

MINDFUL MOMENTS CHALLENGE .

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

“If you truly want to change your life, you must first change your mind.”

Mindfulness is the practice of maintaining awareness of thoughts, feelings, body sensations, and the surrounding environment. It also involves acceptance of our thoughts and feelings without the belief that there is a right or wrong way to think or feel in the present moment. While it has its roots in Buddhist meditation, it has become more mainstream in America recently, partially due to Jon Kabat-Zinn’s Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program which launched in 1979.

The 5 Most Common Benefits of Mindfulness:

1. **Decreased stress** – Just closing your eyes and being silent for a few moments can lead to higher brain functioning, increased immune function, lowered blood pressure and heart rate, along with an overall feeling of being calm and still.
2. **Enhanced ability to deal with illness** – Cancer patients and others with chronic illnesses are among the most studied groups on the impact of mindfulness. The practice does not remove their symptoms, but it can help make them more manageable.
3. **Facilitation of recovery** – Recovery from chronic or potentially terminal illness is improved through decreased stress and anxiety and enhanced posttraumatic growth.
4. **Decreased depressive symptoms** – The enhanced ability to regulate emotions leads to better coping and management of depression.
5. **Improved general health** – Mindfulness has been shown to enhance or increase healthy behaviors such as being physically active, avoiding nicotine and alcohol, and improving eating behaviors and attitudes.

A circular logo with a teal background and a white border. The text "GO LIVE" is in a white, sans-serif, uppercase font, and "Smart" is in a white, cursive script font. A small copyright symbol is to the right of "Smart".

GO LIVE[©]
Smart

Stay connected.

For more details about the health benefits of mindfulness, check out the article below, which includes links to helpful resources:

<https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/benefits-of-mindfulness/>

MINDFUL MOMENTS CHALLENGE .

QUIETING THE MIND

“The goal of mindfulness is not to suppress thinking, but to surpass it.” – