

ZENLIGHTENMENT

BY JJ MOK



Introduction

Do you sometimes marvel at those people who can be seemingly completely detached in the midst of total chaos?

Those people who are just... irrevocably at peace? Whose inner peace radiates far beyond the events of their external environment?

Undoubtedly, you've met quite a few.

Did you know that these people aren't born with a genetic predisposition to serenity? They were born into the same biologically human body that you were, they have just wired their brains to make these zen habits their normal state of being.

But guess what? You can, too

What is Zenlightenment?

Zenlightenment is simply meditating with mindfulness.

You see...

Our busy, complicated lives sometimes bring a wave of negative emotions: sadness, jealousy, depression, grief, anger, confusion, anxiety, and stress. Unfortunately, it's all too easy sometimes to succumb to the naturally

powerful nature of these emotions and allow ourselves to be troubled for hours, days, or weeks on end.

On the other end of the spectrum, happiness, gratefulness, joy, relief, comfort and contentment are also emotional pieces we feel at times as we go throughout our lives. True happiness and emotional freedom is what all mankind strives for!

Although self-care is an important concept, many of us fall short in taking care of ourselves. Just as we take care of other aspects of our lives, our physical and emotional health must also take a front-seat priority. Consequences of failing to care for ourselves include a diminished immune system and other health issues.

Mindfulness and meditation in general can help you handle your emotions, achieve lower stress levels, feel happier, and enjoy peace and satisfaction with your life.

Psychologists, counselors, and therapists the world over have recognized the power that mindfulness can bring to our lives if we choose it. Luckily, anyone can harness the benefits of mindfulness with regular practice.

“You have considerable power to construct self-helping thoughts, feelings and actions as well as to construct self-defeating behaviors. You have the ability, if you use it, to choose healthy instead of unhealthy thinking, feeling and acting.”

- Albert Ellis

It may surprise you to learn that the origins of mindfulness reach back thousands of years. Meditation was developed by Buddhist monks who turned meditation into a spiritual element of their “enlightenment.”

What do you think of when someone mentions meditation? Do images of religious monks sitting in circles and chanting “ohhmm” form in your head? Perhaps you’re a little skeptical of meditation and feel that it would take you hours each day in trying to get the technique right. Well, think again!

Mindfulness is not:

- Spending time thinking about the world and all the wonders in it
- Contemplating the great, deep mysteries of life
- Some magical practice thought to bring good luck to your life
- A spiritual practice reserved only for those in highest connection to their Creator
- Daydreaming or fantasizing about what your perfect life looks like

Yes, meditation and mindfulness in the modern world may have some of these mythical connotations, but mindfulness is actually much simpler.

In simple terms, mindfulness and meditation are ways to achieve a calmer state of mind. Mindfulness is essentially a subform of meditation.

Although mindfulness originated with non-western practitioners ages ago, it’s cultivated and studied by scientists, psychologists and doctors all over the world today.

How Do We Define Mindfulness?

In order to achieve the inner peace that mindfulness can bring us, it’s important to consider what the practice of mindfulness actually is.

Jon Kabat-Zinn, who is largely credited with bringing the popularity of mindfulness to the United States and refining it through his renowned Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program at the University of

Massachusetts Medical Center, defines mindfulness like this:

“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.”

The Chinese calligraphy for mindfulness is made up of two different characters. The top character means “presence” and the bottom one means “heart.” Therefore, mindfulness literally means “presence of heart.”

Mindfulness is experiencing and focusing on the present moment.

Whether we’re conscious of it or not, we’re always focused on things and events of the future.

For example, we’re constantly looking forward to the last day of the work week while we’re at work, and what our weekend plans will bring. We look forward to our summer vacations. We look forward to the holidays. We look forward to our birthdays. We look forward to the end of the day when we get to crawl into bed.

In this sense, we’re never truly focused on the present moment, which is the purpose that mindfulness teaches us. Mindfulness is a way to focus on the present moment, to create an awareness, an acute, keen and specific consciousness of ourselves and to center ourselves right now in the present, not sometime in the future.

“The best way to capture moments is to pay attention. This is how we cultivate mindfulness. Mindfulness means being awake. It means knowing what you are doing.”

- Jon Kabat-Zinn

The Case for Mindfulness

Doctors and other experts are always coming out and telling us the next best thing since sliced bread that is supposed to benefit us in some way. Examples include dark chocolate being good for overall heart health, small amounts of wine reducing risks for heart disease and diabetes, and coconut oil boosting the immune system.

The same is true for the practice of mindfulness meditation. Mindfulness has been studied and shown to have huge benefits for your overall health.

The difference is that you're not putting anything into your body with meditation. Coconut oil, dark chocolate, and wine are substances that you ingest to strengthen your physical health.

On the other hand, mindfulness meditation is a behavior shift that uses nothing more than the sole power of your focus and attention.

Empirical, measurable data has come forth showing that mindfulness helps more to lower stress and physically help the body than many other things put together.

For example, Carnegie Mellon University researchers worked with two groups of individuals. The researchers subjected the first group to just three 25-minute mindfulness training sessions, while the second group was a control and were trained in critical thinking skills.

During this study at Carnegie Mellon, both groups were then subjected to a public speaking test and a math test. Stress levels were measured in each group. The group which was trained in mindfulness experienced lower perceived levels of stress than did the other group.

Consider, too, these other research-backed benefits of practicing mindfulness:

1. Lowers depression. Several research studies, including one published in the Archives of General Psychiatry in 2010, show that mindfulness meditation is just as effective as someone taking antidepressant medication.
2. Helps our focus. Research has shown that the regular practice of mindfulness, or even receiving training in mindfulness, can help strengthen our attention, memory, and can also help us tune out distractions.
3. Increases compassion and empathy for others. Researchers at Northeastern University conducted a study where participants who had been exposed to mindfulness training and meditation sessions were significantly more likely to help someone in need over those who received no such exposure to meditation.
4. Creates positive changes in brain structure. Researchers imaged the brains of 16 different people before and after they received training in Jon Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness-Based Stress-Reduction program. Findings revealed that the portion of gray matter in the brain involved with the regulation of positive emotions was greatly enhanced.
5. More benefits. Numerous other studies have been performed that show that mindfulness meditation also enhances our physical health, lowers stress levels, eases anxiety, enhances relationships, and provides a powerful boost to our overall mood.

As you see, research shows that mindfulness packs a powerhouse of physical, mental, and emotional benefits. And they're all available to you, for free! Let's see how you can harness these benefits for yourself...

*"If you want to conquer the anxiety of life,
live in the moment, live in the breath."*

- Amit Ray

Silence Your Mind

You probably have friends and acquaintances who are always rushing about and complaining about their lack of alone time. Maybe they don't even say anything about it because they don't know any other way to be. Every moment, they're busy. Maybe you're one of them.

If you examine the lives of overly busy people, you'll probably find that they're not contented, happy people. There's always so much to do and so little time. Perhaps you're reading this because you feel rushed yourself and want to slow down and reap the benefits of being still.

Two Kinds of Stillness

You can be quiet in body and quiet in mind. Both are important. Being still physically saves you a lot of energy and effort. You feel less exhausted by the end of the day. Mental quietness has a similar effect on your psychological, intellectual, and emotional energy.

All you have to do to achieve stillness of body is to finish your chores and then relax. Even while you're completing your tasks, you can conserve energy by using little movement. To get an idea of how to do this, just watch a monk in action. Or notice how a cat relaxes.

Stillness of mind is more challenging to achieve. However, this kind of quietness is much more critical to overall contentment.

How do you feel when you get some shocking news? How about when you finally reach your target at work, win an award, or find yourself suddenly in a crisis? You feel a rush of adrenaline and you're off, letting off steam in a gush of emotion, words or action.

So if this is such a natural response to big changes, why do you need to cultivate stillness? When you're in the middle, when you're centered, you can see both ends of the spectrum.

When you refrain from reacting in an extreme way, you can control your response to the situation. You can be objective. Most importantly, you can learn from your circumstances and use them for self-development.

From another perspective, *when you've cultivated internal quietness, you're less likely to face extreme ups and downs.*

Try these tips to develop a still mind:

- 1. Stop.** In an extreme situation, pull away from the circumstance for a moment. Take a deep breath before you react.
- 2. Listen.** Listen carefully to what's being said. If your mind jumps the gun with words you feel compelled to speak, bring it back to the moment. Return your attention to what the other is saying.
- 3. Think.** Contemplate why you're facing the situation. Did you play a part in creating it? Is the other simply mirroring you? Is there something you need to learn from this circumstance?

