

MINDFULNESS GUIDE

Your resource for creating a personalized mindfulness practice



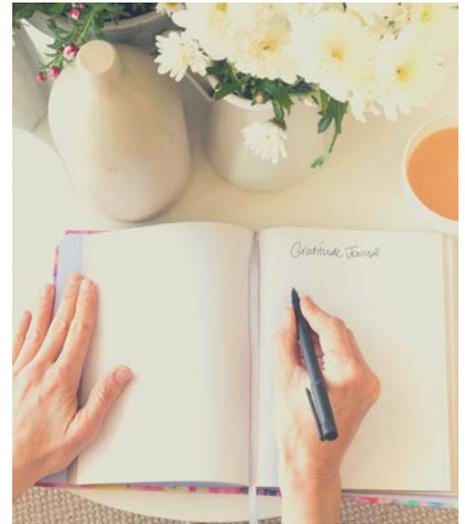
By Dr. Rachel Eva Dew

What Is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is popular buzz word these days, you see it all over social media, in television and films, you see it on products, on t-shirts and in slogans. First of all, what is mindfulness? I like to define mindfulness as something simple, this is my definition of mindfulness - the intentional application of thoughts and actions, mentally, emotionally, spiritually and physically that go inward and connect and align with our authentic self.

Mindfulness is not a religion. Some religions do incorporate mindfulness elements such as practicing love, compassion & kindness. No matter what your personal religious beliefs are, you can incorporate mindfulness and develop a personal mindfulness practice that is aligned to those beliefs. Connect and align to that which is higher than us, whatever that belief is. Connect and align to the highest good to community, self and the connection to higher source, the Universe, God or whatever someone believes in, maybe that is even just energy or nature.

Mindfulness is expressed in our behaviors; mindfulness is not just a state of mind about ourselves. Thinking, 'I am mindful', does not mean you are mindful. Mindfulness being expressed in our thoughts, emotions, actions and words I think is more important than adopting it as a mantra or non-actionable philosophy. I don't think we can be truly mindful without putting that into practice out in the world. Mindfulness is a multidimensional thing that we need to be working towards. Mindfulness is a process, we grow in our mindfulness, it is not an event. Thinking, 'Oh, I was very mindful on Tuesday at 4 pm, so I am good' is a mindful moment, not a mindful practice.



What is Mindfulness Cont.

To be mindful is a continual practice and the best time to practice it and really experience some growth in the area of mindfulness is when you do not feel like doing it and you do not like people that much. In that moment because you may be having a bad day, this is the time for growth in a mindfulness practice. That is an excellent invitation right there to focus on mindfulness because what we focus our attention on gets bigger. Mindfulness is approaching each thing we experience with mindful intention; this is how we move towards or expand mindfulness.

We are always moving in a direction, even if it seems as if we are staying still. For example, when someone decides to take no action, that is still an action. When someone chooses not to respond, that is a response. Stagnation leads in a direction and lack of intentional action usually drifts a person towards an undesired outcome. Thus inviting each of us to continue to show up to our personal evolutionary process with intention, accountability, empowerment and with a solid investment of our time, energy and resources.

That brings me to intentional living. If we are not intentional, we are accidental. It is as simple as that. Accidentally we end up in a negative environment, accidentally we have ended up with a lot of environmental issues, accidentally many people develop illnesses and disease, accidentally people's marriages go to shambles and end up in divorce. We can sow intentionality towards everything. We can create that which we want to create, we can experience that which we want to experience instead of accidentally tripping through life and then experiencing a mess. Really bringing this intentionality, bringing this mindfulness into an intention and putting it into the world through action is how we begin.

*Mindfulness is a
practice of action*

Conscious Co-Creation and Co-Created Evolution



Evolution is happening all around us. Things are never stagnant. Everything is energy all around us and within us. All energy flows in cycles. It is ever moving. Moving forwards, seeming backwards, shifting and evolving as cycles continue. Within concepts of evolution there are many aspects. Most of which, the general population believe tucked within biology and the outer world, and that evolution is unconscious or unfolding without effort or intention to create a specific outcome. People are still buying into the Darwinian evolutionary model which has been disproven. This means a disempowered mindset, believing that genes shift beyond our intention or control in order to help specific species survive over generations (Goswami, 2008).

We also experience evolution within technology which evolves from generation to next generation. From beta model to launch of a platform to updated versions and on and on. We think of technology as an intentional evolution, ever changing based on our will as a result of our conscious needs and desires. But the aspect of intentionality we play within this example is by creating things that solve problems or meet our needs. That is intentionality. What it creates, what its effects globally both within humanity and the environment is for the most part significantly unconscious. Allowing this unintentional evolution to continue without our intentional choices and efforts is like playing Russian roulette.

