

MINDFULNESS CHALLENGE

Welcome to your 7-day mindfulness challenge. Your mission over the next seven days is practice 5 minutes or more of mindfulness each day. It does not have to be done all at once, nor do it have to be the same activity. At the end of this document you will find some sample mindfulness activities but please do not feel that you have to limit yourself to those. Just like self-care is a personal journey mindfulness is too and what works for one person may not work for another. During this week feel free to experiment and try some of the different mindfulness activities to find what resonates with you the most.

Now you may be thinking, that sounds great but what is mindfulness exactly? Mindfulness is defined as the ability to be fully present and engaged in what you are doing in the moment. Mindfulness can be practiced in anything and everything we do. It allows us to step back and be in the present moment in any situation. These situations could include walking your dog, washing the dishes, vacuuming, folding laundry, eating dinner with your family and so on. There is no one single way to practice mindfulness.

Mindfulness does not eliminate stress from our lives, but it allows us to become aware of the thoughts and feelings that accompany these stressful situations and gives us more choice in how we handle them in the moment. It allows us to be more thoughtful when responding to challenging situations which may increase the chances of reacting in a calm and empathetic manner.

Incorporating mindfulness into your lives can increase levels of happiness, patience, acceptance and compassion. It can also lower feelings of stress, frustration and sadness.

In the long term, the more developed your mindfulness practice is the more you are able to catch yourself being distracted and the easier it becomes to bring yourself back to the present moment. Mindfulness is not something that we learn overnight. It takes practice. Be sure to give yourself grace and be patient.

If you are looking for additional information on mindfulness Headspace is a great resource. They also have an app and a free meditation introduction course. You can check out the link below to visit the website and learn more

https://www.headspace.com/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=917256442&utm_content=51529949212&utm_term=409650401166&headspace&gclid=EAlalQobChMI6cO5zqWp6AIVEhgMCh0zFAhXEAAAYASAAEgKDSvD_BwE

Choose one or more of the following exercises for your mindfulness practice.

- **Breath:** Sitting in a chair, close your eyes, feet are flat on the ground, palms face up on your lap. Lean back into your chair and ask your shoulders to relax. Bring your tongue to the roof of your mouth and focus on deep breaths, inhaling to a count of 5 and exhaling to a count of 5. Notice where your breath is going, whether into your chest, or into your belly. If it is going into your chest, intentionally direct your breath to your belly and feel your belly expand as you breathe, and contract as you exhale. Continue breathing deeply for at least 5 mins. or more.
- **Scanning Body:** Sitting in a chair, close your eyes, feet are flat on the ground, palms face up on your lap. Lean back into your chair and ask your shoulders to relax. Bring your tongue to the roof of your mouth and focus on deep breaths. Starting from the tips of your toes, to the top of your head, slowly scan your body. Notice areas of comfort and discomfort, tightness and ease, as well as differences from one side of the body to the other. Be aware of emotions that are present. Scan slowly, notice what you notice, and do not analyze. Simply release the awareness. Once you have reached the top of your head, you are complete.
- **Eating:** Sitting comfortably in your chair, look at your plate of food and notice the colours and textures of the food placed on it. Take your fork, pierce some food and bring the food into your mouth. Chew slowly, noticing the temperature and texture of the food, then swallow after 20 – 30 chews. Notice what you are feeling as you eat each forkful. Notice how fast/slow you are eating. Have your emotions influenced what you are eating and the pace at which you are chewing? Simply notice as you eat, and what comes up.
- **Nature:** Walking slowly in nature notice how you are feeling in your body at the outset. Take slow steps, look around and notice the trees, birds, and animals. Notice the colours, sounds, breeze, the temperature. Be aware and mindful of what is in the present. When done, notice how you are feeling and compare to the outset.
- **Stretching:** In a standing or sitting position, slowly stretch all major muscle groups. As you move and stretch, notice which areas are tight and which are loose. Move into stretches slowly and hold for at least 30 secs. Be aware of feelings, emotions and sensations. Breathe deeply throughout your mindful stretching.
- **Relaxing Music:** Sitting in a chair, close your eyes, feet are flat on the ground, palms face up on your lap. Lean back into your chair and ask your shoulders to relax. Listen to peaceful music and notice feelings, emotions and sensations, without analyzing them. The following is a music sample:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-Rpa9TeKGc>
- **Guided Meditation:** Sitting in a chair, close your eyes, feet are flat on the ground, palms face up on your lap. Lean back into your chair and ask your shoulders to relax. Listen to a guided meditation of your choice. The following are samples:
 - a. 10 mins – by Great Meditation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2cox5JyG34>;
 - b. 10 mins – by The Honest Guys https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6p_yaNFSYao;
 - c. 20 mins – by The Mindful Movement, Mindfulness Meditation for Being Present <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-2zdUXve6fQ>