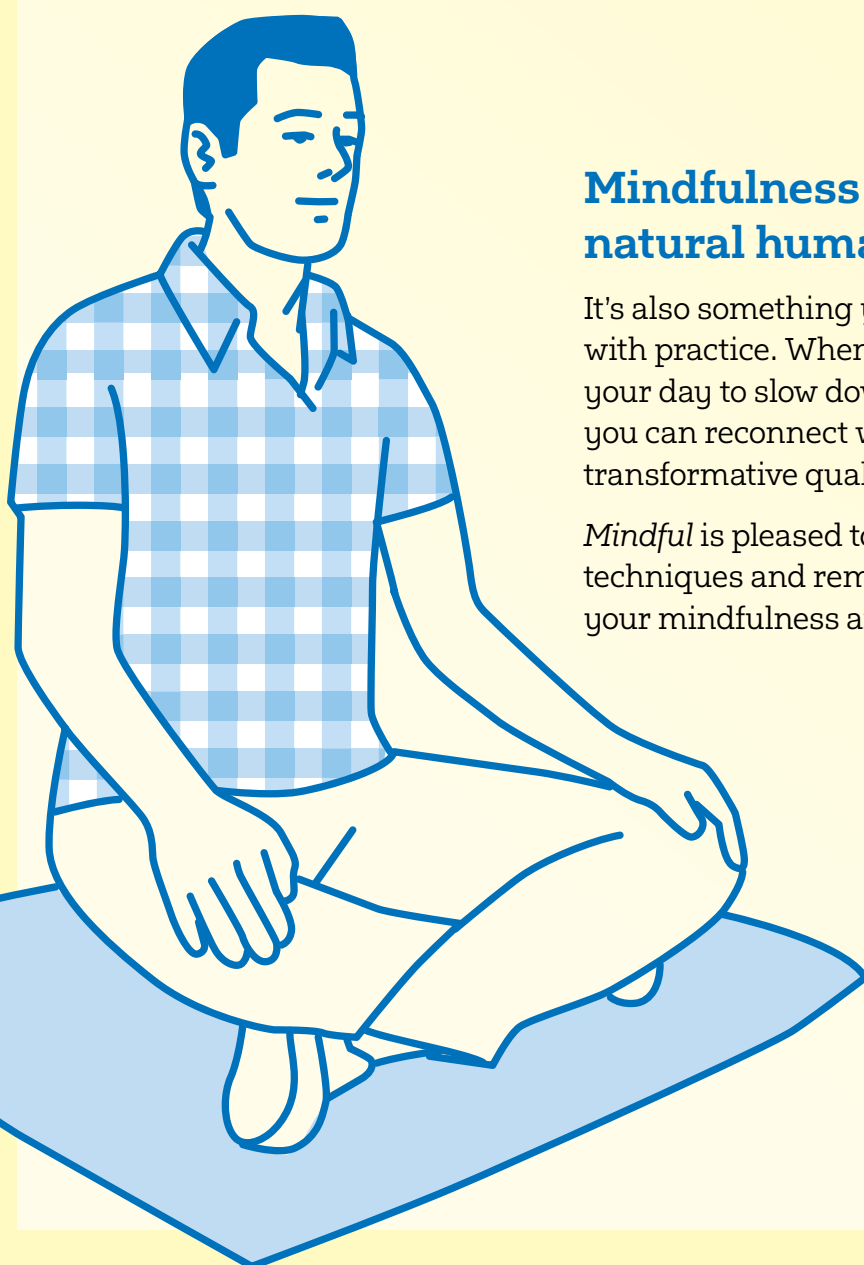


7 Techniques for a *Mindful Day*



Mindfulness is a natural human ability.

It's also something you can improve with practice. When you create ways in your day to slow down and be fully present, you can reconnect with this basic but transformative quality.

Mindful is pleased to offer this collection of techniques and reminders for how to hone your mindfulness and find space in your day.



What is Mindfulness?

We hear the word a lot these days. 2014 has even been called The Year of Mindful Living. 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 our 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 or overwhelmed by what's going on around us.

While mindfulness is innate, it can be cultivated through proven techniques, particularly seated, walking, standing, and moving meditation (it's also possible lying down but often leads to sleep); 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, enhance performance, gain insight and awareness through observing our own mind, and increase our attention to others' well-being.

