

Mindfulness is a word that can sometimes conjure up images of challenging yoga poses, trips to far away places and silent retreats. The truth is, mindfulness is a way of being that, while rooted in the traditions of yoga and meditation, can be found in many short, highly accessible activities that you can easily do each day. Practicing mindfulness lowers your blood pressure, keeps you relaxed, decreases your reactive tendencies, helps you focus better and manages your stress level.

Deep breathing: Breathing breaks. The simple act of taking deep breaths stimulates the relaxation response, which of course, is the opposite of what we call the “fight or flight” response that takes over your body when you’re dealing with a stressful situation. Throughout the day, close your eyes and take several deep breaths. You will immediately feel better and will be practicing mindfulness!

Awareness around eating: Did you ever eat while driving? Or eat while you’re sitting at your desk? You probably ended up with a stomachache, maybe missed a turn or didn’t even do a good job at whatever work task was in front of you. Mindfulness really just means bringing your full attention to whatever you’re doing. If that’s eating, bring your attention fully to eating. If it’s working, bring your attention fully to working. This means minimizing distractions and staying focused on one thing; not multi-tasking. **Research shows that multi-tasking only decreases your effectiveness across all tasks.** So, focusing on one thing and doing your best at that one thing only increases a sense of satisfaction and well-being.

Be aware of distractions: Along with awareness, the idea of focusing is central to practicing mindfulness. There are so many distractions that can suck us in and not only dilute our effectiveness at whatever we’re doing but can also challenge our ability to relax and really enjoy. Notice how technology has insinuated itself into every experience? Minimize your distractions and connect to your surroundings. In some cases, it can save your life. (think: driving or crossing the street)

Practice gratefulness: We are bombarded with information about how the rich and famous live. They’ve got endless clothes, cars, homes and vacations to luxury resorts. On top of that, many of us are working harder to make it in this tough economy. Practicing gratefulness is a way to appreciate what you have. It could be a thought you connect to each morning or a daily journal entry you write. It could be for those in your life, your health; on any particular day, it could simply be the energy you use to get up and have a healthy breakfast.

Exercise: Physical exercise helps us get “into the zone.” It doesn’t just occur when you’re doing hardcore exercise; it can happen just going for a walk. Running, yoga, cycling; anything that requires your attention and breath will do. Try to make it a part of your day, even for 20 minutes.

To get started with a mindfulness practice, visit mindfulhub.com.

We wish you 20 minutes of mindfulness each day!

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