What will be for future generations? Many people are unable to allow themselves to be concerned with such matters. Why? If you take a look at Maslow's hierarchy of needs, it shows us that basic human needs such as food, safety and shelter need to be met before we can move beyond to higher level concerns such as recycling, global warming, world peace, homelessness or consciousness (McLeod, 2018). This means that if someone is struggling to feed their children or living in fear for their safety on a daily basis they will rarely be able to see past or live beyond their current state of survival mode. In order to have a massive shift we also need to focus on helping people become empowered to move beyond survival mode into a mode of thriving, what I like to refer to as 'thriv-al mode'.

From this place can people build a community of intentional and conscious co-creators that create a powerful and positive evolutionary shift. From a scientific perspective, evolution is a natural and universal weeding out and refining response. It is a cause and effect. It listens to the feedback and adjusts. Evolution is happening to us and within our very genes each and every moment. But we do not notice it. We do not notice what one moment added to another moment and on and on creates because we do not make the connection. We also rarely map out and project what these moments, these choices, these actions will create, add or change within the personal evolution, human evolution, planetary and universal evolution because they are all interdependent and connected. It is time for each one of us to awaken and take ownership of the concept of co-created and intentional evolution. Any form of separateness is simply an illusion... including separateness of the outcomes we experience. We are all co-creating these whether we are intentional or not. Let us each choose intentionality behind our co-created evolutionary experience.

We are all co-creating the future together



Conscious Co-Creation and Co-Created Evolution Cont.

Let's look at evolution like a math problem - this plus this, equals that. Unconscious popular culture and life style plus heredity and some elements of natural selection = a certain evolutionary result. We could create complex algorithms and we could study and track each of the elements that go into the equation above and then project all of the specific evolutionary results, even taking into account quantum uncertainty. This is science. This is math. This is the golden 'fact' or authority our culture tends to honor and uphold in the most-high esteem, over intuitive intelligence or wisdom and knowledge, so I will play along for a moment, placing science on its popular pedestal and look at evolution through its lenses.

Based on scientific study, research and mechanics we could not only fairly and somewhat accurately project evolution but we could also theoretically create algorithms that would also show how applying a single powerful intentional action, then tracking out the projected outcomes. This could show us the impact our individual choices have on the world and invites every individual to consider what type of future we want to co-create. 'That is a million years down the road, who cares' you might be thinking. Yes, and also no, evolution affects you daily, you just may not be aware of it.

You, consciously co-creating evolution will radically change the rest of your life, the enjoyment of it, your health, wellbeing, inner peace, wealth and success, as well as that of each and every one of your friends, family members and those you love on this planet (even everyone else you may not realize you love or care about because you may still be under the mass illusion of separateness). This leads us to a powerful question, how? So how do you become conscious? How do you actively participate with intentional and conscious co-creation? These are age old questions that many philosophers, scholars, parents, religious leaders, gurus and spiritually evolved humans have been asking for hundreds of years. The journey towards expanding personal consciousness consists of many metaphorical miles and specific steps. Yet each journey is unique to each individual. An impactful place to begin ones' journey is to learn and practice mindfulness.

*It's time to up-
level our
awareness*



Ecological Living

Ecological living is living in a way that is good for self, good for community and also good for world, it requires reducing our negative footprint physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. It also requires increasing our positive impact within our own lives, within our family and community as well as within the world.

Dive into this subject and discover what you want to create and experience in order to live more ecologically. You may discover that _____ is the impact you want to have on the world or that _____ is what you want to intentionally create.

You can then ask yourself...

- 'What steps and what actions can I take now that will lead towards that'*
- 'What steps and actions will lead towards what I want to create in the world?'*

There is so much 'move away from' thought and energy in the world. 'Move away from' is focusing on what we DO NOT want to experience as our goal instead of focusing on what we DO WANT to experience. An example of move away from goals are, 'I don't want hate, I don't want anger, I don't want violence'.

It is important to shift this TOWARDS what you do want to experience, ask yourself, 'What do I want to experience instead and what steps can I take to move towards that? How can I show up and be the change that I want to see in the world?'

*Is it good for self,
family,
community &
world?*



Expanding Perspectives & Increasing Choice

Often people have not yet experienced something different than the ideas, frameworks, beliefs, patterns and habits that they were raised with, or were exposed to in their lives. Each individual can intentionally expand by experiencing other ways of being, this will increase a persons' choice as to how they can live and be within this lifetime.

Inviting ourselves to both exposure and immersion to new perspectives and experiences is a powerful step towards expansion of choice. That can be done through reading a book, travel, going to a religious temple or church or attending a meditation class.