Mindfulness meditation gives us a time in our lives when we can suspend judgment and unleash our natural curiosity about the workings of the mind, approaching our experience with warmth and kindness—to ourselves and others.

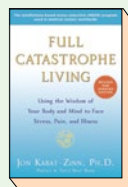


OVERHEARD

"Mindfulness—our capacity to pay attention, moment to moment, on purpose—is an immediately accessible ally."

Saki Santorelli, executive director of the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society

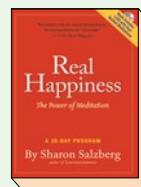
Books to Get You Started



FULL CATASTROPHE LIVING

By Jon Kabat-Zinn

From explanations of the benefits of mindfulness to stories of those who started practicing in midlife to how-tos, this book comes from the founder of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction himself.



REAL HAPPINESS: THE POWER OF MEDITATION

By Sharon Salzberg

A 28-day program of guided instruction in "three key skills" for living: concentration, mindfulness, and compassion. An accompanying audio CD contains guided meditations.



THE MINDFULNESS REVOLUTION

Edited by Barry Boyce

More than 40 short pieces by as many authors who present how mindfulness works and how they've put it into practice in their lives and livelihood.

It's Not All in Your Head

TIME: 3 to 5 minutes

When we think about meditating (with a capital M), we can get hung up on thinking about our thoughts: we're going to do something about what's happening in our heads. It's as if these bodies we have are just inconvenient sacks for our brains to lug around.

Having it all remain in your head, though, lacks a feeling of good old gravity. That approach can make it seem like floating—as though we don't have to walk. We can just waft.

But meditation begins and ends in the body. It involves taking the time to pay attention to where we are and what's going on, and that starts with being aware of our body. That very act can be calming, since our body has internal rhythms that help it relax if we give it a chance.

Here's a posture practice that can be used as the beginning stage of a period of meditation practice or simply as something to do for a minute, maybe to stabilize yourself and find a moment of relaxation before going back into the fray. If you have injuries or other physical difficulties, you can modify this to suit your situation.

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, not perching or hanging back.



For more on mindfulness practice go to mindful.org/inpractice. To submit questions about techniques, the workplace, or relationships and homelife, email inpractice@mindful.org

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

Situate 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 and not too loose.

