



**BROWN**  
Mindfulness Center

**MIA Online Winter Workshop Series**  
**A Taste of Mindfulness**

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## **BASIC MINDFULNESS MEDITATION**

Meditation begins with the curious and non-judgmental observation of life from moment to moment. It is helpful to sit quietly in this way one or two times a day for 5, 10 to 20 minutes or for as long a time as possible. By doing it every day, whether you feel like it or not, you allow a sense of strength and balance to develop in your life which goes beyond moods, emotional turmoil, busyness, and beyond the particular experience in your life.

To begin, find a comfortable sitting position with your back straight but not stiff. Bring your attention to the sensations of the breath as it enters and leaves your body, maintaining your awareness of the breath for the full duration of the inhale and exhale, wherever you feel it most vividly (at the nostrils, the stomach, the chest, etc.) There is no need to change the way you are breathing and you are not trying to get anywhere or feel any specific way. Note that *thinking* about the breath is different from actually *feeling* it in the body.

If focusing on the breath does not feel supportive, feel free to find another anchor for your attention. For example, consider bringing awareness to the feet, palms, contact of the body with the chair or to sounds and hearing.

When you notice that your mind has drifted off to planning, worries, memories, conversations or any of the countless places your mind may wander to, simply bring your awareness back to your anchor. This may happen over and over again, and that is not a problem. It is the nature of the mind to wander, and noticing that you have wandered is a moment of mindfulness.

As you become more comfortable directing and sustaining your attention, you can expand your awareness to take in the body as a whole, or to focus on particular sensations in the body, sounds and silence. You can also begin to observe thoughts and emotions as they move in and out of awareness moment by moment, not getting involved in the content of them but observing them as simply as objects of awareness, just like the breath.

## **BODY SCAN**

In a body scan meditation, you methodically bring attention to the body, moving from the feet to the head or the head to the feet. You may notice a wide range of physical feelings: pressure, lightness, tingles, pulsation, itches, aches, discomfort, warmth, coolness and more. You may not notice anything. Whatever you notice is just fine. The intention is not to elicit relaxation, but to cultivate awareness, to simply notice what is there to be noticed. Some sensations may be accompanied by thoughts or emotions and you might notice those as well as you move through the scan. There is no need to analyze or change your body in any way, just feel and acknowledge whatever is present.

The more you engage in a regular practice of the body scan, the easier and more natural it will be to check in with your body with precise and concentrated attention during the day. When you notice tension in specific regions, bring non-judgmental awareness, spaciousness and curiosity to the sensation, and watch how the sensation may change. You may do this at any time of day, under any circumstances. It only takes an awareness of the body and a willingness to pay attention.

## **MINDFUL CHECK IN**

Begin by taking a deliberate posture of intention and wakefulness. If possible, close your eyes.

### **Step One - Become aware of your experience right now**

Bring your awareness to what is happening right now for you, going through each of the following one step at a time.

- What sensations in the body do you notice? You might scan your body to pick up on any tightness or tension.
- What thoughts are going through your mind? Try to acknowledge the nature or content of thoughts without getting caught up in thinking about the thoughts.
- What feelings are here? Turning toward any emotional discomfort or unpleasant feelings and acknowledging their presence, without needing to do anything about them.

### **Step Two – Narrow your attention to the breath**

Bring your focus to the physical experience of breathing. Feel the breath in the abdomen as it expands and releases. Follow the breath all the way in and out, using the breath to anchor yourself in the present moment. Whenever your mind wanders, gently bring it back to the breath.

### **Step Three – Expand your awareness**

Now expand the field of your awareness to become aware of the body as a whole, sitting and breathing, from the crown of the head to the soles of the feet, including your posture, facial expression and the places where your body meets the floor or the chair.

Then expand your awareness even further outwards, to include the feel of the air in the room and the space around you.

As best you can, bring this expanded and more spacious awareness into the next moments of your day.

