

Mindfulness: Daily Life!

Whether we choose to include meditation as a daily practice or not, we can all benefit from mindfulness! It's nothing more than a nonjudgmental awareness of the present moment. Here are some ways to incorporate mindfulness into daily life that don't involve sitting still, or having your eyes closed!

Mindful Dishes. I hated doing the dishes until I started doing them mindfully. Take a breath and approach this with an open mind, instead of a frustrated-about-doing-the-dishes one. How does the water feel on your hands? Warm? Cold? Do you feel the soap? Can you smell the soap? Try to stay present and tune into your senses during this process, instead of wandering and thinking about the past or future. If and when your mind wanders, just bring it back to the dishwashing—without being angry that your mind wandered (you are human, it's going to happen no matter how long you practice).

Mindful Showers. In the shower, do the same thing. Notice how the water feels on your body. What's the temperature like? How does the soap feel and look? Does it have a smell? Mindfulness is nothing more than practicing keeping your attention in the shower, rather than planning the minutes following.

Mindful Eating. Sit down at a table and enjoy your meal, free of any technology or distractions. Notice how your food looks. What are the shapes? Colors? How does it taste? What are the textures? Flavor? How does it feel when you chew? When you swallow? Take your time.

Listening & Sound Exercise. Be still and close your eyes, or feel free to leave them open. Take a breath or two to relax, and then take a minute or two to notice all of the sounds in your environment. What do you hear? Can you notice 5 different sounds?

Senses Walk. Get your steps in! I'll go for a walk (it can be 5 minutes or an hour—whatever you have) and take time going through each of your senses. (I usually skip taste... as I'm typically not eating while on my walks!)

I like to start with touch: What are the physical sensations you feel while you walk? What do you feel beneath your feet? In your joints? Do you feel any tension? Notice, and try not to judge. Just notice it—it doesn't even need to be named. Spend as long as you can (or can manage) on this sense. Then move onto the next.

Sound: What do you hear? Are the sounds close? Far? Try not to judge whether they are pleasant or unpleasant, but just let them exist with you on this walk.

After some time, notice smell: Can you smell flowers? Grass? Sweetness? Dog poop? Again, no naming is necessary. Just notice, experience the smells as fully as you can and let the smells be as perfect as they are—and if there aren't any smells, don't stress your nose out trying to find some. Feel free to notice sight as well, or instead try the Color Walk exercise below.

Color Walk. Walk for any amount of time and start with a color—I usually cycle through pink, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. What do I see around me that is pink? Pinkish? Notice it. Notice the shape, color or texture, but don't prioritize naming or labeling it. Don't discriminate whether it's natural or manmade—just notice anything around that has the color. After a minute, a block, or whenever feels right, move onto the next color. These walks have always opened me up to seeing things I've never seen before. (I will often go for these walks after being activated or upset. 10 minutes later and I'm relaxed and stable!)

Dance Class! Pre-COVID days, I joined a dance studio and loved taking dance classes every week. When I attend a choreography-based class, in-person or online, I have to be SO present and focused, or else I can't follow the class. I try to notice how my body feels doing certain movements—how my feet press into the ground, or when certain muscles tighten or release. You can of course practice this with any kind of physical exercise or movement!

