

BEGIN NOW

**10 SIMPLE PRACTICES
TO BEGIN CULTIVATING MINDFULNESS
IN YOUR DAILY LIFE**



WE CAN ALWAYS BEGIN NOW

NOW is a good time to begin.

No matter what came before, or what may come next, NOW is the moment to live in. Mindfulness is a skill and a way of being. It is practice and purpose. Here and now. This moment as it is.

Mindfulness helps us be self-aware and know what is happening, in body, mind, heart, and environment, and to accept whatever that is right now. The amazing and breathtaking as well as the painful and heartbreaking. Paying attention to the moment-to-moment details of our lives reduces stress, improves wellbeing, and can open us up to the possibility of real joy.

Being mindful also allows us to be more intentional in responding to whatever is happening right now, even if it's not pleasant. The beauty of being aware of moments of suffering is that there is choice in the noticing. Instead of playing out the same old autopilot habits, being mindful helps us to notice our reactivity, breathe into it, interrupt the pattern, and maybe choose a different response. And therein lies the possibility of freedom, growth, health, & happiness.

Every human being has these abilities, we just have to learn the why and the how, and we have to remember to do it.

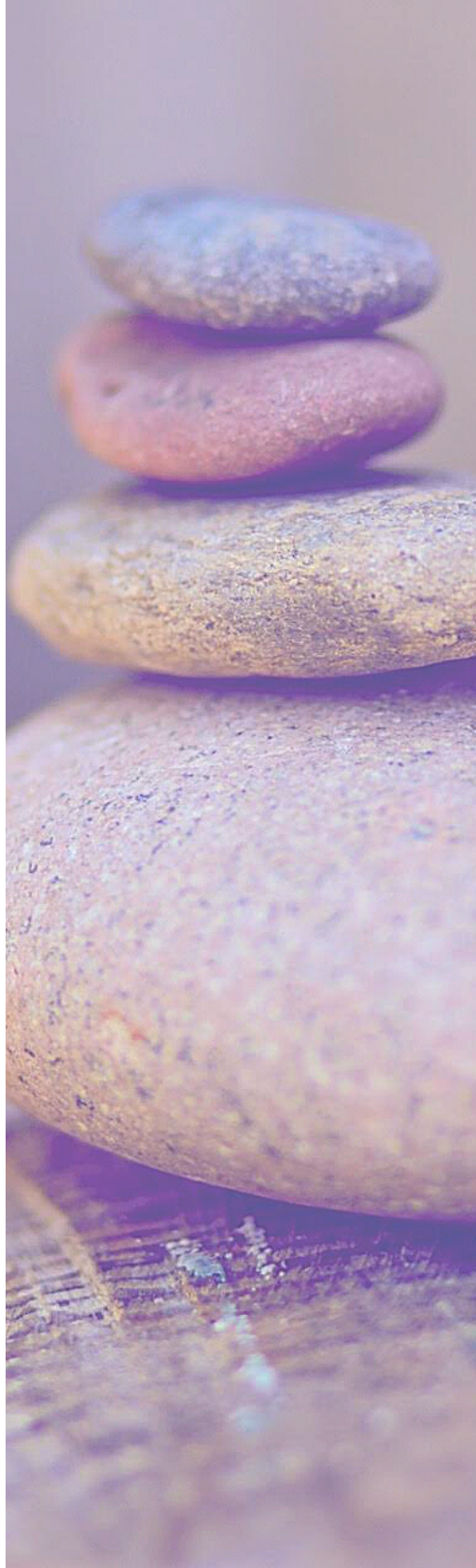
So, just **BEGIN NOW.**

Christy



"MINDFULNESS IS
ABOUT BEING FULLY
AWAKE IN OUR LIVES."

Jon Kabat-Zinn



PRACTICE THE BELLY BREATH (AKA 4-7-8 BREATHING)

Close your eyes

Drop your shoulders away from your ears

Relax your face (smooth out those furrows if you can)

Place one hand on your belly

Inhale to the count of 4 through your nose while expanding your belly

Pause for a count of 7

Exhale to the count of 8 through your mouth while contracting your belly using your diaphragm muscles
(who knew you'd get an ab workout just breathing?)

