

Mindfulness means:

- Being fully present in the moment
- Focusing on one thing at a time
- Pay attention to what's going on around you – and within you
- Making space between a stimulus and your response
- Accepting without trying to control

Examples of ways to incorporate mindfulness into your daily routine:

1. Take a minute or two before you get out of bed just to “be” before you start the day. Notice how you feel, linger as you stretch, make a conscious choice to start the day with gratitude.
2. When you get in your car, do one thing at a time: put on your seatbelt (pause), put the key in the ignition (pause), turn the car on (pause), put the car in gear (pause)notice how good it feels not to hurry through these small tasks you do throughout the day.
3. While driving, choose not to play the radio or talk on your phone. Instead, just focus on driving or enjoy the scenery or a conversation with someone in the car. Notice the way you feel as you simplify your car ride, breathing deeply if you feel tense.
4. When you get to work, sit in your car for a few moments before you head inside. Notice your physical body and your thoughts. Ask yourself if your current thoughts and feelings will help start your day off in the best way possible, or if there is perhaps an attitude check that would be helpful.
5. At work, use a reminder to periodically check your stress level and practice a stress-reduction technique if necessary. For example, whenever the phone rings, release the tension in your jaw; whenever you return to your chair from a break, take three deep breaths.
6. Eat at least a few lunches each week *without* doing work at the same time. If you are eating with co-workers, try just observing the conversation without thinking about what you are going to say next. Listen to the tone of their voices or try to figure out how each person is feeling. Or, make lunch your “alone” time to recoup and reflect.
7. If a co-worker approaches while you are in the middle of something, make a conscious choice to either a) stop what you are doing and give that person your undivided attention; b) ask the person for a moment to finish up what you are doing and then give them your attention; or c) tell them you are in the middle of something and ask if you can call them later in the day.
8. As you walk to the car after work, *notice* the way the air feels on your face and *look* around you. What haven't you noticed before because you've been thinking about other things or hurrying?
9. When you are driving home, notice if you are rushing or feeling negative. Are you tense because of traffic? What good is that doing you? How does it feel to stop fighting or being angry about the situation and just accept the moment as it is?
10. When you pull into the driveway at home, sit quietly for a few moments before going inside. Use a relaxation technique so you can enter the house with a positive attitude. When you go into your home, *be aware* of your family. What haven't you noticed about them until now? What are they really asking for from you? How will you respond?

BREATH AS RELAXATION

Focusing on your breath is the simplest and most widely-used form of relaxation. After just a few seconds of deep breathing, you'll notice immediate changes in your body and mind, often including lowered heart rate, decreased feelings of anxiety and clearer thinking. Although it may be ideal to sit quietly or even lie down, you don't need to do either in order to get the benefit of breath focus. If you are in a position where you are unable to sit or lie down, simply stand where you are and bring your attention to your breath.

Simple Deep Breathing

With your mouth closed, begin to inhale *slowly* through your nose. Take your time as you inhale ... allow the air to fill and soothe your body. When you're ready, exhale *slowly* through your nose or mouth. Take your time with your exhale ... let your body relax as you do. In a rhythm that feels comfortable to you, continue to inhale and exhale slowly. Do not force the air in or out. Allow the breath to naturally deepen and slow as you go. As you breathe, bring your mental awareness to your breath, allowing other thoughts to simply float by. Enjoy the feeling of the air coming in and out ...

Deep Breathing with Countdown or Calming Words

Enjoy some deep breathing as described above. This time, on each exhale, you will say either a number or a calming word to yourself. If you choose numbers, start at 5, 10 or 15 and work your way down to one. If you choose calming words, repeat your word (i.e. "relax", "peace", "let go") to yourself each time you exhale.

OTHER RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

There are many other physical and mental relaxation techniques including toe tensing, progressive relaxation, guided imagery and more. Consider finding a CD or podcast with audio versions of these relaxation techniques – iTunes has many.

Toe Tensing

Alternately tense and relax your toes, drawing stress and tension from the rest of the body. For this one, it's best to either sit upright or lie down.

Think about your toes. Visualize them.

Take a deep inhale. Hold briefly. Exhale strongly.

Now pull all 10 toes back toward your face.

Hold them back for 5 – 10 seconds.

Now relax your toes. Wait a few seconds as you inhale.

Again, exhale strongly and focus on your toes – spreading them wide and pulling them back.

Repeat the above cycle at least a few times in a row.

Guided Imagery

Choose a comfortable posture. Close your eyes. Imagine yourself in a favorite, peaceful place. This place can be anywhere you have been that makes you feel content and relaxed, or even somewhere you've never been but you imagine being wonderful - maybe on a sunny beach with cool breezes, or sitting atop a mountain after a fresh snow, or even in your own home.

With your eyes closed, cultivate a detailed image of this place. See the beauty in this place. Notice your surroundings. Feel the air around you. Hear the sounds. Think about what it would smell like. Take in every aspect of this place as you begin to deepen and slow your breath. Relax and enjoy your vacation. Stay as long as you need to.