One can try new things, attend a few times and immerse themselves in what that experience is, so that they can draw the truths that are true for their lives out of that experience and incorporate that into their practices. To expand it takes a willingness to take action and it also takes an investment of energy, which is their intentionality put into action. When people consciously co-create a better understanding of different ways of being, thinking and doing it begins to build unity.

*Expansion
is
growth*



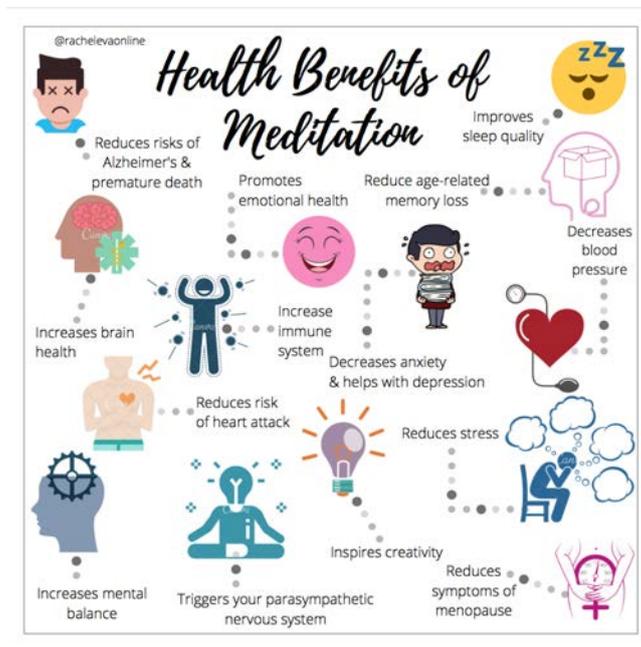
Building a Bridge to Unity

In building the bridge to unity, as a person expands, loosens their grip on their attachments to their beliefs and the 'my way is the only right way' viewpoint, a person becomes able to show up more with a preference to their beliefs. A preference is a gentler space where there is room for other beliefs where as an attachment says if my way is right then your way is wrong. Moving towards preference begins to build the bridge to unity.

This helps an individual to take accountability and responsibility for a co-created world. It is not us and them, we are all us. When we all start to become an 'us', what does this lead to? This leads towards more collective positive experiences such as peace. With all of the violence in the world right now and with so many people responding by getting angry and projecting their anger through their words and actions in order to reflect their personal beliefs and what they do not want, the division continues.

The change starts with each one of us, inside. When we practice preference versus attachment we are able to step back from reactionary modes and get into the mind set of, 'We are all co-creating this world we live in, how can I be the change I want to experience?', this dramatically shifts individuals away from focusing and magnifying the negative, builds the bridge to unity and enables them to begin moving towards creating positive sustainable change. Expansion towards this empowered perspective removes the illusion of separateness and helps people experience and understand that we all do effect one another. Moving towards an empowered perspective is one of the foundational steps in growing in balance within the integrative 'system of self'; mind, body, heart and spirit/soul.

*Unity leads
to peace*



How Can Mindfulness Positively Impact Your Life & Your Health?

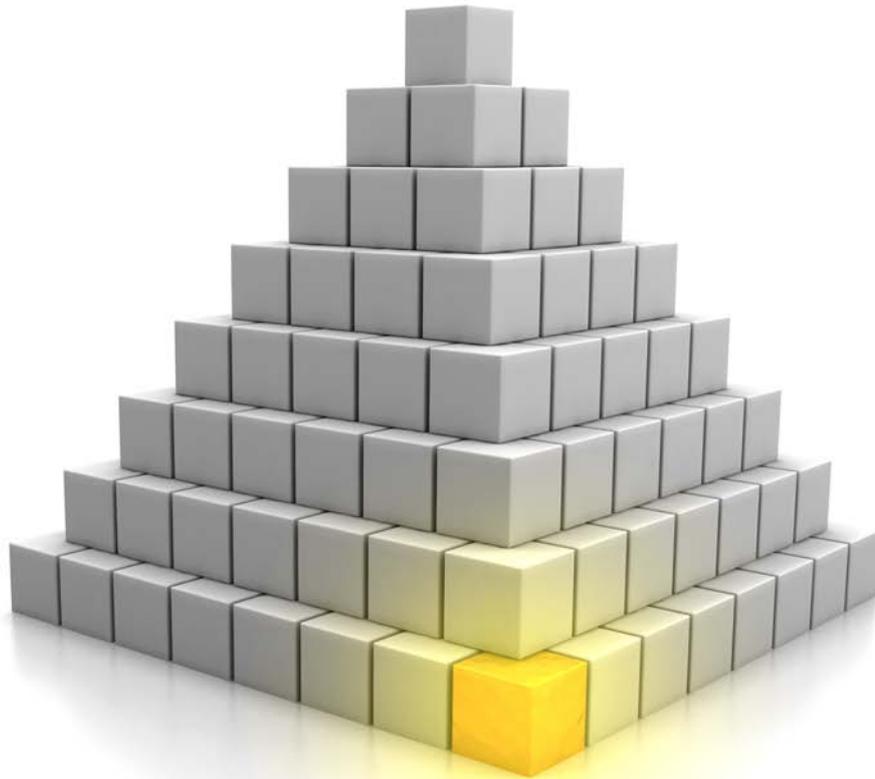
A daily mindfulness practice can have MASSIVE positive impact on your health and wellbeing. It positively impacts your mind, body, heart & spirit. The Harvard Gazette reports that ‘Studies have shown benefits against an array of conditions both physical and mental, including irritable bowel syndrome, fibromyalgia, psoriasis, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. But some of those findings have been called into question because studies had small sample sizes or problematic experimental designs. Still, there are a handful of key areas – including depression, chronic pain, and anxiety – in which well-designed, well-run studies have shown benefits for patients engaging in a mindfulness meditation program, with effects similar to other existing treatments’.

