEM TO FIND THE PERFECT TIME?
Stop trying! Set the bar lower: Give some attention to just one or two of the 20,000 breaths you take each day.

Consider a teacher

Most of us benefit from guidance and instruction when learning something new. A trained meditation instructor can provide support and can help with the specific questions that might come up for you.

“When a teacher is available to us, it’s the best possible scenario, someone who has been down the path and is a couple of steps ahead to help us get unstuck,” says Hickman.

Difficult emotions or memories may come up in meditation that people don’t know how to handle, says Diana Winston, director of mindfulness education at the Mindful Awareness Research Center, UCLA and coauthor of *Fully Present: The Science, Art, and Practice of Mindfulness*. “More advanced work with a teacher will allow to you move into the nuances of your practice, will keep it alive and interesting and applicable to your life.” (For more on how to find a teacher, see page 122.)

It takes lots of practice and a variety of other skills to teach meditation. A good teacher is not just conveying information, but modelling a way of being. Certification for meditation teachers is still fairly new, but the number of programs and graduates is slowly growing. UCLA is pioneering a year-long course leading to a Certificate of Mindfulness Facilitation, for instance. And Florence Meleo-Meyer, director of the Oasis Institute for Mindfulness-Based Professional Education and Training, says her organization has certified the training of more than one hundred MBSR teachers worldwide and will soon post a list of those certified MBSR teachers.

Online teachers linked to mindfulness programs at major centers are also available. A few sites make it possible to do video chats with the instructor.

Check out a class

Classes can offer great routine and support for beginners by offering systematic guided instruction, as well as some company on the journey, which veteran teachers say is no small thing. “There is just something about being in community,” says Hickman. “It keeps it fresh.”

In Meleo-Meyer’s experience working with meditation classes, from the very first session people began to share what brought them. “It begins this sense of all the different ways that have drawn us together. As people hear from each other there is a sense of relationship—‘That was just what I was going to say!’”

That said, finding the right class may take some effort. It’s important to sample different approaches to find one that fits, says

Meleo-Meyer. Some questions to consider: Does the class feel like it speaks to new meditators? Can you sit in on a session before making up your mind? Some meditation centers offer secular practice, some have a spiritual bent, and some emphasize diversity. (For more on programs and classes, see page 124.)

Whatever setting you may be drawn to, if the price is steep, ask about reduced fees or scholarships. Most organizations have a policy of offering financial support to students, seniors, and others who need it.

Seek community

Talk to longtime meditators about how they’ve kept their practice going, and you’ll hear a common refrain: Company can help. When Steve Hickman finds his dedication dragging—and he does, even after teaching meditation for years—he gets support from other meditators. “I learn from their experience,” he says. “If I were sitting in a room day after day in total isolation practicing, I think I would lose perspective.”

“It’s really nice to meditate with other people and not feel alone,” says Winston.

But if you live far from an urban center and can’t find anyone close to home to give you instruction, you can go for an online course. UCLA offers such courses, including one for beginners that includes optional chats with instructors and fellow meditators. (Check out UCLA’s Mindful Awareness Research Center on the web.) There are other well-designed programs, including an MBSR eight-week self-guided class authored by Florence Meleo-Meyer and Saki Santorelli. These days, people taking online classes often form online communities. (If you’re just looking for an inspiring talk to keep you going, check out the resources on page 125.)

Even the smallest community can help immensely, says Jeany Duncan, who relies on a community of two, herself included. “A friend and I agreed together to stick with it,” she says. “So we message each other each day.”

On a day when Duncan might have forgotten, her friend will text and mention her own meditation for that day. “It’s a simple text, maybe just ‘25,’ indicating how long each of us sat,” says Duncan. “We send each other a thumbs up and a word of encouragement and that’s it. We keep each other going.” ●

Lost? Confused?
Ready to quit?
Reach out to a
mindfulness center
and ask to talk to
a teacher, or look
for one online.
**THERE’S NO NEED
TO GO IT ALONE.**



How to find a teacher

Looking for instruction from someone? It's important to have your eyes open and make an informed choice. *By Diana Winston*

If you want to make mindfulness a part of your life, you'll probably want to consider working with a meditation teacher or instructor. Whether you meet face to face or via a video chat online, you'll want to keep the same principles in mind.

Learning mindfulness is a relationship. Even if you start with a book, you're learning from the author. If you and your teacher begin a dialogue, you can dig deeper into your life and be more present for it as it unfolds from moment to moment. That dialogue—much of it held in silence—will help your mindfulness practice unfold more creatively.

But how do you find a person who's right for you? Here are a few questions to consider.



For more resources on meditation basics, go to mindful.org/gettingstarted.

1

Do you have good chemistry with them?

Think about qualities you'd like to develop and see if the instructor embodies them. If you're going to learn from someone on an ongoing basis, you need to connect strongly.

2

Are they open and accessible?

You want someone who's relaxed and at ease, who comes across as present, caring, and compassionate. Equally important, you want someone who can work with your schedule.

3

Do they have a deep understanding of the practice?

While it's important that you and your instructor get along well, it's also important for them to be credentialed and have a strong personal practice to draw from when they're teaching.

4

Could they regard you as a friend?

