



Mindfulness Journey beginner's guide



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My journey toward mindfulness began with a simple curiosity about meditation and its benefits. As I delved deeper into the practice, I discovered that mindfulness was not just a way to relax and destress, but a way to connect with my inner self and the world around me. Mindfulness has been a part of my personal journey for many years now. It has helped me to become more present, more compassionate, and more aware of my own thoughts and emotions.

Mindfulness is not just a personal practice; it is a powerful tool that can transform our entire society. In a world that is constantly moving and changing, it can be easy to get caught up in the chaos and lose sight of what truly matters. Mindfulness can help us to slow down, find stillness amidst the storm, and to connect with the present moment in a way that is deeply healing.

This e-book is an invitation to connect with your own inner wisdom, awaken the beauty of the present moment, and cultivate a sense of joy and gratitude for all that life has to offer.

My hope is that this e-book will inspire you to take the first steps on your own mindfulness journey and that you will discover the same transformative benefits that I have. May you find peace, joy, and fulfillment in each moment of your life.

With love and gratitude,

A stylized, handwritten signature in dark grey ink, appearing to read 'Sarvinder Kaur'.

Sarvinder Kaur



Mindfulness - Beginner's Guide

Chapter 1. What is Mindfulness

What does it mean to be mindful? What's the definition of mindfulness?

Chapter 2. Mindfulness Practices

How do we start practicing mindfulness?

Chapter 3. Mindfulness Reminders

What do we need to keep in mind as we start our mindfulness journey?

Chapter 4. Mindfulness Meditation

What is mindfulness meditation? How do meditate on breath?

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Chapter 1

What is Mindfulness?

The Autopilot Mode

Let's do a simple check.

How many times are you present while eating your meals?

How many times have you driven from home to the office or back being aware and present for most of the journey?

How many times have you brushed your teeth knowing the entire time that you were brushing?

How many times have you showered with the awareness of the scents around you?

How many times have you listened to long-drawn stories of your child with attention?

Chances are that you go about doing most mundane and everyday activities that occupy a lot of moments of your life with a significant lack of awareness. This means that you do most of these activities on autopilot.

What is occupying your mind while your body is performing these activities?

A simple observation of yourself in these moments will tell you that you are lost in thoughts while your hands, eyes, and mouth perform everyday tasks. These thoughts could be something about the past or about the future or they could even be a story about the present.

Research indicates that, on average, a normal human being has about 70,000 - 80,000 thoughts per day. So that's approximately 2500 - 3,300 thoughts per hour.

The Default and Direct Networks

Norman Farb along with his team conducted a study in a 2007 called "Mindfulness meditation reveals distinct neural modes of Self-reference". The findings of this study indicated that people have two distinct ways of interacting with the world, engaging two different sets of neural networks - default and direct.

The default network is activated often when doing habitual mundane tasks or when the task is not stimulating enough to engage all our attention. It is also known as the narrative network and contains all the stories, analyses, memories, interpretations of situations, and concepts. The tendency to slip into this mode is natural.

Let's take the example of peeling an orange. When you are peeling the orange your default network sets off into narrative mode. Your thought might initially be about the characteristics of the orange. Then thoughts might shift about the cost of oranges and inflation. Before you realize it, thoughts would have jumped to something else. And, on and on, the thoughts weave some kind of story. This is our narrative circuitry, and the mind is a compulsive storyteller.

Farb and his team also spoke of another way in which you could engage with the world – **the direct network**. Here you relate to the experience just as it is. You perceive everything for what it is. For instance, if you are peeling an orange, you are completely aware of peeling it– its feel in your hands, its aroma, its texture, and so on. That's the direct experience.

Often the default network is active for most waking hours and operates in autopilot mode.

There's nothing wrong with this network except that the experience of life and the world can get highly dominated by this default network. This excessive use of the default network leaves little space to experience reality without the stories and interpretations. This also leaves little space for you to really live life as it unfolds in the present moment.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a gentle practice that helps you stay rooted in and be aware of the present. It is a practice that helps you be completely alert to life as it is happening; using all senses.

