

# THE LOST ART OF **BEING PRESENT**

HOW TO LIVE IN THE NOW & MAKE  
EVERY MOMENT COUNT





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# Introduction

Many Eastern practices such as meditation and yoga have become more prominent in the West in recent years. The similarity between these two practices is that they both offer relaxation and enhanced focus. These practices are becoming more popular by the day, and they're increasingly featuring in movies as they continue to gain stamped acceptance in Europe. This shows that there's something people in the East understand about relaxation and keeping the mind free from stress that needs to be understood in the West.

Depression is on the rise across the globe, and suicidal attempts are getting worse by the day. This situation shouldn't be this way because the modern world is full of fanciful toys. Besides, we have sleeker and faster ways of doing things, thanks to the development of machines and intelligent tools. Various companies are leveraging artificial intelligence to make life easier and more enjoyable. Still, the number of unhappy people in the world is alarming.



According to the World Health Organization, there are more than 264 million people battling depression across the globe. In the US, there are more than 16.2 million adults suffering from a major depressive disorder. At its peak, depression can lead to suicide. So, this unpleasant situation has to be arrested. Thankfully, one of the ways you can avoid this mental disorder is through a practice that costs nothing: mindfulness. This book will focus on the meaning, techniques, and benefits of this practice. Reading the content of this guide guarantees improved mental health, among other benefits.



# CHAPTER 1

## MINDFULNESS 101





# Chapter 1: Mindfulness 101

This journey will begin by exploring the rudiments of mindfulness. We'll also discuss the differences between mindfulness and meditation, as well as the types of and factors that enhance mindfulness.

## **Meaning of Mindfulness**

You need to understand what mindfulness is all about to be able to practice it effectively. Generally, mindfulness refers to being aware of your environment and the sensations demanding your attention. For example, when you are living in the moment, you'll pay attention to the natural arrangement and color of the flowers as you walk through a garden. You'll also notice the way cars are moving and stopping rather than just see them as objects flying past you while walking on a busy road.

Your mind has a tendency to act like a monkey jumping from one branch of a tree to the other. The Buddha refers to this state of mind as “the monkey mind.” This restlessness is the reason many people find it difficult to stay in the moment. Their minds are full of thoughts about the future and how they can solve the next problem in such a way that they cannot enjoy the current moment. Such people are always distracted and find it difficult to concentrate on a task.

Many people don't realize the transient and short nature of life. You cannot afford to live a meaningless and colorless life due to your inability to see the beauty in the basic things of life. For some people, they will never realize the importance of those simple but foundational things in life until their health declines. Staying in the moment and making every moment count is supposed to be our default mode. However, it's now a lost art that so many people are learning the hard way.

# The Differences Between Mindfulness and Meditation

There's no doubt that mindfulness and meditation share a number of similarities. Nonetheless, they aren't the same. Mindfulness is broader and simpler than meditation. You cannot meditate everywhere you go, but mindfulness isn't restricted to any particular location. Before you can meditate, you'll need to be somewhere you'll not be distracted. There are also some outfits you'll need to get the best out of the practice. However, that's not the case when it comes to mindfulness.





Meditation promotes mindfulness, but you can stay in the moment without practicing meditation. For example, you can simply focus all your energy and attention on a conversation you have with your friend or a member of your family. At that moment, you can decide to switch off your phone or put it away so that you can have a full grasp of what the person is saying. You're not meditating at that moment. Yet, you are practicing mindfulness because you are making the best of that conversation.

So, every single time you choose to be fully engrossed with an activity you are involved in, you are practicing mindfulness. When you are living in the moment, you'll enjoy and analyze a football game you are watching in detail. You will not be thinking about how you will perform at an interview at that moment. People that practice mindfulness allows future events to handle themselves. In other words, they don't allow the pressure of an upcoming situation to cripple their enjoyment of the current moment. They put their best in whatever they have to handle right now without distractions.

## **Types of Mindfulness Movement**

Remember that the central idea behind mindfulness is staying in the movement, regardless of what you're doing. Yet, there are some activities that can make you practice mindfulness deliberately. Below are some of them:

### **Breathing Exercises**

Breathing exercises involve deliberately elongating your breath and slowing it down while observing it. This routine enables you to refresh and improve your focus. Breathing exercises feature in seated meditation. However, it only serves as an anchor for the practice. In mindfulness, this exercise helps you to reconnect to your environment.

### **Mindful Walking**

Taking a walk is recommended by physical experts as a beneficial exercise that offers multiple benefits. Still, you can combine mindfulness with it to get more out of the activity. For example,

while walking past a garden, pay more attention to the breeze and the beauty of nature all around you.

## **Routine Workout with Mindfulness**

You can synchronize your breath, tune in your body, and stay in the moment while nourishing your muscles and building strength. This approach is a fantastic way of enjoying the benefits of working out and mindfulness at the same time. It is a combination that you will find beneficial to both your body and mind.

## **Mindful Stretching**

Stretching is an early-morning home routine for many people. It helps to reduce stiffness, release tension, and eliminate negative emotions. You can introduce mindfulness into the activity by observing every movement you make. Pay attention to your body and your breath. You are inadvertently building resilience, focus,



and energy, which translate to a better living experience, especially while going through your daily activities.

## **Factors That Enhances Mindfulness**

There're some things you can do to make it more seamless to stay in the moment. Here are some of them.

### **Digital Disconnection**

Digital devices have many advantages, including a faster accomplishment of certain tasks. Sadly, they have become the greatest source of distraction for many people. This excessive use has also affected the quality of sleep and interpersonal relationships of many individuals. If you want to make every moment count, you need to stay off your digital devices sometimes or totally for some days, if possible.

