

## Nine Simple Ways to Practice Mindfulness

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At the core of mindfulness is experiencing the here and now, but how much time do you spend in the present? For many of us, the answer is probably “not much.” Our minds naturally wander while thinking about the past and planning for the future. How can you bring your mind back to the present, even for a little while? Many people believe they need to meditate for blocks of time to practice mindfulness. Meditation is an option, but it is certainly not the only one. Here are nine easy ways you can make mindfulness a part of your day:

1. *Take a deep breath or two.* Sometimes we get so caught up in the bustle of life that we forget to slow down. By being mindful of your breathing for just a moment, you can take a short break from life’s distractions.
2. *Notice a simple activity.* Some daily tasks are so habitual, you probably don’t give them a second thought, but what if you did? Take a step back and notice little things like the tingling in your mouth after brushing your teeth or how good the warm water feels on your skin when you take a bath or shower.
3. *Appreciate your environment.* Whether it’s your home, the great outdoors, or the people around you, being aware of your surroundings can help you feel gratitude and enjoy the moment at hand.
4. *Savor a snack or the first few bites of a meal.* How often do you eat at your desk, in the car, or on the go? Sitting down to relax and enjoy a meal is an uncommon luxury in our modern culture. Even if your time is limited, give yourself a moment to savor a snack or even the first few bites. Enjoy the color, texture, and flavor of the food. What do you notice? Do you enjoy it more? Are you satisfied with less?
5. *Give a conversation your full attention.* Even during our interactions with others, it’s easy to get distracted by things in our environment or even our own thoughts. By giving another person your undivided attention, you’re both likely to get more out of the time together, and it might even strengthen your connection.
6. *Be grateful.* Take a moment to notice and appreciate something positive in your life right now. It doesn’t have to be anything big—in fact, it can be as simple as enjoying a warm cup of coffee, time with a friend or loved one, or a sunny day.
7. *Laugh.* There’s nothing quite like a good chuckle to help you forget the stresses of the past and worries of the future, even if only briefly. Laughter is good for you, so look for little ways to do it more often!
8. *Try yoga or tai chi.* These are great examples of mind-body exercises that include an element of mindfulness. Not ready to try something new? You can even practice mindfulness on a walk, jog, or bike ride by focusing on the rhythmic motion of your body. Remember to talk with your doctor before starting a new exercise program if you have any health conditions, bone or joint problems, if you’re currently pregnant, or if it’s been a while since you’ve been active.

9. *Turn off technology.* Electronic gadgets are here to stay, but they often distract us from the other things in our lives. Give yourself permission to silence them or turn them off, even if only briefly, to allow you to focus on other things. What do you notice when you focus more and multi-task less?

How will you practice being mindful just a little more often? Challenge yourself to try one or two of these simple tips each day. You might be pleasantly surprised by the outcome!

*Sources: American Psychological Association; Harvard Medical School; HELPGUIDE*