



Mindfulness: A Resilience Practice

Handout

Mindfulness Practices

Notice Five Things

This common mindfulness exercise allows you to take a break, center yourself, and connect with your environment. It focuses your attention away from challenging thoughts such as worries about the past or future and toward what you notice in your environment, using your senses. It encourages you to be *present*.

Steps

Take a moment to stop and think about, one at a time, five things you notice using any of these senses:

- Hear
- See
- Touch or connect with your body
- Smell

Mindful Breathing

This is a formal meditation practice that focuses on using your breath as the focal point of your attention. This practice works by withdrawing your attention from distracting thoughts and actions and directing your attention to the physical sensations of the breath. By doing so, you put less energy into emotional states like restlessness, anxiety, frustration, and craving that drive unwanted thoughts and emotions. Over time, the mind becomes calmer, your emotional states become more balanced, and your experience becomes more positive.

Steps

- Sit comfortably, with your eyes closed and your spine reasonably straight but in a relaxed position.
- Bring your attention to your breathing.
- Imagine that you have a balloon in your stomach. Every time you breathe in, the balloon inflates. Each time you breathe out, the balloon deflates. Notice the sensations in your abdomen as the balloon inflates and deflates: Your abdomen rising as your breath comes in and falling as your breath moves out.
- Thoughts will come into your mind, and that's okay, because that's just what the human mind does. Simply notice those thoughts, and then bring your attention back to your breathing.
- Likewise, you can notice sounds, physical feelings, and emotions, and again, just bring your attention back to your breathing.



Mindful S.T.O.P.

The Mindful S.T.O.P. is a four-step practice that helps people engage in more effective behaviors and experience less stress in response to challenging situations. Mindfulness doesn't necessarily tell you what to do; but it provides you with the space, calmness, and mental clarity to make better decisions about what to do next. The mindful S.T.O.P. can be a tool during challenging or stressful situations or important situations that require you to do the *effective* thing and not the *mindless* thing.

Steps

- **Stop** and envision a *stop* sign to help you pause and bring your awareness to the present moment. This break provides the space to do something else.
- **Take** a deep breath to purposefully draw your attention to your breathing and connect to the present moment.
- **Observe** and adopt a receptive attitude to notice what is unfolding. You can observe what you are thinking, feeling, hearing, seeing, touching, and noticing in others. All of these elements are capable of entering your field of awareness in a receptive and gentle way so you can achieve clarity, calmness, and a deeper understanding of how best to act given the situation.
- **Proceed positively** by choosing to do what's most effective in the moment rather than what uncomfortable or impulsive thoughts and feelings are trying to tell you to do.

Mindful Daily Routines

Daily routines provide a prime example of how to integrate mindfulness seamlessly into your life.

Steps

- Pick an activity that constitutes part of your daily routine, such as getting out of and making the bed, brushing your teeth, shaving, or having a shower.
- When you do that activity, focus completely on what you are doing: the body movements, the tastes, the touch, the smell, the sights, the sounds, and so on.
- When thoughts arise, acknowledge them, let them be, and bring your attention back to the routine at hand.
- Again and again, your attention will wander. As soon as you realize this has happened, gently acknowledge it, note what distracted you, and bring your attention back to your senses.



Mindful Eating

Mindful eating involves paying full attention to the experience of eating and drinking. It enables you to give yourself respite from the sometimes relentless work that you do and your own thoughts. People who eat mindfully have reported feeling significantly less stressed afterward, enjoying their food more, and losing more weight compared to those who eat mindlessly. Next time you sit down to eat, immerse your awareness in the act of eating by directing your attention to what you are seeing, tasting, hearing, and otherwise noticing about the experience.

Steps

- Pay attention to the colors, smells, textures, flavors, temperatures, and even the sounds (crunch!) of your food.
- Pay attention to the experience of the body. Where in the body do you feel hunger? Where do you feel satisfaction? What does half- or three-quarters full feel like?
- When eating mindfully, pay attention to the mind. While taking the stance of having a receptive attitude by avoiding judgment or criticism, watch when the mind gets distracted, pulling away from full attention to what you are eating or drinking.
- Watch the impulses that arise after taking a few sips or bites: to grab a book, to turn on the television, to call someone on your cell phone, or to get some additional work done. Simply notice the impulse, and return your awareness to the act of eating.

Mindful Commuting

Use mindfulness to make commuting a less stressful experience by focusing your attention on the environment around you.

Steps

- Pay consistent attention to exactly what you're doing—driving!
- Use stop signs or lights as cues to engage in mindful breathing.
- Mindfully notice whatever comes your way—notice your surroundings (pick up things you've never realized before), notice the colors of the cars around you, the faces of the people, and your thoughts and emotional reactions as they arise. Cultivate this ability to simply observe and pay attention to your thoughts, emotions, and sensory experiences, untainted by any judgments or criticisms.
- Last, convert a normally stressful experience into a reminder to de-stress.