If you take these steps, you'll be able to avoid overreacting or reacting negatively in haste. This means your response, if and when it does come, will be the right one for the circumstances and for you.

The Importance of Silence

Another way to develop mental stillness is to practice silence. Speak only when necessary. Speak only when you have something of consequence to say or something that will help the other.

Before you speak, examine your motivation for saying what you want to say. Is it to further the welfare of the other? Or is it to praise yourself or prove that you're right and the other wrong? A need to always be right is the basis of much conflict.

Moreover, *when you're habitually silent, your words have more effect. People pay attention when you speak.*

As you work toward greater self-awareness, try cultivating internal stillness. Just follow these guidelines as a start. As you practice, you'll realize many rewards.

Develop A "NOW" Mindset

It's hard to find anywhere in the world that isn't supporting the idea of a present moment or mindfulness mindset. A present moment mindset has been found useful in the treatment of chronic pain, anxiety, and depression. *There are many benefits, both mental and physical, from living your life in a mindful manner. Mindfulness is a simple skill that can be learned by anyone.*

Keeping your mind in the present avoids two negative emotions: regret and anxiety. If your mind is in the past, you're likely to feel regret. Allow the past to die. There's no reason to torture yourself.

Anxiety results from worrying about the future. If you're not thinking about the future, you can't worry about it.

There are many amazing things going on around you each day. You're just too distracted by your thoughts to notice and appreciate them.

Adopting a present moment mindset will allow you to live your life to the fullest. You can appreciate the little things life has to offer. You'll no longer be trapped living in your head. *Reality is all around you.*

"Your destiny is to fulfill those things upon which you focus most intently. So choose to keep your focus on that which is truly magnificent, beautiful, uplifting and joyful. Your life is always moving toward something."

- *Ralph Marston*

What is a Present Moment Mindset?

While it's widely accepted that mindfulness is a positive thing, it's not quite as easy to find a definition accepted by everyone.

Here are a few definitions:

- *"A mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique." – definition of "mindfulness," oxforddictionaries.com*

- *“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.” - Jon Kabat-Zinn*
- *The practice of maintaining a nonjudgmental state of heightened or complete awareness of one’s thoughts, emotions, or experiences on a moment-to-moment basis. – Merriam-Webster*

Consider a few examples of not maintaining a present moment mindset:

- Sitting in a meeting at work, but thinking about your unpaid bills.
- Spending time at the park with your children, but your mind is focused on work or your weekend plans.
- You’re watching television, but you’re worried about the future or regretting the past.

For our purposes, we’ll define mindfulness as paying attention to your environment and your current activities. Ideally, most of your day will be spent focused on whatever you’re doing and the things going on around you.

It isn’t possible to do this 100%. It’s important to plan for tomorrow and consider the future, but most of us spend far too much time focusing on anything but the present.

If you spend your time with one eye on your smart phone, one eye on the kids, and a third eye on the TV, you’re not being very mindful. And both your physical health and mental health are suffering because of it. *Living in the present moment increases your control over your life.* Learn how to harness your attention.

“Mindfulness is about love and loving life. When you cultivate this love, it gives you clarity and compassion for life, and your actions happen in accordance with that.”

- Jon Kabat-Zinn

Advantages of a Present Moment Mindset

The list of benefits provided by a present mindset is nearly endless. Scientists are discovering additional benefits almost daily. *One thing is for certain, it's doubtful you can do anything for yourself that would be more helpful than adopting a present moment mindset.* It's challenging, but well worth the effort.

Consider the advantages you can enjoy by keeping your mind in the present:

1. A present moment mindset enhances physical health:

- Lowers blood pressure
- Enhances sleep
- Relieves stress
- Reduces chronic pain
- Changes brain structure and chemistry in a way that lowers the risk of future mental health issues
- Lowers the stress of cancer therapy
- Strengthens the immune system

2. It enhances mental health, too:

- Enhances social relationships with family, friends, and strangers
- Reduces anxiety and depression

- Enhances feelings of wellbeing, happiness, and a agreeableness
- Conscientiousness is enhanced
- Useful in treatment of eating disorders and substance abuse
- Obsessive compulsive disorder symptoms are lessened

3. A present moment mindset also generates feeling of wellbeing:

- Those that practice mindfulness develop attitudes that increase levels of satisfaction.
- It's easier to enjoy the little things in life, because you're fully engaged.
- Keeping your mind focused on the present minimizes the opportunities to worry about the future or feel regret over the past.
- There is less concern with material or occupational success.
- A present moment mindset permits the formation of deeper relationships.

Hopefully, you're excited at the prospect of living a more present life. There are numerous benefits to being mindful on a consistent basis. The best news of all is the cost. It's 100% free! While mindfulness is simple, that doesn't mean it's easy. There are many challenges that pave the road to living in the present.

“Mindfulness helps us freeze the frame so that we can become aware of our sensations and experiences as they are, without the distorting coloration of socially conditioned responses or habitual reactions.”

- Henepola Gunaratana

The Challenges of Developing a Present Moment Mindset

Developing a present moment mindset is challenging. At first, you'll struggle and be uncomfortable. That's your brain pouting. It's important to persevere if you want to be successful. The most important factor is consistency. You can't change your focus after a week of hard work. However, you can change it after a few months of consistent effort. Start small, but address the issue daily.

Understanding the challenges that lie ahead will increase the odds of success:

1. The distractions never end. Buddhist monks and nuns are required to be celibate. They are also forbidden from handling money or having any possessions beyond a few robes, a bowl, and a spoon. It's not that Buddhism considers sex, money, or possessions to be evil. It's a matter of eliminating distractions.
 - The more you try to focus on the present moment, the more the universe seems to throw distractions in your path.
 - Notice that most of your distractions have to do with the past and present, work, finances, and other people.
 - Avoid feeling frustrated. Use these distractions as great opportunities to practice a present moment mindset. If you can be present during the most distracting circumstances, everything else is easy!
2. Mindfulness requires diligence and continuous effort. We've learned to expect gratification to arrive quickly. But changing your mindset takes time and effort. Fortunately, your practice is self-rewarding. The more you

practice, the better you become. As your skill improves, you'll enjoy your life more.

- The beginning is the most challenging part. Your constant struggle to control your thoughts and attention can sap your motivation and create a new type of stress, but it does get easier with practice.
 - Practice being present from morning to night. Be mindful from the time you wake up until you fall asleep. The more practice, the more your skills will grow.
 - If you want to be successful, you have to show up every day and give it your best effort. A present moment mindset requires 24/7 attention.
3. Progress is often slow. Your mind has been undisciplined for many years. You can't tame a wild monkey in a day. Your mind is like a wild animal that's been allowed to do as it pleases, often to your detriment.
- The people and things to which you're most attached are the hardest to give up thinking about.
 - Be aware that releasing your attachment to people and things makes it more likely they will find their way into your life.
4. Your goals can interfere with your ability to be present. Goals often become distorted, and we become overly attached to achieving them.
- If you feel negative emotions around the lack of achieving your goals, you're too attached. Impatience, frustration, anger, and general negativity are the negative emotions most often experienced when you're too attached to achieving a goal.

- Goals are meant to provide a direction and a context to your optional daily activities. Avoid giving your goals the power to define you and your mental state.
5. Old habits die hard. Habits are behavioral and thought tendencies that happen without thinking. Your current pattern of thinking and behaving has been in place for many years. It's also enjoyable on a certain level. Letting your mind wander to more interesting thoughts is entertaining and can distract you from boredom and other negative emotions.
- By being mentally present consistently, you can develop a new habit. It takes time. Be patient.
 - Learn to stick with your negative emotions. Avoid running away from unpleasant experiences. Stay focused on your task until it's completed.

Are you prepared for the challenges? Changing your focus and the way you view the world won't happen overnight. The real task is consistency. Trust that things will work out in the end and enjoy the process. You'll be amazed by how your view of the world is altered. Simple things will mean much more to you. Your level of satisfaction with your life will be enhanced.

Hang in there!

“You practice mindfulness, on the one hand, to be calm and peaceful. On the other hand, as you practice mindfulness and live a life of peace, you inspire hope for a future of peace.”

