

MINDFULNESS PRACTICES FOR THE WORK DAY

“Short practices many times a day” is a useful way to think of cultivating mindfulness. Take a look at the suggestions below and choose one or two to integrate into your day. Experiment to find ones that work for you. Note that all of the informal practices described below will be significantly easier and arise more spontaneously if you are also strengthening your capacity for mindfulness through a more formal daily mindfulness practice.

1. As you awaken in the morning, bring your attention to your breathing. Instead of letting your mind spin off into yesterday or today, or jumping out of bed and into your to-do list, focus on your breath as it moves in and out of your body. When you pay attention to the breath, it takes you out of churning thoughts and worries and into your body where you can access resources for coping and creating well-being.
2. Once you get to your office, take a moment to “just be.” Become aware of your breath, the feel of the chair and your feet on the floor and perhaps even name your intention for how you want to experience the day (not what you want to get done.)
3. STAPLE IT - Choose one thing you do every day and staple your mindfulness practice to it so that every time you do it, you strengthen your ability to direct and sustain focused awareness. Examples include becoming fully present for the moment before you press send on an email, every time you sit in a chair, walk up or down stairs, pick up the phone, open a door, while eating or taking the first few sips of a beverage, or as you start up your computer in the morning and shut it down at the end of the day. Remember, choose just one thing and make it a habit through intention and repetition.
4. STOP – as soon as you notice a stress reaction and bring awareness to your breath, sensations, thoughts, feelings and urges, without getting caught up in them. Over time you may begin to notice how automatic those reactions are and, with practice, you will begin to notice that you are responding in new ways to what is arising rather than being driven by stress reactivity.
5. Find two places in your day to integrate a mindful pause, a moment in your day when you choose to step out of the autopilot quality of the day and bring your attention to the present moment and your breath and body. Afterwards, with distractions lessened, you may be able to see more clearly what is here in this moment and move into the next moment more strategically and with more awareness, energy and calm. This pause may be one minute or three to ten. Set a calendar reminder or find another way to remember your intention.
6. Commit to a “Transition Practice” – each time you make a transition from one activity to the next, stop and check in. Learn to pause in the midst of life.
7. “Center Before You Enter.” Before going into a meeting, having a conversation or even answering the phone – take a few breaths, feel your feet on the floor and check in with yourself. Then, as best as you can, purposely set aside what you have been thinking about (the past) and what you are going to do next (the future). In this way, you bring your whole self to the activity. From this present place, you will be able to focus on what is important, see and hear more clearly what is arising, access knowledge, creativity and options to make more skillful choices.

MINDFULNESS PRACTICES FOR THE WORKPLACE

8. Integrate a short body scan and/or a few minutes of mindful stretching into your day.
9. Practice mindfulness with some of the walking you do naturally during the day, walking that is often done on autopilot or lost in thoughts. To do this you might bring full attention to the soles of your feet as they meet the floor or the feeling of your body in motion. This simple practice will build the muscle of mindfulness, bring you into the present moment, settle any scattered energy and slow down the frenetic mental and physical pace that so often takes over.
10. When you are in a meeting, notice the wandering mind and practice gently but firmly bringing it back to your breath and what is being communicated. Choose to purposely listen with curiosity without pre-judging, attributes of mindfulness.
11. Mindful listening – How does it feel when someone is totally present for you in an interaction? When they're not? Every time you interact with someone you can practice being fully present. What is it like to listen to another without planning what you're going to say, evaluating what he or she is saying, wondering what he or she thinks of you or trying to control the situation (the way we often listen when someone is speaking).
12. Mindful speaking - how does it feel to pause and take a breath before speaking and stay connected to your posture, tone, content and body while you speak? In this pause, you might bring mindfulness awareness to what you are about to say by asking yourself the following four questions: Is it true? Is it beneficial? Is this the right time to say it? Is it respectful? If you are unsure of any of the above, consider not speaking it.
13. Notice if you are multi-tasking. It often happens without our being aware it has happened. We start a project, hear the sound of an incoming email or text or see a document on the desk and redirect our focus. "Continuous partial attention" has a significant impact on effectiveness, efficiency and well-being. Mindful-task instead of multi-task - Choose one thing to focus on and eliminate as many opportunities for distraction until you complete the task.
14. Bring awareness to negative thoughts whenever you notice them and strengthen the capacity to intervene in them as soon as they arise. Get familiar with your mental habits and repetitive stories (I'll never have enough time, I'm not good enough, this always happens to me, etc.) and recognize the running commentaries that loop around in our heads. Do you really have to engage with and believe all of what it says in there?