

# Practicing Mindfulness

## BRING PEACE AND CALM INTO YOUR DAY

*By Barbara Volpe*

How many times a day do you find yourself caught up in thoughts of the past; thinking about uncompleted tasks, unresolved issues, words you wished you could take back, or words left unspoken? Or do you find yourself fantasizing about the future, focused on events that may or may not happen, wishing for a different present?

How often are you bombarded with information, ideas, and messages that excite or overload you with a longing for the past, or you become dissatisfied with your present and long for a utopian future? Throughout a typical day, our thoughts and feelings fluctuate, often leaving us feeling overwhelmed, dissatisfied, or stressed. When our thoughts are in the past or future, we miss being in the present.

A few years ago, a colleague presented me with the book, *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life*, by Jon Kabat Zinn. It was the right book at the right time for me. Practicing mindfulness did not take away stress, but now I am quick to recognize when I need to stop, breathe, and focus on the present moment, bringing me to a place of calmness.

One of the ways we can strengthen our focus on living in the present is practicing mindfulness through breathing and sensory exercises. The exercises, in the attachment, could be practiced any time of the day and any time you feel yourself becoming stressed from thoughts of the past or worries about the future. Bringing yourself to the present, will help bring peace and calm into your mind and body.

*Feelings come and go like clouds in a windy sky. Conscious breathing is my anchor.*

~ Thich Nhat Hanh

Peace be with you!

Barb

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# A Tranquil State of Mind

## MINDFULNESS EXERCISES FOR BECOMING PEACEFUL AND CALM

By Barbara Volpe

### PRACTICE MINDFUL BREATHING

*“One conscious breath – in and out – is a meditation.”*

~Eckhart Tolle

With each exercise we will start with breathing. Anytime during the exercise, if your mind starts to wander, bring your attention back to your breathing. This may happen many times—be kind to yourself when it happens! Accept the wandering, it is neither good nor bad, it just is what it is.

- Find a relaxed, comfortable position. Notice your posture, back straight but relaxed. Hands resting comfortably in your lap. Relax any areas of tightness or tension.
- Close your eyes, if that is comfortable for you, or keep them in soft focus.
- Now we will tune into your breath. Breathe in through your nose and let the breath out through your mouth.
- As you breathe in through your nose, try and breathe in deeply feeling the air fill your chest and down into your belly.
- As you breathe out through your mouth, try letting the air out slowly through your mouth feeling the release of the air from your chest, down to your belly.
- With each inhale and exhale, pay attention to your breath, the rise and fall of your chest and belly.
- Each time your mind wanders away from the breath, notice where it goes. You can say to your mind “wandering” and gently bring your attention back to feeling your breath go in and out.
- When finished, wait a moment, then bring your attention back to your body. Take one last deep cleansing breath in, then out. Send your mind a thought of gratitude for taking time to have a mindful moment today.

### PRACTICE MINDFUL FEELING

*“Yoga practice can make us more and more sensitive to subtler and subtler sensations in the body.*

*Paying attention to and staying with finer and finer sensations within the body*

*is one of the surest ways to steady the wandering mind.”*

~Ravie Ravindra

Find an object that is of interest to you and that is comfortable to hold. This could be an artifact that has meaning to you or something that has a textural quality that is appealing to you. Close your eyes, if that is

comfortable for you or keep them in soft focus. Find a relaxed, comfortable position with your hands holding the object comfortably in your lap. Notice and relax your body, let go of any tension. Now tune into your breathing. Inhale deeply through your nose, exhaling slowly through your mouth, three times. Each time drawing your attention to the breath going in and out, the rise and fall of your chest and belly.

- Now, bring your attention to the object resting in your hands.
- Notice the sensation of the object on your skin.
- As you feel the object, release any judgements, the feeling is what it is.
- Notice the object's weight, its texture.
- Each time your mind wanders away from the object, notice where it goes. You can say to your mind "wandering" and gently bring your attention back to feeling the object in your hand.
- When finished, wait a moment, then bring your attention back to your body. Take one last deep cleansing breath in, then out. Send your mind a thought of gratitude for taking time to have a mindful moment today.

## PRACTICE MINDFUL HEARING

*"Let go of your mind and then be mindful. Close your ears and listen!"*

~Rumi

This exercise can be done as guided practice with someone leading the exercise or on your own. Himalayan singing bowls, musical chimes, instrumental or meditation music, or nature sounds (CD's or downloaded from the Internet) can be used as a focus for this exercise.

Close your eyes, if that is comfortable for you or keep them in soft focus. Find a relaxed, comfortable position with your hands comfortably in your lap. Notice and relax your body, let go of any tension. Now tune into your breathing. Inhale deeply through your nose, exhaling slowly through your mouth, three times. Each time drawing your attention to the breath going in and out, the rise and fall of your chest and belly.

- Now, ring the chime or start the music.
- Notice the sounds that you hear.
- As you hear the chimes or music, release any judgements, what you hear is what it is.
- Notice the different sounds, then intensity of the sound, the tone and pitch.
- Each time your mind wanders away from the sound, notice where it goes. You can say to your mind "wandering" and gently bring your attention back to hearing the sound.
- When finished, wait a moment, then bring your attention back to your body. Take one last deep cleansing breath in, then out. Send your mind a thought of gratitude for taking time to have a mindful moment today.

## PRACTICE MINDFUL SEEING

*"It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see."*

~Henry David Thoreau

Find a relaxed, comfortable position with your hands resting comfortably in your lap. Notice and relax your body, let go of any tension. Now tune into your breathing. Inhale deeply through your nose, exhaling slowly through your mouth, three times. Each time drawing your attention to the breath going in and out, the rise and fall of your chest and belly.

- Now, bring your attention to your surroundings.
- Notice the colors, shapes, and textures around you.
- As you observe your surroundings, release any judgements, what you see, is what it is.
- Observe one object and narrow your focus; what do you see?
- Each time your mind wanders away from the object, notice where it goes. You can say to your mind "wandering" and gently bring your attention back to feeling the object in your hand.
- When finished, wait a moment, then bring your attention back to your body. Take one last deep cleansing breath in, then out. Send your mind a thought of gratitude for taking time to have a mindful moment today.

## PRACTICE MINDFUL SMELLING AND TASTING

*"You must be completely awake in the present to enjoy the tea."*

– Thích Nhất Hạnh

For this exercise, choose a Hershey's kiss, mint, or flavorful hard candy. Open the candy wrapper but do not put the candy in your mouth at this time.

Close your eyes, if that is comfortable for you or keep them in soft focus. Find a relaxed, comfortable position with your hands holding the candy comfortably in your lap. Notice and relax your body, let go of any tension. Now tune into your breathing. Inhale deeply through your nose, exhaling slowly through your mouth, three times. Each time drawing your attention to the breath going in and out, the rise and fall of your chest and belly.

- Now, bring the piece of candy close to your nose. What do you notice about its smell?
- Next, put the food in your mouth but do not chew it, just rest the candy in your mouth.
- Notice the texture of the candy, the way it feels in your mouth.
- Notice the intensity of flavor.
- Now take your first bite. Does the intensity of the taste change?
- Notice the sensory experience of chewing and tasting. Continue to slowly chew and taste, being as mindful as you can.
- Each time your mind wanders away from the object, notice where it goes. You can say to your mind "wandering" and gently bring your attention back to feeling the object in your hand.

- When finished, wait a moment, then bring your attention back to your body. Take one last deep cleansing breath in, then out. Send your mind a thought of gratitude for taking time to have a mindful moment today.

“If you want to conquer the anxiety of life, live in the moment, live in the breath.”  
~Amit Ray

As you incorporate mindful practice into your daily life, you may find that you are now more at peace, calm and focused during those moments when life challenges us.

## RESOURCES:

[http://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/mindful\\_breathing](http://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/mindful_breathing)

[https://healthpsych.com/5-minute-mindful-breathing-](https://healthpsych.com/5-minute-mindful-breathing-exercise/)

[exercise/http://www.clayton.edu/Portals/541/docs/Five%20Senses%20Mindfulness%20Exercise.pdf](http://www.clayton.edu/Portals/541/docs/Five%20Senses%20Mindfulness%20Exercise.pdf)

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