



WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness is intentionally being aware of what is going on in and around you without judging or criticizing. Simply put, it is being aware of the present moment—paying attention to what is happening right now, in a nonjudgmental way. Mindfulness is also considered a tool for training the mind. To use it most effectively, you will need to understand how to use it, followed by consistent practice and continual effort.

The Present Moment is a Gift

Being **mindful** means being grounded in the here-and-now—the **present** moment. Being **present** is possessing the ability to **recognize** sensations, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors as they arise as well as the ability to tune into the people and environment around you. A well **trained** mind has the mental space and clarity required to respond **mindfully** and purposefully to everyday situations rather than reacting to them.

It is easy to get lost in thought—dwelling in the past or worrying about the future takes the mind further from the present moment, which can increase feelings of anger, anxiety, depression, etc. The more you practice **mindfulness**, the more skilled you become in bringing the mind back to the **present** moment when it begins to wander, which can increase feelings of joy, peace, and stillness.

Dwelling in the past or worrying about the future creates unnecessary stress and only compounds the stresses of everyday life. Grounding the mind in the **present** moment, through **mindfulness** based practices, will naturally dissolve excess stress because it is no longer focused on changing something that cannot be changed or worrying about something that has not happened. This is what makes the **present** moment such a gift!—It is where everything has ever happened and will happen—it is where all of life takes place. Being **present** for life is the greatest gift you can give yourself and the friends around you.

Why Mindfulness?

Life can be stressful so it's important to use effective coping skills to manage the ups-and-downs. **Mindfulness** is an effective and handy **tool** because it is always with you, can be used at any time, and can be applied to any situation such as brushing your teeth, eating breakfast, listening to a friend, etc. **Mindfulness** can be used to **train** the mind to become more relaxed, peaceful, compassionate, and **aware**—who couldn't use more of that?

The Mind is a Muscle

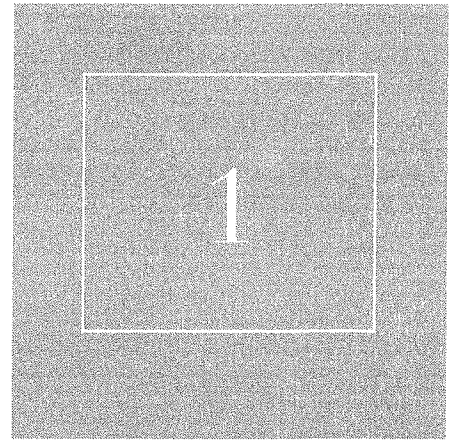
Many people understand the importance of working out to remain fit, but neglect to workout the mind to remain peaceful. The mind is like a muscle; like a muscle, it needs training and exercise. With all thoughts, feelings, and actions tracing back to the mind, it is important to exercise the mind using the **mental gymnastics** of **mindfulness**.

What Next?

Identify one simple action you would like to do **mindfully**, then practice! See example below.

Goal—“I take 10 **mindful** breaths every morning before I get out of the car for work.” ♥

Practice—Silence electronics; remove distractions; breathing in I am **aware** I am breathing in; breathing out I am **aware** I am breathing out; bring the mind back to breath when it wanders.



WELCOME

We would like to welcome you to the first issue of the Mindful Minute! This monthly newsletter will run until May 2018.

Our newsletter is intended to educate readers on mindfulness; the benefits of mindfulness; and how to use mindfulness to reduce stress and improve self-care.

Each issue will include at least one brief **mindfulness** practice, online resources, and much more!

Critical content will be underlined and key words will appear in **bold**. Look for the red hearts which indicate **mindfulness** practice ideas.

LEARNING GOALS

1. Define **mindfulness** in your own words.
2. Identify one **benefit** of **mindfulness**.
3. Identify one **mindfulness** technique for reducing **stress**.
4. Create a one minute **mindfulness** or **self-care** routine.