If you cannot imagine staying one week off social media, you need to act fast. You can deliberately stay off for some days to be in charge again. Whatever makes you lose control over your life has

put you at the backdoor. You need to wrest it back and be in charge as fast as possible.

## **Work-Life Balance**

Many people find it challenging to leave their jobs in the office. They often bring uncompleted tasks home, thereby finding it difficult to have time for their loved ones. If you want to stay more in the moment, try to leave your job in your office. When you are at home, let your family have full access to you to create great memories together. It doesn't matter if you're working at home. You still have to ensure that you create an office space and time at home to avoid letting your job demands interfere with your family life. You'll not be happy to discover that there are some other people that your kids prefer to you.

## **Stay Closer to Nature**

Possessing and cultivating a garden, especially with your family, is one of the most fulfilling activities in the world. It creates a sense

of togetherness as you try to achieve a goal as a family. However, if you don't have one, you can still stay closer to nature by visiting one or going to places with beautiful sceneries. Walk through the location and appreciate the creativity in nature and the exciting colors of various plants and flowers.

## **Have Hobbies**

Instead of wasting time on digital platforms, enjoying a hobby is a better activity. Find something you like to do that can take your mind away from your challenges and other negative emotions whenever you're doing it. Hobbies also ensure that you're doing something that improves your self-esteem. You will enjoy this benefit if you choose a hobby that you're good at doing.

## **5 Facts About Mindfulness**

There are many intriguing facts about mindfulness that can inspire you to practice it more. Some of them are listed and explained below.

- **It's not religious:** Some people assume that they need to have a religious affiliation before they can practice meditation and mindfulness. However, this is far from the truth. You don't need to be a Buddhist or Hindu to stay in the moment.
- **There are over 1300 mindful apps:** You'll not find it difficult to practice mindfulness because there are countless quality materials and apps that can help you to get the best out of the activity.
- **Mindfulness has an Eastern root:** Mindfulness traveled from the East to the West.
- **Search for mindfulness has increased by 67% recently:** In the last five years, online searches for mindfulness have increased by a staggering 67%. This shows that more people are beginning to understand the importance of this practice.
- **Some of the most mindful cities in the world are in Europe:** Aarhus (Denmark), Lucerne (Switzerland), Reykjavik (Iceland), Bergen (Norway), and Turku (Finland) are some of the most mindful cities in the world.



## **Chapter 2: The Perks of Practicing Mindfulness**

The benefits of staying in the moment are so numerous that writing a book on them will still not be enough to explain all of them. Below are some of the most common advantages of practicing mindfulness.

### **Stress Reduction**

One of the most obvious benefits of practicing mindfulness is stress reduction. Indeed, stress is part and parcel of life. You need pressure to be at your best and perform to the peak of your powers. However, stress mustn't be so much that it overwhelms you. When that is the case, you'll be physically and mentally exhausted.

One of the reasons people are stressed and under extreme tension is because of anxiety. They are thinking about how they will solve their marital problems while at work. In the same way, they are anxious about how they will perform the next day in a presentation while spending time with their family. If you can learn to stay more in the moment, your stress level will drop significantly.

## **Enhanced Performance**

You cannot be at your best when you have so many negative thoughts running through your mind. You need your mind to be at peace to gather your thoughts together to make the right decisions. It's virtually impossible to make quality decisions when your mind is clouded with many colliding thoughts. Your thinking process will be inhibited, leading to struggles with drawing logical inferences.

Negative and unguided thoughts can affect your preparation, which in turn can affect your performance. Practicing mindfulness enables you to bring tranquility to your mind, providing the enabling platform for a quality decision-making process. This is



the reason many top executives around the world practice meditation and mindfulness. Boost your performance by keeping your mind free from clogged thoughts by staying in the moment.

## **Improved Insight**

Insight is the ability to see what others cannot see. It's a beyond surface-level analytical prowess that gives an individual the ability to understand a phenomenon or concept in an unusually in-depth way. When you listen to a person that has insight into a matter, you'll be impressed by their ability to delve into seemingly complicated issues with apt simplicity.

Note that insight is fueled by observational skills. Meanwhile, you cannot be at your best to observe anything when your mind is full of different, incoherent thoughts. You have to subdue your monkey mind to have a keen interest in a subject matter to analyze it accordingly. Staying in the moment helps you to prevent your mind from being in autopilot mode.

## **Enhanced Awareness**

You need to be conscious of what is going around you wherever you find yourself. If not, you'll miss out on many opportunities to create quality relationships with people. Usually, when we ask people how they are doing, they often say "fine" ceremoniously. In many situations, these people have things troubling them that they'll only tell individuals that care enough to ask them sincerely.

This undivided attention is needed in your workplace, but especially in your home and when you are around your friends. If you are a parent, there're times that your kids will have issues they'll like to discuss but will only tell you if you are persistent. When you ask them once, they will feel that you don't really care to know how they feel but was just asking for the sake of it. Practicing mindfulness enables you to be more vigilant to probe further when necessary.

## **Increased Empathy**

Empathy is needed in an increasingly cold world where selfishness is at its peak. People are naturally selfish, and it's getting worse by the day. Many individuals are devising more sophisticated and shocking ways to play on the intelligence of others to gain an unfair advantage over them. Social media platforms have become the harbinger of many harmful and insensitive comments about others.

As of the time of putting this material together, Thierry Henry, a famous retired footballer that represented Arsenal and Barcelona in his active days, decided to quit social media because he felt it was no longer safe. Empathy, the ability to put yourself in the shoes of others, is lacking in the modern world. Practicing mindfulness helps you to see things from the right perspective to treat others well.

## **Enhanced Interpersonal Relationships**

One of the products of increased empathy and improved awareness is enhanced interpersonal relationships. We all want to

be around people that care about us enough to ask us probing questions that will make us open up to them. It is when you are staying in the moment that you can pay attention to non-verbal cues that can encourage some critical discussions.

Your friends and families want to know that you care about them. They don't need you to just say it. They want to see you act it. Actions convey far more than what words can say. Once your consciousness of what is happening to the people around you improves, it'll affect their trust and connection with you. When you ask them questions, they'll be more willing to open up to you.

## **Better Mental Health**

Mental health issues include depression and anxiety, among others. In most cases, these problems are products of an unstable and disturbed mind. Anxieties are of different types, and they can be in the form of phobias, which are unreasonable fears about a certain situation. Still, they are all results of a mind that's not at peace due to what might happen. Funny enough, some of the things anxious people fear might occur never take place.



In the modern world, rising bills, infidelity, betrayal, distrust, and other issues make it difficult for people to have sound minds. Many individuals are under pressure by the day to prove that they aren't failures. This pressure can be positive when channeled in the right direction. However, when it isn't properly managed, it can lead to various physical issues such as high blood pressure. Unhealthy comparison can also bring about negative emotions that can end up causing depression and other mental health issues for an individual.

# CHAPTER 3

## MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUES





## Chapter 3: Mindfulness Techniques

Knowing the benefits of a practice doesn't guarantee that you understand how to go about it. After discussing the benefits of being present, it's imperative to highlight and explain the ways you can cultivate this habit. This section will explore some mindfulness techniques based on walking and how you can leverage them to improve the quality of your life.

### **Basic Walking Mindfulness**

This is one of the simplest methods of practicing being present. It is all about paying attention to your body sensations as you take a walk. In other words, you will use the feelings you have in your body as an anchor point during this mindfulness. An anchor point is the focal object or stimuli that you deliberately choose to occupy your mind instead of allowing random thoughts. Failure to keep

track of your thoughts will put your mind in an autopilot mode that can make negative emotions overwhelm you. So, instead of stray thoughts, you'll focus on your body sensations as you walk in this technique.



Focusing on your body while walking can also help you to notice certain aspects of the way you walk. For instance, you can begin to see the movement of your muscles in a new way as you observe the sensations of your feet. It gets more interesting as you encounter different surfaces below you. Don't only observe what your legs are doing; you should also notice what's happening to

your torso, spine, arms, and head while walking. You should also pay attention to subtle changes in your breathing, body temperature, and pulse during the activity.

## **Leveraging Words and Phrases**

As earlier mentioned, mindfulness isn't restrictive. It's all about taking actions that can make you fully aware of what is happening in your body and around you. The method you use doesn't matter. The most crucial factor is that you should do something that will make you stay in the moment and wade off negative emotions. So, in case you don't achieve the desired result from an approach, you can choose another method that will be beneficial to you. If focusing on your body sensations feels awkward or boring, you can use words or phrases that appeal to you as anchors. You can use these words while taking a walk.

There are phrases recommended by mindfulness experts. An example is, "I have arrived, I am home, in the here, in the now." You can try it. If it's helping you to stay in the moment, then stick with it. On the other hand, if it's not yielding the kind of result you desire, you can select the one that you feel is preferable to you.

When taking a word, begin by counting in rhythm with your steps. Whenever you realize that your mind is wandering, don't feel bad about yourself. Simply start counting all over again.

## **Sensory Walking Mindfulness**

Sensory walking mindfulness is an advanced form of basic walking mindfulness. Just like the former, it's also simple. The key part of it is tuning in to your five senses while covering a distance at a relatively slow pace. You will be able to savor the precious moments that come with being outside and moving as you stay present in the moment with your senses. Everything around you will come alive, and you'll feel that you are living. When you are engrossed in this moment, past mistakes and every future anxiety will escape through the back door. Our senses keep us grounded in the moment while our thoughts drift to the past or future.

Begin by keeping your eyes still and observe as the view changes and various shapes come into your line of vision. Then make the sole of your feet your focal point. Be aware of the different sensations as the surface beneath you changes. Next, pay

attention to the sounds around you as you move. Observe the sound your feet are making and every other one striking your eardrums. Finally, notice tastes and smells in the air and how they differ.

## **Body Scan Walking**

You can practice walking mindfulness in such a way that your mind will be functioning like a systematic sensory detector. While walking, you will start by paying attention to the soles of your feet. Observe the sensations in that part before moving up to your feet. The interval for the change on a focal point can be after taking twenty steps or four minutes. After your feet, keep moving up to your ankles and calves.

Once the interval is complete, shift your focus to the way your knees are bending. Up next are your hips. Be conscious of the way they move and the feelings around them. Then proceed to your arms and hands, where you will observe the ways they swing at your sides. Your torso and your heart can be the next targets as you focus on the changes taking place there. Move to the neck before you eventually end it on your head.

## **Gratitude Walking**

In many situations, negative emotions are products of the inability to see the positive things happening to you and around you. You are only bothered about all the things you have not achieved, and you are feeling dejected and rejected. If only you can look at the bright side, you'll realize that you have more than enough reasons to be grateful. Your bills might be piling up, but you have sound health. Is that not enough reason to appreciate your life?