They may not be a "friend" per se, but they're like one. Friends look in the same direction—not toward each other, but toward what's best for each person. Can you and the person teaching you communicate at eye level?

Why hanging out with other meditators helps

Sitting quietly and mindfully is powerful whether you do it alone or in company. But here are some compelling reasons to consider a regular group practice.

1

Learn from others

Sharing meditation experiences with others helps you see the world beyond your own life story. If you live remotely or are shut in, call a group and see if someone will video-chat with you or visit with you in your home.

2

Practice longer

In a group, people are more likely to sit for longer periods of time and settle into meditation more easily. Perhaps it's merely the fact that when you're at home you can jump up the second your phone rings, but in a group you will stay put.

3

Get more committed

Developing a regular meditation practice on your own can be a bit challenging. It's nice to have a buddy or two. When you commit to practicing with others, you're more likely to commit to your own practice, even when you are all by yourself.

4

Make new friends

You get to meet like-minded people. Extraordinary long-term friendships can arise from practicing together.

5

Go deeper

In groups, people talk together about meditation practice—not just the experience itself, but the insights and theories behind it. These discussions allow you to deepen your own experience and find renewed inspiration and motivation.



JASON LEE

Choosing a program

Mindfulness offers tools to explore the human condition in all its variety. Here's an overview of the many types of programs at your disposal.

Meditation centers

Although many meditation centers around the country are associated with religious organizations, you can find centers or programs that make room for people who prefer a non-religious orientation. Washington, DC, for example, has the Insight Meditation Community of Washington, which offers community meditation opportunities, retreats, workshops, and free online talks and guided meditations. There are similar centers in cities throughout North America. You can call to check them out.

Try, also, a center for mindfulness at a university near you. UCLA, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Massachusetts (among others) offer meditation programs open to the public. If you're unsure about your local school's program, call to ask if they encourage community participation.

Online and apps

One of the benefits of living in a digital age is that we can pretty much access whatever we want. That is certainly true of meditation.

Every major meditation center or university has an online component, offering you virtual courses, guided meditations, information on retreats and workshops. There are also new apps you can try, like Headspace and 10% Happier: Meditation for Fidgety Skeptics by Dan Harris. Type the word "meditation" into your search engine and you'll quickly see the remarkable number of programs available.

Mindfulness-based initiatives

Ever since Jon Kabat-Zinn developed Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction in 1979, it has steadily grown, to the point where you can find MBSR in any major city—and beyond. There's

also been an explosion in related programs for people facing all sorts of challenges.

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, with its strong emphasis on inquiry, is a powerful way for people with depression to explore their mental habits. Mindfulness-Based Childbirth and Parenting focuses on lifelong practices for mindful parenting. Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness Training gives special attention to working with thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward food. Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention is helpful for people who wish to develop a lifestyle that supports their recovery.

There are many more of these "mindfulness-based interventions" and a good internet search will turn them up.

Targeted training programs

Professionals who want to deepen their practice can take advantage of any number of mindful meditation programs specifically designed to meet their needs.

For example, CARE for Teachers (Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education) recognizes the stresses that teachers work under and adapts MBSR techniques to help educators improve their well-being and nurture their students. Doctors Ronald Epstein and Mick Krasner, of the University of Rochester Medical Center, offer training programs for physicians in an initiative called Mindful Practice. It aims to help doctors develop greater capacity for self-awareness in stressful and demanding situations and enhance their communication with patients. The Institute for Mindful Leadership helps leaders find the space they need to be more reflective, to make room for more intuition, and to become better team-builders.

7 meditation talks to inspire you

These days, you can access top mindfulness experts 24/7. Learn from the best with these talks. *By Teo Furtado*

1

Step out of the way

By Judson Brewer

Why is the state of flow so hard to achieve? In this TED Talk, a neuroscientist and mindfulness expert shows how we ourselves are the only barrier keeping us from flow.

2

Radical acceptance

By Tara Brach

"If we're at war with ourselves, we can't feel love and connection with our world," Brach says. She looks at how mindfulness can reveal the loving awareness that is our essence.

3

Find the space to lead

By Janice Marturano

In this talk, Marturano, founder of the Institute for Mindful Leadership, shows what mindful leadership really is, why it is critically important, and how it can be cultivated.

4

Moment by moment

By Jon Kabat-Zinn

The creator of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction and author of *Full Catastrophe Living* talks about cultivating mindfulness and integrating it moment-by-moment in our lives.

5

Can happiness be hardwired?

By Rick Hanson

Why are our brains like Velcro for the bad and Teflon for the good? In this podcast, the neuroscientist talks about how we can deepen our experiences and rewire our brains.

6

Love yourself

By Diana Winston

Winston shows how to work with hindrances that arise when we practice. She talks about the power of loving-kindness: a simple tool to help us cultivate self-compassion and recognize our shared humanity.

7

Mindfulness: what it is and is not

By Joseph Goldstein

"It's...being aware of what arises and then seeing what we learn from being aware." Sit back and learn from one of the leading mindfulness experts.



Contributors

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Mindfulness is about being
fully awake in our lives. It
is about perceiving the
exquisite vividness
of each moment.

Jon Kabat-Zinn



MICHEL RAVASIO/STOCKSY

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