



Mindful Activities to Enhance Your Practice

Mindfulness is bringing your presence to a place of awareness with curiosity and compassion.

~ Nikki Nanos ~

What you already do you can do more mindfully and can involve one, two or all of your senses. Bring your **Awareness** and focus on one sense, or with intentional awareness switch from one sense to another.

1. It is sometimes better to start with just one sense of awareness. For instance. You may pick sound. Today I am going to listen better. Take a little notebook with you, and just simply jot down all the distinct sounds you hear. You may spend as little as 1- 5 minutes with this at different times of the day.
 - a. Sit quietly and just listen. Close your eyes if that helps.
 - i. What does the room I am sitting in sound like?
 - ii. Be aware when the air conditioning or heat goes on.
 - iii. Do you hear the refrigerator turn on?
 - iv. A clock ticking?
 - v. Birds chirping or singing outside?
 - vi. Traffic driving by your home?
 - vii. Airplanes flying by?
 - viii. The sound of voices?
 - ix. Music playing—what instruments do you hear?
 - b. Take your listening to work or as you are going somewhere with simple awareness.
 - i. What it sounds like when you get into your car, from the sound of unlocking it to slipping into your seat and the sound of the cloth, vinyl or leather as you slip into the seat.
 - ii. The sound of the seatbelt snapping. Does the seatbelt make a noise against your clothes?
 - iii. The sound of traffic as you drive to work. Car, truck, motorcycle sounds.
 - iv. What do you hear when you enter the building?
 - v. When speaking, do you hear your own voice?
 - vi. When others speak to you, listen a little deeper.
 - vii. Do you hear chairs rolling, purses, phones, staplers, papers being set down?

As you can see, these lists could go on and on of many little sounds we take for granted. Simply jot down the sounds for 5-7 days, working on either **a** or **b**. If you choose **b** wait until you are safe and not driving to jot what you heard down. Don't make it difficult, keep it simple. Below is a personal example:

Day 1

Water trickles from lake
Hum of pool filtration
Hum from air purifier
Fridge kicked in
Air went on
Bird cawing
Bird chirping
People talking in distance

Day 2

Sound when I sat down
Water from lake
Buzz from laptop
Nose snuffle
Fridge on
Clock ticking
Gate outside clangs
Neighbor's door opens/closes
Neighbors' voices

Day 3

Outside chime
People speaking Spanish
Child runs w/ loose shoe
Pool gate slams
Outdoor furniture moved
Water splashing in pool
Pool water waves
Fridge
Scratching my neck



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We do these activities to heighten our awareness. As you look back on your lists after 5-7 days, you realize, sometimes there are sounds you knew had to be there, yet you did not write them down. We can see how certain sounds (and you can apply this to any of the senses) pull our attention somewhere else. As I look over my list, I could know the air conditioning went off, yet I didn't list it on Day 2 or 3. This also helps us become better listeners and appreciate more when we are being listened to. Inadvertently, doing this type of activity decreases anxiety/stress as we get away from ruminating on anxious thoughts we may be having at the time. We are being more mindful of life around us.

Apply the above principles to each of your senses. Taste, touch, smell, hearing, seeing.

2. Everyday activities we normally do on auto-pilot where we can be more mindful for just a moment. Below are just a few. Check in with yourself and ask which sense is most prominent?
 - a. Eating
 - b. Brushing our teeth
 - c. Washing our hands
 - d. Vacuuming
 - e. Dusting
 - f. Scrubbing sinks
 - g. Watering plants

3. With hands open and palms facing each other, slowly and gently rub your hands together. You may wish to close your eyes, as this helps reduce stimuli around and gives us a heightened awareness.
 - a. Awakens your sense of touch.
 - b. What does it sound like?
 - c. How does the temperature change?
 - d. How does it make you feel?
 - e. Do you feel a response anywhere else in your body as your hands touch?