- Thich Nhat Hanh

Developing a Present Moment Mindset

Developing a new mindset is a process. The process is quite simple. There aren't layers of steps that must be completed before moving to the next level. If you do enough tasks mindfully, your thought process and focus will change. How many tasks will it take? A lot.

Resolve to be as mindful as you can each day. It will be a struggle at first, but your ability will grow quickly.

The process for developing a present moment mindset is simple:

1. The most effective practice can be during routine activities. These are often activities that require a minimal amount of attention. There's just enough going on to keep your mind partially occupied, but you're free to let your mind wander. Only, you're going to put an end to that!
 - Taking a shower, washing the dishes, driving to work, brushing your teeth, and eating are all routine activities that are perfect for practicing mindfulness.
 - During these routine activities, pay full attention to what you're doing. Notice when your mind starts to wander and gently bring your attention back to the current activity.
 - Notice how it's impossible to feel bad or stressed if your thoughts are anchored to your activity.
2. Start as soon as you awaken each day. If you can get off to a good start, you're more likely to retain a present moment mindset throughout the day.

- Spend a few minutes in bed noticing your environment. List 5 things each that you see, smell, hear, and feel. How does your mouth taste.
 - Then close your eyes and notice your breath traveling in and out of your body. Feel your chest rise and fall. Count at least 25 breaths. Keep your mind on your breathing.
 - As you're walking to the bathroom, think Walking to the bathroom.
3. Waiting can be a great opportunity to practice being present. We spend a good amount of time waiting each day. We wait in traffic, at a red light, and at the checkout line. We wait for someone to get off the phone. We wait at the doctor's office.
- We have places to go and people to see, so waiting is a major source of frustration. Take advantage of the situation and use the opportunity to practice. Notice your environment or pay attention to your breath.
4. Practice meditation. You don't need a fancy cushion, a temple, or East Asian music to meditate. You need a quiet place and a comfortable position you can hold during the session. A chair is fine. Many people even practice walking meditation.
- Meditation trains your brain to be more efficient and improve focus. You have the opportunity to experience the best possible version of yourself.
 - Seek out a local teacher or other educational materials. There are many books available at your local library.
5. Use a timer. Find a simple kitchen timer or use an app for your phone or computer. Remind yourself to be mindful by giving yourself an hourly reminder. When the timer sounds, spend one full minute being as mindful as you can. With enough reminders, you'll soon find yourself

spending most of the day in a present moment mindset.

- Link your mindfulness to other cues that happen several times each day. It might be eating or getting a drink of water. Between the cues and your timer, your progress will soar.
6. Do one thing at a time. Studies have shown that single tasking is much more effective than multi-tasking. Focus on one task at a time. If you're typing a report, just type the report. If you're taking a drink of coffee, focus on that.
 7. Be deliberate. Instead of focusing on getting the task done, focus on doing it properly. Avoid shortcuts and do your best work. Avoid rushing or being haphazard.
 8. Take on fewer tasks, but get the important things done. If you can complete a few critical tasks each day, every aspect of your life will improve. Most people distract themselves with meaningless tasks and avoid the most important things.
 - You'll have fewer things to do and avoid wasting your time.
 - Apply this idea to all parts of your life: What's most important?
 9. Take a moment between tasks. It's common to rush from one task to the next, but it's important to inject a little space between tasks. A short break signifies the end of one activity. Sitting back down signifies the beginning of another. Keep your schedule relaxed and avoid planning too much into your day.

That doesn't sound too bad, does it? It's more tiresome than you would think. But after a few weeks, you'll feel much more relaxed. Even stressful days become quite easy. You'll find your mood is much more even. You'll

also realize that much of your previous misery was self-inflicted. Get started today and start living in the present.

“It takes a little bit of mindfulness and a little bit of attention to others to be a good listener, which helps cultivate emotional nurturing and engagement.”

- Deepak Chopra

A Primer on Meditation

The good news is that you already know how to meditate. You were born with the skill to meditate. Have you ever become so engrossed in something that you lost all track of time? Have you ever been so absorbed in the moment that you didn't hear someone talking to you? Meditation is no different.

However, meditation doesn't just include those fascinating activities. Meditation also includes the mundane. Can you become just as engrossed with the prospect of washing the dishes or putting on your socks? It is possible to put your meditation skills to practice in all situations.

Meditation provides a tool to give the everyday activities in your life the same reverence as you currently give the fascinating ones.

Consider these points:

1. Meditation is simple and common. Meditation isn't complicated. Meditation isn't mysterious. In the simplest sense, meditation only has a couple of steps.

- #1 – Pay attention to what is happening around you.
 - #2 – When your thoughts wander to something else, go back to step #1.
 - #3 – Repeat. What could be simpler?
2. Awareness is a key component. A beginning meditator will quickly allow his mind to wander. A lack of awareness results in a long period of time passing before noticing that his attention has wandered.
- The development of awareness is the most important step for someone new to meditation.
 - You're currently mindful in many circumstances. Meditation provides a means to be mindful in all situations.
3. Meditation is portable. You can meditate during any moment. You could be eating a sandwich or tying your shoes. Meditation can also be more formal where your full attention is on meditating.
4. The breath is key. There are several advantages to focusing on your breath. It's always with you. It's always happening right now. It's also a body process under your direct control. As long as you're breathing, you're still alive and hope exists! Breathing provides a connection to your body and physical experience.
- Any free moment is an opportunity to meditate. You don't need a special place to sit. You only need a few seconds, if that's all you can spare. Bring your attention to your breath and leave it there as long as time allows.
 - If you have time to yourself, the greatest benefits can be found with a session of at least 20 minutes. If you're enthusiastic, 45 minutes is even better.

5. Meditation is a process, not a result. If you're focusing on your present moment and redirecting your thoughts back to the present, you're meditating. It's not necessary to reach a particular mental state before meditation begins. If you're following the steps, you're meditating.
 - Your mind may be racing. That's okay. Notice that it's racing and redirect your thoughts.

6. Your religion is okay with meditation. It could be argued that praying is a form of meditation. You can meditate very successfully without violating the rules of your religion. In fact, you'll find yourself paying more attention in church. Meditation doesn't even have to be spiritual. Paying attention isn't spiritual.

7. You already have everything you need to get started. You can start meditating right here and now. The environment doesn't have to be quiet, though it will be easier. You don't have to be calm and relaxed, though it will be easier. Any props are optional.
 - If possible, set aside a room in your home for meditation. Even a small section of a room is fine.
 - A cushion can be helpful. Meditation cushions are often called a zafu. Sit on the cushion with your knees on the floor or on a mat.
 - Having a timer is useful. You don't feel the need to keep one eye on the clock. Keep going until the timer sounds.

8. Meditate! If you're looking for step-by-step instructions, here they are.
 - Set your timer.
 - Take a seat in a position that you can hold for the allotted time.

- Close your eyes or leave them slightly open.
- Focus on your breathing. Feel the breath and count each one.
- When your mind wanders, bring it back to the present. Ask yourself what is happening right now. List the things you see, hear, taste, smell, and touch. What do you feel in your body?
- Return your focus to your breathing.
- Continue the process of breathing and returning your thoughts to the present until your time expires.
- That's as complicated as it needs to be.

“Science and mindfulness complement each other in helping people to eat well and maintain their health and well-being.”

- Nhat Hanh

Practicing a Present Moment Mindset in Different Environments

Every situation is a little different. It's important to master your present moment mindset in all situations and circumstances. Hitting a golf ball off the tee isn't the same as putting for the win. Being mindful at home won't do you much good at work. Practice in every possible environment.

Work

If you work full-time, you spend at least 50 hours a week either getting ready for work, driving to and from work, and actually being at work. That's a lot of time. If you're like most employees, you probably feel like you don't have the time to worry about focusing on the present moment. But work can actually be one of the best places to practice. You might even get a promotion.

Use your time at work to your advantage:

1. Make a list of things to do before you get to work. The evening is the perfect time to make a work to-do list. You won't have to spend any time or energy figuring out how to start your day. Keep your list short and relevant.
2. Have a work morning routine. When you first get to work, perform your routine. It might be to check your mailbox, listen to any voicemails, and get a cup of coffee. Then just sit for a minute and focus on your to-do list.
3. Start with the first item and stick with it until it's completed. When your mind starts to wander, bring it back to the task at hand.
4. When it's time for a break, focus on your break. Find a place to sit for a moment or take a short walk. Be present.
5. Eat your lunch mindfully. Notice the feeling of the food in your mouth. Chew slowly. Focus on the taste.
6. Use your timer. Remember to meditate for one minute each hour.
7. Be mindful on the drive home. Be a responsible and safe driver by keeping your mind on your driving.