*Source <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2018/04/harvard-researchers-study-how-mindfulness-may-change-the-brain-in-depressed-patients/>

Here is a list of some of positive things that mindfulness & meditation bring to your life:

- Get better sleep
- Make progress toward your weight-loss goals
- Lower your stress levels (this reduces risk of illness & disease)
- Decrease loneliness
- Release temporary negative feelings
- Improve focus, clarity & attention
- Improves cognition
- Manage chronic pain
- Help prevent depression relapse
- Increase feeling of wellbeing
- Reduce anxiety
- Increase brain gray matter
- Improve memory
- Reduce risk of Alzheimer's
- Help with ADD/ADHD & OCD
- Lower blood pressure
- Alleviate gastrointestinal difficulties
- Increase heart health & treat heart disease
- Increase empathy
- Decrease negative judgement habit
- Increase patience
- Increase mind-body connection
- Increase self-awareness
- Increase oxygenation of the body
- Help you align with your authentic self
- Increase the ability to hear/notice the body's internal feedback

*Mindfulness
heals*



Cornerstones of Mindfulness

Meditation & Mindset as Cornerstones of Mindfulness There are two cornerstones of any mindfulness practice, those are meditation & working on your mindset.

Many of our thoughts, words spoken, emotions and even actions stem from our mindset. Working on increasing balance, harmony and positivity within your mindset is a lifelong game changer!

*Build a
mindfulness
foundation*



Demystifying Meditation

Meditation can be an uncomfortable thing to consider or practice for many. There can be preconceived notions or beliefs about meditation that make the idea of it scary, unachievable or just seem down-right weird. But in actual practice you can find a way to meditate that will work for you, your life style, time constraints and beliefs that will be safe and effective. Why meditate? Simple, it has been scientifically proven to reduce stress, which increases health, balance and enjoyment of life.

Who does not want to be happier and healthier? It is also a powerful tool for self-discovery, self-care and personal growth. So how can we unweave some of the odd things you have seen or heard about meditation? Let me help demystify the concept of meditation for you a bit:

1. You do not have to meditate for any specific amount of time to see benefits. Even 2 minutes of meditation can have a powerful and positive impact on your life.
2. Meditation does not have to be religious or conflict with your personal beliefs, no matter what your beliefs are.
3. Meditation is not something that you may immediately enjoy, find easy or see radical benefits from.

You can't do one sit up and then expect to have ripped abs. Meditation is a practice that needs to be consistently performed and developed into a habit before you will see the full benefits and enjoyment of it. Learning to quiet the mind and sit still can be very hard for some, yet I promise it is achievable for EVERYONE (even those with ADD, ADHD, racing thoughts or even OCD). I was introduced to meditation when I was 5 years old. I have studied many forms of meditation, developed my own personal meditation practice and taught meditation to thousands of people around the world.

So let me help you understand meditation a bit more from my perspective. I like to describe meditation is 'marinating' on something, something within that is silent. Those of you who cook may have an understanding of this, especially when it comes to grilling steaks. For any vegetarians...I lovingly respect you and I am not sorry, it's an effective example so please try to relate in...

Say you are grilling a steak; most people will marinate the meat or let it sit submerged in something for a predetermined period of time in order that the meat will soak up as much of the marinade as possible (for flavor). Fully marinating and submerging meat in the marinade causes an environment where the meat can fully soak the marinade into every part of the meat...even all the way into the center. Why? So the steak can be transformed into the best and most flavorful version of itself. Do you get the analogy? Sweet!