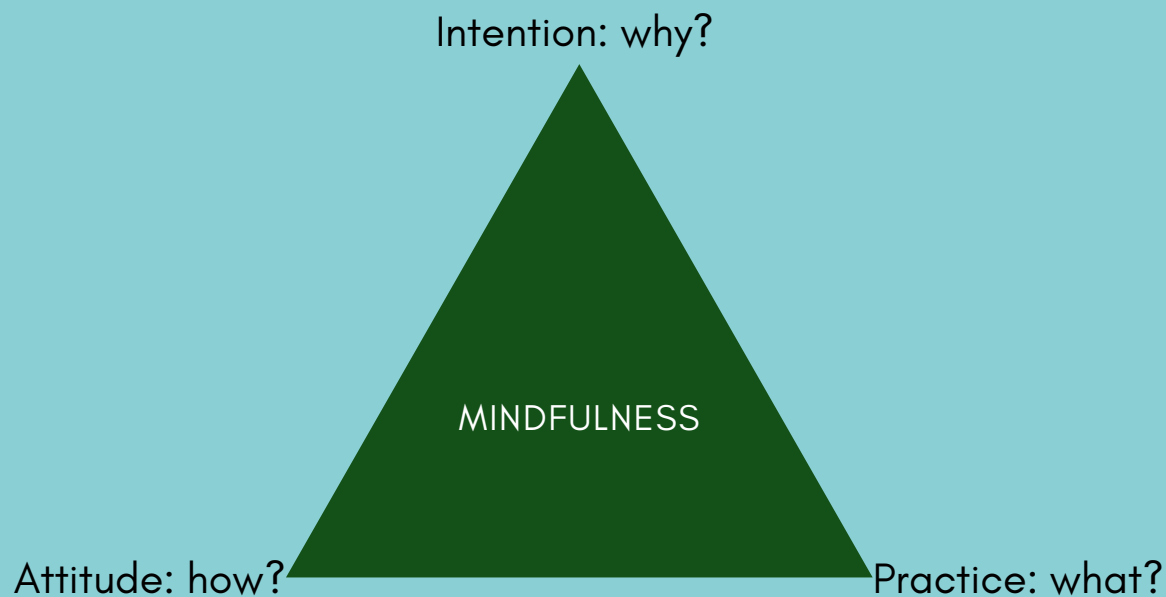
The roots of mindfulness can be traced back thousands of years to ancient Eastern traditions such as Buddhism and Hinduism, where it was practiced as a way of achieving spiritual enlightenment.

However, it was not until the 1970s that mindfulness began to gain traction in the Western world, thanks to the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn and his development of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) therapy. This program, which combines mindfulness meditation with gentle yoga and body awareness exercises, was initially used to help patients cope with chronic pain and other medical conditions.

Since then, mindfulness has gained widespread popularity in the Western world, with numerous studies demonstrating its effectiveness in reducing stress and anxiety, improving cognitive function, and enhancing overall well-being.

Today, mindfulness is widely practiced in a variety of settings, from schools and workplaces to hospitals and prisons, and continues to evolve and develop as a tool for promoting mental and physical health.

Three elements to living mindfully are intention, practice, and the attitude we bring to our practice. The intention is why we do it, practice is what we do and attitude is how we do it.



“Mindfulness means **paying attention** in a particular way; **on purpose**, in the **present moment**, and **non-judgmentally**.”

Jon Kabat-Zinn

Paying Attention

Paying attention is a central concept in the framework of mindfulness, which refers to the practice of being fully present and aware of one's thoughts, feelings, and surroundings in the present moment. When we pay attention mindfully, we focus on our experiences without judgment or distraction, allowing us to gain greater insight into ourselves and the world around us.

On Purpose

When we engage in any activity with intention and awareness, we do it "on purpose" rather than mindlessly going through the motions. By bringing our attention to the present moment, we are able to fully engage in the activity and appreciate the experience for what it is. Whether we are brushing our teeth, walking in nature, or having a conversation with someone, doing it "on purpose" allows us to fully immerse ourselves in the present moment and appreciate the richness of the experience. It is through the practice of mindfulness that we can develop the ability to live our lives "on purpose" and with intention, rather than simply going through the motions.

Present Moment

Mindfulness encourages us to be fully present and engaged in whatever we are doing, whether it is a simple task like washing dishes or having a conversation with a friend. By focusing on the present moment, we become more aware of our thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations, which can help us better manage stress and anxiety. Mindfulness also teaches us to let go of worries about the future and regrets about the past, and instead focus on what is happening in the here and now.

By accepting the reality of a situation instead of denying or resisting it, we have the power to choose how we react to that situation. Responding to situations in a mindful way with acceptance and awareness, rather than automatically reacting in the same ways we always have in the past, can be helpful and empowering.

Non-judgment

Judgment comes very naturally to us. It is a conditioned mental habit. Practicing non-judgment does not mean pushing away all judgmental thoughts or worse still, getting into a conflict with them.

With regard to any kind of thoughts and especially judgmental thoughts, there is a rule: What you resist, persists.

How then to deal with a mind that habitually comes up with judgment?
The non-surprising answer is: mindfully! We can use mindfulness even to address our judgmental thoughts. They are simply there, the reality of the moment. Just thoughts!