BREATHING POEM ♥

Breathing in I am **aware** I am breathing in
Breathing out I am **aware** I am breathing out
Breathing in I feel peaceful
Breathing out I feel calm
Breathing in I am here
Breathing out it is now
Breathing in I am loved
Breathing out I give joy

KEY WORDS

aware, benefit, consistent, meditation, mindfulness, present, recognize, reduce stress, self-care, tool, training

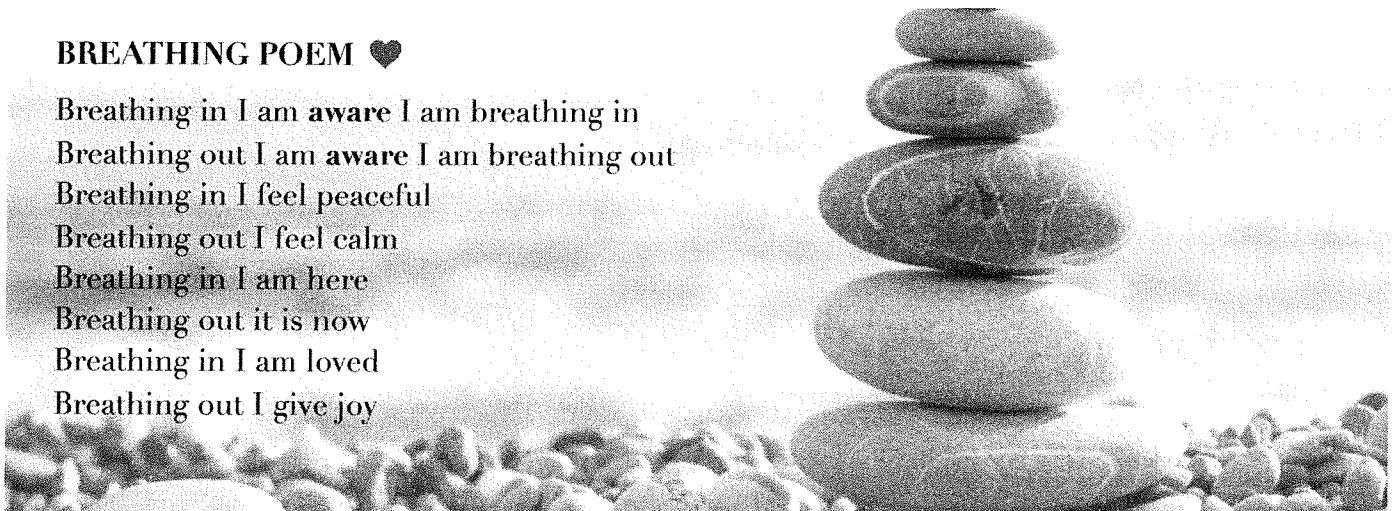
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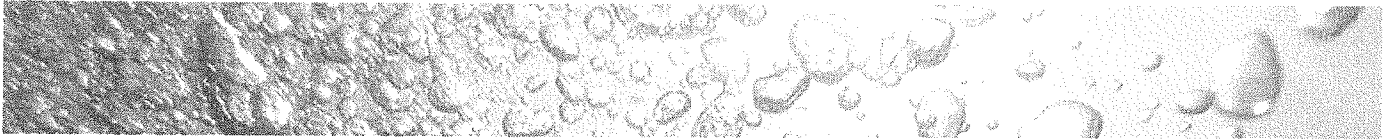
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THE WELL

By Alison Maurer, MA, LMHC

*“When the well’s dry, we know
the worth of water.”
-Benjamin Franklin*

We’ve all heard about the importance of **self-care** and taking time for ourselves. But why is knowing about such things so much easier than doing something to improve the situation? We know that taking a brisk walk is better than sitting on the couch eating chips. We know that taking a minute to breathe and reflect is better than immediately firing off that snarky email. As educators we are great at facilitating positive behaviors and habits in our students, but sometimes not so much for ourselves. A lot of times it’s not until the well runs dry that we truly realize how much we need to take that time for self-care.

Research shows not only does high levels of stress and burnout cause physical and psychological symptoms in educators, it also influences stress levels of their students. In a study, conducted by the University of British Columbia, a correlation was found between teachers’ burnout levels and students’ cortisol levels, a hormone that indicates stress. Researchers found that in classrooms where teachers were feeling more burned out or exhausted, students’ cortisol levels were higher, especially in the morning. “It is unknown what came first—elevated cortisol or teacher burnout,” said Eva Oberle, the study’s lead author and assistant professor at UBC’s School of Population and Public Health. “However, this suggests that stress contagion might be taking place in the classroom among students and their teachers.” (<https://news.ubc.ca/2016/06/27/ubc-study-finds-stress-contagion-amongst-students-and-teachers/>). So how do we make those positive changes that can make a difference in our lives and the lives of the people around us?