Demystifying Meditation Cont.

Meditation is a 'dropping in' or 'checking in' to being completely present with oneself. We spend so much time in motion, in doing, meditation helps us to learn to be. To be present with oneself and to tap into a connection to something greater. This something greater can be anything you define it as...nature, energy, God, the Divine, Spirit, the collective unconscious, the universe or even simply 'love'. If prayer is talking to that higher thing, then meditation could be called listening.

When we meditate we are marinating in being, in our relationship with self and also the relationship with that higher thing. When we take the time to marinate, we soak it up. That gives us flavor! Meditation can be focused on a specific religious or spiritual alignment or it can be completely focused on relaxation and 'emptying the mind'. The choice is yours. There is a form of meditation that will feel safe and comfortable for you. That is the one to choose. However, discovering the most effective form of meditation will take a commitment on your part to experimenting, paying attention to the feedback within yourself and making adjustments.

*Let go of beliefs
around
meditation that
do not serve
you*



Beginning To Meditate

'Where do I start???' There are so many options and opinions about how to do it right! I invite you to let that belief go. There is no one way to meditate. There is no one way that is right or wrong. The best advice I can give you is to begin to meditate in any way you want. Start where you are and grow from there.

Do some searches for meditations and guided meditations, and watch a few. Try the ones that interest you. See what helps you begin to connect with your internal landscape.

Here is a simple meditation that I teach –

Find a comfortable place to sit down where you won't be interrupted.

Turn off your phone ringer.

Close your eyes.

Focus your attention on your breath.

Begin to deepen your breath. Breath deep relaxed breaths versus forced breaths.

Give yourself permission to let your thoughts float by without engaging in them.

Any time you find yourself thinking or becoming distracted, simply and lovingly bring your focus back to your breath.

Continue to just BE and focus on your breathing.

Do this for as long as or as short of an amount of time as you would like.

When you are done, congratulate yourself on your accomplishment and investment in yourself. It is not helpful to critique or judge your meditation. Simply pay attention to the internal feedback that arises after and make adjustments to your next meditation session. Remember to give your meditation muscles a chance to grow strong through regular practice.

Some of the benefits you may experience after you practice consistently are; less stress, increased health, decreased illness, peaceful thought life, better ability to deal with difficult people, places and situations, more mindfulness in all areas of your life, a deeper understanding of yourself, spiritual growth and more general happiness. Be patient with yourself and the process. It is worth the investment of time and energy!

*Start where
you are and
grow from
there*



Practicing Meditation

We become people who meditate one meditation at a time over time.

If prayer is talking, then meditation could be called listening. Another way I like to describe meditation is 'marinating' on something or marinating on nothing. Those of you who cook may have an understanding of this, especially when it comes to grilling steaks (for any vegetarians...I am not sorry, it's an effective example so please try to relate in).

Meditation can begin and remain very simple. You can choose to follow along with a 'guided meditation' or close your eyes, empty your mind and simple focus on your breath or choose a focus on 'love and light' or God or anything else that feels right to you. Here are a few simple steps for 'how to get started' in meditating.

START SMALL

Begin with a realistic goal, maybe 2-5 minutes of still quiet time. You can build up from there but set a realistic goal to begin with.

GET INTO A QUIET ZONE

Create a quiet space and time for you to meditate... even going into your bathroom, closing the door and sitting on the floor if necessary (those of you with young kids can probably relate to that option). You will need an uninterrupted quiet space for your meditation. JUST BE Sit quietly and as distracting thoughts come to your mind make a conscious choice not to get into a relationship with those thoughts. A relationship with thoughts simply means repeating the thoughts over and over in your mind. Instead of allowing your thought life to run round and round like a hamster on a wheel you can focus your attention on your breath, an inspirational quote, or even on the feeling of LOVE.

The point here is to BE and BE STILL! Start small, with love, non-judgement and patience! It's okay if you don't love it at first. It's okay if you do. Just try to begin a daily practice. If you forget one day or get off course for a bit try not to beat yourself up, instead choose to jump back on the path and try again.

*One meditation
at a time*



The Power of Prayer

Prayer is something that every religion incorporates. However, you do not need to have a religion or a belief in a specific higher power in order to pray and to experience the benefits from it. According to a study by Centra State Hospital, "the psychological benefits of prayer may help reduce stress and anxiety, promote a more positive outlook, and strengthen the will to live." Other practices such as Yoga, T'ai chi, and Meditation may also have a positive impact on physical and psychological health. For many Americans, every day is a day of prayer. More than half (55%) of Americans say they pray every day, according to a 2014 Pew Research Center survey, while 21% say they pray weekly or monthly and 23% say they seldom or never pray. Even among those who are religiously unaffiliated, 20% say they pray daily. Women (64%) are more likely than men (46%) to pray every day. And Americans ages 65 and older are far more likely than adults under 30 to say they pray daily (65% vs. 41%).

