

Mindfulness Starts With You: 7 Daily Micro-Practices to Shift Your Experience

Congratulations for taking the first step on your mindfulness journey. Half the battle to being more present is to be aware. How can you get anywhere until you recognize where you are right now?

You are invited to embark on a journey to bring more clarity and calm to your life, more quality to your work and more joy and connection to your relationships.

Be prepared to see things differently. Imagine having blurry vision your entire life and then one day getting that perfect pair of glasses to bring everything into sharp focus. When your eyes are opened, you won't ever see things the same way again. It becomes contagious and you will want everyone you know to accompany you on this journey. too.

Sure, it would be great if everyone could walk in lock-step beside you, but the truth is not everyone is ready. But don't let that distract you: The shifts you experience will not be in vain.

***“Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world.
Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.” - Rumi***

The key to impacting the world is to start with your own experience –it's the only thing you can control. And the key to shifting your experience for the better? Starting with you.

Shift and your experience shifts with you

Once you start practicing mindfulness, a subtle shift will occur inside of you – and this will in turn impact those around you.

It's true that there are many things and people in your life that you can never truly “change”, but you can shift your perspective in the way you experience them.

People approach life through their own lens. It's how you respond that will have a mind-blowing impact on your well-being. And your own internal shift, like the warmth of the sun, helps everything and everyone in your path bloom.

Your thoughts settle into feelings. Your feelings may turn into action. Once you become aware of thought and notice it, you can make better choices about how to respond. Those responses create a ripple effect within you that radiate outward, transforming your experience.

Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom. – Viktor E. Frankl

Here are 7 daily “micro-practices” to whet your appetite about what is possible when you make mindfulness a part of your daily life.

This is an invitation to be present because the only moment that matters is NOW!

Individual enlightenment can lead to the collective good of the entire world.

***“The true value of a human being can be found in the degree to which he has attained liberation from the self.”
– Albert Einstein***

When you separate from your ego, you strip away the illusion. The illusion of what should, could and ought to be prevents us from being our true self. But more importantly, this internal shift will bring more clarity, joy and spaciousness to your experience.

When your alarm goes off and before you open your eyes in the morning....

1. **First, take three long and deep mindful breaths.** Before you open your eyes and spring out of bed on autopilot, become conscious of your breathing. As you inhale, feel the touch of the air as it comes into your nostrils. Exhale slowly and let any tension go. By becoming conscious of our breath, you can change the messages you are sending to your

brain. Activate the part of your nervous system responsible for conserving energy in your body and maintain the effects of the resting state as you begin your day.

2. **Rise slowly and allow your feet to *feel* the floor beneath you as you stand up.** Ground yourself in a moment of presence. Notice the touch of the floor: is it cold tile, radiant heat, hardwood, plush carpet? What is the sensation you feel when your feet hit the ground?
3. **When you step outside for the first time, stop and take a purposeful look around.** Notice something outside your home that perhaps you never noticed before. Your neighbor's beautifully landscaped lawn. The ornate architecture of the building across the street. Our heads are usually down as we rush out the door and into our day. Pause to see where you are. Feel the fresh air. Notice the weather!
4. **At your first stoplight, recognize the urge to reach for or look at your phone.** Mindfulness is about noticing the itch before you can train yourself to stop scratching! After you become aware of the impulse, you can choose a different response and stop yourself if needed. Get curious about this urge: maybe it's boredom, a habit, or a sense of feeling important or needed? Often we don't even recognize our habits, so start paying attention to them. Noticing the itch to check your phone isn't about judging, but simply recognizing that it is there. Notice it, be with it and become curious about the sensations in your body that accompany it. How do you feel? Is your chest tightening or heart rate increasing? This is your nervous system taking over with the *fight-flight-freeze* stress response. Take three long and deep mindful breaths to steady yourself and activate the resting state – and then check in with your body to see how that feels.
5. **As your day begins and you start interacting with others, whisper to yourself “May you be happy” for the first three people you see.** You don't have to know them. Begin a practice of sending kind thoughts to others, especially if they trigger negative emotions in you. You never know the depth or pain of someone else's story. When someone cuts you off in traffic, or a co-worker gets contentious, you might not have the full picture. Notice the urge that arises when confronted with the negative behavior. Instead of reacting out of anger or frustration, just think about wishing them well. Start noticing the emotions that are triggered within you and how your body feels so you can choose different responses. *Feeling* angry or irritated is okay, though, so don't be too harsh on yourself – it's the action that you can change. This is what we mean by *stress management*. You can't alleviate all stress from your life (wouldn't that be lovely?!) but you can perceive it in a different way so you can better cope with it. With awareness, you can make a better, healthier choice.