Start Small—A lot of time just the idea of starting a new habit can be overwhelming, but if we start small it’s easier to ease into a new activity. For example the first month we start a **mindfulness** program we may start with five minutes of practice. The first month we start a new exercise or yoga routine it may only entail 10-20 minutes of movement. This is good. Relish the accomplishment and use the small successes to build momentum and gradually increase the time.

Create a Routine—Just like our students thrive on routines, so do our bodies. So whether it’s writing in a gratitude journal before bed every night or taking five minutes to sit down and savor a cup of coffee each morning, try to do these things at the same time and place each day.

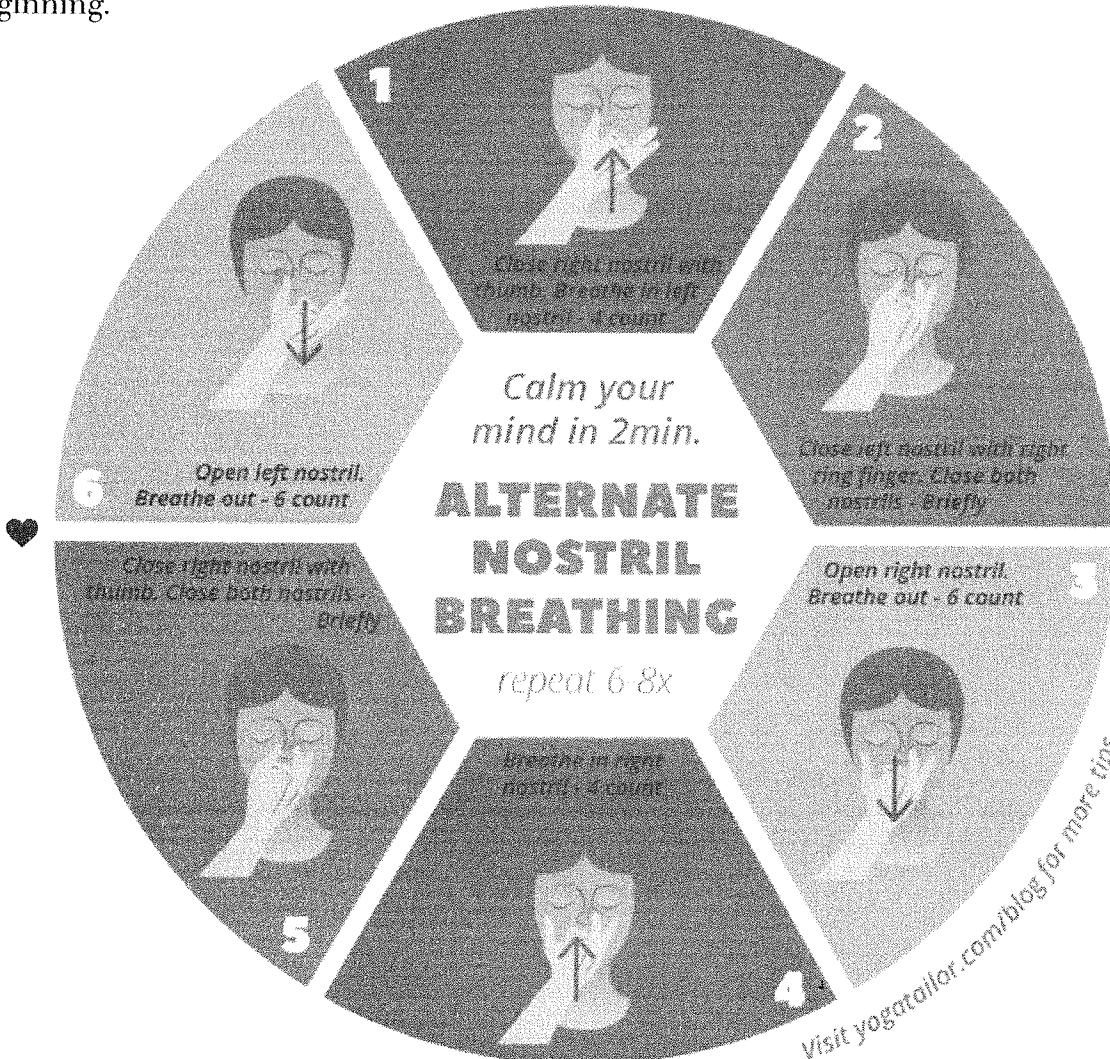
A Little Bit Often—It’s better to do a little bit every day or most days, than to do a lot every once in awhile. If we only do self-care activities once in a blue moon they are less likely to be effective and they are more likely to make us feel even more exhausted and defeated. For example, if someone tries to workout for two hours their first time, the next day they may feel exhausted and sore...and less likely to work out that day. The same is true for your mindfulness practice, start small so you leave feeling accomplished instead of overwhelmed or defeated.