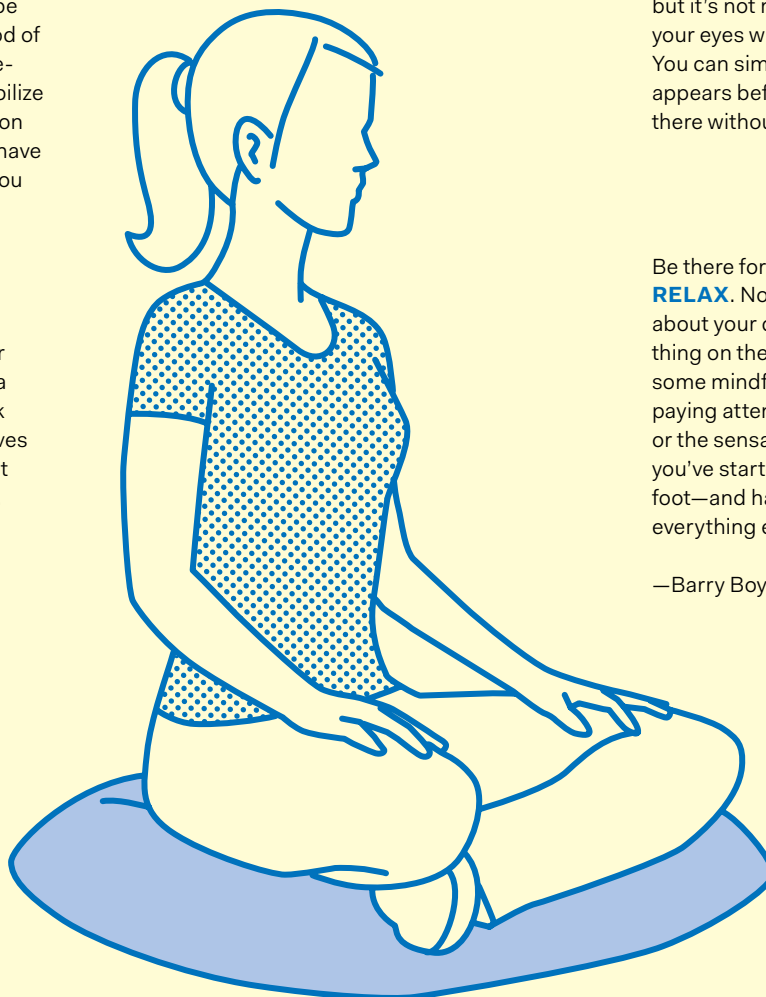
5

Drop your chin a little and let your **GAZE** fall gently downward. You may let your eyelids lower. If you feel the need, you may lower them completely, but it's not necessary to close your eyes when meditating. You can simply let what appears before your eyes be there without focusing on it.

6

Be there for a few moments. **RELAX**. Now get up and go about your day. And if the next thing on the agenda is doing some mindfulness practice by paying attention to your breath or the sensations in your body, you've started off on the right foot—and hands and arms and everything else. ●

—Barry Boyce



Body Language

Time: 10–20 minutes

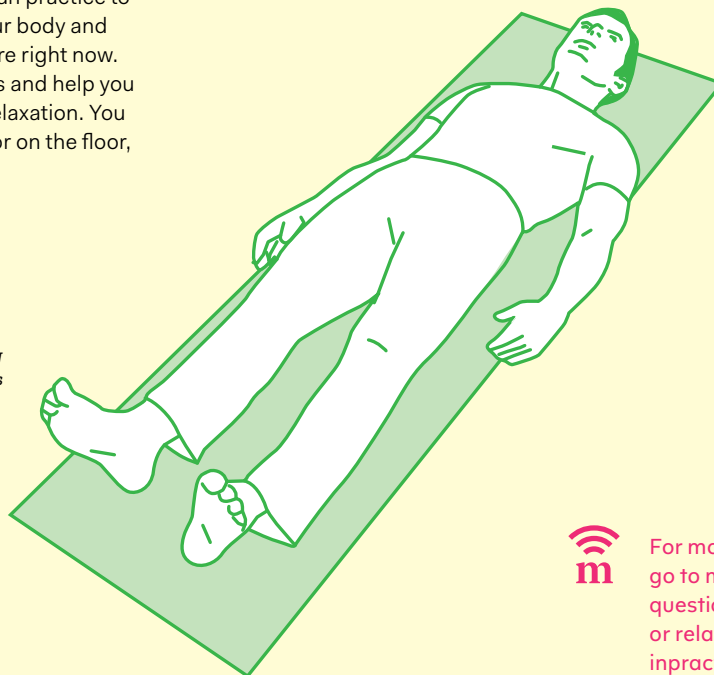
When was the last time you noticed how your body was feeling? Not just when you have a headache or you're tired or you have heartburn after that spicy taco you ate for lunch. But just noticing how your body is feeling right now, while you're sitting or standing or lying down. How about noticing how your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

.....
Susan Bauer-Wu, PhD, is the director of the Compassionate Care Initiative at the University of Virginia School of Nursing and the author of *Leaves Falling Gently: Living Fully with Serious & Life-Limiting Illness through Mindfulness, Compassion & Connectedness*.



1

Settle into a comfortable position, so you feel 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 shoulders, 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.

If you fall asleep during this body-scan practice, that's okay. 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. ●



For more on mindfulness practice, go to mindful.org/inpractice. To submit questions about techniques, the workplace, or relationships and home life, email inpractice@mindful.org

Tea Party

Time: 10 minutes

Over the years that I've been running Samovar Tea Lounge in San Francisco, I've found that life doesn't actually get better when we're distracted—surfing online, updating our status, checking the news, generally immersed in our devices. Life gets better when we're connecting with real people in real time. Not to mention that the less time we spend on our devices, the more time we have to actually do something. Write something. Create something. Taste something.

The ritual of tea—boiling the water, brewing the leaves, and sipping the infusion—does something that little else in life does these days: it gives us a little hiatus, a break in the action. Compared with the nano-gap we might get while waiting at a stoplight or grabbing a quick espresso, this is time we can actually dive into and enjoy.

We're not talking hours here. Try 10 minutes and see how you feel. It doesn't need to be complicated. Pay attention to each step, take your time, and you may find that for the rest of your day you're a little more relaxed, present, and cheerful.

