

how to
PRACTICE
MINDFULNESS

3 simple &
effective exercises
you can do
anywhere

shahin najak

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MINDFUL
CHANGES

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about mindfulness

Mindfulness is being aware of this moment:
stopping and noticing the present moment without judgment.

Being mindful is also noticing what is going on both internally
and in our external environment.

As Thich Nhat Hanh states,

“Our true home is in the here and now.”

Happiness is not an elusive thing that will be in the future
when we have attained a job, a house, a relationship, money, or
whatever we have set our hearts on.

Mindfulness is the energy within ourselves that we can
cultivate through simple practices that help us recognize what
is present in our “now.”

Mindfulness is the energy that brings awareness to our breath
and senses and, with gratitude, the miracle of being alive.

practice one

STARTING WITH YOUR BREATH

Breathe in deeply, breath out calm.

A simple but powerful exercise that helps bring us back to the present moment, is to “fully arrive.” How many times do we notice ourselves doing something, but not really being in that moment or task?

When you notice what your mind is thinking about, you will often find that it’s either ruminating about the past or worrying about the future. For example, when you are brushing your teeth, fully arrive: be just brushing your teeth, instead of trying to finish the two-minute task in order to jump into something else.

Take the time to step into the moment you are in. Notice the thoughts that are going on in your mind, and take three cleansing breaths. Notice the air as you breathe in through your nose, follow it all the way down to your abdomen and back out through the nose.

Notice the quality of your breath. Ask yourself why sometimes you can only follow your breath to the chest before your mind wanders and sometimes you can follow the breath down to the abdomen. When is that? Why is that?

When you start noticing how you breathe, you will become an expert on your breath, and you'll be able to arrive to it when you need it.

You can also practice sitting for a few minutes a day with your hand on your heart or belly as you breathe. During stressful situations, using the breath as an anchor that grounds us and brings us back to the present moment helps us to not get entangled into past regrets or future worries.

When we step back from the chaos that our mind creates and are able to look at it from a more centred and peaceful place, we learn how to be at ease with how things are right now, and that's how we create positive shifts in our lives.



Take my hand. We will walk.
We will only walk.
We will enjoy our walk without
Thinking of arriving anywhere.

Thich Nhat Hanh

practice two

CHECKING IN WITH YOUR BODY

Intentionally release tension.

We can carry stress, pain, and tension in our bodies without even noticing it. Have you ever been frustrated or agitated during the day and then realized that you have also had a headache all day?

Multi-tasking, going from one task to another or one meeting to another, trying to get all the items off our neverending “to-do” list can be not only draining but also stressful to our bodies. Research shows that stress causes illness and pain in the body. If we accumulate stress in our lives and live in a chronic state of stress, our bodies truly suffer.

Tension generally builds up in our shoulders, head, neck, face, back, and chest. Practice intentionally releasing stress by coming into a position that’s most comfortable for you, whether sitting, lying, or standing.

Breathe in calmly and breathe out releasing tension. Breathe in, notice where in the body you are experiencing tension, tightness, or stress. Now, hold the breath in that area, soften the area with your breath, and now breathe out with awareness, releasing that tension.

Being aware of our body and scanning the body for tension and stress and using our breath to release tension is a nourishing way to self-care.

Practice this simple, easy, and loving practice several times during the day; while driving, during meetings, standing in line at a coffee shop, working at the computer, and while doing the many chores like cooking and cleaning during the day. Once this mindfulness exercise becomes habit, you will notice it becomes a part of your daily self-care practice.



When we give ourselves the chance to let go of all our tension, the body's natural capacity to heal itself can begin to work.

Thich Nhat Hanh

practice three

LISTENING AND PAYING ATTENTION TO SELF-TALK

Release the self-critic, delete the negativity.

We know that good communication starts with listening. To fully hear and understand, we need to be present and listen without judgment. Mindful listening is a practice of love and kindness. Paying attention and being present when a person is speaking is how we connect with others on a deeper level.

We can often hear ourselves judging what the person is saying or thinking about what to say next before the person has completed telling us their thoughts. We can hear ourselves mentally agreeing or disagreeing with another's opinions and points of view. So, it's clear that mindful listening requires practice, patience, and focus.

Practice bringing attention back to what is being said. It's like training a puppy: gently but firmly, and with love.

Being a mindful listener also includes listening to our own selves and listening for that self-talk. A lot of what we tell ourselves is negative.

Science has found that our brains have a negative bias built into our system, so it's no surprise when our minds become quite judgmental in the privacy of our own heads.