Suggestions for Starting a Practice—Please refer to the next few pages for suggestions on starting a **mindfulness** practice using breathing **meditation.**



I AM LIGHTER THAN A FEATHER YET THE STRONGEST MAN CANNOT HOLD ME FOR LONG...

One of the most popular tools for mindfulness has been hiding right under your nose, or rather passing through it—the breath. Breathing meditation is a highly effective way to calm the mind and relax the body. It is so powerful that research has shown it can improve blood pressure, reduce heart rate, reduce anxiety, improve digestion, improve mood, improve sleep, cue the parasympathetic nervous system to put the breaks on the fight-or-flight response, and much more. See below for instructions on alternate nostril breathing from yogatailor.com/blog or check out this 4 min video from Kavita Maharaj <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCK1jBfRVsE>. Be sure to review the subsequent sections on how to prepare for breathing meditation and minding your posture before beginning.





HOW TO PREPARE

Preparing for breathing meditation is just as important as the meditation itself. It helps to relax the mind and moves the mind into a more relaxed and focused state, much in the way a singer would warm the vocal chords or a an athlete would stretch...

Locate a quiet place free from distractions. Silence all electronics. Ensure children & pets have adequate care.

Open the curtains. Natural light is best. If the room is too dark you may begin to feel drowsy.

Vacuum or tidy the **meditation** area for a few minutes. A clean room naturally relaxes the mind & will help with concentration.

Empty stomach or after a light snack. Meditating after a heavy meal can lead to sleepiness. Remaining alert and focused is vital.



Click the Link Below to Watch the ASAPScience Video on the Power of Meditation

The Benefits of Mindfulness

- Signals the release of endorphins, serotonin, & dopamine
- Reduces pain
- Improves digestion
- Lowers blood pressures
- Reduces inflammation
- Improves sleep
- Improves mood
- Increases oxygen
- Improves immune functioning



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aw71zanwMnY>



MIND YOUR POSTURE

Posture and concentration are two of the most important aspects of breathing meditation—posture impacts concentration, and concentration is the vehicle for deepening the meditation experience. Keeping a straight, but relaxed back is the most important thing to remember when sitting for meditation.

Chair—Feet flat on the floor about hip-distance-apart.

Cushion—Legs crossed.

Spine—Straight, but relaxed. Imagine a string is attached to the crown of the head and gently pulls the spine into alignment. Allow the shoulders and arms to relax.

Eyes—Open or slightly closed. If open, gaze slightly down & in front of you; this will help prevent distractions. Decide which one you prefer and stick with it for the length of the meditation.

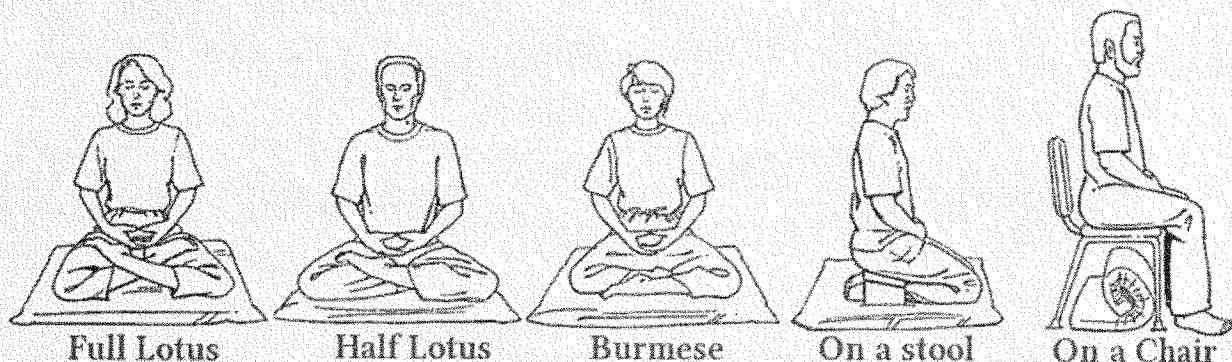
Hands—Palm-up on the knees, pressed together at heart center, or allow the right-hand to gently rest in the left as pictured below.