### **Benefits of the Mindful Check In**

This is a very useful practice to use from time to time throughout the day to reconnect with, reboot and rebalance the body and mind. It is also a strategic practice that moves attention in specific ways to get unstuck from unhelpful thought patterns and automatic routines. The attention moves from wide to narrow to wide, like an hourglass, and allows for changes in perception. This movement of attention is very important because when we are lost in thoughts, worrying, caught up in automatic pilot routines, multitasking or experiencing stress reactivity, our attention is often not really available to us and we are unable to consciously and skillfully choose how we want to respond to what is arising in our life moment to moment. This practice brings us back into a direct experience of the present moment, with all of the information, wisdom and resources available in that state of being.

## **The Practice of Mindful Walking**

*“Do not underestimate the power that comes to you from feeling the simple movements of your body throughout the day.*

~ Joseph Goldstein, *Insight Meditation*

Mindful walking can be a formal practice that is just as potent as sitting meditation in cultivating awareness. It can also be a key to expanding awareness from formal meditation to living mindfully day to day. There are many ways to practice mindful walking. Below are some forms to explore.

### **Formal Mindful Walking Practice**

Find a place where you can walk back and forth slowly for about 6 – 10 steps. Take a moment to close your eyes and feel your feet on the floor. You might even begin with a short body scan. As your awareness comes back into your feet, shift your weight back and forth from one foot to the other, feeling the pressure and lightness and whatever other sensations arise. Then begin to walk with small steps. As you move each foot, bring full awareness to the soles of your feet. After a while, you might expand your awareness to the stages of walking – lifting, stepping and placing one foot and then the other. Feel and engage fully with the experience of walking. When you get to the end of your walking path, pause briefly, turn around, and bring full awareness to your next steps. Walk at whatever speed keeps you most present.

As you walk, let the thoughts and images that arise remain in the background. If you find yourself lost in a thought or emotion, just stop and bring your awareness back to your breath or feet and then resume walking. Remember that the practice is not about stopping thoughts, but about noticing when you’ve been carried away and coming back to the present moment.

### **Informal Walking Practices**

Integrating short moments of mindful walking throughout your day is a powerful way of strengthening the muscle of mindfulness. It is also a useful tool for slowing down a racing mind or body and can be used as a transition practice to help you let go of what just happened so that you can be more fully present for the next moment.

Any time you find yourself walking is a good time to practice mindfulness. For a casual walking practice, choose a place to walk where there won’t be too many distractions and starts and stops. Begin walking and focus all your attention on what you are doing, noticing sensations as they arise. You can bring your attention to the soles of your feet, legs or body as a whole. When you find yourself drifting away from your focus, simply notice where your mind has gone and return to the walking. If you are just learning this practice, you might choose to rest attention simply on feeling the sensations of the body in motion or, if you are walking in nature, you might focus on what you are seeing, hearing, smelling or feeling.

You can also practice bringing mindfulness to the walking you do as you go about your life. Notice how often you are actually present for the experience of walking and how often you are lost in thought. Commit to walking up or down stairs mindfully or walking through the halls at work with awareness that you are walking. Bringing present moment awareness to walking during routine tasks and errands short-circuits the automatic pilot mode and can make our routine experiences more interesting and leave us calmer, less exhausted and even happier, as reported in research on the connection between focus and happiness. You might choose one walking activity that you do every day and “staple” your mindfulness practice to it, such as being fully aware of the first 10 steps you take when you walk to get coffee, go to the rest room, walk into your building, etc.

