

Mindfulness Anywhere

The Goal of Mindfulness

The goal of mindfulness is for you to be more aware and in touch with life and with whatever is happening in your body and mind at the time it is happening. Another way to say that is to be in the present moment. If you are experiencing a distressing thought, feeling, or actual physical pain, by being mindful you attempt to see it clearly and accept its existence. Acceptance, of course, does not mean passivity or resignation. On the contrary, by fully accepting what each moment offers, you open yourself to experiencing life much more completely and make it more likely that you will be able to respond less reactively to any situation that presents itself.

Mindfulness Meditation

One way to reduce stress is through mindfulness or meditation exercise, but these practices are not always easy. For many people, myself included, turning our brains off can be one of the most challenging things we will ever attempt. This is one of the main reasons people say this is a practice- you must practice to achieve your mindfulness goals, and it is good to remember that every session will be different. Some days my meditation practice feels like a transcendent, cosmic experience, other days I don't even get close to that sensation, but I never regret trying, and there are benefits for just making the attempt.

Meditation means many things. For most people, it means turning inward; it means quiet observation, reflection, and awareness of ourselves and our surroundings. For other people, being mindful is taking the time to self-care and reflect on life. No matter how or why you want to start the practice, there are clear benefits to your nervous system, digestion, and anxiety levels simply for trying, for taking time out of your hectic day to pause, be quiet, and calm your body and mind. One of the best ways to start is by practicing paying attention to your breathing. We breathe every moment of every day. Breathing keeps us alive. When you breathe, try to breathe from your diaphragm (the muscle that separates the lung cavity from the abdominal cavity). Take long, deep breaths and slowly exhale. Find your own rhythm and try not to force or control the process.

The Actual Practice

You can meditate almost anywhere and it doesn't need to take any specific amount of time. It can be done inside or outside, in silence or with music, in full lotus position, seated in a chair, in a car, standing up, or even walking around. Start by bringing your attention to your breath. Feel your belly and chest rise and fall with each breathe. Clear your mind. Try not to judge yourself or your thoughts. When thoughts do come, there is no reason to ignore or suppress them; simply observe them as neutrally as possible and let them pass for the moment.

There is no right or wrong way to meditate or practice mindfulness. The only rule is to be kind to yourself; show yourself respect. You get an A+ just for trying to relax and take care of your body and mind's needs.

The way you are doing it is perfect!

A Positive Affirmation

No matter how many people there are on planet Earth, there is only one you. There is only one person who has lived your life experiences. You have a unique point of view of the world, and that perspective matters and contributes to the whole.

Know that you are important. What you feel and think are important. Even when it is very hard, try to be your own best friend. Remember to congratulate yourself for your successes. Try not to beat yourself up during times of perceived failure. Ask yourself, are the words I am saying to myself the type of words I would say to a friend or loved one?

Remember to thank yourself for taking time out of your busy day to take care of yourself.