Pause

Repeat twice daily.

(Start with 4 breaths at a time.)

What did you notice?

Write it down!

1



Did you know... that panic attacks are often caused by forgetting to breathe out?

You feel like you can't get enough to breathe because you haven't expelled the old stale air!

This exercise sends the message to your brain that you are safe, relieves anxiety, and can even help you sleep.

SOAK IN THE GOOD STUFF

To appreciate the positives in our lives, and not just all the PITA (Pain In The Ass) moments, we must intentionally notice when the good stuff happens.

1. When something good happens during your day, the first step is to notice it!
2. The second step is to accept that it's good.
3. The third step is to spend some extra time enjoying the warm feelings that arise from this positive occurrence.

Swim in it. Marinate in it. Let yourself really feel the goodness of the moment.

What physical sensations do you feel in your body?

What emotions are present?

What thoughts are floating around in there?

Spend a good minute or two just dwelling here.

Notice if your inner critic tries to take this goodness from you. Don't let it.

4. The fourth step is to make it stick by writing it down (see below).

It doesn't have to be anything big.

It's often the small moments that bring us the most joy, and we miss so many of them.

The first sip of coffee, a nice customer service rep conversation, a sincere "thanks" from your kid.

Keep track.

Write them down every day for a week.

I'll bet you'll be amazed at the awesome week you had.

What did you notice?

Write it down!

2

Did you know... that negativity saved lives? We are **3 times** more likely to remember the negative as the positive. A survival mechanism, this "negativity bias" meant those who remembered where the rattlesnakes lived were more likely to survive and pass on their genes than someone who forgot that important tidbit, but only remembered the beautiful roses that bloomed on the same spot. Negativity helped our ancestors survive. so this neural habit is very deeply embedded in us.

WHAT DOES YOUR STRESS REACTION LOOK LIKE?

How do you know when you're experiencing stress?

Bring to mind a recent stressful experience, one in which you know that you were emotionally triggered.

Perhaps your teenager rolled her eyes at you for the 42nd time in 24 hours, your boss took credit for your work, or when you were inexplicably flipped off by another driver in traffic.

What physical sensations did you experience in your body?

What thoughts or thought patterns were present in your mind?

What emotions showed up?

How did you behave?

What did you notice?

Write it down!

3

Did you know... Identifying your own stress reactivity can help you catch it in the future and interrupt your auto-pilot reactions. Then you can actually choose a wise response to the situation, instead of screaming and falling on the floor like a toddler in tantrum.
(Although sometimes, that may actually be the most effective response.)

NOTICE YOUR LUNCH

Find a quiet table, leave the office, sit in the backyard.
Whatever it takes to take the time to notice your food.
Even if only for the first bite.

Notice the textures, the colors, the aromas, the flavors.

Consider where the food came from and how it made its way to your plate.

You might also notice whether you actually enjoy the flavors you're tasting.

Just don't try to savor cold, greasy veggie tempura.
Trust me on this one.

What did you notice?
Write it down!



UNI-TASK

Pick one single activity to uni-task on today to train your brain to stay focused.

Turn off your phone.

Close unnecessary tabs on your computer.

Turn off the TV and radio.

Close your door.

Use this one task as the object of your attention.

Notice when your mind wanders away.

Bring your attention back to the task at hand.

Repeat.

(You might be surprised that even unpleasant tasks can be more enjoyable than you think!)

What did you notice?

Write it down!

5

Did you know... that multi-tasking reduces productivity up to **40%**?

It can also reduce your IQ 15 points, or equal to that of your 8-year old.

I knew you were really a genius. Just stop multi-tasking all the time!

S.T.O.P.!!

Get some small, fun stickers or office dots and stick 'em in various locations around your house or office.

- Put one on the phone.
- One on the door of the fridge.
- One on the bathroom mirror.
- One on your computer monitor.
- One on your kid. (Just kidding.)

When you see a sticker, take that as a cue to remember to **STOP**.

Stop

Take a breath

Observe your body, thoughts and emotions

Proceed with intention and choice.

We often move through our days forgetting to pause and sometimes even forgetting to breathe. That's a great way to get dizzy, but not a great way to live life.

