

- When you go outside, take a few deep breaths. What's the air like? Is it warm or cold? How does the warmth or chill feel on your body? Try to accept that feeling and not resist it. Notice any plants, their colors, and the contrast of those colors against the sky and clouds.
- Eat a meal in silence. Don't do anything but focus on your food. Smell your food before eating it. Notice what your food looks like. Eat slowly, and savor each bite. What flavors do you taste?
- When you can, take some time at the beginning of your day to sit alone and think. Focus on your breathing. Gaze out the window, and listen to the sounds outdoors. Or take a slow walk by yourself. Count your steps while you breathe in and out.
- If you can do this at work, try to stop for a few moments each hour. Note how your body feels. Let yourself regroup and let your mind settle before you return to what you were doing.
- If you struggle with anxiety or "worry thoughts," imagine your mind as a blue sky and your worry thoughts as clouds. Now imagine those worry thoughts floating across your mind's sky, almost the same as you would watch clouds float across the sky. Do not judge or resist your thoughts. Just let them pass by as you watch.
- One Minute Breathing

This exercise can be done anywhere at any time, standing up or sitting down. All you have to do is focus on your breath for just one minute (or 10 seconds, or 30 seconds...start slowly...). Start by breathing in and out slowly, holding your breath for a count of six once you've inhaled. Then breathe out slowly, letting the breath flow effortlessly out back into the atmosphere.

Naturally your mind will try and wander amidst the valleys of its thoughts, but simply notice these thoughts, let them be for what they are and return to watching your breath.

Literally watch your breath with your senses as it enters your body and fills you with life, and then watch it work its way up and out of your body as the energy dissipates into the universe.

If you're someone who thought they'd never be able to meditate, guess what? You're half way there already! If you enjoyed one minute of this mind-calming exercise, why not try two?

- Mindful Observation

This exercise is simple but incredibly powerful. It is designed to connect us with the beauty of the natural environment, which is easily missed when we're rushing around...

Pick a natural organism within your immediate environment and focus on watching it for a minute or two (or 10 seconds, or 30 seconds...). This could be a flower or an insect, the clouds or the moon.

Don't do anything except notice the thing you are looking at. But really notice it. Look at it as if you are seeing it for the first time.

Visually explore every aspect of this glorious organism of the natural world. Allow yourself to be consumed by its presence and possibilities. Allow your spirit to connect with its role and purpose in the world. Allow yourself just to notice and 'be'.

- Touch Points

This exercise is designed to make us appreciate our lives by slowing the pace down, coming into purer awareness and resting in the moment for a while.

Think of something that happens every day more than once, something you take for granted, like opening a door for example. At the very moment you touch the door knob to open the door, allow yourself to be completely mindful of where you are, how you feel and what you are doing. Similarly, the moment you open your computer to start work, take a moment to appreciate the hands that let you do this, and the brain that will help you use the computer.

The cues don't have to be physical ones. It could be that every time you think something negative you take a mindful moment to release the negative thought, or it could be that every time you smell food you take a mindful moment to rest in the appreciation of having food to eat.

Choose a touch point that resonates with you today. Instead of going through the motions on auto-pilot, stop and stay in the moment for a while and rest in the awareness of this blessed daily activity.

Mindful Hand Awareness Exercise

Grasp your hands really tight and hold for a 5 to 10 seconds, then release and pay attention to how your hands feel. Keep your attention focused on the feeling for as long as you can.

Mental Focus Exercise

Stare at any object and try to remain focused on just that object for as long as possible. Keep a mental watch on when your mind starts to wander, then just bring it back to the object. The longer you can remain focused, the more your mindfulness will increase.

Tactile Exercise

Pinch your arm and pay close attention to how it feels and what your emotions begin doing. Pay attention to the pain it causes, and how it radiates out from the site where you pinch. This exercise can really tune you in to how your body deals with discomfort and what emotions rise. Do you get angry when you feel pain?

Musical Stimuli Exercise

Listen to your favorite song and pay attention to how it makes you feel. What emotions stir? What memories come up, and how do those memories make you feel? Engage the emotions and see where they lead.

Olfactory Sense Exercise

Smell something strong like coffee beans or perfume and pay close attention to what happens in your nose, and then what feelings these scents evoke.

Just as in step 5, but with taste instead of smell.

Melting Exercise

Sit and relax, and imagine yourself melting into everything around you. You might begin to feel at one with everything after some practice.

Full Sensory Awareness Exercise

Wherever you are, just stop and look around when safe to do so. Become aware of everything that your senses pick up. How do you feel? Do you feel over-stimulated? Do you feel anxious?

Silence Exercise

Spend an hour or two in complete silence, and just absorb your surroundings. Earplugs might help this exercise.

I Exercise

Become aware of every time you use the word "I" in a sentence. This forces us to focus on how self-centered we all are. I was shocked when I started doing this...

Challenge Your Beliefs Exercise

Take one long held belief and pretend that you believe the direct opposite. Make a mental note of how you feel and what thoughts come into your mind.

Cause and Effect Exercise

Contemplate cause and effect for everything that you do for some predetermined amount of time.

The Mindful Plot Exercise

Watch a movie and observe how you become engrossed in the story. Take mental note of your emotions as you watch the film.

Do the same as 13, but with music.

Undivided Attention Exercise

Do something around the house that you've never done before and do it with utter and undivided attention.

Candle Staring Exercise

Stare at a candle flame for ten minutes straight while studying everything you can about it. When your mind wanders, become aware of where it's going, then bring it back to the candle flame.

Three Senses

Another helpful mindfulness trick is simply to notice what you are experiencing right now through three senses – sound, sight, touch. Take a few slow breaths and ask yourself:

- What are three things I can hear? (clock on the wall, car going by, music in the next room, my breath)
- What are three things I can see? (this table, that sign, that person walking by)
- What are three things I can feel? (the chair under me, the floor under my feet, my phone in my pocket)

Think of these answers to yourself slowly, one sense at a time.

LINKS:

<http://www.mindful.org/meditation/mindfulness-getting-started/>
<http://www.the-guided-meditation-site.com/mindfulness-exercises.html>