Gratitude walking helps to keep your mind away from disturbing and depressing thoughts to focus it on the beauty of your surroundings. This shift in perception begins to break the inherent pessimism that leads to self-doubt. In the long run, you'll start reminding yourself about other positive things in your life that are worth thankful for. Savor the positive vibes that come with this paradigm shift for a while.



## **Observational Walking**

You can understand your emotional experience as you walk by bringing mindfulness into it. Pay attention to the way you are reacting emotionally to everything and everyone around you, especially when they are in close proximity to your personal space. This awareness can help you detect the way you unconsciously judge things and others, as well as your approval of certain things and people. Observe the pleasure you have as you approach sunshine and dread as you get closer to small hills.

This observation can help you to become more emotionally intelligent. You'll discover your threshold of frustration, anxiety, and relaxation. When you understand how quickly your emotions can change when facing some situations, it can help you to manage negative emotions more effectively. The truth is that you can always choose how you want to respond to a situation, regardless of how stressful it is.



# CHAPTER 4

## HOW TO SIT FOR MINDFULNESS PRACTICE



## **Chapter 4: How to sit for Mindfulness Practice**

You can practice the art of being present whenever you want to and wherever you want. As earlier mentioned, there are no restrictions. Still, if like to practice staying in the moment while sitting, there's nothing wrong with it. You can take advantage of the steps in this section to practice mindfulness in a sitting position.

### **Get a Seat**

It's critical that you find somewhere comfortable and stable where you can sit that will give you the requisite balance to practice without distractions and interruptions. You can choose to sit on a park bench, cushion, or chair. What you choose doesn't matter. The most important thing is to find a spot that offers you a solid,

stable seat that will not leave you hanging or perching. You can sit for approximately two minutes to test whether the sitting position will strain your back or not. If it fully supports your body without straining any part of your body, you're ready for the next step.

## **Focus on Your Legs**

The next stage is to observe what your legs are doing. If you are sitting on a cushion on the floor, cross your legs in front of you in such a way that you will feel comfortable. If you have been involved in some kind of seated yoga posture before now, you should find it easier. Just assume the position you have always been using before now. If you are sitting on a chair, it's recommended that the bottoms of your feet are in contact with the floor. If your legs aren't in a comfortable position, it will affect your concentration during the practice.

## **Straighten Your Upper Body**

Once you feel that you're sitting comfortably and your legs in a stable position, straighten your upper body. Still, you have to do it in a way that won't stiffen it. Note that your spine has a natural curvature. Ensure that you retain it to avoid straining your back to avoid destabilizing yourself. Your body is designed in such a way that your head and shoulders won't have issues with resting comfortably on top of your vertebrae. Simply put your upper body in its natural position where it won't be under any pressure due to a wrong posture.

## **Position Your Upper Arms Parallel to Your Upper Body**

It's crucial that your upper arms are parallel to your upper body to put you in a position that provides the perfect platform for practicing mindfulness. You can achieve this by letting your hands drop onto the tops of your legs. Your hands will land in the right spot once your upper arms are at your sides. If your hands are too far forward, it will make you hunch, creating an uncomfortable feeling. If they are too far behind, it will affect your back. It will be stiff. What you're doing is more like tuning the strings of your body. So, it's crucial that it's neither too tight nor too loose.



## **Drop Your Chin a Little**

The next step is to let your gaze fall gently downward as you drop your chin a little. To get the best out of this position, let your eyelids drop lower than usual. Note that you don't have to close your eyes to practice mindfulness. However, lowering your eyelids completely might help you stay clear of distractions. You can use what you are looking at as a focal point rather than close your eyes. You can even be staring without necessarily focusing on the object before you.

## **Stand Still**

At this point, you need to relax and bring your attention to your breath. If you're not comfortable with using your breath as your focal point, you can use your body sensations instead or any other anchor that can make you most effective such as the phrases mentioned earlier. Stand still and retain your balance for some seconds.

## **Be Conscious of Your Breath**

If you have chosen your breath as your focal point, follow it as it goes in and out through your nostrils. The emphasis of this practice is on exhalation. The inhalation is only a matter of taking a pause. Bring your awareness to the physical sensation you're getting as the air moves in and out of your nose or mind. Also, observe the rising and falling of your chest and belly. You can create a mental note of every sensation as you become engrossed in this activity.



## **Gently Return Your Attention When Wandering**

It's inevitable that your focus will start to drift to other things during the process. This is the same way other things compete for your attention in your day-to-day activities. So, instead of judging yourself, learn from the process and use it to train your mind during the times you have the same experience. Instead of feeling bad about yourself, gently bring your attention to the anchor

again. If it's your breath, watch it go in and out again as you have been doing before now.

## **Don't Pause Impulsively**

There might be moments when you feel like taking a pause or making an adjustment after some minutes of practice. You might feel like scratching a part of your body. Still, don't lose control to your body. Plan when to take a pause to make the adjustment. This discipline will help you to train yourself to choose your actions. People that react to a situation without thinking about it are likely to make the wrong choices. So, you should leverage the experience to build your emotional intelligence. You should dictate for your body and not the other way round.

## **Observe and Learn When Necessary**

If you observe that your mind keeps drifting away after bringing it back to what you're doing a number of times, you might need to stop fighting it. Instead, you can leverage the experience to understand your thought pattern. Observe the kind of things that are taking your focus away. Is it your bills or your relationships? Whatever it is shows that you need to work on your mind in that

area of your life. You should make plans about how you can solve an issue without being overwhelmed emotionally.

## **Gently Lift Your Gaze**

At the end of the practice, lift your gaze or open your eyes if you have closed them. Take a moment to observe any sound in your surroundings. Observe how you feel right now. Also, pay attention to your thoughts? Are they still drifting around? Are they negative? Has the practice been worth it? Your answers to these questions will affect your motivation to practice the next time. Review the success of the day and make plans about how you'll practice the next day.