6. **When eating, choose one meal and take the first three bites with mindfulness.** Take time to look at what's on your plate before diving right in, smell your food, and take one small bite. Then put your fork down and chew slowly as you taste the flavors and feel the textures. You may find that you don't actually like the foods you eat on autopilot! Become aware of the connections between the food you eat and the world at large. Take the time to consider the many people who have played a part in placing that food in front of you. For example, let's say you snack blindly on carrots. Think about the people that tended the soil, planted the seeds, and harvested the crops. And those who purchased the carrots, packaged and delivered them to the store - right up to the person who checked you out at the register. You are part of a larger story. It's a connective thread across many people who have touched your life all because you snacked on a single carrot. This is a great way to ground yourself and your place in the world, which helps put everything in perspective.

7. **As you lay your head on your pillow at night, reflect on three things that you are grateful for that day.** Make gratitude the core of your life. There are pros and cons to every experience, but it's very easy for us to only focus on the negative and ignore the larger picture. It's like shining a flashlight on a bug that grossed you out on a hike. The spotlight of your attention can become focused while forgetting the beauty and majesty of the lush green forest around you. Gratitude comes from the present moment because you are not striving for something you don't have in the future or regretting something you can't change in the past. **Where you focus, you feel.**

“It only takes one breath to consciousness.” - Eckhart Tolle

As you can imagine, this is just the tip of the iceberg. Clarity, joy, spaciousness and stress management are all within your grasp. With mindfulness and compassion comes improved relationships, increased quality of work, inner calm and a positive mindset.

Mindfulness is a journey and a practice, but it all starts with taking that first conscious breath.

Intrigued? Here's what you can do next:

Visit [With Pause](#) to learn ways to practically integrate mindfulness into your life and explore workshops on how to bring its benefits more fully into your work, school, home or relationships.

Are you a teacher or administrator seeking to introduce mindfulness practices to the students to create best possible learning environment, as well as instill more purpose and value to the

classroom? [Learn more about the Learning With Pause series](#), which can be tailored to your needs.

Are you a corporate manager or HR professional seeking to improve your team's performance, collaboration, and problem solving skills, leading to clearer thinking and quality work? Review our [Work With Pause](#) offerings, ranging from one-hour workshops to six-week courses.

Are you a parent seeking to increase your self-awareness and sense of calm, as well as improve your relationship with your children? Discover our [Parenting With Pause program](#).

Are you an entrepreneur juggling how to build your business with managing overwhelm on both the personal and professional level – and need a way to explore strategies and rethink challenges? [Explore With Pause's coaching options](#).

Or are you an overworked, stressed-out individual who wants to increase your self-awareness, manage your anxiety and increase your sense of clarity and purpose so you can live your life on purpose? [One-on-one coaching With Pause](#) may offer you that shift in perception you are craving.

Follow With Pause on [Twitter](#) for insights and practices to help you bring more mindfulness to your life.

Share your mindfulness journey and get support from others on the same path by liking us on [Facebook](#).

Or follow us on [Instagram](#) for inspirations to support your transformation.

“Authenticity is a collection of choices that we have to make every day. It's about the choice to show up and be real. The choice to be honest. The choice to let our true selves be seen.— Brene Brown