

Everyday Mindfulness

Staying “Present” in the Little Moments of Your Day

“Mindfulness” is everywhere these days, widely touted as the key to serenity. Essentially it is about fighting the human tendency to move through time on automatic pilot. At its core, it seems simple: Just pay attention. Of course, if it were that easy, we wouldn’t see people seeking out blogs, books, and workshops--all promising to help us stay “in the present.”

The reason it is such a struggle to “be mindful” is that so much of our day consists of repeated activities that can easily become routinized, allowing the mind to wander out of sheer boredom. Coming back to the present means disrupting the “groove” we have worn into our experience of the world by introducing something new--a little twist, if you will.

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It doesn’t take much to disrupt this pattern of “checking out” mentally, just a willingness to try...again and again. Because the truth is that mindfulness is a practice--meaning, no one does it perfectly. And no one “gets it,” once and for all. It takes some effort, and attention. And every practice has to start somewhere. So here, we’d like to share with you some ideas for bringing moments of mindfulness into the predictable experiences of your day. See if any of these help you become more anchored in the present as you go about your day.

5 Tips for Staying “Present”

- In the shower: Most of us start the day with a shower, and for many it is a utilitarian activity--get clean, and get out. But try noticing how the water feels on your body. Check in with your body--are any of your muscles or joints feeling sore? Would a little extra warm (or hot) water feel good there right now? As you wash your hair, can you focus on the sensation--making it a scalp massage? Can you clean *and* nurture yourself at the same time?
- Making coffee/tea: Take just a moment to smell the coffee or tea as you prepare the bag/leaves/grounds. What do you notice in the scent? Does the smell elicit any memories? Wrap your hands around the warm cup--does that sensation make you smile? Can you sit for a minute or two, and just enjoy drinking a nice warm beverage--without any distractions (TV, radio, conversation)?
- Folding laundry: If the clothes are fresh from the dryer, notice the warmth against your skin. You can even pick up an armful and hug them--no one is looking! As you fold each garment, perhaps you remember when/how you acquired it, or associate it with an activity or event you particularly enjoyed. Fully immerse yourself in that memory--feel the pleasure that it gave you.
- Time with your pet: If you have a beloved animal companion, take just a few moments to stroke and fully appreciate this beautiful being. Look closely at the whiskers--we bet that you will see them in places you never noticed before! Or look at the individual hairs around the mouth or eyes--see how they shade into different colors. Move slowly as you scratch--is there some place your pet particularly seems to enjoy?
- Look outside: Take a moment to gaze out the window. If there are animals in your view, watch what they are doing. Can you identify them? Do you see people--what are they doing? Or what do you *imagine* they are up to, based on their actions? If all you see are buildings, notice the colors and shapes that make up the structures--see how the light hits them. Do they look substantially different at different times of the day?

These are just a few suggestions to get you started, but once you get the ball rolling, we know you will find other small opportunities to practice mindfulness in your day. Remember: No one is fully “in the moment” all the time. But *any* time that you are fully engaged in what you are doing--and enjoying it--is a “success.” Because mindfulness *does* open the door to greater peace, as well as gratitude and joy--which is reason enough to give it a try.