

10 Mindfulness Meditation Exercises

The health-promoting benefits of mindfulness are supported by a large body of research.

- **Mindfulness** is nonjudgmental awareness of what's happening in the present moment.
- **Mindfulness** is a way to break free from being on autopilot and to become more fully present to where you are and what you're doing in the here and now.

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Mindful Meditation on the Breath

Please lower or close your eyes and notice where you feel your breath.

That might be the air going in and out of your nostrils or the rise and fall of your chest or your stomach.

If you can't feel anything, place your hand on your chest or your stomach and notice how your hand gently rises and falls with each breath.

Just focus on your breath.

When your mind wanders, as it will do, gently shepherd your attention back to your breath.

I'll give you a couple of minutes to simply focus on your breath.

[Practice as long as you like]

Gently, bring your attention back to the room.

Body scan

Please lower or close your eyes and notice where you feel your breath.

Notice your:

- Feet
- Ankles
- Calves
- Knees
- Thighs
- Backside in the chair
- Belly
- Chest
- Shoulders
- Arms
- Hands
- Shoulders
- Neck
- Jaw
- Tongue
- Cheeks
- Eyes
- Eyebrows
- Forehead
- Scalp
- Now, take a quick scan from the top of your head to the bottom of your feet
- And from the bottom of your feet to the top of your head
- And back to your breath

Now, gently bring your attention back to the room.

Positive Emotion Mantra

The health-promoting benefits of **positivity** are supported by a large body of research. For example, optimism is linked to better health outcomes, ranging from fewer colds to increased protection against cancer and cardiovascular disease (Seligman, 2011). Moreover, happy people are more likely to engage in healthy behaviors. Positivity researchers call this the **happiness advantage**, that is **your brain at positive performs significantly better than at negative, neutral, or stressed**. When you're experiencing positive emotions your intelligence rises, your creativity rises, and your energy levels rise. **However, data shows that 80% of people are below an optimal 3:1 ratio of positive to negative emotions.**

Fredrickson, a happiness researcher, identified 10 positive emotions associated with flourishing. They are:

1. Inspiration
2. Hope
3. Pride
4. Interest
5. Love
6. Awe
7. Amusement
8. Joy
9. Gratitude
10. Serenity

So, for this mindfulness activity, I invite you to pick one of these positive emotions and use it as a **mantra**, repeating the word over and over again, allowing yourself to amplify and intensify your experience of the emotion.

Please choose an emotion you want to contemplate.

When you're ready, please lower or close your eyes and begin to focus on your mantra.

If your mind wanders, then gently shepherd your attention back to the word you selected.

I'll give you a couple of minutes to bask in the positive emotion you selected.

[Practice as long as you like]

Now, you can begin to bring your attention back to the room.

Sources:

Achor, Shawn: https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work/transcript?language=en

Fredrickson, Barbara (2013). *Love 2.0: Finding Happiness and Health in Moments of Connection*

Seligman, Martin (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*.

Loving-Kindness Meditation

So, please lower or close your eyes and begin by focusing on your breath. Simply, take a few deep breaths.

Begin by imagining **someone you love unconditionally**.

Focus on this individual and repeat the mantra 3 times:

may you be safe may you be healthy may you live with ease and happiness	may you be safe may you be healthy may you live with ease and happiness	may you be safe may you be healthy may you live with ease and happiness
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(Allow 5 seconds)

Now, focus on **yourself**. Extend loving kindness to yourself:

may I be safe may I be healthy may I live with ease and happiness	may I be safe may I be healthy may I live with ease and happiness	may I be safe may I be healthy may I live with ease and happiness
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(Allow 5 seconds)

Now imagine an **acquaintance**, someone you don't know very well and toward whom you do not have any particular feeling. Extend loving kindness to this person:

may you be safe may you be healthy may you live with ease and happiness	may you be safe may you be healthy may you live with ease and happiness	may you be safe may you be healthy may you live with ease and happiness
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(Allow 5 seconds)

Now, imagine **someone who irritates or annoys you** in some way. Extend loving kindness to this person:

may you be safe may you be healthy may you live with ease and happiness	may you be safe may you be healthy may you live with ease and happiness	may you be safe may you be healthy may you live with ease and happiness
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(Allow 5 seconds)

Now, imagine **all living beings**. Extend loving kindness to all living beings:

may you be safe may you be healthy may you live with ease and happiness	may you be safe may you be healthy may you live with ease and happiness	may you be safe may you be healthy may you live with ease and happiness
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(Allow 5 seconds)

Finish by attending to your breath and savoring your feelings of loving kindness.

