



Mindfulness Techniques

Below is a list of very simple techniques to bring your awareness to the present. Keep this up for even 10 minutes a day, and you won't even be able to stop the benefits from happening. 10 minutes a day out of 24 hours, c'mon, I don't buy that you can't find that time. Maybe challenge yourself to turning these habits into "auto-pilot" so it's not such a chore. Why not work with what your body already does?!

- feel the water (hot, cold, lukewarm) running down your shoulders and head in the shower.
- take 3 deep breaths, on purpose, with each exhale allow tension to leave your body.
- listen and name 3 sounds that you hear, what is the nicest sound and what makes it pleasant.
- just breathe, pay attention to each breath and what it does in your body or where it goes when you exhale, don't force it, let your body breathe naturally and just observe.
- look to something natural in your immediate environment and focus on watching it for just 30 seconds to a minute as if you were seeing it for the first time even, explore every aspect of it, allow yourself to be consumed and curious about its presence and existence.
- listen to your favourite song and pay attention to how it makes you feel or what memories pop up (possibly you can find a connection with the emotion and the memory that pops up).
- smell something strong like coffee beans and pay close attention to what happens in your nose.
- taste something and pay close attention to the taste and how it changes as it moves in your mouth.
- sit and relax and imagine yourself melting into everything around you.
- stop wherever you are, become aware of everything at that very moment that your senses pick up (see, touch, smell, taste, hear) and pay attention to how you feel (overstimulated, anxious?).
- spend some time in complete silence and just absorb your surroundings (earplugs could help).
- become aware of every time you use the word "I" in a sentence (this is interesting....it forces us to focus on how self-centred we all are).
- take one long held belief and pretend you believe the direct opposite, make a mental note of how you feel and what thoughts come to you.
- watch a movie and observe how you become engrossed in the story, make mental note of your emotions as you watch and they transition.
- do something around the house you have never done before and do it with utter and undivided attention.
- stare at a candle flame while studying everything you can about it, when your mind wanders (and it will!) become aware that it's wandering and gently bring it back to the flame.
- stop and feel gratitude for one thing in your life, think about it in detail.
- pause 3-5 times a day and notice how you are breathing at those moments or where there is tension in your body at those moments.

- truly pay attention when someone is talking to you, listen to the words and make eye contact.
- find a few small, familiar objects (like a toothbrush, nail clippers, an orange) and look at these objects with fresh eyes, look for one new detail about each object that you didn't see before.
- get a raisin, sit in a quiet place: look at the raisin, roll it in your fingers, smell it, slowly put it between your lips before your mouth, roll it in your mouth and note how it feels, notice the impulse to chew or swallow the raisin.....move along until you do eat it and swallow it.
- eat mindfully the first two bites of every snack and meal you eat (this can be less overwhelming than trying to eat an entire meal mindfully) and notice what's there before you bite, note the texture in your mouth, the smell, the taste....try to find the taste of all you saw before you bit.
- instead of checking your email, give your brain a break, take a moment and just watch out your window.
- feel the air on your skin for 10-60 seconds.
- scan your body from top to bottom or bottom to top and attempt to soften discomfort or tension.
- take a simple walk in your day (door to car, building to building, elevator to lobby) and take in the environment through your senses mindfully along the way.
- create something and really try to be involved in the creative process.
- place an elastic band around your wrist and snap it once in a while and notice how that feels and what it does to your awareness suddenly.
- name three things you can see, three things you can feel, three things you can hear.
- listen to a song and focus on only one instrument for the entire song.
- inhale to a count of 5, hold your breath for a count of 5, exhale for a count of 5.
- make a collage of images from a magazine that demonstrate what your mind is like today or how you are feeling that day.
- stop through the day several times to check in with your body and see what it needs (water, washroom, food) and follow through.
- designate a door knob as a touch point every time your hand touches this doorknob you think of something you are grateful for in your day.
- grab an ice cube and hold it in your hand and notice what happens to your hand and the ice cube.

Remember we are accepting that the mind will wander. When this happens, simply notice it. Don't give mind to what is driving the thought or the storyline behind the thought that appeared. At this moment you are trying to be present....on purpose. Acknowledge the thought (it's not nice to ignore unexpected guests), pick it up in your hand and place it on one of the clouds that are passing through your mind. There will be an unlimited supply of clouds drifting through for the other thoughts that will pop by. Bring your awareness back to your present moment and let the cloud drift off with its new thought on board.



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