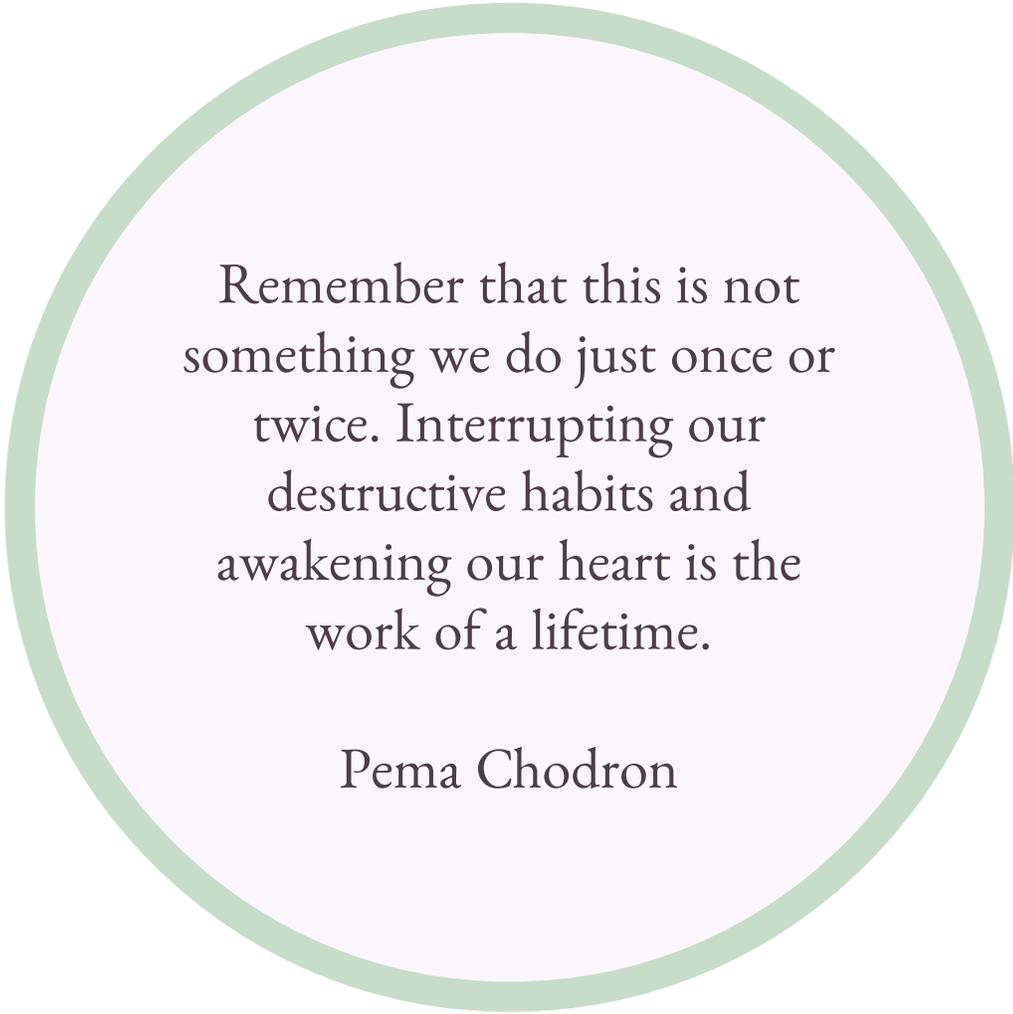
Observing what your mind is telling you is a good indication of how you feel about yourself. You've probably told yourself: "I can't believe I forgot that!" or "I'm so stupid!" "Why did I say that?" "This is too hard!" "I'm never going to achieve that!" These are the typical negative, self-sabotaging words we all hear ourselves say. I call it our "inner critics," constantly keeping us in line.

It's time to let that critic have a break. When we allow our habitual negative thoughts a time out, we allow our anxiety and stress to have a break, and we find that we have more space, energy, and ease in our lives.

When you hear yourself say negative things about yourself, practice this loving kindness meditation: repeat words such as, "May I live with grace, ease, and peace of mind" or any other positive words that mean something to you.

You can even just put your fingers to your temples and say: "delete, delete, delete!" and replace the negative thoughts with a positive, life affirming thought. It's even more powerful to say it out loud!

Noticing self-judgments when they arise breaks the habit of self-criticism and allows us to live a less critical, more balanced, present, and easeful life.



Remember that this is not
something we do just once or
twice. Interrupting our
destructive habits and
awakening our heart is the
work of a lifetime.

Pema Chodron

