



**Free Article**

## **INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS**

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## Introduction to Mindfulness



**EVERYTHING YOU DO IS A MINDFULNESS PRACTICE**



Why do we want to be mindful?  
Mindfulness alleviates suffering.

Suffering is created because we all have beliefs about how things are and expectations about how things should be. These beliefs and expectations are our story - the story we tell ourselves about ourselves and the world. When we are attached to our story, we are unhappy when events or people don't coincide with our story. Mindfulness helps us to recognize the story and detach from it so that our state of mind (in other words, our happiness) is not dependent on circumstances, other people or anything outside of us.

Practicing Mindfulness frees us from judgments that keep us stuck in habitual patterns that cause suffering. Mindfulness allows us to live a more authentic life. In doing so, we are released from the burden of attachment and can remain calm and centered despite outside influences, thus reducing our own suffering and the suffering of those around us.

*The best thing we can do for ourselves and our world is to have a clear mind from which to make conscious choices and to remain as centered and balanced as possible.*

In order to be mindful, we need to practice. How do we practice? Mindfulness practice is very simple, using the breath to focus awareness in the body. Bringing awareness to the body helps us to disengage from our thoughts so that we can notice thoughts instead of attaching to them. Thoughts by themselves are not bad and the goal is not to do away with all thoughts. The goal is to detach from thoughts. Attaching to thoughts means identifying with them. When we identify with our thoughts, they define us and control us, which can create suffering. For example, if you are attached to the thought that you are important (or good or stable or whatever label you use) because of the job that you do, if you no longer have the job, you have not only lost the job, you have lost your identity.

## Sitting Practice

- Provides the opportunity to be aware of what is going on in your body and really listen without distractions.
- Practice can be done sitting in a chair or on the floor with eyes open or closed. Feet or legs should be in contact with the floor.
- Body should be relaxed yet alert with a straight spine.
- Practice for a minimum of 5-10 minutes in the morning and 5-10 minutes at night, longer if you can.

*Sample Sitting Practices (do one at a time or go from one to the other for 5 – 20 minutes):*

- **Attention on the breath:** Count the breath, in one, out one, in two, out two, up to ten and back down again. If you lose your place, start at one again. Let the numbers go and just be aware of your breath. When a thought or thoughts arise, notice the thought and come back to the breath. Notice when you are not aware of your breath; bring yourself back to your breath with awareness.
- **Awareness of Thoughts and Feelings:** Notice thoughts and feelings, when a thought comes up, before coming back to the breath, give the thought a name, for example, worry, work, children, future, past. When a feeling arises, see if you can stay with the feeling. If you notice yourself going into thought again, name the thought and come back to the breath and stay with the feeling. Feelings are truth.
- **Don't Know:** Ask “Who am I?” and answer “I don't know”. Or ask “What is this?” and answer “I don't know.” This can be done with any question.
- **Metta - Loving Kindness:** May I be well and happy, May I be strong, confident and peaceful, May I have ease and well-being. Or use a Gatha.

## Gathas

- Short poems that can be used like mantras to maintain focus on the breath
- Help occupy the mind to set a direction for practice

*Sample Gathas for daily tasks and sitting practices:\**

This car is my legs It goes where I choose When I drive with awareness Everyone lives in safety	Sitting in the present moment I breathe mindfully Each in-breath nourishes love Each out-breathe, compassion	Chasing after the world Brings chaos Allowing it to come to me Brings peace
Earth, water, sun and air All live in this food I prepare	When things fall apart on the job I vow with all beings To use this regretful energy And pick up the pieces with care	Falling asleep at last I vow with all beings To enjoy the dark and the silence And rest in the vast unknown

## Walking Practice

- Provides the opportunity to be aware while moving so you can bring Mindfulness into your everyday life and notice how your body feels while it is in motion.
- One step on the in-breath and one step on the out-breath. Can do 3, 4, or more steps for faster walking or running.
- Use mindful walking to slow yourself down to bring your awareness back to your body if you are getting ahead of yourself. For example, every time you walk to the bathroom, make a decision to do it mindfully.
- Practice walking meditation outdoors and be aware of surroundings, such as wind, sun, trees, clouds, houses, birds, cars, clouds, street, rocks, dirt, water.

### *Gathas for Walking Practice:\**

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My mind can go in a thousand directions Now I walk in peace Each step creates a warm breeze With each step, a lotus blooms	As I take a step My foot kisses the floor With gratitude to the earth I walk in liberation
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## Mindfulness in Daily Tasks

*Focus on your breath, bring your awareness into your body. Pay attention to what you are doing. Do one thing at a time.*

- Eating: when you eat, take a moment to notice how your body feels, to appreciate the food, pay attention to how your body feels as you eat the food, chew slowly, pause between each bite, notice thoughts and feelings that arise as you eat, notice when you feel full, stop and take three mindful breaths several times during a meal.
- Folding laundry
- Washing dishes
- Driving
- Whatever your work is...

## Mindful Speech and Deep Listening

- Speak from your truth in the present moment, be fully present
- Listen with your whole being. Just listen. Don't try to fix, don't worry about how to respond. Just be present.

## Bells of Mindfulness

*Opportunities to wake up and pay attention*

- Red lights
- Telephones
- Someone being angry with you
- Feeling angry, anxious or stressed
- Feeling out of touch with your body or your breath
- Negative thoughts
- Brushing your teeth

\*Gathas from "Beginning Mindfulness: Learning the Way of Awareness" by Andrew Weiss

## **Tips for Bringing Mindfulness in to Your Everyday Life**

1. Sit for at least 5 minutes in the morning and 5 minutes at night, longer if you can.
2. Do sitting practice as the first thing when you get up or at the same time every day - Make Mindfulness a habit.
3. Slow down until your awareness is back in your body.
4. Sit in your car for 5 minutes before going in to work or in to a store or your house.
5. Take a walk at lunch time or some time during the day – even if only for 10 minutes, practice mindful walking.
6. Be mindful as you walk, be aware of your feet touching the floor or the ground, be aware of your body and your breath
7. Practice mindful eating.
8. Practice mindfulness as you drive. Don't use the radio, cell phone or other distractions. Just breathe.
9. In conversations, practice mindful speech and deep listening. Notice when you are trying to figure out how to respond or solve or fix instead of just listening.
10. Take three mindful breaths before doing something.
11. Take three mindful breaths to bring your awareness back to your body or when you feel stressed.
12. Get a bell of mindfulness and use it in your home. Anyone can ring the bell and everyone must stop what they are doing and take three mindful breaths.
13. Don't multi-task unless you can give your full attention to both tasks.
14. Ground yourself. Sit with both feet in contact with the floor. Bring you awareness down into your feet. Feel yourself grounding into the earth.