

Mindfulness Exercises

Being mindful helps people do better in just about every part of life, like focusing on homework or feeling less stressed out. Practicing mindfulness a little bit every day helps you to build this valuable skill.

These exercises help you practice mindfulness in four different ways. Try doing all of them.

As you do each exercise, you will probably find that your mind wanders after a minute or two. That's normal — minds do that. Your job is to gently bring your attention back to the thing you are focused on. The more you practice doing that, the better you train your brain to pay attention.

1. Mindful Eating

You can do this with an orange, an apple — or even something as tiny as a raisin. The idea is to really pay attention to what you are eating.

Let's say you decide to do mindful eating with an orange. Your job is to eat the orange slowly, without rushing. You can do this mindful eating exercise with your eyes open or closed.

1. Start by holding your orange. Roll it in your hand. Notice how it feels.
2. Hold the orange near your nose. What does it smell like? Take a whiff of the bittersweet smell of the orange peel.
3. If you have your eyes open, notice how the orange looks. Pay attention to whether the skin is smooth or bumpy. If you hold it firmly, is it squishy?
4. Slowly peel your orange, paying attention to how it feels in your fingers. Notice the juiciness, and whether the inside of the orange smells different from the outside.
5. Is your mouth watering? Go ahead and taste your orange. Notice how it feels on your tongue, and against your teeth. Notice the flavor, the texture, and the juiciness as you chew each piece slowly. Take your time as you chew, taste, smell, and feel each bite of your orange.

2. Mindful Breathing

With this exercise, you focus your attention on breathing. You want to pay attention to your breath in an easy way — on purpose, but not forced.

1. Sit up in a comfortable way. Close your eyes.
2. Notice your breathing as you inhale and exhale normally. Just pay attention to your breath as it goes in and out. Can you feel the place where the air tickles your nostrils?
3. Pay attention to how the breath gently moves your body. Can you notice your belly or your chest moving as you breathe?
4. Sit for a few minutes, just paying attention to your gentle breathing. See how relaxed you can feel just sitting, breathing in and out.
5. When your mind starts to wander and think about something else, gently guide your attention back to your breathing.

3. Mindful Walking

This exercise is about paying attention to how your body moves as you walk slowly.

1. To start, pick up one foot and take a step forward, in slow motion. Pay attention to how you naturally keep your balance.
2. Now walk in slow motion, step by step. Notice how your arms and legs and feet move. Pay attention to how your knees bend and straighten, as you lift one foot and then the other, nice and slow.

3. Breathe in and out, in time with your steps. See if you can keep your attention focused on walking slowly, step by step, as you relax and breathe.
4. Whenever your mind wanders, gently guide it back to your s-l-o-w motion moving. Keep breathing, in and out, as you enjoy moving in slow motion.

4. Mindful Word

1. Think of a word that seems calm or soothing. This could be a word like "peace" or "love" or "peaceful" or "snowflake" or "sunlight" or "hum" or "calm."
2. Think the word to yourself. Say it silently and slowly in your mind. Say your word to yourself with each breath you take, in and out. Keep your attention gently focused on your word.
3. When your mind wanders, guide your attention back to your word, and keep saying it gently and slowly while you relax and breathe.
4. Can you do this for a whole minute? Can you do it for 5 minutes?

When you practice, you will probably notice that you feel calm and relaxed. If you keep practicing, you might start to notice that it's easier to focus your attention on things like schoolwork or listening. You may begin to feel calmer and more patient in your everyday life. You may find that when little things go wrong, you can handle them better.

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