

MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is known as the state of being aware of the present moment and paying attention, intentionally. There are many ways one can practice mindfulness as part of a routine, hobby, or a coping skill.

Signs You Could Benefit from Mindfulness:

If you are experiencing any of the following symptoms, you might consider trying mindfulness:

- Stress
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Trouble concentrating
- Needing a "change"
- Stuck in a rut
- Bored

Benefits of Mindfulness:

- Improved sleep and energy levels
- Stress relief
- Decreased anxiety
- Higher immune functioning
- Improved memory
- Better concentration and focus
- Improved overall mood
- Emotional integration
- Increased patience
- Increased compassion for others as well as self-compassion



Online Resources

There are many ways to access more information about mindfulness online through videos, articles, examples, and more.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6T02g5hnT4>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjtfyuTTQFY>
- https://www.ted.com/talks/andy_puddicombe_all_it_takes_is_10_mindful_minutes?language=en
- <https://positivepsychology.com/mindfulness-for-children-kids-activities/>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mlk6xD_xAQ
- <https://www.mindful.org/what-is-mindfulness/>
- Apps - Headspace, Calm, 10% Happier, Smiling Mind, & more

Mindful Activities & Grounding Techniques

Guided Relaxation and/or Meditations

o Guided meditations are great for those that are just starting out, but also those that have been practicing for a while. During a guided meditation, a person will guide you through the meditation process using sounds, written text, videos, music, and/or talking. You can find short or long guided meditations on YouTube, various Mindfulness websites, and phone apps like Calm/Headspace.

Breathing Exercises

o Breathing exercises are a great way to become in tune with your body one again. They also work to give your brain more oxygen, prevent you from hyperventilating, and calm your body overall. There are various breathing exercises you can do, but in general, make sure to take deep breaths inhaling through your nose, hold it for a little, then release deeply through your mouth.

Loving Kindness Meditation

o This is a great exercise when you might feel out of tune with your body and feel a lack of compassion, love, and kindness. As humans, we are often so critical of ourselves, and this can trickle down into our personal relationships with others. Not only does this exercise help increase loving kindness towards others, but also prompts you to increase your self-compassion and love towards yourself. You can start this practice in a guided meditation through YouTube or <https://palousemindfulness.com/meditations/lovingkindness.html>

Visualization

o This technique combines regular meditation with the art of visualization. What this means is (guided or not) you will practice visualizing a space that you may have fond memories of, a space that feels truly safe to you, a space you feel very comfortable in, or a space that you've never been before, but want to visit. This is also a great technique to connect with our senses – using touch, smell, sight, sounds, and taste – in this peaceful, safe environment. Maybe you're on a run, at the beach, or even at home with your loved ones. You can start this practice with guided meditations on sites/apps mentioned previously, as well as transition to your own visualization method the more you practice.

4-4-4

o This is an example of a breathing exercise. This one has guidelines that are easy to follow. Breathe in deeply for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 4 seconds, and release your breath for 4 seconds out through your mouth. Think about the sensation of your tummy rising and falling and how it feels to breathe this deeply. Use this until you return to the present moment and feel calmer.

5-Finger Breathing

o This is another example of a breathing exercise. To do this, hold out your palm. You will begin tracing your hand. Every time you are tracing upwards, breathe in. Every time you are tracing downwards, breathe out. This can also be used as a grounding technique as we are pulling back to our breathe and our physical body. Do this as many times as you need to return to a sense of calmness.

Yawn/Stretch

o This is a good exercise that can be completed multiple times a day for a short amount of time. If you are feeling overwhelmed or stressed with your schedule, try to stand up every hour and stretch. Before beginning the stretch, try to fake or let out a yawn, which helps to interrupt your thoughts and bring you to the present. Next, beginning stretching slowly and deeply, especially in areas that you are feeling tension. Begin saying "hello" to this tension and acknowledging it. Now, you can return to your schedule feeling relieved of tightness and tension.

Mindfully Eating/Drinking

o This is a great, quick way to return to the present moment amidst our busy schedules. When you notice yourself eating or drinking something yummy, begin thinking about it mindfully. What does it taste like? What is the texture like? What's the temperature like? What is in the food/drink? Asking yourself questions like this really helps you focus on just this one small object and appreciate our eating/drinking.

Set an Intention/Aspiration

o This a great way to improve on contentment you may already be feeling today. Pause for 10-20 seconds and decide on an intention/aspiration that you want to practice or improve on. Some examples: be more patient with others, be kinder to yourself, or approach others with love always. Once you have an aspiration, goal, or intention, set a time in the morning to say it to yourself and lead your day with that.