# CHAPTER 5

**HOW TO BRING  
MINDFULNESS TO YOUR  
EXERCISE ROUTINE**



## **Chapter 5: How to Bring Mindfulness to Your Exercise Routine**

Researchers have discovered many benefits of regular exercise. It's one of the requirements for staying healthy and maintaining an excellent physique. Meanwhile, we have discussed the perks available to you when you learn to stay in the moment. A combination of mindfulness and exercise is an intriguing combo that offers the benefits of both practices. Below are some hacks that can help you to integrate mindfulness into exercise seamlessly:

### **Pause and be Mindful of Your Purpose**

There are various motivations for exercise. Some people are involved in regular exercise because they want to lose weight. For others, it's because they want to improve their physique or boost their immune system. In the midst of the stress and sweat, it's



easy to lose sight of the reason for the activity. It's this loss of focus that makes some people inconsistent with their routine.

You can keep your eye on the ball by reminding yourself about the reason for the exercise. When you keep your mind on what you intend to achieve, you are staying in the moment because you'll focus on the essence of the activity rather than the stress and other unpleasant sensations you're experiencing as a result of the activity. In the long run, you'll be able to retain your consistency as you proceed towards your target.

## **Disconnect from Digital Devices**

Listening to music can help during exercise because it can improve your mood during the routine. However, bringing your phone along during your workout can lead to distractions. You can end up receiving a call or tempted to check a notification that can break your rhythm. So, it's in your best interest to stay away from your digital devices during your routine so that you can be absolutely focused on what you're doing.

Let your focus be on the treadmill, sidewalk, woods, and other things present in the place you are working out. You should ensure that you don't let the thought of any other thing or events fill your mind. Your bills and how you will convince your boss to give you a rise can wait for the time being. Be fully present in the moment as you sweat it out to enjoy the benefits of both mindfulness and working out.

## **Focus on Your Body Sensation**

When you are involved in an exercise routine, there are so many processes going on in your body. Be fully present in the moment by observing the sensations in your body while working out. Do you feel the same way you felt the previous day? Are you finding the routine easier or more challenging than previous times? Failure to notice these changes can make you regret getting involved in physical activity in the long run.

You may be doing a routine wrongly or putting undue pressure on a part of your body. Your body will give you signals that things aren't right. However, you will find it difficult to detect these warning signs, which can lead to some health complications in the

future. Exercise is supposed to boost your health and not make it get worse. You can know when to stop or seek professional advice when you are observant enough to notice what's going on in your body.

## **Leverage Your Breath as an Anchor**

If you're not careful, your mind can start wandering around during your workout. It's natural that your mind will be trying to divert your attention away from the strain your body is experiencing during physical activity. That's the reason you can find yourself paying unnecessary attention to a promotional poster on the wall when you ought to be focusing on the sensations in your body.

So, you have a duty to stop your mind by wandering away. You can leverage your body sensations as a focal point, as suggested earlier. However, this approach mightn't work for everyone. If you are included in that category, you can try your breath instead. Use your inhalation and exhalation as anchor points during the workout. Pay attention to the rate to ensure that you stay in the moment.

## **Try Other Focal Points**

Staying in the moment during physical activity can train you to have more control over your monkey mind. However, it's going to be very challenging to have control over your thoughts if you don't have a particular anchor or focal point. Therefore, you need something that can keep distractions and negative thoughts far away from your mind. If you use your body sensations and your breath without results, don't be afraid to try another anchor.

You'll not be committing any crime if you experiment with different focal points until you find the one that'll work for you. You can try an anchor for two days. If it's not working, experiment with another one. Once you find the one that works for you, stick with it and use it whenever you are working out.

## **Take Advantage of Open Awareness**

The most common and prescribed method of keeping stray thoughts away from your mind when exercising is to choose an anchor point and focus on it throughout the activity. Nonetheless, some people struggle with this approach. It feels too restrictive for them because it requires a lot of self-control. If that is the case for you, all hope isn't lost. You can use another approach that many people have found effective: open awareness.

In this technique, instead of choosing a specific focal point, you'll deliberately allow your mind to move from one anchor to another. What makes this different from when your mind is wandering aimlessly is that you're still in charge. The most important thing about mindfulness is that you are in charge of your thoughts and emotions rather than allow them to overwhelm you. You can start by observing the air before moving on to the temperature.

## **Strengthen Your Commitment**

In most cases, you'll remember the reason for the workout at the start of the routine. Still, you can start losing sight of it as your hands start quaking and the muscle strain starts getting to you. You'll start wishing you are through and might bring an abrupt

end to the routine if you are not determined enough. That trying moment is the best time to renew your resolve.

It's that period that you need to remind yourself about the purpose of the workout. Exercise is a discipline of the body, while mindfulness is the discipline of the mind. So, when you combine them, you are exerting self-control over your mind and body at the same time. Strengthen your commitment by refocusing on the benefits of the activity.

## **Appreciate Your Efforts**

The period when you're working out is one of the best times you can get rid of the toxicity of upward and downward social comparison. One of the reasons you feel bad about yourself and the quality of your experiences in life is that you are comparing yourself with others. You feel that some people are having nobler experiences, which makes you doubt yourself. It's in your best interest to eradicate this harmful comparative analysis.

As you get to the end of your workout for the day, appreciate your efforts. You might not have the physique of your dream yet or lose

weight as much as you want. Yet, you should be proud of the fact that you are striving to make progress. Take a moment to allow the positive vibes of the progress you are making to fill your mind. Savor the feeling for a while before you call it a day.

