

Getting Started with Mindfulness

Mindfulness means "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Engaging in regular mindfulness practice can be very helpful in developing the capacity to be open and willing with all your internal experiences.

Here's what to do:

1. Find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. Turn off your phone.
2. Sit comfortably in a position you feel like you can maintain. Leave your arms and legs uncrossed and your feet flat on the floor. Your arms can rest in your lap or on your legs.
3. Follow the instructions on whichever meditation you decide to follow (most of these will automatically start playing once clicked):
 - a. [Dropping the Anchor](#) (2 minutes)
 - b. [Mindful Drinking](#) (5 minutes)
 - c. [Breathing Meditation](#) (UCLA – 5 minutes)
 - d. [Breathing Meditation](#) (Portland Psychotherapy – 10 minutes)
 - e. [Acceptance of Thoughts and Feelings](#) (12 minutes)
 - f. [Willingness Exercise](#) (13 minutes)
 - g. [Leaves on the Stream](#) (13 minutes)
 - h. [Mindful Body Scan](#) (14 minutes)
 - i. [Awareness Exercise](#) (15 minutes)

It is very likely that your mind will become sidetracked repeatedly. This is normal and to be expected. It does not mean you are doing it wrong. When you notice your mind going elsewhere, merely bring yourself back to focusing on whatever the audio is asking you to focus on -- usually your breath. You may have to refocus many times during mindfulness practice. That is *Okay*. Our minds constantly pull us out of the present moment. We want to gently practice the skill of coming back to the present whenever we notice we've left it.

You may notice yourself feeling relaxed. When it occurs, that is a nice *byproduct* of mindfulness, but not the goal. The goal is merely to be present as much as we can. And you may encounter unwanted thoughts, feelings, emotions, and physical sensations. If that happens, see if you can take an open and compassionate stance toward those feelings, without trying to change them.

Like any skill, mindfulness takes practice. A sailor does not learn to sail during a storm. Analogously, if the only time you practice mindfulness is during high-stress situations (i.e., a storm), then it may not be as useful for you as it would be otherwise. Try to practice one of the exercises once a day. If, for whatever reason, that is not feasible for you—then practice at least once a week.