*Source <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/05/04/5-facts-about-prayer/>

Dr. Kent Ingle reports that "Prayer, much like meditation in Buddhism, or concentration on breathing techniques in Yoga, causes the mind and body to focus on singular focal points that align the mind, soul, and physical aspects of a person to lower cortisol levels, improve oxygen utilization, and confer numerous other psychological benefits. Marilyn Schlitz, Ph.D., and lecturer at Harvard, says, "It's clear from the correlational studies within the epidemiology data that positive relationships exist between religious and spiritual practice and health outcomes on a variety of different conditions." Moreover, she says that in a study and confirmation study on intercessory prayer, "the prayer groups had statistically significant improvements in outcome, suggesting that the intervention has clinical relevance." Even in clinical studies, prayer has been proven to increase healing! Bottom line, no matter what your beliefs are, prayer is powerful.

*Prayer is a
powerful
healer*



Creating A Meditation & Prayer Journal

Meditation (listening) and prayer (talking) are two powerful ways to grow your spiritual life! Many times we do not notice growth because it happens slowly over time. Creating a meditation and prayer journal is a wonderful tool for both growing your spiritual life as well as following the progress of your spiritual growth.

Here is a simple structure you can follow for your daily meditations and prayers, then add some thoughts into your journal about what you experienced during meditation and also what prayers were on your heart. Important to note, pray to the God you believe in and if you don't believe in God you can still pray. Direct your prayers to the universe, to energy, or even simply to 'all that is love'. Growing your spiritual life is an incredibly important part of a harmonious and healthy life. Seek, grow and expand. Start where you are.

MEDITATION & PRAYER JOURNAL EXERCISE:

Spend 5-10-15 (increase time this week) minutes sitting silently, following your breath (breathing in and out through the nose, tracking the breath into my nasal passages, down my throat, into your lungs, all the way down into your belly, and then followed it through the exhale. Repeating this and quieting the mind). As thoughts came into your mind, I did not get into a relationship or judge them. Lovingly acknowledged them and let them go. Bring your hearts focus onto God or love or something that feels peaceful and beautiful to you. Sit and actively LISTEN, and BE STILL. After 5-10-15 minutes of this begin to pray or talk to God. In your journal write on the following: In doing this prayer and meditation today I experienced, learned, experienced and felt: _____



Bringing Mindfulness to Thoughts, Words & Actions

Mindfulness that is not put into practice in your thoughts, words and actions is not true mindfulness. Mindfulness needs to be applied to these areas daily.

This can be as simple as beginning to pay more attention to your internal thought life, the words you choose and the actions you take and then intentionally beginning to shift them towards being more loving, kind, positive, inclusive and non-judgmental.

*Mindfulness
without action
is not
mindfulness*



Kindness as A Practice

Kindness is both an art form to be mastered as well as a solution for most of our moods. Kindness changes the world in many powerful ways both big and small. One of the most powerful changes that it makes is in our own attitude. You may have heard 'it is impossible to be miserable when you are grateful'...? Well I believe IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO BE UNHAPPY WHEN YOU ARE GIVING KINDNESS TO OTHERS. So be generous to others, even that annoying person at work, a stranger in line or that cranky guy in traffic. Be kind and it will bless both their day and yours.

Here is a very simple wellness coaching tool I call 'finding the beauty in others' that I use in my book 'Transform' to help people transform their lives.

Exercise: Finding The Beauty

Today I noticed

_____ about
_____ (someone), and I thought
_____ so I shared with the
person the following words

Example: You have beautiful eyes! It seems simple and it is, but sharing kindness is hugely impactful! Try this out today and see what giving kindness to others adds to their lives and to yours.

*Kindness IS a
spiritual &
mindfulness
practice*



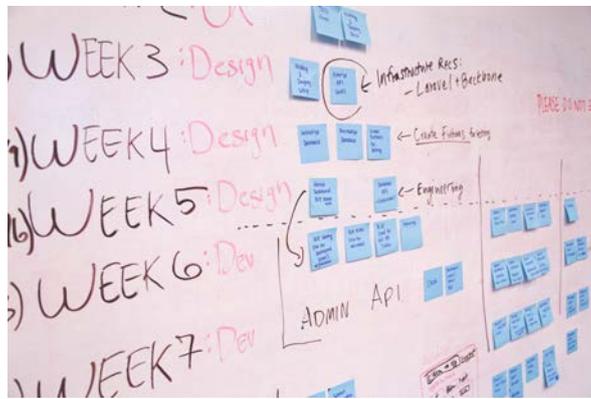
Developing Your Own Mindfulness Practice

In order to create your own mindfulness practice that works for you and is achievable with consistency takes time, attention and energy as well as experimentation. This investment will pay you back HIGH dividends!