# CHAPTER 6

## HOW TO BE MORE PRESENT IN VARIOUS SETTINGS





## **Chapter 6: How to be More Present in Various Settings**

It's easy to be distracted by different thoughts that can ruin your mood and affect the quality of your life. The truth is that we all want to be happy. In fact, it's the secret desire of our hearts which many of us fail to admit. We assume that we'll be happier if we buy expensive gadgets, accessories, and outfits. However, many people have discovered the futility of that rat race to their dismay and disappointment. You'll be happier if you learn to be present and make every moment count. This chapter will highlight how you can go about it wherever you are.

## **Lessons from Scandinavian Nations**

According to the UN World Happiness Report, Scandinavian countries such as Denmark have most of the happiest people on earth. The secret isn't because they have the best economy or have the highest number of the richest people in the world. Rather, the secret is a practice they have that makes them live in the moment called **Hygge**. The Danes believe that there's no English word that can be a direct replacement for this word because it is more than an idea but a way of life.

Below are some of the lessons that can be learned from this nation that can help you to stay more in the moment:

### **The Danes Discourages Social Comparison**

Aksel Sandemose highlighted the belief system of his Scandinavian hometown when he wrote the ten rules of Jante Law in 1933. The laws are as follows:

- Don't think you are anything special.
- Don't think you are as good as we are.
- Don't think you are smarter than we are.

- Don't convince yourself that you are better than we are.
- Don't think you know more than we do.
- Don't think you are more important than we are.
- Don't think you are good at anything.
- Don't laugh at us.
- Don't think anyone cares about you.
- Don't think you can teach us anything.

The laws above show what many other European nations are missing. When you don't compare yourself with others, you'll find more value and meaning in your life. The Danes understand this, and they are enjoying the benefits. The absence of social comparison will make you focus on yourself and stay more in the present.

## **The Danes Walk to Work a lot**

Many people assume that they will be happier when they buy expensive cars they can rock wherever they go. Nonetheless, the lives of the Danes prove otherwise. The capital of Denmark is Copenhagen. Apart from being the capital of the nation, it is also the center of the designer goods universe. Strangely, more than

50% of the residents of this city either walk or cycle to and from work every day.

It sounds weird because you would have expected that most of them should drive to their workplaces. Nonetheless, the reverse is the case. This situation shows that many of the people in this city aren't materialistic. They have discovered that happiness has nothing to do with buying expensive gadgets. In fact, possessing them ends up becoming a distraction for many people. Cycling to work and walking to your workplace are forms of exercise that enhance your body more than driving.

They will help you to keep fit effortlessly. Besides, walking gives you time to process your thoughts and evaluate your life devoid of sentiments. At that point, you're alone and will find it easier to detect limiting and harmful thoughts and emotions. So, you'll be doing yourself a lot of good by considering these practices. Indeed, there are situations where your workplace is too far from your home. Still, find other avenues for parking your car and just take a walk.

# **How to Incorporate Mindfulness into Various Aspects of Your Life**

Remember that the central idea about being present is concentration and consciousness of what is going on around you. You can incorporate this habit into every area of your life by leveraging the hacks below.

## **At Work**

It's not only when you're at home or with your friends that you need to live in the moment. You should also incorporate this practice into your workplace. Failure to do this will affect your job satisfaction and performance. It can also increase your stress level and make working meaningless to you. One of the things you need to do to ensure that you're able to focus when working is to choose a job that you find interesting.

You should also pick up a career that maximizes your strength and downplays your weaknesses. Once this foundation part has been settled, you'll not find it difficult to be engrossed when working. If you're working in an office, don't let anyone distract you so that you can focus on the task at hand. You should also

avoid checking your social media accounts except during your break period. Take advantage of your break period to recharge your battery for the next phase.

## **At Home**

As earlier mentioned, avoid bringing your job home. This doesn't only imply that you shouldn't be working with your laptop for prolonged hours at home. It also means that you shouldn't let your job stress affect the way you relate with your family members. Don't discuss your struggles at work with your spouse unless he or she can offer a solution to the problem. Even when that's the case, you should be sensitive to know the right time to discuss such matters.

If conversations regarding your job dominate your discussion with your spouse, it can lead to friction in your relationship with him or her. Resist the temptation to always bring your job into your interaction with your family members. Also, you should limit the time you spend with your digital devices when you're at home. Andy Murray, a famous tennis star, once lost his girlfriend

because he was spending excess time playing games. Your family members want your attention, and not just your money and fame.

## **In Social Gatherings**

The Danes place value on social gatherings. Social gatherings don't mean you have to attend a party. You can simply invite your friends to your home and cook for them. You don't have to wait until the holiday season before you do this. You can leverage weekends for this activity. Ensure that you're a good host by giving your guests the utmost attention they deserve during their stay.

Such an event creates an atmosphere where everyone feels loved and appreciated. It will give you more memorable moments that will delight you whenever you remember them. Attending such gatherings is way more profitable than spending time on social media platforms. Home events when you don't have to dress to impress anyone are fantastic for your mental health and self-esteem.





# CHAPTER 7

## MINDFUL MOVEMENT PRACTICE FOR SLEEP PATTERN RESTORATION



# **Chapter 7: Mindful Movement**

## **Practice for Sleep Pattern Restoration**

The relevance of getting quality sleep cannot be overemphasized. It refreshes you and prepares you for the activity of the day. Due to the impact of mindfulness and other meditative practices on the mind, experts have speculated that they should be able to help people to sleep better. Some researchers decided to investigate this possibility.

