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# MINDFULNESS TIPS

## to Live a More Wholesome Life

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**A**fter more than a year of having been forced into a global shutdown due to Covid-19, it feels good to finally be moving in the direction of a less restrictive lifestyle.

Mask-wearing mandates in many parts of the world are loosening, professionals are gradually returning in-person to the workplace, concerts are resuming, children are gearing up for summer camp, and much more. While many of us welcome a return to the life we once knew with wide-open

arms, some of us may want to still hold on to that sense of “slowing-down,” which we experienced during a good portion of the quarantine.

Given our increasingly fast-paced world and all there is to juggle on any given day, it’s easy to see why we often find ourselves feeling overwhelmed and stressed-out. Sometimes it seems as though there’s so much to do and literally not enough hours in the day to get it all done. But, a regular practice of mindfulness can help us to internally

slow things down so that we are better able to navigate through the chaos of our lives. It can be as simple as taking three minutes to sit and just notice the body breathing.

Now, you may be thinking that you don't have three minutes to spare to focus attention on the breath, let alone just sit. The good news is that this doesn't have to be an all-or-nothing approach. Even taking mere seconds throughout your day to pause and connect with the breath or the body can be incredibly centering and help incline you in the direction of relaxation.

There will likely be times when our schedules simply don't permit us to fit in a formal practice of mindfulness — perhaps we plan to practice extra early in the morning, only to have a young child wake up at the same time, maybe a work conference runs later than expected, or something else pops up. In other words, life can sometimes “get in the way” and push our formal practice to the wayside. But, that doesn't mean that we can't weave mindfulness into our day in other ways.

Below are seven simple, yet effective, ways in which you can informally incorporate mindfulness into your daily life. Over time, these small practices really can lead to big changes. You may begin to notice that you feel a bit calmer, are more present and easily able to escape reactivity, and obtain a greater sense of overall well-being.

## The Value of Non-Doing

Given that we tend to constantly be “doing,” we often are totally unaware of the ways in which we create unnecessary suffering for ourselves. But, when we give ourselves permission to rest, albeit only for a minute, or even a few seconds, we can recognize how we are and then identify ways to better care for ourselves. By intentionally protecting some of our time each day to simply be, we are able to step out of reactive mode and make more conscious and wiser decisions for ourselves, as well as others.

Try simply dropping into the richness of your morning cup of coffee or tea without having to check your email, watch the news or otherwise multi-task. When you drink your beverage, allow yourself to simply do just that. Notice the sensation of the mug against the lips, take in the aroma of your coffee or tea, savor its taste, feel the warmth against your hands, in your mouth and maybe even through the body as you drink it. So often we miss out on many of the moments of our lives in the midst of all of our doing. But, the moments of our lives really are better when we choose to show up for them, and allow ourselves to slow down a bit and enjoy the experience.





## Mindfulness of Chores

Being that I have a husband and three young boys, I often find myself in the kitchen preparing meals and cleaning dishes — a lot of them! Although washing dishes is far from glamorous, like so many of our day-to-day chores, it is a wonderful opportunity to practice mindfulness. For example, when washing the dishes, notice the shapes and colors of the dishes, the sound of water splashing around the sink, the scent of dish soap or even the small movements and sensations in the hands and arms as you clean each dish. If boredom arises, simply acknowledge it and bring your attention back to the task at hand — washing dishes. When thoughts arise, acknowledge them, let them be just as they are and as much as possible, try not to judge your experience. Then, gently invite your attention to come back to the experience of cleaning the dishes. Even if attention wanders hundreds of times, each time you bring attention back to the cleaning of the dishes you strengthen the mind's ability to be in the present moment.



But, allowing ourselves periods throughout our day to disconnect recharges us so that when it's time to take action, we are more focused and therefore, more productive in our work.