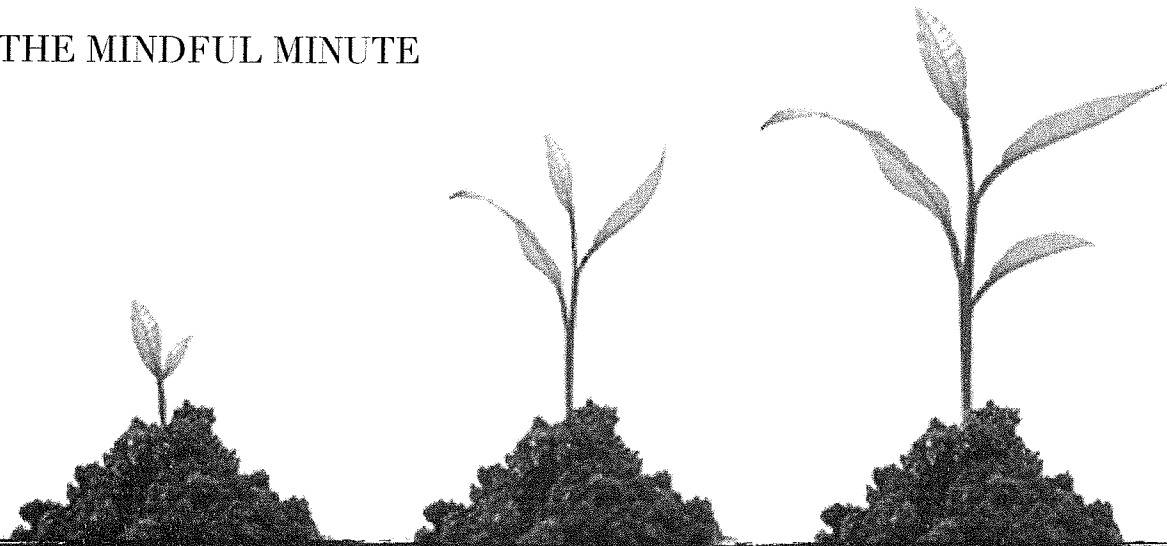
Tongue—Resting gently behind the top row of teeth to prevent swallowing. Allow it to remain relaxed & avoid pressing it with force.

Muscles—Relaxed. Taking a few deep breaths will help.

Mind—Focused, **aware**, non-judgmental, relaxed, & patient. Generating joy during your practice will improve the experience.

Watch this 2 minute video, “How to Meditate: 3 Body Position Options” by tuja wellness
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8HFf8FiVxs>





CREATE A PRACTICE

Now that you have learned the basics of **mindfulness**, it is time to create a one minute practice.

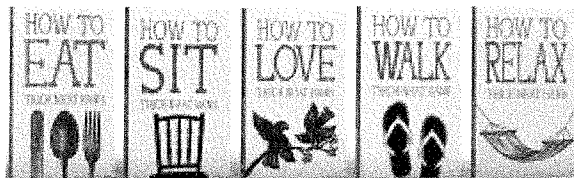
Remember to start small and allow your practice to grow over time. See below for practice ideas, **mindfulness tools**, and additional resources for practicing **mindfulness**.

– Happy practicing!

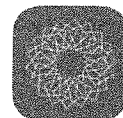
PRACTICE IDEAS

- ♥ Drinking tea or coffee
- ♥ Eating
- ♥ Walking
- ♥ Listening
- ♥ Brushing your teeth
- ♥ Petting your dog or cat
- ♥ Folding laundry
- ♥ Cleaning
- ♥ Answering e-mails
- ♥ Smelling a flower

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS



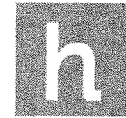
APPS



I Can Be Calm



Calm



Happier

ONLINE RESOURCES

- mindful.org
- <https://tinybuddha.com/blog/30-simple-mindfulness-practices-to-help-you-focus-and-be-present/>
- <https://www.pocketmindfulness.com/6-mindfulness-exercises-you-can-try-today/>

GUIDED PRACTICES

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wFX9Wn70eM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52qgs9MhGbQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67SeR3LAtdI>