



# EVERYDAY MINDFUL LIVING

The practice of mindfulness—directing all your attention and awareness to the present—can bring many benefits to your emotional and physical health, as well as to the relationships in your life.

Everyday mindfulness can:

- Pull you out of the negative downward spiral that can be caused by too much daily stress, too many bad moods, or the habit of rumination.
- Help you make fewer errors when processing your experiences.
- Help you put stressful events into perspective and build resilience so you're less overwhelmed by them in the future.

While there are many mindfulness exercises you can practice on a regular basis, learning how to be present in the moment is also a way of life. With practice, you can learn to live a more mindful life that allows you to become more conscious of everything you are doing.

It can be tough in today's fast-paced world to pause and be present, after all, there are many things competing for your attention and there's a lot of pressure to multi-task.

But, if you're intentional about being more mindful during your everyday life, you can live with greater purpose and more happiness.

## **PRACTICE MINDFUL EATING**

Mindless eating while you scroll through your phone or reaching for food for emotional comfort is common and it can contribute to a host of problems, like overeating and consuming too much sugar.

Practice becoming more mindful about how you fuel your body. Resist the urge to multi-task while you eat. When you eat, be present with your food.

Pay attention to each bite that you're taking. Chew your food slowly and savour the taste.

Notice your body's signals about when you're getting full and pay more attention to what's on your plate. When you become more intentional about what you're eating, you'll be better equipped to focus on fuelling your body with the nutrition it needs.

## **BE MINDFUL IN YOUR INTERACTIONS**

Whether you're interacting with your partner, your children, or a colleague, mindful interactions are important.

Mindfulness in a relationship is about observing what the other person is doing in a non-judgmental way. It's also about staying present in the moment during your conversations. So rather than scroll through your phone while you're with someone, give them your undivided attention. And instead of 'zoning out' while they're sharing their opinion, seek to really hear their message.

You can become more mindful by paying attention to the way you're feeling, listening carefully, and learning to respond to others in a more mindful manner (rather than reacting out of anger).

## **ENGAGE IN ACTIVITIES MINDFULLY**

Do you ever have trouble recalling whether you washed your hair already when you're in the shower? Or do you sometimes forget why you walked into a certain room? Those are signs that you have a lot of things going on in your mind and you aren't being mindful.

Fortunately, you can improve at this and there are many opportunities to practice throughout the day. Walking, gardening, eating your favourite snack and many other activities can be opportunities to practice mindfulness. You just perform them with a heightened sense of awareness. This means focusing on the present moment, tuning into physical sensations, being fully aware of everything you do, and letting go of thoughts of the future or anxiety over the past.

Take cleaning the house, for example. Start by viewing your work as a positive event—an exercise in self-understanding and stress relief, rather than simply as a chore. Then, as you clean, focus on what you are doing as you are doing it—and nothing else. Feel the warm, soapy water on your hands as you wash dishes; experience the vibrations of the Hoover as you push it over the floor; enjoy the warmth of fresh-from-the-dryer clothing as you fold it; feel the freedom of letting go of unneeded objects as you put them in a box for donation.

Another opportunity to practice mindfulness in your everyday life is when you're listening to music. Really focus on the sound and vibration of each note, the feelings that the music stirs up within you, and other in-the-moment sensations.



Throughout your day, look for opportunities to be more mindful. Whether you're riding the underground or taking a hot shower, try to be full of awareness of what you're doing and what's happening around you. When your mind wanders, congratulate yourself for noticing and gently bring your attention back to the current moment.

Spending a little time outdoors can be another way to achieve mindfulness, and you don't need to go too far to get the desired results. Take a walk around your area. If you have some nice trails, parks, or green spaces, they can make the perfect environment for getting in touch with nature and for connecting with the present moment. Observe what you see on your walk, how the weather feels, what you hear, and what you smell.

## PAUSE THROUGHOUT THE DAY

As you move from one activity to the next throughout the day, it can be tough to stay mindful. You can get back on track by pausing throughout the day to practice a few basic mindfulness exercises.

You might make it a habit to spend a few minutes being mindful at certain times of the day, like during meals or

when you're getting in the car. You can also make it a habit to practice focus on your breathing when you're upset or anxious. Breathing techniques can have a calming effect and help you stay grounded in the present moment.

Progressive muscle relaxation is another exercise you might practice throughout the day. Simply, work on tensing

and relaxing your muscles, one muscle group at a time. With practice, you'll learn to recognise when you're tensing up certain parts of your body.

## MEDITATION FOR MINDFULNESS

To clarify, what we're doing here is aiming for mindfulness, not some process that magically wipes your mind clear of the countless and endless thoughts that erupt and ping constantly in our brains. We're just practicing bringing our attention to our breath, and then back to the breath when we notice our attention has wandered.

- Get comfortable and prepare to sit still for a few minutes. Simply focus on your own natural inhaling and exhaling of breath.
- Focus on your breath. Where do you feel your breath most? In your belly? In your nose? Try to keep your attention on your inhale and exhale.
- Follow your breath for two minutes. Take a deep inhale, expanding your belly, and then exhale slowly, elongating the out-breath as your belly contracts.

How long was it before your mind wandered away from your breath?

Did you notice how busy your mind was even without you consciously directing to think about anything in particular?

Did you notice yourself getting caught up in thoughts before you came back to reading this?

We often have little narratives running in our minds that we didn't choose to put there, like:

"Why does my boss want to

meet with me tomorrow?"

"I should have gone to the gym yesterday."

"I've got to pay some bills"

or (the classic) "I don't have time to sit still, I've got stuff to do."

If you experienced these sorts of distractions, you've made an important discovery: simply put, that's the opposite of mindfulness. It's when we live in our heads, on automatic pilot, letting our thoughts go here and there, exploring, say, the future or the past, and essentially, not being present in the moment. But that's where most of us live most of the time—and uncomfortably, if we're being honest, right? But it doesn't have to be that way.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

Mindfulness takes practice and effort. No one is good at it when they first start. Your mind is likely to wander repeatedly. But, with practice and patience, you'll get better and eventually, you'll recognise that you're living a more mindful life and you'll be free to enjoy benefits, like decreased stress, better mental health, better relationships, and greater overall happiness.