Gently return your attention to the room.

Autogenics Practice

Autogenic means something that comes from within you; namely, relaxation.

In this exercise, repeat the following phrases 3 times each either silently or aloud.

My arms are heavy & warm
My heartbeat is steady & strong
My breathing is deep & relaxed
My abdomen radiates warmth
My forehead is pleasantly cool

Gently, bring your attention back to the room.

Guided imagery practice: Inner Safe Place

In this guided imagery practice, you'll visit an inner safe place.

Begin by focusing on the breath.

So, please lower or close your eyes and notice where you feel your breath.

Simply focus on your breath.

Now, invite an image to form of a place, an environment that would support relaxation.

This place could be indoors or outdoors, familiar or unfamiliar.

As the image begins to take shape, notice

- The colors
- The textures
- The sounds
- The smells
- The time of day
- The season of the year
- Notice how it feels to be there, how you feel in your body, in your mind, in your emotions

This is your time and your place. Take some time to enjoy it now.

[Practice for as long as you like]

In the same way that you carry a glass of water from one room to another, you can carry the experiences from this place into your daily life. So, start to collect what you'd like to carry forward, knowing that you can always return to this place at another time in a similar way.

Allow the image to fade and gently, bring your attention back to the room.

4-7-8 breathing technique

In this practice, you'll

- breathe in through your nose quietly for 4 counts
- then, you hold your breath for 7 counts
- then, you blow air out through your mouth audibly and forcefully for 8 counts
- repeat the process 4 times

This is a free and easy practice that you can do **at least twice a day**.

You can do it more frequently than twice a day but never more than four breath cycles at one time.

After a month, if you're comfortable with the practice, you can increase to 8 cycles each time you do it but that's the absolute maximum.

Source: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/324417#benefits>

Heart Centered Meditation

In this meditation, select and repeat one of the **Four Aspects** of the heart centered meditation for a specific period of time. The aspects are:

- Oceanic compassion
- Innate harmony
- Healing presence
- Unconditional love

Pick an aspect and just focus on your aspect, repeating it over and over silently or aloud.

Lower or close your eyes and begin your mantra.

When your mind wanders, gently bring your attention back to your mantra.

[Practice as long as you like]

In the same way that you carry a glass of water from one room to another, you can carry the experience of your meditation into your daily life. So, collect what you'd like to carry forward, knowing that you can always return to this meditation at another time.

Gently, bring your attention back to the room.

Gratitude Practice

Allow your eyes to close gently.

Take a slow, deep breath to bring yourself to the present moment.

We'll focus on the events, experiences, people, pets, or possessions for which we feel grateful [5 seconds].

Let's begin with the gift of life itself, the most precious gift.

The gift of a heartbeat: pumping life-giving blood to all your organs.

Take a moment to give thanks for the miracle of your existence and the complex organ systems of your body.

[Allow 10 seconds]

Now think about all the things we have today that make our lives easier.

We flip a switch, and light appears.

We turn a tap and clean, drinkable water flows.

We adjust a thermostat, and a room grows warmer or cooler.

We have a dwelling to protect us from the elements.

We enter a vehicle and it takes us where we want to go.

We have machines that wash our clothes. And we have clothes to wear, places to store them.

There are machines that store our food at just the right temperature and help us cook it without having to gather wood.

We have public libraries that have thousands of books and recordings, free for anyone to borrow and read.

We have public schools that can teach us to read and write, skills that were historically available to only a very few.

Take a moment to give thanks for modern conveniences and opportunities to learn and grow.

