

Tip sheets – informal practice

Learning to take short casual/informal approaches to your mindful practice can support your journey to becoming more clear, calm and composed. Use these short tips alongside your formal practices throughout the week.

The more we find time to do them to more our minds will motivated to do more and the mind will begin to notice more in our inner and outer world.

The goal is to develop a light hearted approach. If you forget, no problem, do not beat yourself up. Just make a commitment to remember.

This is an act of kindness to yourself, so look forward and even when things are difficult or distracting, the simple act of just noticing will support all the practices in the course in time.

1. Mindful minute

Take a minute when you remember, or do this before and after every job task. Some people will prefer to plan time in by putting reminders onto their mobiles.

- Sitting down and stopping all activity.
- Remind yourself why you are doing this - reinforce positive reasons.
- Connecting with you breathing or the sounds around. Maybe start with 3 deeper soothing breaths. Just noticing how things are.
- Notice what is popping up in your experience right now, thoughts, sensations or emotions.
- No need to act on them in this minute.
- Just practising noticing what is around and being with it for a while.
- No need to set any timers for this, it is intended to be informal, so enjoy, practice and then move on into your daily activity.



2. Noticing sensations when they arise

As we begin to notice more in our daily lives we can use this to strengthen our awareness of sensations within the body, along with thoughts and emotions. By making a commitment to stop and pay attention to what is going on in our bodies is part of the work we are doing.

- Making a conscious effort to stop and direct our awareness inward to notice where and how we feel can teach us so much about how we live and the effect it has.
- Using any moment to just stop all activity.
- Asking ourselves "What is going inside me right now?"
- Moving around the body to sense what is happening or perhaps we may be drawn to an area in the body that is tense.
- Stay curious to how it feels, try and imagine size, colour, images associated with the sensations. Can you tell if it is just in one place or a collection of sensations?
- No need to push these sensations away, we are learning to be with them for short informal periods of time, slowly building our strength of mind.

No need to spend long periods of time doing this, this is meant to be informal. Just notice when we do the following things for example:

- Before and after calls or online meetings.
- Waiting for things to happen, like a delivery or the kettle boiling

In time we start to notice things before we ever used to. This can be useful in responding rather than reacting to situations. We can notice the sensation and make a gentle effort to relax in and around it.

3. Taking in the good, focusing on joy, gratefulness

Knowing that our minds have a natural negative bias when it comes to thinking means that sometimes we fail to see the positive side of things. We can help to change this bias and our outlook when we begin to notice the little things that make us and others feel good. We can stop and take time to notice and reinforce the good things in life.

- Smell your food and drinks, savour the smell and notice how your body responds.
- Take notice of flowers and beautiful objects, stop and take in the colours and shapes. This is a moment of joy, soak it up and feel it sinking in.



- Just listening to the people we love, without jumping in and feeding a conversation can help you to appreciate this person and be grateful for their presence in your life.
- In the morning before getting out of bed, name 3 things that you are grateful for. This orients the mind to a more relaxed state, and slows down its tendency to get involved with negative thinking before the working day.
- Take the time to be with things you do not like, can you think of 3 positive things about this moment.

There is so much to be thankful for and we forget about this so easily because of our conditioning and negative bias. Learning to bring positive moment into our experience, on purpose, and then soaking up and taking in the good sensations will trigger calming hormones and help you to relax and create a different way of being for yourself.

4. Noticing what drains you and what gives you energy

As your mindfulness develops you will begin to realise that all your thoughts, sensations and emotions have a positive and negative effect. Beginning to pay more attention to these experiences can help you to make decisions about how you could be spending your time more wisely.

Noting or writing these new observations can help to reflect and see any patterns that keep re-occurring in our behaviour. Examples of contrasting lists could be:

- Nourishing activities v Depleting activities
- Enjoyable v not enjoyable
- What made me feel good v What made me feel bad

Being able to see things arise in your experience and then how you react or respond can teach us a lot about ourselves. However we must be kind and loving toward ourselves as well as others in daily life. Loosening the grip of negativity and promoting the ability to respond.

There will be angry moments where we hold on to this emotion after the effect and we can counter it immediately by using simple phrases toward other people and directed towards us:

- May you be well - especially with difficult people
- May I be well.
- I am doing my best right now.
- It is not their fault.
- How can I be kind in this moment?
- I can handle this feeling and get on with my day.
- This feeling will soon pass.



5. Observe your inner critic

By now we are seeing and sensing a lot more about our experience as it happens. By following and continuing to practice we reveal more and more about who is really in charge.

