

Ten Mindfulness Activities to Keep You Focused

1. Do One Action Mindfully

Pick an action you do at the same time every day and plan to do that action mindfully. For example, brush your teeth: notice the smell of the toothpaste when you put it on the toothbrush, notice the bristles of the toothbrush, then notice the sensation of the toothbrush while it's in your mouth, how it feels as it brushes against your teeth. Continue to notice your experience until complete.

2. One Minute of Mindfulness

This is an easy mindfulness exercise, and one that you can do anytime throughout the day. Take a moment right now to try this. Check your watch and note the time. For the next 60 seconds, your task is to focus all your attention on your breathing. It's just for one minute, but it can seem like an eternity. Leave your eyes open and breathe normally. Be ready to catch your mind from wandering off (because it will) and return your attention to your breath whenever it does so.

Use this exercise many times throughout the day to restore your mind to the present moment and to restore your mind to clarity and peace.

Over time, you can gradually extend the duration of this exercise into longer and longer periods. This exercise is actually the foundation of a correct mindfulness meditation technique.

3. The Ten-Second Count

This is more of an exercise in practicing concentration than it is in mindfulness. In this exercise, rather than focusing on your breath, you just close your eyes and focus your attention on slowly counting to ten. If your concentration wanders off, start back at number one! For most people, it goes something like this...“ One...two...three...do I have to buy milk today or did John say he'd do it? Oh, whoops, I'm thinking.” “ One...two...three...four...this isn't so hard after all... Oh no....that's a thought! Start again.” “ One...two... three... now I've got it. I'm really concentrating now...”

4. Mindfulness Cues

In this exercise, you focus your attention on your breathing whenever a specific environmental cue occurs. For example, whenever you hear the phone ring, you promptly bring your attention into the present moment and stay focused on your breath.

Simply choose a cue that works for you. Perhaps you will choose to become mindful every time you look in the mirror. Perhaps it will be every time your hands touch each other. Perhaps it will be every time you hear a bird.

Mindfulness cues are an excellent mindfulness technique that are designed to snap you out of the unconscious “autopilot” state of mind and bring you back into the present moment.

5. Mindful Hand Awareness Exercise

Grasp your hands very tightly and hold for 5 to 10 seconds, then release and pay attention to how your hands feel. Keep your attention focused on the feeling for as long as you can.

6. Mental Focus Exercise

Stare at any object and try to remain focused on just that object for as long as possible. Keep a mental watch on when your mind starts to wander, then just bring it back to the object. The longer you can remain focused, the more your mindfulness will increase.

7. Tactile Exercise

Hold an ice cube and pay close attention to how it feels and what your emotions begin doing. Pay attention to the discomfort it causes, and how your fingers and hand feel as you hold it. This exercise can really tune you in to how your body deals with discomfort and what emotions rise. Do you get angry when you feel pain?

8. Musical Stimuli Exercise

Listen to your favorite song and pay attention to how it makes you feel. What emotions stir? What memories come up, and how do those memories make you feel? Engage the emotions and see where they lead.

9. Olfactory Sense Exercise

Smell something strong like coffee beans or perfume, pay close attention to what happens in your nose, and then what feelings these scents evoke.

10. Melting Exercise

Sit and relax, and imagine yourself melting into everything around you. You might begin to feel at one with everything after some practice.

In a world full of doing doing doing, it's important to take a moment to just breathe, to just be.