



Mindfulness and meditation is good for you. I suspect you most probably know that by now. Everyone is talking about and doing mindfulness these days. When I first started teaching Hakomi workshops I used to have to explain what mindfulness was to the majority of the participants, who didn't really know what it was. These days, everyone already knows. And rightly so, mindfulness is like the most powerful medicine we've found, proving to be beneficial for pretty much every physical or emotional health problem that it's been studied for. But even though we know what it is and how good it is for us, we still have a hard time regularly practicing it. When I suggest mindfulness to people, the most common response I hear is something like "Yes, I know, I should, I just can't seem to find the time". Of course, if you are managing 20 or 30 or even 60 minutes of mindfulness meditation practice a day, you are doing brilliantly, and you don't need to read on. But if you're like most people I hear from, really interested in mindfulness and convinced of its benefits, but struggling to find time to do it regularly, then I have some ideas for you. Of course, a regular meditation practice every day, of anything from 20-60 minutes is certainly very beneficial for your body and mind. However, there is evidence that even a few minutes of mindfulness is beneficial too, with some suggesting that 5 minutes of mindfulness every day is better than half an hour once a week. So if you can't manage to sit on your cushion for 20 minutes a day, stop beating yourself up about it, and try some of my Mindful Moments practices, knowing that you are still doing something good for yourself.



Mindful Minute

Take one minute to stop what you are doing and be still. Use a clock with a second hand or a timer on your phone to literally take a one minute break. Just pause, and notice. Anything, whatever, just notice. Even if you follow the minute hand on the clock, that's ok. Be curious, see what comes to your attention. At the end of the minute, notice how you feel and go back to what you were doing. No matter how busy you are, I'm sure you can find the time to do this one!

Mindful Breath

Tuning in to your breath is one of the easiest and quickest ways to become mindful, and it's a tradition that goes back many thousands of years. All you need to do is turn your attention to your breath. And that's easy because you always have your breath with you, right? You may find it easier if you close your eyes, but that's not

essential. Take a breath, without changing anything, but just observe your breath as you do so. You may notice your chest or abdomen rising and falling, or perhaps you feel the air as it enters your nostrils or moves down into your lungs. It doesn't matter where you feel it, just whatever is most noticeable to you. See if you can get curious about the qualities of your breath in this moment – as if you are saying hello to your breath. Is it fast or slow, shallow or deep, does it have a temperature, or some other quality you notice? This will help you stay mindful of your breath. You can do this for a minute or two, or longer if you have time, just breathing and being present to your breath.

Mindful Sensations

Becoming aware of the sensations in your body is another great way to quickly become mindful and present, and can help you become more grounded if you are stressed or anxious. Similar to Mindful Breath, but in this case you're paying attention to the sensations present in your body. Again, this may be easier for you with eyes closed, but not essential. Pause what you are doing, and turn your attention to your body. Just wait a moment, and see what sensation you notice first. Perhaps a tension in some part of your body, like your neck or shoulder, or a furrowed brow, or a clenched jaw, or a tingling toe, or an ache in your arm, or a warmth in your stomach or anything at all. It doesn't matter what it is, just whatever you become aware of first. Once you notice something, keep your attention on it. Try to be curious about it, rather than judgmental. Pay attention to the qualities of the sensation. What size is it (pinhead, golf ball, soccer ball, etc)? Does it have a material quality (like steel, a cloud, knotted rope, etc)? Does it have a temperature? See if you can be really interested in how this particular sensation is showing up in this moment, even if it's a familiar one for you. Notice any thoughts, feelings or judgments that come up associated with the sensation. Perhaps you think, "Oh no, not again!", or feel worried, or judge yourself for being so stressed that you have such muscle tension. It's easy to get caught up and carried away with this – so try to bring yourself back to the actual sensation and just notice that these thoughts, feelings or judgments are here. You can stay with one sensation for a few minutes, or if you have time, perhaps you may notice another sensation in your body, and you can become mindful and curious about that one.

Mindful Sights

This is another quick and easy one that will help you become more present and grounded, especially useful when you are caught up in busy or stressed thoughts. Take a look around you and let your eyes fall on to something interesting. It can be anything at all – an object in your office, a picture on the wall, a book on your bookshelf, a tree or plant, the sky and clouds, something you are wearing, or even the carpet or floorboards. Bring your full attention to that object. Really look at it and notice whatever is there to notice – its colour, shape, and texture. Hang out with this sight for a few moments. Then slowly allow your eyes to move and fall onto something else. Do the same thing again – really notice the object, take in its qualities, hang out with it and then slowly move to something else. You can look for 5 different sights within a few minutes. Notice how you feel after doing this.

Mindful Sounds

This one is similar to Mindful Sights, but using sounds instead. Pause what you are doing and listen carefully for any sounds – the hum of the air conditioning, the ticking

of a clock, cars on the street outside, a bird tweeting, someone typing at the desk next to yours, or even your own breathing. Take a moment to really pay attention to the sound – notice the rhythm, pace and volume. Hang out with this sound. Then slowly move your attention and see if you can find another sound. Again, once you find something, get curious about its qualities, hang out with it, and then slowly move to another one. You can do about 5 sounds within a few minutes. Notice how you feel afterwards.

Mindful Movement

Try bringing mindfulness to a regular activity or movement that you do. Activities can be things like taking a shower (so much more enjoyable when you're actually present rather than thinking about all the things you have to do in your day), brushing your teeth, or getting dressed. Movement can be any formal exercise you do, walking around your office or home, or doing a few stretches. Next time you're walking, running or at the gym, try taking out your earphones for a few minutes and really pay attention to the movement you are making in your body. You might feel more pain, or sweat, or perhaps even get more satisfaction from the feeling of your body moving. When you move from one place to another, one room to another, or even in your chair, just pay attention to how you move and what it feels like in your muscles.

Mindful Eating

How often have you reached for the last mouthful of a little treat you gave yourself, only to find that apparently you'd already eaten it? So disappointing! Practicing mindful eating will mean you'll get to enjoy and appreciate what you are eating, and often this also means you'll eat less too. So next time you are eating or drinking something – a snack, cup of tea or coffee, breakfast, lunch or dinner, or even a glass of water – see if you can bring mindfulness to what you are eating. You may just do this for three or four mouthfuls out of your meal. Slow down first, and notice what the food or drink looks like – the colour, size, shape and texture. Then slowly bring it towards your face and really smell it. Notice what happens inside your mouth as you anticipate eating or drinking it. Then slowly again, take a bite or a sip, and savour it in your mouth, taking time to feel it and taste it before you swallow. Then slowly swallow, noticing all the sensations in your mouth and throat. Take a moment to really savour it before you reach for another bite or sip. How good is that?

I hope some of these Mindful Moments practices work for you, and help you bring more mindfulness, presence, clarity and focus to your everyday life.

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