Here are some of the things to consider when developing your own mindfulness practice:

1. *Daily Practice* – Developing a daily practice of self-care which can include meditation and mindfulness among other self-care techniques you find helpful.
2. *Aligning Your Values* – When you align your actions with your highest values you begin to live a more authentic life that is honoring of your true self. After doing your Values Elicitation exercise begin to take steps to align your life with those values.
3. *Proper Care* – Practicing the proper care, treatment, self-love and nurturing of all aspects of self.
4. *Managing Time, Energy and Resources* – When you manage all three of these you will create more balance in all areas of your life. This balance will have a positive impact on your overall wellness and wellbeing.
5. *Experiment* – Try out different types of mindfulness activities and see what works for you!
6. *Start Where You Are* – Let go of any self-imposed expectations and simply do your best each day, even if that is only one mindfulness activity done for 2 minutes! You can always add or expand your practice later.

*Your
mindfulness
practice is as
unique as you
are!*



Mindfulness Exercises

There are hundreds, if not thousands of different mindfulness activities and exercises out there. Do a little research through searching the internet, talking to friends about their mindfulness practice and even reading books on the subject. This will expand your options for choosing the mindfulness elements that you want to try and potentially include in your own personal mindfulness practice.

Below are a few that I have created, use them if they serve you...

Finding the Beauty Exercise -

Rebuilding Neuropathways The 'Finding The Beauty' exercise is designed to help you shift your internal thought life, create more loving and positive thoughts and retrain your brain towards optimism and love. Retraining the brain is like building a muscle. It takes repetition and consistency. Over the next 30 days I invite you to practice the following:

Step 1: Finding the Beauty in Others – Daily for 1 week

Step 2: Finding the Beauty in Others & Finding the Beauty in Self – Daily for 1 week

Step 3: Finding the Beauty in Others & Finding the Beauty in Self & Finding the Beauty in the World – Daily for 1 week

Step 4: Finding the Beauty in Others & Finding the Beauty in Self & Finding the Beauty in the World & Finding the Beauty in the Challenge – Daily for 1 Week

You will need a notebook or a journal where you can write out each exercise. Use the format for each below...

*Just like
building a
muscle
exercises need
to be done with
consistency*

Mindfulness Exercises Cont.

Finding The Beauty Exercises:

Step 1: Finding the Beauty in others.

Simply fill in the blanks. Today I noticed _____. Here you will put anything positive that you noticed about another person. This can be someone you know, someone you don't know, someone you just saw in passing. So, after you filled in this blank, "Today I noticed _____ about _____" (the person you noticed), "and I thought _____" (you will write down your positive thought that you had), "and I shared it with _____ (person) and I shared the following words _____."

So in filling in those blanks, how this exercise would look is, for example, "Today I noticed a woman in line at the grocery store who had beautiful eyes, and I thought, 'wow, she has really pretty eyes,' and I shared with the woman the following words: 'you have beautiful eyes.'" So, to simplify this a little bit, the whole exercise is simply about noticing beautiful things around you in other people. Consciously connecting with the thought, recognizing and paying attention to it, and then sharing that thought with the person who it's about, or sharing it with someone else.

Step 2: Finding the Beauty in Self.

This is the same exact process. The only difference is you're noticing something about yourself that's beautiful. You're noticing something positive within yourself, some form of beauty. That can be a physical beauty, an emotional beauty, anything positive, and you will fill in the blanks the same as you did for the Finding the Beauty in Others. Here's an example of what that exercise could look like. "Today I noticed compassion about myself, and I thought, 'wow, I really have empathy for others,' and I shared with my journal the following words: 'I feel good about myself today because I'm an empathetic person.'"

Step 3: Finding the Beauty in the World.

Again, same process of filling in the blanks. Noticing something beautiful in the world can be anything in your surroundings. It can be something philosophical. Anything that you notice. An example of how this part of the exercise could look is: "Today I noticed that when there's a large scale tragedy, people tend to reach out and really support one another and I thought, 'people really do care about one another,' and I shared with my friend Jessica the following words: 'People have the capacity to be really kind'".

Step 4: Finding the Beauty in the Challenge.

This is thinking about the specific things that are challenges in your life and finding the beauty in those challenges, again filling in the blanks. Here's an example of how that could look. "Today I noticed that my budgeting skills are getting better in the midst of this credit card debt. I thought 'wow, I'm really learning how to set budget and follow it' and I shared with my sister the following words, 'I think I'm actually getting better at my finances.'"