Being mindful at work will enhance your mood and productivity. Don't be surprised if your performance at work improves. You'll feel less rushed and get more done. Remember to focus on the most important tasks.

“Mindfulness is so powerful that the fact that it comes out of Buddhism is irrelevant.”

- Jon Kabat-Zinn

Home

Most of us are either at work or at home. Our time at home is often more flexible, which is good and bad. It's easy to daydream the hours away or become distracted by the internet or TV. Use your time at home to your best advantage.

Be mindful at home:

1. Remember to use your mundane tasks as opportunities to practice. Mowing the grass, vacuuming the floor, and folding laundry are excellent times to practice your present moment mindset.
2. Mindfulness applies to communication skills, too. When your family is speaking to you, focus all of your attention on listening to them. Watch how much your mind wanders while your precious child is telling you about her day at school. You'll be shocked!
 - You'll also be shocked by how much people appreciate someone that really listens and pays attention.
3. Take walks. Try to take a regular walk and use your present moment mindset skills. Notice what you see, hear, and smell during your walks. Feel the ground under your feet. Remember your breath, too.
4. Meditate daily. Meditation practice is practicing a present moment mindset under ideal circumstances. Get as much practice as your schedule will allow.

A present moment mindset at home is very important. Home is where we worry and make ourselves unhappy. Your family also needs you to be at your best. Make an effort to build your mindfulness skills at home.

“That’s been one of my mantras - focus and simplicity. Simple can be harder than complex: You have to work hard to get your thinking clean to make it simple. But it’s worth it in the end because once you get there, you can move mountains.”

- Steve Jobs

Out in the Real World

Though we spend most of our time at home or at work, there’s a whole world out there. The world is full of distractions and opportunities to practice being fully present. It’s an excellent training ground for dealing with the unexpected.

Build your skills when you’re out on the town:

1. Keep your mind and your eyes on the road. While you’re driving all over town, pay attention to your driving. It’s safer for you and everyone else. It’s common to let one’s mind wander while driving, but certainly not safe. Pay attention to your environment and traffic. See if you can catch yourself thinking about something else.
2. If you’re out with others, communicate mindfully. Again, give any communication your full and undivided attention.
3. Wait. At some point, you’ll be waiting. You might be waiting for your friend to show up or for a table at the restaurant. Notice your environment and your breathing. Waiting can be boring. A bored mind will try to run wild. Tame it.

It’s possible to practice a present moment mindset in any situation or circumstance. You’ll even find yourself practicing in your dreams. Whether

you're at work, home, or out on the town, you can enhance your mindfulness skills. It's not necessary to wait for perfect circumstances. The circumstances are always perfect.

"I find hope in the darkest of days, and focus in the brightest. I do not judge the universe."

- Dalai Lama

Conclusion

Adopting a present moment mindset is very powerful. There are numerous physical and emotional benefits. It can enhance your relationships and increase your overall sense of well-being.

Developing a present moment mindset is a significant challenge. To change your mental habits takes effort and focus. It's important to build your skills each day. One of the most important tools for increasing your level of mindfulness is meditation.

Meditation can be as simple as paying attention to what you're currently doing and catching yourself when your mind wanders. Keep bringing your attention back to the present. That's meditation at the simplest level. Meditation can be performed in any environment. Special tools and circumstances aren't required.

Practice your skills in all environments. You probably spend time at home, work, and out in the real world. It's important to practice everywhere. You can only become mindful where you practice regularly.

Consider adopting a present moment mindset and doing the work to make it a habit. Your health and happiness will be enhanced.

Present Moment Affirmation

I live in the present. I slow down and give my full attention to one activity at a time.

I breathe in and out. I concentrate on the air entering and exiting my body. Each inhalation energizes me. Each exhalation relaxes me.

I observe my thoughts without judging them. When I realize that my mind is wandering, I gently return my attention to the present. I recognize my power. I choose which thoughts and feelings to act upon.

I connect with each of my senses. I notice the scent of freshly cut grass and the softness of my favorite towels.

I savor simple pleasures. I am content drinking a cup of delicious tea or soaking in a warm bath. I enjoy free fun with my children. We make paper crafts and play word games.

I spot promising opportunities. I find ways to capitalize on events at home and work. When my child stays home sick, I use the time to read together. When a colleague takes a new job, I volunteer to take on more responsibility.

I learn valuable lessons. Each moment is important because it can teach me something.

Today, I focus on being present. I enjoy the journey as well as the destination. I let go of regretting the past and worrying about the future. I feel peaceful and content.

Self-Reflection Questions:

1. How does mindfulness help me to enjoy life?
2. What is the relationship between mindfulness and gratitude?
3. How can I balance living in the present and planning for the future?

Step-by-Step Guide to Mindfulness Meditation

Practicing mindfulness meditation does take time, effort, and patience. However, the advantages that you receive from this practice are certainly worth it.

You don't need to practice mindfulness on an Olympic-level.

You can achieve results with as little as 20 to 30 minutes per day.

Follow these easy steps to practice mindfulness meditation:

1. Start out with a quiet place. For mindfulness or any form of meditation, you can practice anywhere at anytime. However, the easiest place is a quiet one, free from any distractions.
 - Some places that you may be able to practice include in your car, at home, or even at work if you have a private office atmosphere.
2. Get comfortable. Many people sit in a lotus-style type of position, in which you sit cross-legged with the feet resting on the opposing thighs. This is not necessary, however.

- You can sit cross-legged with your feet resting underneath your knees. Feel free to sit in a desk chair, on the floor, or any seat where you can get comfortable for a few minutes.
3. Breathe. Close your eyes and take several slow breaths, focusing on inhaling and exhaling deeply. Do this several times.
 - You'll become more relaxed as your muscles and cells receive more oxygen and your mind slows down.
 - Continue paying attention to the air that's coming in and going out.
 4. Notice physical sensations. As you focus on the air you take in and let out, also notice the sensations throughout your body.
 - Pay attention to the weight of your body in your seat, noticing whether you're perhaps leaning further to the right or to the left. Pay attention to your body's temperature -- do you feel warm, cool, or in the middle?
 5. Pay attention to the noises around you. Just let the noises be and notice their presence.
 - Whether it's the whistling of the fan, the hum of the air conditioner or heater, or the chatter of people's voices outside, just notice that these sounds are also present during your meditation.
 6. Notice when your mind wanders. It's perfectly normal – especially for beginners – to wander off in thought, thinking about this, that, or another thing that pops into your mind.
 - When your mind wanders, just quietly bring your attention and awareness back to your breath, noticing the air slowly going in and going out.
 7. End your mindfulness session when you're ready. Slowly open your eyes. Stretch. What do you feel at this moment in time? Are you more relaxed, calmer, or more focused?

When you first start mindfulness meditation, you'll most likely find it difficult, if not impossible, to keep your mind from wandering. However, as you get more practice, it becomes easier to clear your mind and focus on your breath.

The key is to practice it consistently.

“Mindfulness is the aware, balanced acceptance of the present experience. It isn't more complicated than that. It is opening to or receiving the present moment, pleasant or unpleasant, just as it is, without either clinging to it or rejecting it.”

- Sylvia Boorstein

Making Mindfulness a Habit

As a science, researchers study mindfulness in order to discover answers to the questions they have about the benefits of mindfulness.

As a way of living, mindfulness is just that: being mindful and living in the present.

As a practice, cultivating mindfulness requires training. Any type of training requires dedication and practice. Practicing requires that you devote your time and attention to the matter.

If one is to make mindfulness a habit, therefore, it requires time, attention, and training.

Avoid making excuses for your failure to cultivate mindfulness; it is easy to fall into this trap.

There are many who give meditation or mindfulness a one-off try and then decide that the amount of time they attempted to practice mindfulness was simply not worth it because they didn't see any immediate benefits to it.

There are others who sincerely want to make a change in their life and decide to practice mindfulness, only to give up a few days later because "it's too hard" or they "don't have enough time." That is, they make excuses for why mindfulness doesn't work for them.

There are still others who want to change the story they have in their heads about who they are, what they can accomplish, and how they're going to achieve the goals they have laid out in front of them.

These people realize that mindfulness can completely change their lives in exchange for only a few minutes each day. They can become healthier, less stressed, happier, more at peace with themselves and their situations and much less distracted as they accomplish what they set out to do.