Jesse Jacobs is the founder of Samovar Tea Lounge in San Francisco. You can find out more about the modern tea movement here: www.samovarlife.com/topics/savor-focus

1

Buy some good tea. Whole-leaf tea is generally fresher and better tasting—you get more bang for the buck. Look for consistency in size, shape, and color. I recommend unflavored tea, because it's generally better quality. And it's a fraction of the cost of tea bags or coffee.

2

When you're boiling the water, just boil the water. Don't do anything else. If you have a glass kettle, watch the bubbles go from tiny to large to roiling. Notice your breath and allow this experience to set the tone. The Earth is mostly water. You are mostly water. Water is a miracle, and so is heat. Enjoy them.

3

Add about 1 cup of boiled water to 1 heaping tablespoon of tea. Steep the leaves for only 1 minute. I like to use a generous amount of tea leaves to maximize their flavor and caffeine and brew it quickly. Notice the steam wafting up. Notice the aromas arising out of your cup. Breathe easy.

4

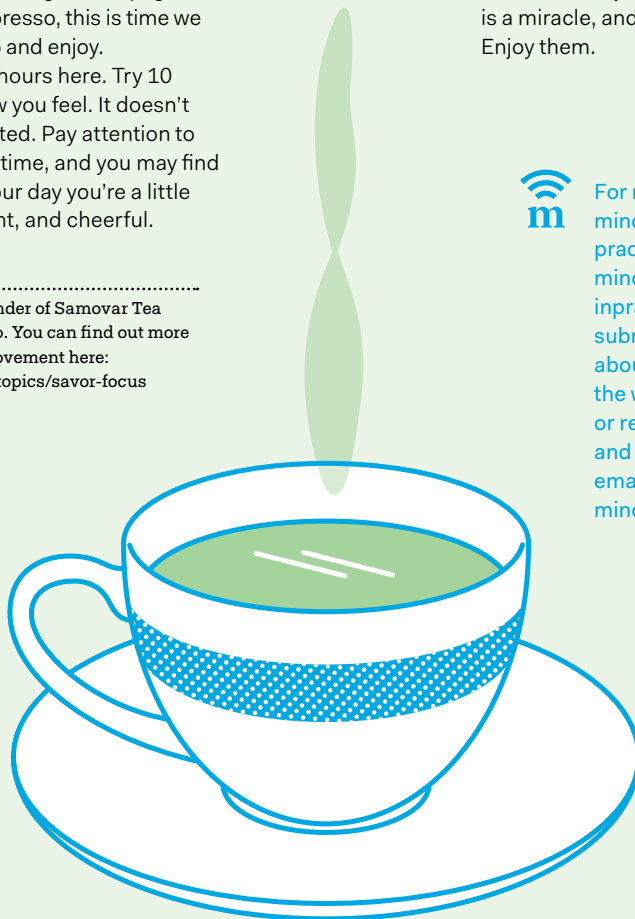
Remove the infusion and just sit with the tea for 2 minutes. Let it cool slightly and notice the color of the brew. Enjoy the aroma in the air. Feel the ceramic in your hand. Appreciate the fact that this infusion was made possible by someone thousands of miles away who picked the leaves.

5

Now is the time to drink your tea. Sip slowly. Pay attention to the temperature. Is it hot, warm, or cool? Notice the taste. Is it earthy or grassy or floral? How does the body of the tea feel in your mouth? Creamy and full, dry and thin, heavy or light? You might notice that taking this time to enjoy just one activity enriches all the others in your day. That's not because the activities have changed. But you have. ●



For more on mindfulness practice, go to mindful.org/inpractice. To submit questions about techniques, the workplace, or relationships and home life, email inpractice@mindful.org



Stressing Out? S.T.O.P.

Time: 1 to 3 minutes

Two-thirds of Americans say they need help for stress. But stress itself is not the problem. It's how we relate to stress.

The stress response is critical to our survival. It can save our lives or enable a firefighter to carry a 300-pound man down 20 flights of stairs. Of course, most of us don't encounter a life-or-death threat all that often. We usually experience stress reactions in response to thoughts, emotions, or physical sensations. If we're actively worried about whether we can put food on the table or get the perfect exam score, presto: the stress reaction activates. And if the bodily systems involved in stress don't slow down and normalize, the effects can be severe. Over time, we can succumb to, among other things, high blood pressure, muscle tension, anxiety, insomnia, gastro-digestive complaints, and a suppressed immune system.