Mindfulness Exercises Cont.

Building Gut Trust Exercise

Begin with communication...Sit quietly, close your eyes and ask yourself the following: "I would like my intuition or gut to speak louder to me, and I would like to develop my ability to HEAR, trust and listen to it." Continue to sit and meditate on this thought for a few minutes while setting this as an intention: "To hear, trust and listen to my gut/intuition." Listening to your gut... Practice listening to the "gut" leading or intuition within your body. Take notice of that inner voice or inner prompting. It may be small and quiet at first. It may come in the form of silly things like a thought of "don't forget to grab a sweater" when leaving the house. In those moments FOLLOW this prompting - trust it even if it doesn't make sense and simply grab the sweater for example. Later, in your Wellness Journal write about these promptings and your progress.

Example of how to journal about this: As I was doing

_____ I experienced, noticed
or felt led to
do _____

_____ by my gut/intuition and my response was to

_____ and.... I spent 5-10-15 (increase time this week) minutes sitting
silently, following my breath (breathing in and out through the nose, tracking the breath into my
nasal passages, down my throat, into my lungs, all the way down into my belly, and then
followed it through the exhale. Repeating this and quieting the mind). As thoughts came into my
mind, I did not get into a relationship or judge them. I lovingly acknowledged them and let them
go. I sat and actively LISTENED to my intuition or gut. In doing this I experienced, learned,
felt: _____

Mindfulness Exercises Cont.

Breathing Techniques

Breathing techniques are another form of meditation or mindfulness practice that have greatly been effective in reducing stress on a physiological level, or a cellular level within the body. If you are experience stress, tension, anxiety, or mental health issues like depression, these breathing techniques and exercises will be hugely beneficial.

The first breath technique that we will go into is called the Ha Breath, or Ha Breathing technique. The second breathing technique we will go into is called Belly Breath, and then the 3rd aspect of the breathing techniques will be putting both the Ha Breath and the Belly Breath together in a specific stress reduction or anxiety-reducing breathing technique. All three of the different techniques can be used to assist you, and individually they are very powerful. They are also powerful when combined together in the combination technique.

A good use of the Ha Breath by itself is acting almost as a pause button. When you are are facing a stressful, frustrating, or emotionally hurtful situation, using that Ha Breath Exercise to put a pause on the situation and release the tension is very helpful. A good time to use the Belly Breath by itself is when you are processing a negative emotion. What does this mean exactly? If you are experiencing a negative emotion that you would normally want to shut down and avoid, moving the attention to the belly breath is a wonderful technique to just move through the negative emotion without suppressing it. A great time to use both in combination is when you really need to pause, reset, release, and redirect. So let's jump in and see how.

Ha Breath Technique

The Ha Breath is a very simple, very fast pause and release technique. Simply take a deep inhale through the nose, drawing the breath all the way down into the belly, then open the mouth and exhale "Haaaaaaaaaaa." Do this any time at the first sign of stress, tension, or negative emotions like anger or frustration, or anxiety.

Belly Breath

To begin belly breathing, simply sit in a comfortable position. Place your hands gently on your belly. Breathe in deep down into the belly. See you can feel your belly expand up against your hand. As you exhale, fully release all of the breath out of the body. You should feel their hand collapsing, or releasing, with the belly as you breathe out the air. Again, inhale drawing the breath all the way down into the belly; exhale fully, exhaling all of the breath from the body. It's as simple as that. The Belly Breath can be a good breathing technique that can be done in just 1-2 minutes. Even taking 5-6 belly breaths in a row can have a physiological effect on the body, and on releasing stress.

Merging the Two

Finally, we'll merge both of those breathing techniques together into the third combined technique. With this, we simply do 3 Ha Breaths and then shift the focus into one minute of belly breathing. What this does is a full pause, release, reset, and redirect. This is a fantastic exercise for people who suffer from anxiety. Here is how that looks... 3 Ha breaths (Ha breath, Ha breath, Ha breath), now, bringing the hands to the belly, begin your belly breath. Deep inhale drawing the breath all the way down to the base of the belly, exhale fully releasing all of the air from the body. Deep inhale drawing the breath all the way down to the base of the belly, and exhale fully releasing all of the air from the body. And we continue this belly breath for one full minute. That's it. Now you have combined the two breath techniques into a third.



Personal Mindfulness Practice Exercise

Using the pages below, write out a mindfulness practice that is:

- 1. Specific*
- 2. Clear on time invested*
- 3. Something that is achievable on a daily basis*
- 4. Balanced*

