

# 12 Mindfulness practices to increase your overall well-being

Being human is hard. It's so easy to get stuck in the exhaustion of day-to-day adulting (i.e. parenting, maintaining your relationships, tending to your home, your career, and all the responsibilities...) that often, self-care lands at the bottom of our "to-do" list.

And when we put ourselves last, everything else suffers. Truth is, not having the time to take care of yourself isn't the issue. We all have time for what we deem important.

The reality is, you likely were not role modeled how to practice self-care and/or taught how to prioritize your own well-being (without being considered selfish).

Maybe you thought that doing the basics - getting enough sleep, eating well and exercising - was enough. And while it's a good start, it actually isn't enough.

Or perhaps you have some experience with practices to support your mental and emotional health, but you haven't been guided sufficiently in how to integrate these tools (such as mindfulness and/or meditation) into your life in a way that creates lasting, positive change.

If this rings true for you, don't worry - you're not alone. I'm glad you're here because I know you're ready to thrive, rather than merely survive, in your life.

Meditation is the foundation, taking moments of silence and stillness to slow down, connect with your breath and body, to observe whatever is arising.

Mindfulness is the integration of this awareness into all aspects of your life so you can be accepting of whatever arises, more present, less distracted, have the ability respond instead of react, and be more compassionate rather than judgmental (and more!) All of this improves your overall well-being, as well as your joy, contentment and relationships.

This guide provides you with 12 different practices to support you through the challenges or stressors of day-to-day life, making it not only easier to get through the tough stuff, but also to help you appreciate all the good stuff.

Let's get started...

## Assess Your Well-Being

Before you can begin to create positive and lasting change for your overall health and well-being, let's do a quick assessment on what is, and is not, working in your life.

This self-assessment is intended for you to reflect and get crystal clear on where you'd most like to see improvements in your well-being as a result of practicing mindfulness.

On a scale of 1-10, rate the following statements: 1 = "not great;" 5 = "it's okay;" and 10 = "this is great" (or any number in between!)

Observe your answers without judging it. This is simply a baseline of your well-being, and can provide insight on which areas of your life can improve with mindfulness.

- 🌀 I feel I get enough sleep and generally feel rested \_\_\_\_\_
- 🌀 I am able to focus on tasks without getting too distracted \_\_\_\_\_
- 🌀 I have quality relationships in my life \_\_\_\_\_
- 🌀 I feel comfortable in my body and am able to physically do what I'd like \_\_\_\_\_
- 🌀 I have a regular routine of exercise \_\_\_\_\_
- 🌀 The inner voice in my mind is kind and supportive \_\_\_\_\_
- 🌀 I have a positive mindset, and can focus on the good in my life \_\_\_\_\_
- 🌀 I know how to set healthy boundaries with the people in my life \_\_\_\_\_
- 🌀 The unknown future does not give me too much anxiety; I view it as exciting \_\_\_\_\_
- 🌀 When I feel my emotions strongly, I can regulate and get back to calm \_\_\_\_\_
- 🌀 I know that my thoughts are not my truth; they are just thoughts \_\_\_\_\_
- 🌀 My life feels balanced; I am busy and I also make time for rest and play \_\_\_\_\_
- 🌀 I can communicate effectively with those I'm in relationship with \_\_\_\_\_
- 🌀 I know how to not dwell on the past; I am able to be present \_\_\_\_\_

## Being Well

Now that you have your baseline, it's time to practice...

The following 12 practices are foundational to living a happy, healthy and fulfilling life. I truly believe mindfulness is the answer to everything, as it provides you with a framework of acceptance, compassion and awareness for every moment of your day.

We tend to get easily overwhelmed, feel stuck, or out of alignment when our life is not in flow; mindfulness will help you feel in flow.

Regardless of what you're going through, being more mindful will help you be more conscious of your responses and aligned in your values, which will positively contribute to your overall well-being, benefitting all aspects of your life and relationships.

There are a few different ways that you can engage with these practices. You can just focus on one at a time, for a week or so, to really deepen your connection to being more mindful, or you can practice a different tool every day. There is no right or wrong, however, I would suggest to go in order, as there is an intention in the formatting; they do build on one another.

I do suggest that after you practice each tool, you take a mindful moment to reflect on what you became aware of; I offer a few suggestions below as a guide to journal or write about your experience.

🌀 When I was practicing, I noticed... \_\_\_\_\_

🌀 The thoughts in my mind were: \_\_\_\_\_

🌀 The emotions I felt were: \_\_\_\_\_

🌀 The sensations I felt in my body were: \_\_\_\_\_

🌀 It felt hard when: \_\_\_\_\_

🌀 It felt easy when: \_\_\_\_\_

🌀 That the area(s) of my life that would benefit from this practice are: \_\_\_\_\_

🌀 Some insight I gained was: \_\_\_\_\_

# 1 Meditation

🌀 Listen to this guided meditation on how to tune into your breath as a way of grounding into the present moment, while calming your brain and your body. **Download the meditation here.**

# 3 Mindfulness Practices

Mindfulness is the practice of being in the present moment, on purpose, without trying to change what you're experiencing. Notice your thoughts, emotions, or sensations in your body, as well as your external circumstances, without having to do anything other than stay in awareness, acceptance and compassion. Practice being mindful when you are feeling stressed, anxious or overwhelmed; it won't change the challenges you are facing, though it will help in how you respond intentionally, rather than react out of habit. Below are 3 practices...