Prioritize & Take Action

A great psychologist and researcher, Albert Ellis, constructed a theory of cognitive thinking that said that individuals have power over their lives to choose healthy behaviors instead of negative, unhealthy ways of living.

To make mindfulness meditation a habit, consciously choose when you're going to practice it and then do it:

- Mornings. You might want to use early mornings as a way to refresh. Wake up and immediately use this time to practice mindfulness to

recharge and get ready for the new day.

- Evenings. Or perhaps you would prefer to set aside time before you go to sleep as a way to let go of all the negative thoughts and events throughout the day.
- Lunchtime. You could even use your lunch hour as a way to not only catch a short break from work, but also to calm your nerves should you find that anything in the first half of the day has caused you to feel stressed, distracted, or depressed.

Regardless of the time of day you choose to practice mindfulness, it's critical that you carve out time daily to devote your energy to creating a healthier you!

*“Mindfulness isn’t difficult,
we just need to remember to do it.”*

- Sharon Salzberg

Consciousness Affirmation

I live consciously.

I make deliberate choices about my feelings, thoughts, and actions.

I slow down. I focus on one task at a time. I schedule adequate time for errands and chores. When I feel pressured, I remember my priorities and limit nonessential obligations.

I meditate regularly. I sit down and calm my thoughts. I breathe deeply. I breathe in energy and breathe out tension.

I take breaks. I pause between phone calls and meetings to refresh my senses and charge myself up for the next project.

I savor my food. I delight in the textures, colors, and tastes of fresh fruits and vegetables. I quench my thirst with pure water and fragrant teas. I indulge in occasional treats without any guilt because I know that I eat sensibly most of the time.

I focus on the purpose behind my work. I think about how I am contributing to society or helping others to fulfill their needs. I feel gratified and connected.

I enjoy my leisure time. I hang out with family and friends. I work on my hobby.

I listen closely. I give others my full attention. I care about what they have to say. I want them to know that they are important to me. I can learn from the experiences of others. I can validate their feelings and help them with their struggles.

Today, I enjoy the present moment. I move through my day consciously and deliberately with a smile on my face and peace in my heart.

Self-Reflection Questions:

1. What is the relationship between simplicity and mindfulness?
2. How can I develop a consistent meditation practice?
3. How would my life change if I developed greater mindfulness?

Other Meditation Styles

While mindfulness has been empirically studied as well as promoted throughout the United States and other countries, there are certainly other styles and forms of meditation that you can practice.

Regardless of which type of meditation you choose, the number one issue of importance is its priority in your life and whether you make time to practice it.

Other types of meditation include:

1. **Mantra-based Meditation.** This is a form of meditation that uses a specific phrase or sound, otherwise known as a “mantra.” While mindfulness focuses primarily on one’s breathing and bodily sensations, mantra meditation focuses on a repeated sound, chant, or phrase.
2. **Visualization Meditation.** This type of meditation relies on specific imagery for a goal or accomplishment that you hope to achieve
 - Visualization meditation is often used in sports and has been shown to enhance an athlete’s performance.
 - With visualization, your focus is on your desired outcome. You imagine a detailed picture of what the outcome looks like, feels like, and smells, sounds, or tastes like.
3. **Moving Meditation.** Some people prefer this type of meditation because it requires exercise, such as walking. Moving meditation is actually a yoga practice combined with mindfulness.
 - Sometimes called “Breathwalk,” this technique encourages you to

synchronize your breath with your footsteps, while still focusing on bodily awareness and sensations like breathing.

4. **Body Scanning Meditation.** This meditation involves bringing awareness first to one specific part of the body and then moving on to others.
 - For example, you focus on the physical sensations, stress, or tension in your left arm and then intentionally release all tension in that area. Repeat with your right arm, and then with other areas of the body until fully relaxed.
5. **Several other types of Mindfulness Meditation.** There are also a few other different kinds of mindfulness which you can practice when you focus on your breathing. These include mindfulness listening, mindful immersion, mindful observation, and mindful awareness.
 - These other forms of mindfulness meditation involve setting your attention on a specific thing or task and paying attention to the details.
 - For example, mindful immersion is a form of mindfulness where you immerse yourself fully into the task at hand, thereby creating an entirely new, unique, and fresh experience.

As you set out to create a routine for practicing meditation, choosing to mix up the style of meditation can be beneficial if you feel monotonous or bored at times. For example, perhaps in your first week you can practice mindful listening while choosing to practice moving meditation in the second week.

“Meditation is to be aware of what is going on: in your body, in your feelings, in your mind, and in the world.”

- Thich Nhat Hanh

7 Simple Hacks to Calm Your Mind Without Meditation

Meditation is a powerful tool, but it's not the only way to calm your mind. Consider these tricks to find peace and inner calmness.

Try these ideas the next time you want to calm your mind and feel better:

1. **Breathe.** The simple act of breathing can help you calm down quickly and reduce anxiety. Breathing can help you focus on the moment and forget your worries. A few deep breaths help relax your muscles as your cells receive the extra oxygen.
 - Learn simple breathing exercises or just breathe deeply.
2. **Show gratitude.** By showing gratitude, you can change your focus and find peace. Being thankful and saying it can help you see the positive things that are around you.
 - Send an email, talk on the phone, or write a note to someone that you would like to thank.
 - When stopping and giving thanks, you're also living in the present moment. When your mind is on the present moment, there's no room for worrying about the future or regretting your past.
3. **Smile.** How often do you smile during the day? Do you smile at strangers as well as friends?

- Smiling can instantly boost your mood. It can help relax the body and mind, help the immune system, and reduce stress.
 - Research published in the journal Psychological Science shows that even a fake smile can have a positive effect on the body. The act of smiling positively affects the brain.
4. Go for a hike or enjoy nature. If meditation doesn't appeal to you because it involves sitting, then go for a hike or find another way to enjoy nature. Explore a park, trail, or other natural area near you.
- Notice the sounds, smells, and visuals in front of you as you walk.
 - Nature can have a soothing impact on the brain and body.
5. Turn off your phone and other devices. Constant communication and connection can make it hard to have a calm mind. Turn off your phones, tablets, computers and other devices to find peace.
- By disconnecting from technology for brief periods of time, you'll be able to relax.
6. Play with your pet. If you're lucky to have a dog, cat, or other animal, play with them to find calmness. Research shows that pets can help people stay calm and relax.
- Try petting your dog or cat for an extended period of time. Only focus on them and don't think about other issues.
 - Consider taking your pet for a walk and getting exercise at the same time.

7. Do some type of manual labor. Sometimes, manual labor such as cleaning the house or mowing the lawn can help calm the mind. Exercise can boost brain chemicals that make you happy.
- Manual labor can help you forget issues by forcing you to focus on completing the tasks.
 - Look for activities that need to be done at home or at work. Do the dishes, vacuum, clean out closets, or organize cabinets. Sort the garage or attic, try gardening, or pull weeds. If you're finished with tasks at home, reach out to friends and neighbors to help them.

Although meditation can be important, it's not the only way to stay calm. Consider trying other methods and experimenting until you find the ones that work best for you.

Take The Mindful 20/30 Challenge

As we go throughout our lives, there are literally thousands of decisions that we face each day. We're challenged with decisions from the moment our alarm clock startles us awake until the time our minds drift off to sleep at the end of the day.

It is estimated that the average adult makes about 35,000 decisions in a single 24-hour period:

- To hit snooze on the alarm clock or get up and start the morning
- What to eat for breakfast and how many servings
- What to wear: the green or the blue shirt? What shoes match the outfit?
- The decision to take the dog out for a short walk before leaving for work
- Should you go into work or call in sick?
- Whether we let a traffic or road rage incident dictate our mood for the day

On and on the decision wheel constantly spins. Yes, we're faced with problems, tasks, drama, stress, workloads, good news, bad news, indifferent news, world news, and mass amounts of information. We're bombarded with this data on a daily basis and we're expected to know what to do with it.

Our senses, physical bodies, emotional health, and spirit routinely experience an information overload!

Living in the present, being mindful, and deliberately practicing mindfulness is one way in which we can tell our bodies and our whole selves to slow down.

With a warring of our inner selves telling us that we're literally so busy that we don't have time to slow down, each one of us must make the decision to challenge ourselves to stay true to ourselves and live in the present.

Practicing mindfulness is a purposeful way in which we can literally be free of distractions. However, making the decision to practice mindfulness is only the first step.

