

Exercises in Mindfulness: In mindfulness there are informal and formal meditation practices. Below are some examples of informal practices that one can do in everyday life, throughout the day.

Coffee Meditation: This is a lovely morning mindfulness exercise. As you make and pour your morning coffee do each step slowly, in mindfulness. Allow yourself to be aware of each movement as you pour, lift, sip, swallow and enjoy. Let yourself be totally present as you drink being aware of the way your hand guides the cup to your mouth, the inhalation of the aroma, the intention to sip and how the mouth and tongue move to pull the coffee into your mouth. Pause between sips and savor any lingering flavor or body sensations. Then sip again. Try drinking one cup of coffee, or tea, mindfully daily.

Half-smile Phone Meditation: At work or at home set your intention to pause before answering the phone, staying out of automatic pilot. Perhaps you can let it ring at least twice before answering. Become aware of being in your body and any thoughts, feelings or sensations of anticipation or aversion about answering the phone or who might be calling. Half-smile like the Mona Lisa and answer the phone with curiosity and kindness.

Driving Meditation: While driving, become aware of body sensations. Are you rushing, late, on time or angry with the traffic and what does this feel like in the body. For example does rushing feel like tension e.g. hands wrapped tightly around the steering wheel, shoulders raised, breathe shallow and rapid, stomach tight etc. Is it pleasant or unpleasant? If it is unpleasant and not helping you drive better can you allow yourself to let go and relax.

Computer Meditation: When you come to your computer pause and refrain from starting immediately. See if you can be aware of your intentions. Are you here to work, play, surf, distract yourself, research? Then knowing your purpose allow yourself to turn it on and begin. Like formal meditation with the breath see if you can be aware of impulses to leave the task at hand and do something else. Or you can be aware of your breath and posture. Do they reflect your work, attitude, or interest? Be curious.

Washing the Dishes Meditation: Wash the dishes relaxingly, as though each bowl is an object of contemplation. Consider bowl as sacred. Follow your breath to prevent your mind from straying. Do not try to hurry to get the job over with. Consider washing the dishes the most important thing in life. Washing the dishes is meditation. If you cannot wash the dishes in mindfulness, neither can you meditate while sitting in silence. (The Miracle of Mindfulness by Thich Nhat Hahn, 1975).

Everyday Walking Meditation: On your way between rooms, to your car, or on a break allow yourself to stay in your body but walking at a normal gait. Feel your feet as they touch the ground. Perhaps you can be aware of the feel of the breeze on your face or in your hair or the smell of the recent rain or blossoms on the trees. Walk without getting ahead of yourself by thinking about where you are going or wondering if that great shirt is on sale yet and who is hanging out at Blackbird. When you do find you've moved ahead simply bring your attention back to the movement of your body with each step.

Formal Breath Meditation: Sit in a comfortable, relaxed but dignified position. When you are ready bring your attention to your breath. Bring COAL (curiosity, openness, acceptance and love) to this process. You may be aware of the sensations of your belly rising and falling with the in and out breath or of the sensations at the nose or chest. See what is most prominent for you. Then allow your awareness to follow each in-breath and out-breath. We give full attention to the feeling of the breath as it comes in and full attention as it goes out. When your attention wanders away from the breath simply bring it back to the breath as soon as you notice. Do this without judgement or blame. Minds wander. Bring your attention back over and over. You may notice the breath is shallow or deep, slow or fast, smooth or ragged. Just be curious without trying to change or control it in anyway. Your body breathes itself all day without your help.