

April DIY Exercise

KEY: MINDFULNESS

EXERCISE: MINDFULNESS MINI'S

“With mindfulness, you can establish yourself in the present in order to touch the wonders of life that are available in that moment.” – Thich Nhat Hanh.

“In today’s rush, we all think too much—seek too much—want too much—and forget about the joy of just being.” Eckhart Tolle

Mindfulness is the ability to stay in the present moment and to focus your thoughts on what is happening in the here and now. It’s our ability to not think about the past or the future but to instead observe what is happening in the moment.

Deepak Chopra, Eckhart Tolle, and others teach about the power of mindfulness and the importance of incorporating it into our daily practices, given its many proven benefits from reducing anxiety, depression, and chronic pain to improving sleep and reducing stress. Mindfulness also helps us in achieving our goals such as weight-loss or starting a new project. And most importantly, mindfulness can help us stay centered to more effectively manage ourselves and others, or deal with external challenges.

However, it’s not something that comes naturally for us, especially with the many distractions that take our attention and focus elsewhere. Most of us are now addicted to our technology and have less ability to focus our attention for a long period of time. We constantly check our texts, social media, the news feed and are bombarded with information overload. Then we find that the day has gone by, without us even once having checked in with ourselves, (let alone spent time practicing mindfulness) which ironically ends up making us feel disconnected, unhappy, and unfulfilled. And when we do slow down, we tend to feel guilty for doing so, like there’s some kind of rule that tells us we need to be busy in every given moment to be productive and make the most of each minute.

The result of this is we become much more susceptible to negativity, misinformation, anxiety, and fear which drags us down mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. We end up out of touch with ourselves, uncomfortable just being alone with ourselves and out of touch and uncomfortable with life and others in deep and meaningful ways. We lose our connection to our inner power. We lose our ability to consciously and intentionally bring our good forth by simply focusing on where we are, and what’s working for us right now.

Although it can be difficult to squeeze in 20-30 minutes of daily meditation, we can build mini practices throughout the day to help us focus our attention. The following exercises can each be adjusted to mini exercises, taking no more than a few seconds to a few minutes to practice and incorporate into your life. Feel free to rotate them as needed and do them often.

Choose an exercise below and practice it several times throughout the day.

Practice Gratitude –When we practice gratitude, we focus our attention in the present moment and on what is positive in our lives. It keeps the good stuff at the forefront of our mind so that we’re able to come back more easily into “the now” moment, instead of fretting about the future or rehashing the

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past. This simple practice yields powerful results on many levels, as gratitude gives you more to be grateful for.

Bring Your Senses In - One of the simplest ways of staying mindful is to bring your attention to the present moment. In this mini exercise, use your five senses to help you. At some point during your day, stop what you are doing for a moment and observe what is going on around you. What noises do you hear? What scents do you smell? What are others around you doing? Wherever you are, whatever you're doing, put your full attention there and observe it through your five senses for just a few moments to practice bringing your mind to that now moment.

Focus On Your Breath - Another practice for bringing our attention to the present moment is focusing on our breath. You are already breathing! Your breath is happening with or without your conscious awareness, but by intentionally bringing your attention to your breath, you can help your mind slow down, focus and become aware, and be present in that moment. Close your eyes. Breathe. With each breath, notice how you are breathing. Is it shallow or deep? Take five deep belly breaths and focus your attention on your inhaling and exhaling. Expand your breath so that you begin to breathe deeply and longer. Repeat that three times and practice it multiple times during the day.

Practice Conscious Listening -Most of the time when others speak, we are in our heads trying to think of how we are going to respond. We tune out about halfway before the person is even finished with their thought. Next time you have a conversation, try active listening where you are putting your full attention on the other person. Listen with your ears, heart and intuition.

Observe Your Surroundings – This is a perfect practice to use when you're outside. Just focus on what is happening around you. Notice the traffic. Focus on the people walking by. Notice a beautiful flower or a tree. The wind in your hair. The sun on your face. The color of the sky. The energy and vibe you feel around you. This can be done in as little as 30 seconds. Remember, you can take as long as you need to be observant in that present moment. You can practice this when you're going for a walk, a hike or just sitting on your patio, standing on your front steps, or standing in your yard. Or just stand still on the sidewalk before you get in your car, before you walk into the office, the doctor's office, the grocery store, or wherever you are, and for just a few moments, stand still, and for the briefest moment, observe your surroundings. And here's where you can get *a two for one* – before you move a step, close your eyes and give thanks. Then continue on your way!