In one study, the investigators discovered that people who practice mindfulness are likely to get more quality sleep than individuals who don't have this habit. Despite the fact that research on this topic is ongoing, the findings so far have been promising. This section will explore some mindfulness practices that can improve the quality of your sleep.



## **Cat/Cow**

The cat/cow movement is renowned for its ability to help you to stay in the moment while relaxing your body. Note that you cannot have a good quality sleep if your mind isn't in the right state. When you sleep without putting your mind in a state of tranquility, it's likely you'll have nightmares. In the same way, you need your body to be in a relaxed state to sleep well. When you sleep feeling tired and exhausted, the chance is very high that you'll wake up feeling drained. Meanwhile, sleep is supposed to reinvigorate you and energize you for your daily activities.

This movement loosens tension down your spine and stretches your back, preparing you for a restful night's sleep. Begin by placing your knees on the ground beneath your hips while placing your hands on the ground below your shoulders. Ensure that you keep your head forward and back straight. Lift your chest and look forward, arching your spine lightly as you inhale gently, then drop your belly toward the floor. While exhaling, bring your face toward your navel and dome your upper spine to round the top of your back. Repeat this process with 3-5 breaths to get the best out of it.

## **Deep Lunge**

If you are doing a job that requires you to sit for most parts of the day, it'll take its toll on your hips. Your hips area will be tight, and this can be problematic when you try to sleep in the night. So, it's crucial that you find a means to relax that part of your body to get restorative sleep. Many people depend on painkillers to ease the pain so that they will be able to sleep without a problem. However, this approach is a short-term solution that can make you experience some side effects.

Instead of loading chemicals into your body system, you can seek a natural means that is healthy for your body both in the short and long run. Thankfully, you can practice mindfulness while leveraging deep lunge to ease the pain and stress in the hip region to put you in a relaxed state that will make you sleep like a baby. Start by putting your right foot forward and slide your knee further behind you. Then place your hands on your knee. Hold that position for five breaths before switching sides. Ensure that you pay attention to the change of sensation in your body all through the activity.

## **Seated Neck Stretch**

You might feel stretched in the neck region due to the nature of the activities you have on a particular day. Sometimes, it might also be due to the way you placed your neck on the pillow while sleeping the previous night. You might need to consider changing your sleeping position to ensure that the issue doesn't keep on repeating itself. In the meantime, you can ease the tension in your neck region by practicing seated neck stretch. It seems like

physical activity, but it becomes a mindfulness practice when you stay in the moment all through the activity.

Seated neck stretch is simple but has a tremendous soothing impact on your neck. Start by sitting and crossing your legs if that posture is possible. You'll find it effortless if you have a flexible body. Then bring your hand over your head in such a way that will make it easy for you to place it on your left ear. Drop your right ear towards your shoulder in a gentle way and hold for five breaths. Before switching sides, bring your head back to the center gently. Ensure that you go easy on your neck when making the transition.

## **Dynamic Bridge**

You might have noticed that each of the mindfulness movements we have explored so far affects a particular part of the body. The dynamic bridge also has an impact on a particular region of your body: your back. This part of the body is often where you feel the impact of stressful activities during the day. When it's time to sleep, you'll struggle when you find your body aching. Drugs



shouldn't always be the first option that comes to your mind. The side effects you can experience due to the use of medications should make you careful before considering them. You should use them when you have no other choice.

The dynamic bridge begins by placing your arms flat on the ground by your sides with your back on the floor. Ensure that your arms are a few inches away from your body. Also, make sure that your palms are facing down. Then place both feet under your bent knees to the floor. Your back should be flat, and your body should feel centered and balanced at this point.

Then lift your hips up toward the ceiling to create a straight line down your thighs, from your knees to your chest as you inhale. To open your chest muscles, interlock your fingers under your body and bring your shoulder blades toward each other.

## **Knee-to-Chest**

The knee-to-chest stretch is beneficial to your low back and hip muscles. Note that sleep will be far from you when you have difficulties in these parts of your body. It also helps to release the

tension on spinal nerves through the creation of more space for those nerves as they leave the spine. So, it is a mindfulness practice that promises to help put your body and mind in a tranquil state that provides the foundation you need for a good night's sleep. You will start this movement by lying down on your back.

While on your back, stretch out your legs and slide them together. Then draw your right knee into your chest, clasping your fingers around your right shin. To stretch your lower back and hips, gently hug your knee without putting pressure on it. In this position, hold for three breaths. Send your knee toward the left for a gentle spinal twist as you release your knee. Focus your gaze to the right side and hold for three breaths before switching sides.

**Note:** Even though all the movements above are physical activities, you should leverage them to learn how to stay in the moment by focusing on the sensations you are experiencing all through the period of the practice. If you approach all the movements that way, you will find it easier to practice mindfulness with other things you do.



# CHAPTER 8

## INCORPORATING MINDFULNESS INTO YOGA



## **Chapter 8: Incorporating Mindfulness into Yoga**

Like mindfulness and meditation, yoga is a popular practice that is enjoying wide acceptance and rave reviews in the West. It has improved the experience and quality of life of many people, and its popularity isn't likely to reduce any time soon. Some people are contemplating choosing between yoga and mindfulness. However, they aren't mutually exclusive. You can combine both to tremendous effect. The tips in this section will help you in this regard.



## **Leveraging the Four Contact Points**

What you do with your hands and legs during a yoga stretch goes a long way in determining the quality of the practice. Therefore, you should ensure that you pay attention to what is happening to them all through the activity. For example, when practicing hand walking meditation, you can introduce mindfulness training into it by paying attention to what is happening to them.