This is also a wonderful activity to do with a partner, sit on a couch or floor facing each other start with one hand touching your partners, then slowly bring in both hands, be aware of where your thoughts go, what changes in your body? Warning: when doing this with a partner, well this can evoke other emotions, save those for another time 😊, and bring yourself back to the sensation of touch. 😊

4. Being **Present**. (adapted from my teacher Mitra Manesh) Sit with yourself for 10-minutes. If you can't do 10-minutes, no worries, do the best you can for where you are at. You can do this on a meditation cushion or sitting in a chair, whatever is most comfortable for you. Close your eyes if you so choose.
 - a. Just breath in and release to the moment
 - b. Ask yourself ... What do I feel right now? Sum it up in one or two words:
 - i. At peace; anxious; tired; confused, etc.
 - ii. Just acknowledge the thought is there.
 - c. Now ask yourself ... Where in my body do I feel this?
 - i. Place your hand there if you can. If, for instance, it is a place on your back you cannot reach, imagine you place your hand there, and say ... "I am aware you are there."



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- d. You can give it a color. You might say you feel tired, tired may be gray to you, or perhaps a dark red. You can give it a shape and/or size, or you can simply say, “Tired” and acknowledge Tired by simply saying, “Tired, I feel you” or call it “Tommy Tired”, it might be a person or comic character, whatever works for you.
- e. Just sit with your Tired, don’t engage with it.
- f. Become aware if you feel Tired in other parts of your body. And just acknowledge you are aware of where you feel it, and just sit with Tired for a moment and move onto whatever you need to do.

No matter where you are in your journey, the more you do the practices, the more you come into awareness, even doing one practice a day, the more you will benefit.

5. **Meditate** every day, no matter how long. Don’t “TRY” to meditate, don’t “TRY” to clear your mind. It will happen naturally. If you only meditate for 1 minute, that’s great. Try to be aware, if you had even 1 second of peace come over you when you took a deep breath in or maybe it happened as you closed your eyes. Don’t worry if your “monkey mind” kicked in after that, just say, “May I have 2 seconds of peace tomorrow.” You may be surprised if you start small and let go of expectations of how much easier and how much faster you grow in this practice.

6. A quick breathing meditation that helps when you are feeling stressed or need to pull yourself together quickly is the “5-Finger Breathing Meditation.” You can do this at your work desk, even while in a meeting.

- a. Open the palm of one hand.
- b. Place your index finger of your opposite hand in the center of your open hand.
- c. As you consciously take a breath in, let your index finger gently run up the thumb of your open hand and as you breathe out, bring your index finger back down your thumb.
- d. Next breath in run your index finger up your open hands index finger and as you breathe out back down your finger.
- e. Do this with each finger.
- f. When you finish. You may simply want to rub your hands together and take a healthy breath in and release.

7. **Journal.** Journaling uncensored is an amazing mindful tool. You may ask yourself, “What is causing me discomfort in life? What does it want to teach me?” Journal about it, journal about a thought that came to you unexpectedly. Don’t think what should I write or this will sound silly, just write and let it flow. It may lead you somewhere unexpected.

8. If you are experiencing discomfort or are aware of its presence ... show yourself **Compassion**, hug yourself and/or put your hand on your heart and tell yourself, “May I be happy, May I be well, May I live with ease.” You can also send the same words to others in your life. “May you be happy, May you be well, May you live with ease.

9. If you hear yourself saying to yourself, “stupid, dumb, idiot,” or any negative thought. Do your best to catch it and change the words as quickly as possible. Be aware of where you feel that thought. For instance, you may try to fix something and instead you make it worse or break it and you say to yourself, “You idiot, you really _____ it up now.” The thought comes on quickly and if you are aware, you will most likely notice you have a physical reaction first, that triggers the



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judgmental thought and the physical feeling will grow and the discomforting thoughts will grow and take you to more discomforting thoughts. Our bodies are sending messages all the time to all parts of us. Having a greater awareness of our physical reaction, can catch the discomforting thought in mid-flight and say instead, “Well, that didn’t work out and it’s okay, it could have happened to anyone.” You might even try to put a “It happens to the best of us” smile on your face.

Mindful living takes practice. The practice makes it easier to bring mindful awareness into your life, especially when needed. Mindfulness is not 24/7, we get sidetracked by life and unexpected events. Know that that is okay, and you are not a Buddhist Monk or Holy Person. We drop/mess up things every day, life happens and instead of beating ourselves up, get **Curious** about your reaction and give yourself **Compassion**. It will help you release that self-judging, discomforting thoughts.

None of us, not one of us, is perfect. Just say to yourself, I have done my best.