Making the commitment to mindfulness and resolving to incorporate mindfulness as a habit and daily routine takes effort. With a commitment

and then a strong resolve to make it happen, you've almost won the battle to creating a healthier self!

The last step is to take action.

Taking The Challenge

If you're up for the task, challenge yourself to put mindfulness into practice for 20 minutes each day for 30 consecutive days.

Follow these steps:

1. Set aside at least 20 minutes.
2. Find a quiet space in which to meditate and experience the power of being mindful.
3. Choose to practice mindfulness at the same time each day for these 30 days or choose different times of the day, but ensure you take the time for mindfulness each day.
4. After the 30 days is over, reflect on how mindfulness has impacted, affected, or changed you.

*Did you complete the challenge? If not, it's okay – just try it again!
“Now is the future that you promised yourself last year, last month, last week. Now is the only moment you'll ever really have. Mindfulness is about waking up to this.”*

- Mark Williams

Guided Meditations

When you're able to connect with yourself, inner peace is inevitable. The outside world will hardly faze you because you will soon realize how incredibly powerful it is to be connected to your higher self.

Meditation doesn't have to mean sitting on a special pillow with Native American flute music, incense, and candles (although that all does sound quite nice). Meditation can be anything.

It is simply time for you to get to know yourself— to be with yourself. It is time to feel yourself as your lungs breathe and your heart-beats.

In a guided meditation, your meditation session is led by an outside source - whether that's another person or a recording you made for yourself. Also, there is a specific purpose for a guided meditation. Your goal might be to manifest something like better health, wealth, or deep relaxation.

One of the hallmarks of a good guided meditation sequence is that it's open-ended. A point is reached where the subconscious is allowed to take over and insert its own images and symbols. In the following example, the guided part of the imagery is stopped at the point of walking through the doors. This is where the subconscious could take over.

With some practice, the images that arise from beneath the conscious mind can become interpretable and clear.

According to the Chopra Center, "Navigating the depths of consciousness on your own can be tough, especially for beginners. Guided meditations provide the assistance of a teacher or guide to walk you through the process and help you find a calm and peaceful state – one step at a time.

You can use the following guided meditations by making a recording of yourself reading it aloud and then playing the recording as you meditate.

Guided Meditation Script: Self Appreciation

Find a comfortable, quiet place to relax. Sit in a position in which you feel most comfortable. Your body should be upright, but loose. Shake yourself out if you feel as though you are sitting too rigidly. Place your hands in your lap and your feet on the floor if you chose to sit in a chair.

Close your eyes now.

Pay attention to your breath.

Start with a deep inhalation and feel yourself relax as you exhale.

With every inhale, you invite relaxation.

With every exhale, you purge negativity.

You have no worries. You have no concerns.

If any negative thoughts creep into your mind simply swipe them away.

They do not have a place here. They are not welcome. Instead, focus on right now.

Feel the sensation of breath as it passes in through your nostrils and out through your lips.

Now focus on the area of your body where you feel your breath the most.

Pay attention to your stomach. Is it contracted or tight? If it is, take another deep breath and release it.

Your hands are softening with each breath.

Your shoulders loosen with each breath.

Your face, throat, and jaw loosen with each breath.

As you continue to breathe, you sense everything around you.

You exist only in this moment. You are here now.

Your attention is on your breath, shift your focus to where you feel it clearest.

Is it your chest or abdomen rising and falling?

Pay attention to the area of your body that expands and contracts with every breath.

Feel the tingle in your nostrils.

Let's now shift your focus instead to the sounds in the environment around you.

Tune into the silence.

What sounds come and go?

Just listen.

Now choose an object to use as an anchor for your attention. It might be the sounds around you, it could be the breath in your chest, nose, mouth, or abdomen. Simply choose an object that feels the most interesting to you. Just one, and there is no wrong answer.

Now notice your belly rising and falling. Feel your chest expand and contract.

Feel the air passing through your body and the sounds it makes.

I want you to stay with the breathing sensations. We are going to focus on breath after breath simply staying with it as best you can as you feel your breath.

When your mind wanders, and it will, label those thoughts. With each thought that enters your consciousness, use a word like wondering, thinking, or questioning to return your focus back to your breathing.

Do this again and again until your focus has been returned. This is important for today's guided meditation because self-judgment shows a lack of self-respect. I want you to recognize it when it happens so you can correct it.

If a judgmental thought appears label it as criticism, self-judgment, whichever word makes the most sense for you.

I want this to help guide you in realizing the frequency with which you judge yourself.

Remember, it isn't personal.

You did not plan to make yourself feel bad.

It's a natural occurrence when you struggle with respecting yourself.

Negative words and voices in your mind can be frequent. Do not give them space to breathe.

Now pay attention to your breath.

Inhale deeply. Exhale deeper.

With every inhale, you invite relaxation.

With every exhale, you purge negativity.

You have no worries.

You have no concerns.

Inhale relaxation. Exhale tension. Inhale calm. Exhale tension.

Breathe slowly, gently, deeply. With every breath, your state of relaxation deepens. You are more at peace and more relaxed.

Paint a picture in your mind.

Imagine somewhere you feel entirely safe and at ease. It might be a picture you have seen or your favorite place to visit. It might be entirely imagined. Picture yourself in this place, feeling happy and calm.

Visualize the smells, sights, and sounds of your imaginary place.

How does it make you feel physically?

You are completely comfortable here.

Enjoy the safety and relaxation you feel in this place.

Remain here for the duration of this meditation.

As I offer you the following affirmations repeat after me and believe that in this moment, they are true.

I value who I am.

I appreciate myself.

I am in harmony with myself.

Every human being has value and I am a valuable person.

I deserve happiness.

I deserve relaxation.

I embrace happiness. I enjoy my contentment.

All of these affirmations are true. In this moment right now, I value the truth of these affirmations.

Take a deep inhale and a deeper exhale. With every inhale, you invite relaxation. With every exhale, you purge negativity.

You have no worries.

You have no concerns.

Inhale relaxation. Exhale tension. Inhale calm. Exhale tension.

When my mood dips, I accept those emotions and understand that this will pass. Through bad times I look forward to better times and know I will be happy again.

My future is positive and bright.

I enjoy the present while looking forward to a happy future.

I can look on past memories with fondness.

I forgive myself for every mistake I make.

We all make mistakes and though I once felt regret I can let go of my regrets. I am a good person and I let go of regret. I have learned from my mistakes and I am moving on.

I am done with suffering and embrace freedom.

I let go of past mistakes and move on to do good things.

I embrace forgiveness.

I feel good about the person I am today.

I accept myself for who I am. I embrace my flaws just as strongly as I do my strengths.

A deep inhalation and a deeper exhalation.

With every inhalation, you invite relaxation.

With every exhalation, you purge negativity.

You have no worries.

You have no concerns.

Inhale relaxation. Exhale tension. Inhale calm. Exhale tension.

My shortcomings are simply opportunities.

It is not a weakness it is a strength in waiting.

I will develop new strengths.

I face challenges with strength.

I will do the best I can in every situation.

I will give all of my effort.

I will focus on the right things.

I don't have to be perfect.

I am a flawed human being, but I can accept my imperfections and offer my best efforts regardless.

I am secure in myself and will not compare myself to the people around me.

The strengths I need are within me and I can develop them.

Take a deep inhale. Exhale deeper.

With every inhalation, you invite relaxation.

With every exhalation, you purge negativity.

You have no worries.

You have no concerns.

Inhale relaxation. Exhale tension. Inhale calm. Exhale tension.

I am a positive character. I have the strength to succeed.

I practice self-acceptance.

I practice self-compassion.

I practice self-respect.

I love myself.

I will take time for myself. I will enjoy that time. I deserve that time. I feel positive about taking time for myself regularly.

When faced with difficulty, I manage it with grace.

When I experience negative emotions, I express them just as I do positive emotions.

I am perfect as is.

I accept me as I am.

I value myself as a human being. I am valuable.

I am confident. I accept myself as I am. I am secure in myself.

A deep inhalation and a deeper exhalation.

With every inhalation, you invite relaxation.

With every exhalation, you purge negativity.

You have no worries.

You have no concerns.

Inhale relaxation. Exhale tension. Inhale calm. Exhale tension.

Repeat these affirmations after me.

I set boundaries.

I enforce my boundaries.

I am not a doormat.

I am a strong, confident person.

I make my own decisions.

I am a strong, confident person.