[Allow 10 seconds]

Now, take a moment to reflect on all the thousands of people who have worked hard to make your life easier.

Those who plant, grow, and harvest your food.

Those who transport that food to market.

Those who make email and Internet access possible.

Those who dispose of your trash.

Those who gather news stories.

Those who play sports and create art or music.

Take a moment to give thanks for a democratic society and the distribution of labor.

[Allow 10 seconds]

Now, consider the people and pets you know who enrich your life, those who smile at you and cheer you on.

Those friends who support you when you need a shoulder or a hand

Take a moment to give thanks for those you hold dear, for those who make your life meaningful.

[Allow 10 seconds]

Finally, take a moment to reflect on your own, personal reasons for feeling grateful in this moment.

[Allow 15 seconds]

In the same way that you carry a glass of water from one room to another, you can carry gratitude into your daily life.

Gently, bring your attention back to the room.

Wheel of Awareness practice by Dr. Dan Siegel

- The **hub**, at the center of the wheel, represents the experience of awareness itself. It's the place of clarity and calm from which you become aware of things.
- The **rim**, or outer edge of the wheel, represents everything that you can become aware of
- The **spoke**, between the hub and the rim the wheel, represents your directed attention and focus, which can be shifted around the wheel at will.

The quadrants of the wheel suggest that everything that is "known" can be divided into 4 categories:

1. What you take in through your 5 senses
2. The inner sensations of your body
3. The activities of your mind
4. The connection to things outside of yourself

During this guided meditation, you will be directed to explore the wheel of awareness.

Begin by getting into a comfortable position and sensing the rhythm of your breathing.

As you breathe in and out, begin visualizing the wheel.

The **hub** is at the center and the **four quadrants** surround it with a **rim** encompassing everything you know and can become aware of. Throughout the practice, you will send out a **spoke** of attention from the hub to the rim to focus your awareness.

Begin at the hub and breathe deeply.

[Allow 10 seconds]

Send a spoke to the rim in the **first quadrant**, which represents your **five senses**.

One by one, take time to focus your awareness on what you're seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching.

[Allow 10 seconds]

Gather your attention back to the hub and breathe deeply.

[Allow 10 seconds]

Send a spoke to the rim in the **second quadrant**, with represents the **inner sensations of your own body**.

Move your focus throughout your entire body, becoming aware of sensations you feel from inside your physical being, from the muscles and bones of your head, limbs, and torso, to the sensations in the organs of your body.

[Allow 10 seconds]

Gather your attention back to the hub and breathe deeply.

[Allow 10 seconds]

Send a spoke to the rim in the **third quadrant**, which represents the **activities of your mind itself**.

These include emotions, thoughts, memories, hopes, beliefs, images, longings, attitudes, and intentions.

Become aware of what enters your mind. **Pay particular attention to the characteristics of how these mental activities enter and leave consciousness.** How do they arise and pass? Do these activities come up suddenly or gradually? Then, do they stay constant or fade in and out? Then, how do they leave? Are they replaced immediately with something else? If not, how does the gap between mental activities feel?

[Allow 10 seconds]



Gather your attention back to the hub and breathe deeply.
[Allow 10 seconds]

Send your spoke of attention out from the hub, but this time, bend it back toward the hub itself to focus on your awareness. Noticing what “awareness of awareness” feels like.
[Allow 10 seconds]

Gather your attention back to the hub and breathe deeply.
[Allow 10 seconds]

Send a spoke to the rim in the **fourth quadrant**, which represents **our sense of connection to things outside of our body**. Start with focusing your awareness on the people who are physically close to you, then expand to others who are further away. Next, expand to those whom you feel close to – family and friends – and then to others whom you’re engaged with, such as colleagues or service providers. Then, widen your sense of connection step by step to include those who live in your neighborhood, city, country, continent, in the whole world, and finally to all of living beings on earth.
[Allow 10 seconds]

Gather your attention back to the hub and breathe deeply.
[Allow 10 seconds]

Gently, bring your attention back to the room.

Source: <https://www.wheelofawareness.com/>