🌀 **Mindfulness of Your Thoughts** - Notice the thoughts in your mind. Create space between you and your thoughts by observing them, without necessarily having to do anything about them. Your mind is going to produce between 50,000-70,000 thoughts per day, and the majority of them are going to be focused on the negative (because we have a negativity bias). Remember that you are not your thoughts and your thoughts are not your truth. When you can practice observing them, you become more able to see them for what they are, and what they are not. *When stuck in reactive thought patterns, say to yourself, "Oh that's interesting, I'm thinking about \_\_\_\_\_ again..." Naming your thoughts in this way breaks the habitual cycle of believing your thoughts as truth, and allows you space to consciously decide what to do next.*

🌀 **Mindfulness of Your Emotions** - The practice is to allow and accept whatever emotion you are feeling; there are no "good" or "bad" emotions - they are all *natural* emotions part of the human experience. Your emotions don't define you and they won't last forever. *When stuck in your emotions, name what you are feeling; it'll create space between you and the emotion, helping you to be less enmeshed with the emotion, as well as more compassionate and less judgmental. This will help you move through the emotion cycle.*

## Mindfulness Practices (cont'd)

 **Acceptance** - Acceptance is the practice of not fighting, denying, resisting or ignoring what is hard or what you don't like, and is easier said than done. Not accepting what's here doesn't make it go away, it only makes your reaction to it bigger. If you push everything under the rug, because it's uncomfortable or undesirable, then one day you're going to trip over the pile under the rug! *Acceptance is reminding yourself, "Even if I don't like what I'm dealing with, I can practice reducing my resistance to it through compassionate deep breaths, while remembering that this won't last forever. This is easier said than done, and I'm trying."*

## 3 Gratitude Practices

 **Write down one thing you are grateful for, and 5 reasons why:**

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 **Gratitude Mantra:** *"I am grateful for all the difficult people in my life, for they remind me who I don't want to be."*

 **Positive Upward Spiral:** Focus on 3 things that are going well or that you are proud of. Any time you are feeling down, stressed or you're dwelling on the negative, focus on what's going right.

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## 2 Compassion Practices

 **Compassion for Others** - I define compassion as *empathy, plus action*, which means to actively be kind and understanding of others and what they are going through. The latin translation of compassion is "*to suffer with,*" which means that we support others through our presence and acceptance, without necessarily trying to "fix or solve" what they are going through. Compassion is the opposite of judgment, and as humans, it's natural to have judgments; with mindful awareness, the key is to not act on that judgment. Having compassion for others is cutting them some slack and not jumping to conclusions about why someone is acting the way that they are. Try putting yourself in someone else's shoes and consider from their perspective what they may be feeling and/or may need. *Being kind, curious and nonjudgmental helps you to be more accepting and understanding, which leads to less reactivity and more presence. To practice being more compassionate, try offering your help before someone asks, or offer to just listen, without necessarily trying to fix the problem; being compassionate is more powerful than you realize and will improve your relationships, and make you feel better in the process. It's a win-win!*

 **Self-Compassion** - Having compassion for others is often easier than having compassion for yourself. We often aren't raised to be kind to ourselves; rather our inner critic can be very loud, and in absence of knowing how to quiet it down, that inner voice can take over. There are 3 aspects to self-compassion: *mindfulness* (awareness and acceptance of what is arising), *kindness* (quieting the inner critic and treating yourself as your own best friend), and *common humanity* (knowing that you are not alone in what you are experiencing, even if the details are different, you are not the first to go through whatever it is you're facing). *Remember, while you are unique, your problems are not, and whatever you are going through, is simply part of the human experience. Be kind to yourself, give yourself a hug, and remember that being human is hard. You have 100% success rate of getting through everything you didn't think you could!*

# 3 Lovingkindness Practices

Lovingkindness, or *metta*, is the practice of wishing wellness to others. In traditional Buddhist practice, there are many layers of metta that we extend - those we love, those we don't know, those don't like, and to ourselves. Lovingkindness is a beautiful practice and can help to decrease anger, judgment, reactivity while increasing love, acceptance and compassion.

 **Lovingkindness to Someone You Love** - Visualize someone you deeply care about. Offer this intention to them, and know that wherever they are in the world, they will energetically receive it. Notice how it feels to extend these well-wishes, and imagine how they'll feel to receive it. Add your own intention at the end.

May you be healthy and strong.

May you be happy.

May you be peaceful.

May you \_\_\_\_\_

 **Lovingkindness to Someone You Struggle With** - *Metta* is easier for those we care about, yet is just as important to offer someone we have challenge with. Visualize someone you experience conflict with, and send them lovingkindness with the following intention:

May you be healthy and strong.

May you be happy.

May you be peaceful.

May you \_\_\_\_\_

 **Lovingkindness to Yourself** - Like self-compassion, sending *metta* to yourself is often harder than offering it to others. And yet, it's one of the most important practices for your well-being. Offering yourself what you most need helps to build confidence, self-love and resiliency. Remember, you are worthy and deserving.

May I be healthy and strong.

May I be happy.

May I be peaceful.

May I \_\_\_\_\_