3 Hugs/3 Breaths

o Hug a loved one tightly and take 3 deep breaths together. This will help ground both you and the other person. This could be helpful during a stress situation, help another person reach calm, or just to show kindness.

Notice & Accept

o It is okay to feel anger. It is a normal human emotion among all the other emotions we feel every day. However, it is important we don't let it overtake us. With difficult emotions, we must learn to accept them and stop denying them or pushing them away. In this exercise, try to notice where in your body you are feeling angry. What does it feel like? Does it have a color? Are you sweaty, are you warm, or tense? Give your anger some adjectives to personify it. Then, accept all these things as they are and accept you are feeling anger. Now return to your breath and give yourself some compassionate thoughts.

STOP

- o **S** – “Stop and take stock” Tune into your experience right now - thoughts, feelings, sensations. Acknowledge these.
- o **T** – “Take a breath” Direct your attention to your breathing. This will help secure you to the present.
- o **O** – “Open and observe” Expand your awareness to outside of your body – your posture, your facial expression, then even more outward – your senses, the next few moments
- o **P** – “Proceed/new Possibilities” Bring your attention to the outside world in the present moment. Be curious and respond naturally after this deep pause.
- o More info at <https://palousemindfulness.com/docs/STOP.pdf>

Naming Other Emotions

- o Even though it is okay to be angry, it is often a secondary emotion. There may be other emotions underlying anger. Begin checking for other feelings than anger. Are you hurt? Are you embarrassed or feel rejected? Are you sad or anxious? Are you stressed or overwhelmed? Again, all these emotions are okay. Begin to give yourself compassion and acceptance for feeling these things. Take a few deep breaths. Maybe even journal about your experience so that you may problem-solve or be motivated at another time.

Grounding Statement/Mantra

- o Coming up with a grounding statement or a mantra can be helpful to ground us during a scary time. For example, saying something like, “I am safe in this classroom.” Or “I am safe when I am with my Mom.” can help remind your body that you are not in any real danger. Repeating this in your head when you are having a panic attack or being triggered connects your brain to your body and reminds you that you are safe.
- o Mantras can also work in the same way, but we can also make a mantra like an affirmation. You could have a mantra that you repeat during a scary time telling yourself “I am very capable. I can do this. I am good at my job. I am able to complete this assignment.” helps reminds us of our strengths in times of stress and uncertainty.

Picking up/touching items

- o This activity will also help bring you back to the room you’re in and aware of the present moment. You will realign with your body as you feel the various weights and shapes of different items in the room.

Hands in Water

- o To place your hands in water, you could try going to wash your hands, take a shower/bath, touch a puddle, or fill up the sink with water. This will also bring you back to the room.

Sour Candy

- o Eating sour candy can use your taste buds to return to your body. This will heighten your taste senses.

5-4-3-2-1

- o This is a good grounding technique when you might be feeling overwhelmed with anxiety, triggers, or other thoughts that are bringing you to a state of fear or sadness. This will bring you back to the present moment and the room you're in.
- o In your head...
 - o 5: Name FIVE things you can see - maybe a book, maybe a spot on the ceiling.
 - o 4: Name FOUR things you can touch around you - maybe your pen, maybe your shirt.
 - o 3: Name THREE things you hear - maybe the A/C, maybe music.
 - o 2: Name TWO things you can smell - maybe coffee, maybe the smell of rain.
 - o 1: Name ONE thing you can taste - maybe cereal.

Release tension in Muscles

- o We often have more tension in our body than we think. Begin to notice the areas in your body that are experiencing the most stress and begin to slowly massage and stretch out painful areas.

Color Matching

- o Like 5-4-3-2-1, this technique is used to notice various things in the room you are in. Name 3 things that are yellow in the room. Name 3 things that are red in the room. Return to the room.

Trace calming words into your palm

- o Practice tracing calming words into your palm with your opposite hand's pointer finger. You may use words that have a special meaning to you, or words like C-A-L-M, P-E-A-C-E, L-O-V-E, and K-IN-D-N-E-S-S, for example. Not only will the feeling of your finger touching your palm ground you, but you will also be metaphorically transported to a place of love and compassion.

Memorize an object's qualities

- o When you feel that you need, grab an object that is close to you. Try memorizing its qualities. What is the texture of the object? What is its purpose? How does it feel holding it in your hand? How heavy is it? What are its colors?