Neither we need to suppress them nor indulge them by believing in them.
Neither we need to justify them nor create negativity or angst toward them. We simply need to acknowledge that we are having a judgmental thoughts at this moment.

This is the beauty of mindfulness! Nothing is out of its purview, not even what appears to go seemingly against it. We can be mindful of anything, and pay attention to anything non-judgmentally, including judgment!

Always We Hope

Lao Tzu

Always we hope
Someone else has the answer
Some other place will be better,
Some other time it will all turn out.
This is it.
No one else has the answer
No other place will be better,
And it has already turned out.
At the center of your being You have the answer,
You know who you are
And you know what you want.
There is no need to run outside
For better seeing.
Nor to peer from a window.
Rather abide at the center of your being;
For the more you leave it, the less you learn.
Search your heart
And see
The way to do is to be.

Chapter 2

Mindfulness Practices

Mindfulness is a kind of energy that we generate when we bring our mind back to our body and get in touch with what is going on in the present moment, within us, and around us. The energy of mindfulness helps us touch life deeply throughout the day. Mindfulness is not hard work. It's very pleasant and relaxing, and we don't need extra time to do it. There's an art to finding creative ways to generate the energy of mindfulness, peace, and happiness in everyday life.

There are enough options to practice mindfulness to induce decision fatigue. Let's focus on some most effective ways to start practicing mindfulness.

Mindful Movement

A few examples of mindful movement are yoga, tai-chi, and walking. Focus on the sounds around you, your breath, or any bodily sensations. Tune into your thoughts and observe them as they come and go. When you go for a mindful walk, notice the breeze against your skin, the feeling of your feet or hands against different textures on the ground, and the different smells around you.

Meditation

Mindfulness and meditation are often used interchangeably. Meditation is the key and essential practice that helps to strengthen mindfulness. Neuroscience research suggests that if you meditate regularly for some time, every day, there are helpful changes that will actually take place in the structure and function of the brain. These changes will then get generalized to everyday life.

Journaling

Journaling is an exercise in thinking and reflection. It helps foster a sense of objectivity and gives clarity of thoughts. Over time, it brings more self-awareness, which helps make decisions in life that align with your values and priorities.

Mindful Activities

Practice mindfulness by paying attention to your daily activities, such as brushing your teeth, doing dishes, driving, taking shower, and eating. Try to keep your mind focused on the activity, notice when it starts wandering and gently bring it back to the present moment.

Chapter 3

Mindfulness Reminders

While mindfulness is something we all naturally possess, it's more readily available to us when we practice on a daily basis. As you start your journey, keep a few things in mind to make your path easier.

1. Remember Mindfulness is Simple but not Easy

Learning mindfulness and meditation is simple. It is a simple practice of coming back to the breath or to the present. However, it is not easy because simply staying present in life is not what we are conditioned to do. We are conditioned to strive and struggle and make plans. Trying to be present goes against very deep conditioning, making it a hard practice. It requires you to have a clear intention, disciplined practice, and self-compassion.

2. Don't Give Up Too Soon

It is possible that you try to meditate though you believe you are too restless for this kind of practice. Such a belief is an impediment to developing mindfulness. The human mind is restless. Restlessness is simply a conditioned habit of escaping from a 'boring' present to a juicier thought or fantasy. This is exactly the kind of habit that does not let you embrace the present. So practice, practice, and practice.

3. Don't Try Too Hard

Sometimes people who start to connect with mindfulness feel excited at receiving a new way to live and find themselves in a hurry to get peaceful. Mindfulness does not proceed in a linear fashion. If yesterday you were calm in meditation it isn't necessary today will be even better. It can go well one day and not go well another day. You could be very regular and dedicated for one month and then feel very restless the next month. We need to remember simply to accept these changes in our practice.

4. Don't Expect an Overnight Change

Mindfulness is not a practice to solve problems. It is a practice that teaches you to stay present and accepting of your problems. It is a shift in your relationship with problems. When you start to stay more present to difficulties and stop clinging as much to moments of pleasure, you begin to relate to life differently, with more calmness and acceptance.

Chapter 4

Mindfulness Meditation

Meditation is exploring. It's not a fixed destination. When we meditate we venture into the workings of our minds: our sensations, our emotions, and thoughts. Mindfulness meditation asks us to suspend judgment and unleash our natural curiosity about the workings of the mind, approaching our experience with warmth and kindness, to ourselves and others.

Breathing meditation is the simplest form of meditation and focuses on awareness of the breath. Breath is something that is always available to us. The breath exists at the intersection point of our body's autonomous and voluntary systems. By controlling our physiology (breath) we can change our psychology (mind).