I believe in myself.

I believe in my abilities.

I believe in my decisiveness.

A deep inhalation and a deeper exhalation.

With every inhalation, you invite relaxation.

With every exhalation, you purge negativity.

You have no worries.

You have no concerns.

Inhale relaxation. Exhale tension. Inhale calm. Exhale tension.

What reason do you have for lacking self-respect? What reason do you give for not loving yourself?

Forget it.

This is a hard reset.

You're starting from scratch.

This is your freedom.

Your mind feels lighter now that you have let go of negative thoughts.

You feel nourished by the positive vibes you have embraced.

You do not need to search for love. You do not need to hunt for self-respect.

Both are inside of you.

It is hiding beneath the surface. It is covered by schedules, concerns, worries, negative conceptions, and social masks.

Open yourself and allow your love and self-respect to shine. Follow their guidance.

You are balanced.

You are serene.

You are prepared to use the fertile soil of your soil to deepen your self-respect.

Today is the day to tear down your walls and be vulnerable with yourself.

A deep inhalation and a deeper exhalation.

With every inhalation, you invite relaxation.

With every exhalation, you purge negativity.

You have no worries.

You have no concerns.

Inhale relaxation. Exhale tension. Inhale calm. Exhale tension.

Release loneliness.

Release insecurity.

Release discomfort.

Heal emotional wounds.

Embrace gratitude.

Practice kindness. You are your friend.

Everything you do, you do with love.

With every challenge you face your wings spread a little wider and you fly a little higher.

You grow stronger.

You grow better.

You grow more confident.

Inhale relaxation. Exhale tension. Inhale calm. Exhale tension.

Picture your peaceful place again. Picture yourself in the calming environment you created for yourself. Acknowledge the positive emotions that stemmed from the affirmations you just spoke aloud. Accept all emotions, whether negative or positive, that you are feeling. Allow yourself the opportunity to enjoy the peace and calm they have brought.

In this place, you feel confident. You embrace who you are as a person. You are strong. You are powerful. You deeply respect the gifts, skills, talents, abilities, and traits you possess. You respect your ability to develop the skills you lack. You respect your ability to grow. You respect the effort you give. You respect yourself.

It's time to leave your peaceful place but remember you can return to it whenever you need to. Hold onto the feeling of security, safety, and self-respect you have experienced and take them with you as you finish your day.

When I count to three it's time to stretch yourself back into the present and continue your day. Alternatively, you may want to drift into a pleasant and relaxing sleep.

One.

I want you to take a deep, slow, and cleansing breath. Exhale deeply.

Two.

Another deep breath in before exhaling slowly.

Three.

You are calm. You are confident. You are refreshed.

Guided Meditation: My Troubles Do Not Define Me

Find your quiet place and get comfortable. Choose a position to relax into, one that you can maintain for the duration of this meditation.

Let's begin the relaxation process with a deep breath in. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Exhale.

Take a deep breath in. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Exhale.

With every breath in you inhale relaxation and calm.

With every breath you expel you purge your body and mind of all negativity and strife.

Your worries have no place here.

Your concerns do not trouble you in this place.

When a negative thought enters your mind, you swipe it away like a notification.

Your focus is on the here and now.

Bring your attention to your breath, hear the sound of air entering and exiting your body, feel the movement of it passing into your mouth and out through your nose.

Take a deep breath in. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Exhale.

Take a deep breath in. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Exhale.

If you feel your mind wandering, that's okay. No judgment just gently correct your attention and return your focus to your breath. Allow your eyes to close gently and feel the weight of your body sink into the ground supporting you.

Let us begin fully with some affirmations. Repeat after me...

I am greater than the challenges I face and I can overcome any adversity.

An obstacle is merely a hurdle I am capable of leaping over.

My focus is on satisfying the highest version of who I am.

I am in control and I do not need to give any space to obstacles or challenges.

I deserve good things.

Now take a deep breath in.

Take a deep breath in. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Exhale.

Listen now to the sounds in the room around you.

If you can hear the weather outside, focus in on those elements and the noise they make on the surface of the window, roof, or ground outside.

Move a hand to your stomach and the other to your chest.

Now take a deep breath in.

Take a deep breath in. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Exhale.

Take a deep breath in. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Exhale.

Feel your body move as your breath passes in and out of your body.

Imagine yourself standing in an open doorway. You are standing on the precipice of greatness and looking at a breathtaking landscape.

Take a deep breath and say, I am at peace.

Take a deep breath and say, I am calm.

Take a deep breath and say, I am at peace.

Take a deep breath and say, I am calm.

Allow your focus to shift back to your hands on your stomach and chest. Feel yourself breath.

This next bit may feel uncomfortable at times. If so, take as long as you need, and don't be scared to take a break if necessary.

Take a moment to be aware of all of your feelings and emotions. If you feel happiness, acknowledge it. If you feel pain, acknowledge it. If there is fear present, acknowledge it.

Repeat after me.

Though I suffer I am happy.

Though I fear I hold hope.

Though I suffer I am happy.

Though I fear I hold hope.

Though I suffer I am happy.

Though I fear I hold hope.

Visualize your suffering and as you do imagine it being washed away by a flood of joy.

Visualize your fears and as you do imagine it being washed away with hope.

One cannot exist without the other.

Now take a deep breath in.

Take a deep breath in. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Exhale.

Take a deep breath in. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Exhale.
Search yourself for your happiest moment.

Did you find it?

Picture it now.

Imagine the weather exactly as it was then.

Is the sun beating down on you? Or is there a light breeze? Perhaps there is a flutter of snow tickling your face as it falls around you.

Feel it.

Who are you with?

Where are you?

Imagine every inch of it in as much detail as you can. Think about the smells, feelings, and everything you experienced at that moment.

Can you feel it?

Take a deep breath in. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Exhale.

Take a deep breath in. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Exhale.

Hold onto the feeling this moment gives you. Imagine you are holding it an embrace and it's warm against you as you hold on tight.

Hold onto the feeling as you take a deep breath in.

Take a deep breath in. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Exhale.

Take a deep breath in. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Exhale.

Imagine you are standing in front of a mirror now and you are still overflowing with the warmth of your happiest moment. Make eye contact with your reflection.

Repeat after me...

I am healthy and I am stable, I embrace my flaws and the person I am as I am.

My compassion will carry me through, negativity will not define me.

I am emotionally pure and negative feelings have no hold over you.

Take a deep breath in. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Exhale.

Give yourself a moment to rest in this feeling and understand that your troubles hold no power over you. They do not define you.

Take a deep breath in. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Exhale.

When you are ready, open your eyes and resume your day.

Guided Meditation for Wealth

Imagine walking in a field, in the soft glow of the moonlight on a pleasantly warm summer evening. The gentle wind causes the tall grass to sway in rhythm. The pleasant scent of the nearby shrubs and flowers intoxicates you as you deeply inhale the moist air.

After holding your deep in-breath for couple of seconds, you slowly release and continue to walk through the field.

As you're walking you notice many signs of abundance; piles of gold and diamonds are scattered throughout the field. You think to yourself that there is enough for everyone to be wealthy beyond his wildest dreams.

From a long way away, you can hear the gentle hooting of an owl. As the wind begins to pick up, you can feel the warm air blowing through your hair. You notice a light in the distance that appears to grow larger as you continue walking towards it. You realize that it is a temple - a glorious temple made of gold and lit spectacularly by the full moon.

As you approach the temple, you are filled with a sense of awe. You realize that something amazing is about to happen; this is obviously a place of great prosperity and abundance. You feel that the key to wealth is going to be revealed to you.

When you finally reach the temple, you start up the long, winding stairs. You move quickly and easily up the stairs with minimal effort. The movement is so fluid that it reminds you of an escalator, only much smoother.

After a few moments you reach the top and see a set of large doors made of wood. With tremendous anticipation and excitement, you push against the doors with all your might. The doors open slowly and with a gentle creaking sound. You walk into the temple, which is filled with light streaming down from the ceiling. What do you see in the temple?

How to Make Your Own Guided Meditation

You can make your own guided meditations quite easily. The most important thing to keep in mind is to emphasize the senses. Describe what you see, hear, feel, and smell. Also important is that you feel safe and comfortable. For example, you don't want to imagine being in your bathing suit while in a snowstorm.

Comfort and sensory detail will help you project yourself into the imagery. The images you give yourself and your thoughts around them should be centered on the topic – wealth, in this example. As previously stated, leaving the imagery open-ended will allow you the space to find the answers you're looking for.