What did you notice?

Write it down!



TAKE A MINDFUL SHOWER

When you take a shower, really be IN the shower.

Notice the smell of the soap.

Notice the sound of the water drops hitting you and the floor.

Notice the warmth of the water spray.

Notice how many other people are in the shower with you.

(Mentally, of course.)

Kindly bring your attention back to your experience of THIS shower when your mind wanders.
Stay present.

What did you notice?

Write it down!

1

Did you know... Research shows that throughout the day, our minds wander almost HALF of the time. For **47%** of our waking lives, our attention is not where we intend it to be.
(For more on this study, go find Matt Killingsworth's TED talk on mind wandering.)
This wandering is part of our evolutionary heritage, in scanning our environment for threats. In other words our brains don't want that nasty hyena sneaking up on us and stealing our newborns. Or our donuts.

NATURE. IT DOES A BODY GOOD.

Talk a slow walk in nature: 15- 30 minutes if you can.

Or just 2 minutes, if that's all you've got.

Even if it's just circling a tree on the sidewalk or a saunter around the backyard.

Notice your surroundings- the breeze or stillness, the sun or clouds, the temperature.

Smell the air- hopefully it's fresh. If not just notice what it is.

Feel your body walking, stretching, moving.

Notice the growing things around you.

Life blooms in the most unexpected places.

(Scrubbing the mold in your shower does NOT count as experiencing nature.)

What did you notice?

Write it down!

PRACTICE MINDFUL WALKING

All you need is space for about a 10-step paceway, where you can walk without tripping on the dog or a lego.

Before you begin, tune into your feet for a moment and notice all they have to do to keep you upright.

Notice the sensations in your body as you lift your foot, swing it forward, place it down, and shift your weight.

Remember to breathe.

Now turn your attention to the other foot, noticing the sensations of lifting, swinging, placing, shifting, breathing.

When your mind wanders, bring attention back to the sensations of walking.

Repeat.

When you reach the end of your paceway, pause, breathe, and notice the act of turning.

Repeat.

Walk this way for 10 minutes, or as long as you can before the macaroni starts boiling over.

(Note: remember that this is a different practice than our mindful nature walk- the focus here is inwards on your experience, rather than on your environment.)

What did you notice?

Write it down!



WHERE ARE MY FEET?

Notice the next time your stress reaction kicks in (see #3), for example when your kid or spouse smart-mouths back at you or a colleague snipes at you.

Take a deep breath and think about your feet.

Not about how long it's been since you've had a pedicure or how worn out your shoes are.

Feel the sensations in your feet and hold your attention there for just a few moments.

Breathe.

Then respond to the sass and sniping with intention, and bring forth all the wisdom and compassion that you have within.

(Remember that the breath, wisdom, and compassion often go into hiding upon confrontation with sass and snipe.)

What did you notice?

Write it down!



FOR MORE...

This practice takes practice....

Much like building a muscle, speaking a new language, or learning a new skill, mindfulness (the way of being) builds with time and repetition.

I know you're saying, I do not have time to do One. More. Thing.

But you do. You have 5 minutes in your day to begin making a commitment for yourself. For your family, your kids, your community, your workplace.

The practices in this guidebook are a good place to start.

Right where you are.

Next, though, you might consider:

1. **Taking a course:** The 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction course is a foundational program in mindfulness training available all over the world, both online and in-person. Find a trained teacher and/or reputable center.
2. **Using an app:** Some of my favorite apps are available for free. Others have a small fee or even a monthly subscription. Do a search for "mindfulness meditation app review" to find a current overview of your options. Headspace, Insight Timer, the Mindfulness App, Smiling Mind, Relax Melodies, and Calm are some of my current favorites.
3. **Coercing a buddy or creating a sitting group:** Whether online or in person, having company and accountability is incredibly supportive to maintaining your practice.
4. **Being kind to yourself:** Starting something new can be challenging and you may have to "Begin Now" over and over again. Offer yourself compassion and grace. You're worth it.
5. **Bringing us to your workplace or going on retreat with me:** We deliver customized presentations and trainings for organizations and lead guided retreats, both in person and online. Contact us for more information and visit our website to learn about our current offerings.

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