Creating space in the day to stop, come down from the worried mind, and get back into the present moment has been shown to be enormously helpful in mitigating the negative effects of our stress response. When we drop into the present, we're more likely to gain perspective and see that we have the power to regulate our response to pressure.

Here's a short practice you can weave into your day to step into that space between stimulus and response.

Elisha Goldstein, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist and the author of *The Now Effect* and coauthor of *A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook*.



S

Stop what you're doing; put things down for a minute.

T

Take a few deep breaths. If you'd like to extend this, you can take a minute to breathe normally and naturally and follow your breath coming in and out of your nose. You can even say to yourself "in" as you're breathing in and "out" as you're breathing out if that helps with concentration.

O

Observe your experience just as it is—including thoughts, feelings, and emotions. You can reflect about what is on your mind and also notice that **thoughts** are not facts, and they are not permanent. Notice any **emotions** present and how they're being expressed in the body. Research shows that just naming your emotions can turn the volume down on the fear circuit in the brain and have a calming effect. Then notice your **body**. Are you standing or sitting? How is your posture? Any aches or pains?

P

Proceed with something that will support you in the moment: talk to a friend, rub your shoulders, have a cup of tea.

Treat this whole exercise as an experiment: Get curious about where there are opportunities in the day for you to just STOP—waking up in the morning, taking a shower, before eating a meal, at a stop light, before sitting down at work and checking email.

You can even use your smartphone's message indicator as a reminder to STOP, cultivating more mindfulness with technology.

What would it be like in the days, weeks, and months ahead if you started stopping more often?



For more on mindfulness practice, go to mindful.org/inpractice. To submit questions about techniques, the workplace, or relationships and home life, email inpractice@mindful.org

Tuning In



.....

How often do you feel really listened to? How often do you really listen to others? (Be honest.)

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.

1

Check inside: "How am I feeling just now? Is there anything getting in the way of being present for the other person?" If something is in the way, decide if it needs to be addressed first or can wait till later.

4

Reflect back what you are hearing, using the speaker's own words when possible, paraphrasing or summarizing the main point. Help the other person feel heard.

2

Feeling your own sense of presence, extend it to the other person with the intention to listen fully and openly, with interest, empathy, and mindfulness.

5

Use friendly, open-ended questions to clarify your understanding and probe for more. Affirm before you differ. Acknowledge the other person's point of view—acknowledging is not agreeing!—before introducing your own ideas, feelings, or requests. ●

3

Silently note your own reactions as they arise—thoughts, feelings, judgments, memories. Then return your full attention to the speaker.

.....
David Rome is a certified Mindful Focusing trainer.



For more on mindfulness practice, go to mindful.org/inpractice. To submit questions about techniques, the workplace, or relationships and home life, email inpractice@mindful.org

Winding Down and Falling Asleep

As someone who works every day with patients struggling with insomnia, the most common thing I hear is once the head hits the pillow, the brain doesn't stop. They know sleep should come, but the brain just wants to think about both pressing and mundane things, such as reviewing the day's events and 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 all 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.



For more on mindfulness practice, go to [mindful.org/inpractice](https://www.mindful.org/inpractice). To submit questions about techniques, the workplace, or relationships and home life, email inpractice@mindful.org.

1

Dim the lights 1 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, begin a focused mindfulness exercise. Sit in a comfortable chair in the same dimly lit room. Imagine the outline of your body and slowly trace it in your head. Keep in mind the amount of pressure you're feeling against the chair or the ground and be mindful of where there's more pressure and where there's less. Start with your head. Is it touching the back of the chair? How heavy does it feel against the chair, wall, or just the air? Then slowly move down to your ear, then shoulder, arm, and leg. Work down to your feet and then back up the other side of your body. Take about five minutes for this exercise.