## **Mindful Chair Yoga**

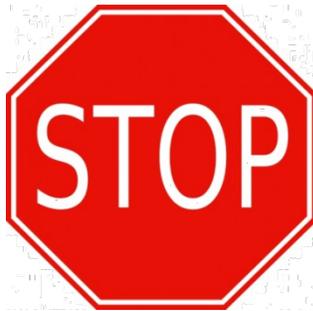
At the Brown Mindfulness Center, we teach and practice yoga as an awareness practice. Intentionally bringing mindfulness to yoga or other movement helps you to become more naturally aware as you move throughout your day. You might explore bringing curious and kind awareness to the following gentle chair yoga stretches, if they are comfortable and appropriate for your body. Do this as a flow or pick one or two postures and bring a few minutes of mindfulness to stretching your body during the day.

1. **Seated Mountain** - Sit forward in the chair. Feel your feet on the ground and your sitting bones on the chair. Feel crown of head lift and spine elongate.
2. **Breathe** – 3 slow and deep belly breaths.
3. **Shoulder rolls** - forward, up, back and down a few times and then reverse or or squeeze shoulders to ears, hold a few seconds and release with a sigh.
4. **Sunbreaths** – inhale arms out to the side or forward and overhead. Exhale down. Do this a few times. On the last exhale and release of the arms, circle the hands on the wrists.
5. **Side bends** - One hand holds chair and other comes up and arcs over. Breathe. Do both sides.
6. **Seated cat and cow to open spine** - Hands on knees. Breathe in and lift chest. Breathe out and round the back. Do a few of these to release tension in the spine and open the chest.
7. **Chest and back stretch** - Place fingers on shoulders. Inhale and open elbows wide. Exhale and squeeze elbows together in front of body.
8. **Seated twist** - Sit tall. Right hand on left knee; left arm behind body; twist gently to the left starting from the belly and moving up to the eyes; inhale and press crown of head up; exhale and soften into twist; Do the same thing on the other side. (Imagine gently squeezing out a washcloth from top to bottom.)
9. **Hip opener** – cross ankle of one foot over opposite thigh. Lean forward to increase intensity. Repeat on the other side. Breathe.
10. **Seated forward bend** – bend forward and relax body, breathe into low back, gently rock head side to side and back and forth. Sway a little if it feels good. (Do not invert if you have unmedicated high blood pressure or other medical condition that would make you not want blood to flow into the head. An alternative is to rest your forearms on your thighs.)
11. **Thigh lift** – Use core muscles to pull knee into chest with hands and lift chest. Breathe and hold.
12. **Ankle circles** - circle ankles and wiggle toes.
13. **Body Scan** - check to see if other body parts need attention.

## **The Stop Practice**

**(Aka: Pressing the Pause Button)**

As soon as you notice that you are having a reaction to something/someone or that some of your personal stress warning signals are present:



**STOP** – intentionally pause

**TAKE A BREATH** – or two and feel the movement of breath in the body

**OBSERVE** – what is happening with you right now? What body sensations can you feel? What emotions are present? What thoughts are going through your mind? What urges and behaviors are happening? Simply notice what’s here without getting caught up in it.

**PROCEED** – Discern “what is called for now” from the direct experience of the moment, not being driven by automatic reactivity, habits and stories. When we step out of autopilot, we have a choice about how we want to relate to the situation. Notice if by adding a space for awareness, your experience is different than in the past, or if you feel more able to respond skillfully rather than react in habitual “knee jerk” ways.

## Personal Stress Warning Signals

Your body is a stress barometer. It is constantly giving you messages to help you maintain health and balance. The messages let you know if something is going on that you need to pay attention to. The more quickly you can become aware of the sensations in your body, feelings, thoughts and behaviors that signal stress and imbalance, the more skillfully you can respond to intervene in the stress cycle. Without awareness, we often react to stress in unhelpful automatic and habitual ways.

Listed below are common symptoms caused by stress. Put a check next to those you experience sometimes and circle those you experience frequently. Add any other stress indicators not listed. This is for your eyes only to help you better recognize your personal warning signals.