There are times when we are resistant and judgemental about situations, people and ourselves. This can be conscious but generally for most of us this is unconscious and therefore involuntary.

An example of this may be when we are asked to do something and we don't want to do it, or we communicate with people and we find that we are chuntering in negative ways. This is the critic, the hidden voice that can push us more into negativity.

Taking the time to notice this voice rising, we are observing and resisting the urge to react.

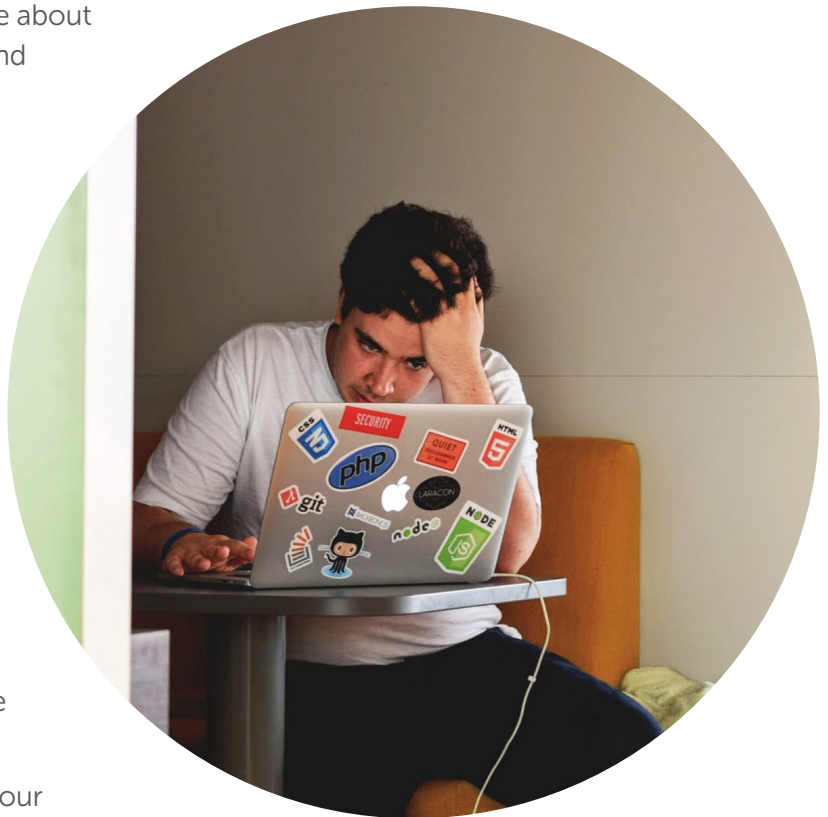
In an informal practice it would be to notice our judgement or criticism and then to stop and tune into the part of the body where you feel it. It could be the stomach area or the chest, maybe the shoulders.

Get interested in your bad side, begin to make friends and acknowledge that perhaps you cannot stop these thoughts, but you can observe and respond instead.

Another good way to bring awareness to this voice is to label and name the experience. We could be:

- Judgemental
- Angry
- Jealous
- Wanting/craving

You name your own experience, get a feel for it and you will notice it when it appears. You then can make better choices based on awareness and not instinctual reaction.



6. Movement, talking and sharing

There will be times when no matter what you do and how much you practice mindfulness where you will lose it. Lost in strong emotions and sensations due to unforeseen events and life changing circumstances.

In those moments we will fail to see that we will pass through these stages more quickly because of our mindfulness practice. In the moment we will be lost, distracted and upset.

In these moments it is important to recognise this and to do something else:

- Exercise or any kind of movement is key to moving positive hormones around the body. Making this a regular feature of your life will benefit you greatly.
- Refraining from too much alcohol and food with high sugar content can reduce your craving and agitation.
- Plenty of water during the day to keep your body and brain functioning and fluid.

These are common sense things but if we take a mindful approach and we now know that most of our negative thinking patterns actually start as unconscious body sensations. Then the body is a very good place to start.

Opening up and telling others about how you are feeling is also a good start for loosening the grip of fear and anxiety and other strong emotions. Join groups that you can participate in.

The best informal technique you can is to go to bed with gratefulness on your mind and wake up with joy on your mind. Work at it and enjoy it.

The mind can be trained, and you are the trainer.



Life & Progress®

Head Office: 0808 164 3941
training@lifeandprogress.co.uk

www.lifeandprogress.co.uk

Four The Cobalt Centre
Siskin Parkway East
Middlemarch Business Park
Coventry CV3 4PE