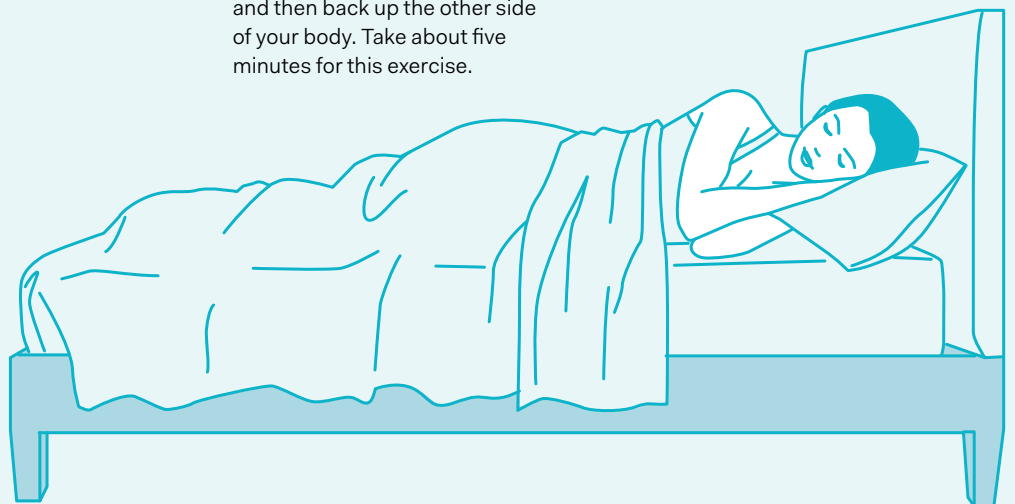
4

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! ●

.....
Shelby Freedman Harris is a clinical psychologist and director of the Behavioral Sleep Medicine Program at the Sleep-Wake Disorders Center at Montefiore Medical Center in New York.



Be Kind to Yourself—Right Now

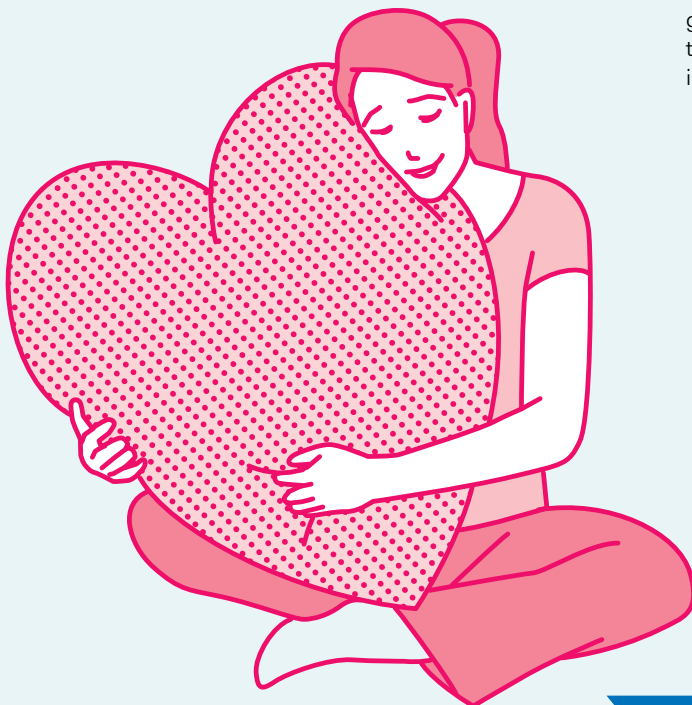
People often find some difficulty in caring for themselves, in receiving love, in believing they deserve to be happy.

Imagine for a moment the amount of energy you expend brooding over the future, ruminating about the past, comparing yourself to others, judging yourself, worrying about what might happen next. That is a huge amount of energy. Now imagine all of 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, the foundation for later being able to include others in the sphere of kindness.

This loving kindness practice involves silently repeating phrases that offer good qualities to oneself and to others.

.....
Sharon Salzberg has been teaching meditation for over 40 years. She is author most recently of *Love Your Enemies* and *Real Happiness at Work*.



1

You can start by taking delight in your own goodness—calling to mind things you have done out of good-heartedness, and rejoicing in those memories to celebrate the potential for goodness we all share.

2

Silently recite phrases that reflect what we wish most deeply for ourselves in an enduring way. Traditional phrases are:

- 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.

You can use these phrases or others that are more personally meaningful to you. Relax and have the phrases emerge gently from your heart rather than be a pounding insistence in your head.

3

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

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

After some time, visualize yourself in the center of a circle composed 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; perhaps they live now, or have existed historically or even mythically. That is the circle. As you visualize yourself in the center of it, experience yourself as the recipient of their love and attention. Keep gently repeating the phrases of loving kindness for yourself.

6

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. ●