<b>Physical Symptoms</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Headaches	<input type="checkbox"/> Back pain
<input type="checkbox"/> Digestive problems	<input type="checkbox"/> Tight neck and shoulder
<input type="checkbox"/> Stomach aches	<input type="checkbox"/> Racing heart
<input type="checkbox"/> Sweaty palms	<input type="checkbox"/> Restlessness
<input type="checkbox"/> Dizziness	<input type="checkbox"/> Fatigue
<b>Emotional Symptoms</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety	<input type="checkbox"/> Frustration
<input type="checkbox"/> Sadness	<input type="checkbox"/> Excessive worry
<input type="checkbox"/> Little joy	<input type="checkbox"/> Mood swings
<input type="checkbox"/> Irritability	<input type="checkbox"/> Edgy/angry/ready to explode
<input type="checkbox"/> Feel lost/hopeless/empty	<input type="checkbox"/> Depression
<input type="checkbox"/> Overwhelming sense of pressure	<input type="checkbox"/> Crying
<input type="checkbox"/> Loneliness	<input type="checkbox"/> Easy to upset
<b>Cognitive Symptoms</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Forgetfulness	<input type="checkbox"/> Negativity
<input type="checkbox"/> Hard to function sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Distracted
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty concentrating	<input type="checkbox"/> Foggy headed
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty making decisions	<input type="checkbox"/> Constant worry and self-judgement
<input type="checkbox"/> Inability to quiet/relax the mind	<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of creativity
<input type="checkbox"/> Loss of sense of humor	<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of motivation
<b>Behaviors/Coping Strategies</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Overly critical of others	<input type="checkbox"/> Bossiness
<input type="checkbox"/> Overuse of alcohol or other substances	<input type="checkbox"/> Smoking
<input type="checkbox"/> Compulsive eating	<input type="checkbox"/> Low productivity
<input type="checkbox"/> Under eating	<input type="checkbox"/> Isolating self
<input type="checkbox"/> Racing around on automatic pilot	<input type="checkbox"/> Lashing out

**Other Symptoms:**

## Types of Stress

### **EUSTRESS**

Considered positive stress and is characterized by focus, energy and flow. Eustress is short-term, is perceived as within our coping abilities, can feel exciting and improves performance.

### **ACUTE STRESS**

Comes from the demands and pressures of the recent past or the demands and pressures of the near future. Acute stress is short-term and the symptoms can generally be remedied with extra attention and self-care.

### **CHRONIC STRESS**

This is the type of stress that can wear people down and lead to significant health consequences. It is easily ignored because the impacts on the body and mind become so familiar that it is simply a “new normal.” A useful way of looking at chronic stress is: “when every so often becomes much of the time.” For example, every so often I am on edge v. I seem to be irritable all the time; every so often I don’t sleep well v. much of the time I am not sleeping; every so often my stomach hurts v. I have indigestion much of the time. Chronic stress requires more time and strategic attention to replenish and rebalance than acute stress. When it is not recognized or addressed, chronic stress often leads to maladaptive coping behaviors as a way to manage the discomfort and simply keep going.

### **BURNOUT**

Much of the recent research on burnout comes from studies of physicians. The Maslach Burnout Inventory lists 3 classic signs of physician burnout:

1. Emotional Exhaustion - You are drained after the office day and are unable to recover with time off. Over time your energy level begins to follow a downward spiral.
2. Depersonalization - You find yourself being cynical and sarcastic about your work. Your attitude is negative, detached, uncaring, or callous.
3. Reduced Accomplishment - Here you begin to question whether you are doing good work and whether what you do really matters at all. “What’s the use.”

There are many other signs and symptoms of burnout. Burnout can also look like depression. What’s most important is to recognize that burnout is not just intense stress, but a particular experience that must be addressed directly.

## **MINDFULNESS RESOURCES**

### **Audio, Video, Web**

Brown Mindfulness Center class recordings - go to [mindfullytoday.org/workplace](http://mindfullytoday.org/workplace). Password is Mindfulness - download to the homepage of your phone for easy access.