Here are some pointers that can help you ease into a meditation practice:

1. Place and Time

It is important to find a time and place where you will be largely undisturbed. Switch off your phone or turn on "focus" mode and let your family know that you will be meditating. Set aside a consistent time for meditation. Morning time is usually the best time to meditate, as it allows fewer distractions and the day starts on a peaceful note.

2. Timer or Music

It is helpful to keep an alarm for the amount of time you wish to practice for. Alternatively, you may play soft music or natural sounds to cue the duration of meditation.

3. Posture

In meditation, it is said that our posture reflects our intention and our state of mind. If we can develop a correct posture then we will find it easier for our minds to settle and calm down. It will help to have a meditation cushion or bench to raise your buttocks off the floor. It is important that the knees are close to the ground, not higher than the buttocks, and that the thighs are sloping down toward the ground. This will support your back and maintain the small hollow in the small of your back.

The most important thing is to find a posture that is comfortable and which also supports a wakeful and alert state of mind.

In case sitting upright is not possible, try using a back support or using a chair.

4. Meditate

Sit comfortably, with your hands placed gently in your lap or on your knees. Let the muscles in your face relax, releasing any tension around the jaw and mouth. Relax your shoulders and close your eyes or soften your gaze.

Set your intention to stay interested in your breath. In these few minutes resolve to let go of all planning, solving, and figuring out.

Bring your awareness to your breath. Feel your belly rise and fall as the air enters your nostrils and leaves your nostrils. Pay attention to the temperature change when the breath is inhaled versus when it's exhaled.

When thoughts come up in your mind, don't ignore or suppress them. Simply acknowledge and bring your attention to your breath. Imagine your thoughts as leaves floating on the water; watch them float by, and don't try to hold them. Breath is your anchor, every time your mind gets distracted, note it and come back to breathe.

Getting entangled in thoughts is bound to happen with a mind that is restless and used to distractions. Observe where your mind went, without judgment, and just return to your breathing. Don't be hard on yourself if this happens; the practice of returning to your breath and refocusing on the present is the practice of mindfulness.



Journey Onwards

I hope this guide is helpful to you in starting your mindfulness journey and sticking to it. I wish you well and sincerely hope that this practice helps you just as it has helped thousands of others.

I urge you not to stop here. I have listed a few recommended books and online resources for inspiration as well as for further investigation. Please go through them. I have also included a couple of samples to get you started with the daily or weekly journaling practice.

Reading can help you intellectually open up to the idea of mindfulness, but real shifts can happen only when you stop, breathe and settle in. So please regularly take some time out from your daily routine, sit in silence, and meditate with the intention of knowing your true nature.

Mindfulness is a pay-it-forward kind of practice. You encounter it, you feel touched and grateful for encountering it. Then you in your own way help others to get in touch with it.

Please help your family and friends get mindful too. This book is a free resource. Please feel free to share it.

Mindfulness Resources

Here are some books, online resources, and apps to help you further your practice.

Books

Mindfulness for Beginners: Reclaiming the Present Moment and Your Life – Jon Kabat Zinn

The Miracle of Mindfulness – Thich Nhat Hanh

Heal Thy Self: Lessons on Mindfulness in Medicine – Saki Santorelli

Buddha's Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love, and Wisdom – Rick Hanson

Start Where You Are: A Guide to Compassionate Living– Pema Chodron

Online Resources

[Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society, University of Massachusetts Medical School](#)

[Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice, University of Wales, Bangor, UK](#)

[Oxford Mindfulness Centre, University of Oxford](#)

[Centre for Healthy Minds, University of Wisconsin-Madison](#)

[Institute for Neuroscience and Contemplative Wisdom](#)

[Mindful Awareness Research Centre University of California at Los Angeles \(UCLA\)](#)

Apps

Insighttimer

Buddhify

Calm

Morning Gratitude

Date: _____

Today I want to feel...

Today I will spread kindness by...

3 things I'm grateful for today are...

"the perfect moment is now"

Weekly check in

DATE _____

TOP 3 THINGS I DID THIS WEEK

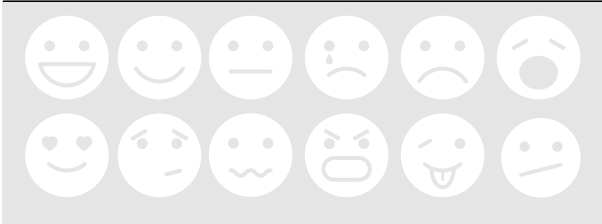
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MOST REWARDING INTERACTION I
HAD THIS WEEK

THIS WEEK I FELT



NEXT WEEK I WANT TO

THINGS I ACCOMPLISHED THIS
WEEK

WHAT WAS THE BEST THING
ABOUT THE WEEK?