## Assess Your Relationship with Social Media, Television, News and Your Device(s)

For many of us, our devices, like an iPhone or Alexa's voice on an Amazon Echo, serve as our alarm clock and from there, we might immediately begin scrolling through social media feeds, such as Instagram and Facebook. Then, we might check various news sites, like ESPN, NY Times or CNN for current events and so on, only to be followed by logging into our personal and professional email accounts to obtain yet, more information. The list goes on and on and when we live in this way day after day, it can stir up extra agitation and anxiety for ourselves.

Try being mindful of your relationship with your device(s), news and the information you choose to expose yourself to. How much screen time do you rack up on any given day and when? How do you feel afterwards? Try limiting your screen time and being cognizant of the type of information you choose to read or listen to. Notice how you feel when you limit your exposure. For example, when waiting in line at the grocery store, instead of pulling out your phone to check email or social media, can you stand in line and simply notice yourself doing just that? Sense your feet making contact with the support beneath you, feel the breath entering and leaving the body, notice sounds in and around the store (I've noticed that Whole Foods these days has been playing some really good tunes!). Inevitably, the mind will wonder off into thinking or planning — this is completely normal and just the

nature of our minds. Each time you notice that the mind has drifted, simply invite attention to return to the present moment by noticing the quality of the breath or perhaps sensing the body as a whole. Rather than feeling obligated to respond to emails, call anyone or otherwise "do" more, simply allow yourself time to rest.



## Free Yourself of Unnecessary or Unwholesome Commitments

Have you noticed the parts of your life that you commit time to, but that don't bring you joy or fulfillment? It can be liberating to recognize what in your life no longer serves you and let go of it. This may mean saying "no" to certain obligations or invitations. Rather than giving yourself a hard time for doing so, try appreciating the fact that it is really a radical act of kindness and compassion towards yourself.

## Stop Killing Time

Look at how you fill up your daily hours — do you find yourself just trying to kill time? Instead, aim to create spaces for non-doing to simplify your life. Sometimes we feel lazy, guilty or think we're wasting time by doing nothing. As attorneys, we're often encouraged to capture every minute of our time in an effort to reach or even exceed our monthly billable goals.





## You Are a Product of Your Environment

A motto I've tried to live by is one that my mother taught me at a very young age: "If you don't have anything nice to say about someone, don't say anything at all." Are you aware of the types of conversations that you get yourself into, whether it be with colleagues, friends or family? It can be really helpful to notice if you tend to complain, gossip or talk about others because negative communication can affect your state of mind. Be curious of the ways in which you can build more nourishing conversations into your relationships. That may mean changing the people you surround yourself with, disengaging from the toxic professional or personal relationships in your life and choosing to surround yourself with people who cultivate more positive communication.



## Mindfulness in Your Daily Routine



You can train your mind to connect with the present moment with even the most mundane of daily activities. A great example is taking a shower. So often, while we stand in the shower, our minds get caught up in planning and strategizing out our entire day that we end up missing out on just how relaxing and enjoyable something as simple as taking a shower can be. The next time you take a shower, or perhaps a bath, try totally focusing your attention on the experience by being curious of body sensations, scents, sounds, and sights. With an attitude that is open, gentle and as much as possible, nonjudging, notice what comes up for you as you feel the temperature of the water against the body, smell the different fragrances from the soap, shampoo or conditioner, listen to the sounds of the water trickling down the walls or sides of the bath tub, and be aware of the sensations throughout your body.

## In sum, these little tips really do add up.

Although there is so much around us that is out of our control, it is very empowering to know that we have the ability to at least control ourselves. We can cultivate greater resilience and equanimity with a regular practice of mindfulness. Taking moments throughout your day to check in on how you are is not only a gift to yourself, but to all those around you. May the benefits of your personal practice ripple out far and wide! ✨

*If you care to take your practice a step further and are able to carve out even just three minutes for a formal practice, I invite you to listen to this short, three-minute guided breathing space practice: <https://youtu.be/SDWhM6AA4hc>. And if you are interested in obtaining more mindfulness resources, please visit my website: <https://www.courtneyschulnickmindfulness.com/>.*



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