Brown Mindfulness Center provides weekly free online and in person guided meditations of varying lengths as well as live online and in person classes. <https://www.brown.edu/public-health/mindfulness/classes>.

PBS/WGBH Public Television production: Mindfulness Goes Mainstream – available online

The Connection: Mind Your Body - a 73 minute documentary featuring leading experts in mind body medicine talking about the power to change your mind and change your health. [www.theconnection.tv](http://www.theconnection.tv)

NPR broadcast: The Science of Mindfulness (January 27, 2014) (25 min.) (Search the web for this excellent overview of mindfulness with Jon Kabat-Zinn.)

Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn - Mindfulness CDs from the founder of The Center for Mindfulness at The University of Massachusetts Medical Center. See [www.mindfulnesscds.com](http://www.mindfulnesscds.com)

Dr. Judson Brewer, Director of Research and Innovation at the Brown Mindfulness Center – TED talk: “A simple way to break a bad habit” (The 4<sup>th</sup> most viewed of all TED talks in 2016)

### **Apps**

10% Happier: Meditation for Fidgety Skeptics –ABC news anchor Dan Harris teams up with well-respected meditation teachers to offer daily short lessons and guided meditations.

Insight Timer, Calm, Headspace – find one you like.

Eat Right Now – 28 day program using mindfulness techniques and the latest science on habit change to become more mindful of eating habits.

Unwinding Anxiety – This course integrates mindful practices with the science behind the mind’s habit loops. Using a mobile app, you’ll have daily access to tips, feedback, tools and support from a community of professionals and peers.

### **Books**

Mindful Work: How Meditation is Changing Business from the Inside Out, Gelles (2015)

Finding the Space to Lead: A Practical Guide to Mindful Leadership, Janice Marturano (2014)

10% Happier, Dan Harris (2014)

Bouncing Back: Rewiring your Brain for Maximum Resilience and Well-Being, Graham (2013)

Meditation is Not What You Think: Mindfulness and Why it is so Important, Kabat-Zinn (2018)

Falling Awake: How to Practice Mindfulness in Everyday Life, Jon Kabat-Zinn (2018)

The Healing Power of Mindfulness: A New Way of Being, Jon Kabat-Zinn (2018)

Mindfulness for All: The Wisdom to Transform the World, Jon Kabat-Zinn (2019)

Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind To Face Stress, Pain and Illness, Jon Kabat-Zinn (Revised Ed. 2013)

Mindfulness: Finding Peace in a Frantic World, Williams and Penman (2011)

A Mindfulness Based-Stress Reduction Workbook, Stahl and Goldstein (includes 21 guided meditations) (2010)

The Mindful Way Workbook: An 8-week Program to Free Yourself from Depression and Emotional Distress, Teasdale, (Includes MP3 CD and downloads of guided meditations) (2014)

A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook for Anxiety, Stahl, Meleo-Meyer and Koerbel, senior faculty with the Mindfulness Center at Brown. (Includes 24 downloadable guided meditations) (2014)

The Inner Advantage: Applying Mindfulness in Business and Law - and Everywhere Else, Patton Hyman (2016)

Say What You Mean: A Mindful Approach to Nonviolent Communication, Oren Jay Sofer (2019)

Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself, Kristin Neff (2015)

The Inner Work of Racial Justice: Healing Ourselves and Transforming our Communities Through Mindfulness, Rhonda Magee (2019)

Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting, Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn

**Articles and Other Publications** - All of the following materials are available online

American Mindfulness Research Association - Database of research. [goamra.org](http://goamra.org)

Mindfulness Can Literally Change Your Brain, Harvard Business Review (1/8/15)

Spending 10 Minutes a Day on Mindfulness Subtly Changes the Way You React to Everything, Harvard Business Review (1/18/17)

The Making of a Corporate Athlete, Loehr and Schwartz, Harvard Business Review (2001)

Mindfulness and Well-Being, Fingold, *Trial Magazine* (March 2018)