When you're finished, make notes of what you felt and saw. Examine your meditation to determine what you can learn from it. The answers aren't always immediately obvious, but they are there.

Guided meditation can be a powerful tool in your self-development arsenal. Used regularly, it can provide tremendous insight and be used as a problem-solving tool.

Try writing your own guided meditations based on your desires, goals, or challenges, and do it regularly. You'll be amazed and thrilled at the results you see in your life.

Guided Meditation Q & A

Many people have heard of meditation and know it as a practice of silent contemplation. When people think of meditation, they often think of someone lying down or seated in a cross-legged position with eyes closed. This is a traditional style of meditation. But there are various forms of meditation that are more active, including walking a labyrinth or engaging in tai chi or qi gong. It is also possible to engage in meditation while doing the dishes or other tasks.

Quieting the mind and developing focused attention is the basis of meditation. Guided meditation is the practice of listening to a recording or a live teacher who leads a series of visualizations leading to a meditative experience.

This guided meditation often takes the listener on a journey of recognizing and examining the body, acknowledging, and quieting the mind, and bringing the mind and body into a unification of relaxation. From this state of relaxation, the guide will invite the listener through a series of imaginative visualizations to create a new reality and assist in shifting the paradigm of existence and understanding. Guided meditations focus on various topics like self-empowerment, health, mindfulness and more.

It is also possible to have a guided meditation made specifically for something a person is working on. This is usually recorded by a therapist or other professional or spiritual teacher and allows the guided meditation to tailor the experience to the individual.

Guided meditation is an accessible practice for all people, though each meditation is unique and will offer a specialized motive or topic of focus.

Q: What Are The Benefits?

A: The benefits of guided meditation are numerous. Meditation is a lifelong practice that can always augment and support transitions in life. When

people are going through immense change or stress, it can be supportive to engage in a practice that is tested and trusted. Guided meditation allows the experience of meditation to be intentional and purposeful.

When engaging in guided meditation, the mind is focused on the sounds and the speaker and places all attention to this relaxation and engagement. This not only benefits the concentration, but also provides a fertile mental space for clarity and creativity to come forth. When the mind is quieted, we are allowed a glimpse into a spaciousness where new ideas can form. Relaxation and guided meditation lower stress levels and allow for personal time to contemplate life and to reflect on actions and make note of ways we engage with the world.

Guided meditation allows for a sense of presence in existence and carves out space in busy life where one can spend time reflecting upon life and actively engaging in visioning and mindfulness.

Q: What Issues Can Guided Meditation Address Or Be Used For?

A: Guided meditation is useful for a variety of conditions and experiences. Most people experience stress on a daily basis in the modern world. Stress can lead to disregulation of the bodily processes and activities. When we are stressed, we can become angry and shut out the outside world. Or we may blow up at others and become irritated and even cruel.

Meditation can lower stress levels and allow personal time to reflect on behaviors, choices, and emotional reactions. The practice of guided meditation is also useful for people who experience anxiety, as there is time to pause the mind and find a sense of peace and relaxation.

An anxious mind is always moving and is often spinning in circles. Instead of racing to keep up with the mind and get more done and become burned out, guided meditation is a time to reflect without reacting and to get an understanding of why the mind is agitated and how the body reacts to this.

During meditation, it is important to breathe deeply, notice the heartbeat, and take note of any thoughts that affect the emotional body. In this way, we realize that anxiety is only a state of being but comes as a result of other situations in life.

Guided meditation can help get to the root of anxiety, or at least, get some relief from the panicked feeling many people experience when faced with uncertainty. Guided meditation may also be helpful for people who experience depression, as many people who are depressed and sad experience trouble connecting with joyful moments in life.

Listening to a guided meditation of nature sounds and elements like water or rain can be relaxing and uplifting. Recognizing that we are each part of a larger system is one way to combat depression by allowing us to become an important and even essential piece of the story of life.

Q: Does Guided Meditation Really Work?

A: Guided meditation works by engaging the conscious and subconscious mind and uniting them in a common mission of relaxation. Guided meditation is often led by a teacher with a soothing voice and also has calming music and vibrations. Listening to this instruction and engaging with the material in a relaxed manner can allow the mind and body to relax in unison.

During guided meditation, the conscious mind which is the level at which we are aware of our thoughts, is allowed to focus on the material presented whether it is voice, music or other sound or mantra.

Additionally, the subconscious mind is typically engaged through vibrational tone, mantra repetition, sounds of nature or other methodology that allows the subconscious mind to relax and reprogram. The subconscious mind includes programming and other judgments, beliefs, and opinions that affect our everyday lives but we are mostly unaware of them.

Our subconscious mind allows our brain to save energy by making decisions based on past information and intuition. However, sometimes our subconscious programming and tendencies are not the most productive and helpful for our current situation and changing lives.

So, guided meditation can allow the conscious and subconscious mind to invite new ideas and ways of being so old thought patterns and habits don't become detrimental.

Q: How To Get Started With Guided Meditation?

A: One of the easiest ways to get started with guided meditation is to find a teacher or therapist. These people are experienced professionals who can create a guided meditation that is tailored to any specific situation that one wishes to overcome.

Teachers will often have recordings available that can be purchased and used indefinitely. Some guided meditations may be applicable for many years, and some even for a whole lifetime.

It can be worthwhile to invest in a guided meditation that is created by a teacher you know and love and who is trusted to guide you to a new level of understanding. It is also possible to download more generic guided meditations. These can be found on various online platforms and on playlists and well as on hard copy CD. Many people have guided meditations on their phones and can listen with headphones at any time.

There are also various phone and tablet applications that focus on guided meditation and allow the student to track their progress and set goals. It is also possible to record one's own guided meditation and record it.

This is especially great for musicians or singers or those people who feel their energy transformed by their own creation. There are many ways to access guided meditations and many resources are free and available online or within community.

Conclusion

Researchers and scientists who have studied the effects of practicing mindfulness often deliberately choose people who haven't had any exposure to mindfulness or meditation training.

This shows that, even with no prior training, a novice can reap the benefits of beginning mindfulness.

Some of these proven benefits include:

- Lowering stress hormones in the body
- Increase in energy
- Increase in mental focus and stamina
- Enhanced memory and attention

- Boost to the immune system
- Decrease in blood pressure and heart rate
- Lower fatigue
- Stronger brain functioning
- More effective processing of emotions and pain
- Increase in self-awareness
- Increase in compassion and empathy towards others
- Better sleep quality
- Lower rates of depression

Even though it may be difficult to understand how sitting in a quiet space for a few minutes each day can impact our lives, meditation can completely change our perspective, outlook, physical, emotional, and behavioral health.

Unfortunately, some people mistakenly think that mindfulness is something “new-agey” or something deeply spiritual that’s out of reach for the typical person. Fortunately, neither of these things is true.

Indeed, mindfulness is a practice just like many other things that we do to attempt to regain control of ourselves and create a healthier life.

With mounds of research at the helm, combined with a deliberate, purposeful action of making mindfulness a daily routine, you can transform the quality of your life.

You can practice mindful breathing, mindful listening, mindful observation or choose one of the many other forms of meditation. Channeling your focus

and attention for just 10 to 30 minutes each day is enough to set you on the path to a healthier life.

The Zenlightenment Affirmation

I live mindfully.

I focus on what is happening now.

I appreciate this moment without comparing it to the past or anticipating the future.

I clarify my thinking and strengthen my relationships. I feel peaceful and happy.

I slow down. I figure out my priorities and shorten my to do list. I take frequent breaks throughout the day. I savor small pleasures like eating a piece of fruit and walking through my local park.

I do one thing at a time.

I give my full attention to each task.

I scan my body. I check for signs of tension. I take a few deep breaths. I relax my forehead and massage my shoulders. I stretch my legs and wiggle my toes.

I repeat positive affirmations. I give myself encouraging messages. I build my confidence and motivation. I devote my time and energy to the things I can control.

I meditate daily. I set aside time for quiet contemplation. I create a peaceful

space to sit and observe my thoughts. I gain insights that help me to make wiser choices.

I treat myself and others with kindness and compassion.

I forgive past disappointments. I let go of judgements. I listen to others and share my feelings. I connect on a deeper level.

Today, I make mindfulness my way of life. I reduce stress and increase my concentration.

Staying present helps me to achieve my goals and enjoy the activities I love.