The hand walking meditation requires placing your right hand on the floor while in a kneeling position. Then put the left hand on

the floor. In your attempt to walk forward, start with your right hand a little bit forward, and then your left hand should follow suit.

## **Finding Balance on all Fours**

Finding balance on all fours - right hand, right knee, left hand, and left knee - is a crucial technique in yoga that ensures that your weight is evenly distributed to put you in a position where you will feel at ease. So, it's something you should learn to put yourself in a relaxed, tension-free position.

The mindfulness of this practice is when you take your time to observe how your weight is shifting onto your hands as you move forward during the activity as you move forward. Move around by shifting your weight to the right hand and right knee. After that, shift it to your left hand and left knee. Then move it forward and back before you settle into an equal weight on all fours.

## **Cow Technique**

The cow pose is named that way because it'll make you assume a position that is often common among cows. It is often combined with the cat pose for stronger impact, as you might have noticed in the last chapter. Still, it can be practiced alone to bring calmness to your body and the much-needed focus to your mind.

This pose involves lifting up your seat and your chest on an inhaling breath while you drop your spine toward the earth and into your belly at the same time. This simple technique can improve your flexibility and make you more relaxed both physically and mentally. So, don't take it for granted just because it is not challenging.

## **Cat Pose**

Due to the similarities between the cat and cow poses, they are often combined. However, each can be practiced separately to enjoy the benefits of each. Besides, the cat pose requires more movement and technicalities in comparison with the cow

movement. Besides, the former reverses some of the processes of the latter.

For example, instead of inhaling, you will exhale. While reversing the curve, lift your waist and drop your tail and head. Repeat this move up to three or four times. While repeating it, move with the breath five to ten times. Your spine will curve one way and round the other way during this move. Go slowly and try to feel every part of the changes.

## **Rising up**

Hand walking meditation, cat pose, and cow pose all require that you stay on the ground. So, it's inevitable that you'll have to stand up at some point. Still, it shouldn't be something you should do in a hurry. You can do it mindfully to take advantage of the moment to train your mind to be present.

When standing up, step back your right hand. Then do the same for your left hand. After that, shift onto your feet and rise up. It is natural that your physical sensations will be changing as you go

through this process. Be fully present in the moment by paying attention to these altering feelings. This discipline can translate into the way you handle other activities.

## **Shoulder Rotation**

Shoulder rotation involves extending your arms out wide to the side. Then inhale and roll your arms in such a way that your palms will face up. Exhale and roll your arms in while putting your palms back. Let this action start from the shoulders. When you are doing it correctly, your pinky fingers will be the last part you'll roll up and down. This movement puts a certain level of strain on your shoulder and arm. Don't miss the opportunity to pay attention to the way you feel because that is one of the main essences of the movement.

## **Side Bends**

To practice side bends, inhale as you put your arms up. Then bend to the right. After that, bend to the left while inhaling and exhaling. Inhale when you put your arms up but exhale when you bend. A crucial part of this movement is paying attention to your body as you move from side to side. You should also pay attention to the position of your head all through the routine. Observing such seemingly minute details will eventually help you when you are involved in other things.

## **Chair Posture**

The chair pose is one of the best ways you can discover your thought pattern. Meanwhile, you'll find it easier to control your mind when you have a good grasp of how your thoughts drift from one place to the other. It involves the combination of two moves at the same time. Begin by inhaling while your arms are up before bending your knees into a chair pose. If you find your mind drifting away at this point, don't fight it. Gently bring it back to focus on what you're doing.



## **Leg Bends**

This move involves standing on your left leg with your right leg bent while exhaling. Then go back to the chair pose and repeat on the other side. It is best if you go right and left up to five to ten times. This movement prepares you for the final stage of this practice.

## **Stand Quietly**

While doing the leg bend, it's natural that you feel tempted to stand up quickly. However, an abrupt end to the activity isn't the best way to draw a curtain on it. A rush towards the end can throw you off balance and take away the feeling of inner peace and calmness that you have been experiencing since the beginning of the routine. To bring an end to this activity, keep your eyes open while remaining still. Observe whatever you are looking at with keen interest. Feel your environment and your feet on the floor. Also, pay attention to your breath as it moves.

**Note:** The arrangement of the moves in this section is deliberate because they are sequential. Feel free to repeat it and practice it as often as possible.

## Conclusion

Life makes more sense and worthwhile when you have access to quality information. As you would have noticed, mindfulness is a simple practice. Besides, it costs nothing to stay in the moment. However, it offers tremendous benefits such as stress reduction, enhanced focus, improved mental health, and maintenance of physical health.

So, it's not something you should take for granted. You have learned various techniques that can help you practice mindfulness seamlessly. Therefore, it's in your best interest to leverage them to improve the quality of your life.

Many motivational speakers and mentors are teaching people to chase their dreams and become the best they can be. However,

they aren't telling people that there are times to slow down and enjoy the current success. Many people live their lives hitting one milestone after the other. Yet, they never get to enjoy the moment because they're always seeking to move to the next level in life. It's true that there's nothing wrong with chasing your dreams and hitting your targets.

Still, you need to learn to slow down sometimes and enjoy the beauty of life. Spend quality time with your loved ones without thinking about the challenges of the next day. Start learning to give your friends and family the attention they deserve. Success is meaningless when you cannot enjoy it with your loved ones. Start staying more in the moment, and you'll be glad you did. It doesn't cost a thing, but it can save you from visiting the doctor or therapist often.