Mindfulness Exercises

Mindfulness: Short Practices for Everyday Life

Mindfulness exercises are short practices that train you to pay attention to the present moment, on purpose and without judging what you notice. Jon Kabat-Zinn founded Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in 1979. His course pairs longer meditations with small everyday practices like the ones on this sheet. Each exercise takes one to five minutes. Try one a day and keep the ones that suit you.

1 Before you start

- Your mind will wander, because that is what minds do. Each time you notice it and come back, you have done the exercise.
- You do not need to feel calm or empty your mind. The aim is to notice whatever is here.
- Link each exercise to something already in your day, like waiting for the kettle, so you remember to do it.

Why does this work? *A lot of the time your mind runs on autopilot. In a study of about 2,250 adults, people's minds were wandering nearly half the time, and they felt less happy while they were. Short moments of attention train you to notice where your mind has gone and bring it back. A review of 29 studies found that the eight-week MBSR course lowered stress, anxiety and low mood in healthy adults.*

2 Five everyday exercises

A. One mindful minute. Set a timer for one minute. Rest your attention on your breath where you feel it most, at your nose, chest or belly. Count each breath out from one to ten, then start again. If you lose count, go back to one.

B. A mindful routine. Choose something you do every day without thinking, like brushing your teeth, showering or washing a cup. Next time, give it your full attention: the temperature, the sounds, the smells and the movements of your hands.

C. Listening to sounds. Sit for three minutes and let sounds come to you, near and far, loud and quiet. Try to hear each one as plain sound before your mind names it, and notice the short silences in between.

D. Three breaths at a cue. Pick a cue you meet many times a day, such as a doorway, a red light or your phone buzzing. Each time you meet it, pause, feel your feet on the floor and take three slow breaths before you move on.

E. Naming what is here. Stop and ask yourself three questions. What do I feel in my body right now? What emotion is here? What am I thinking? Name each one in a word or two, without trying to change it.

**This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.*

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3 Practice log

Write a few words after each practice. Over a week or two, you may see which exercises fit your day best.

Day	Exercise	Minutes	What I noticed
Monday	*B. Mindful routine*	*3*	*The water was warmer than I thought. My mind went to work twice.*

4 Looking back

Which exercise fit most easily into my day?

What did I notice that I usually miss?

When in my day could I use mindfulness the most?

Mindfulness can sometimes bring up upsetting thoughts, memories or body feelings. If that happens, open your eyes, look around the room and feel your feet on the floor. If it keeps happening, or you have been through trauma, a therapist can help you adapt these exercises.

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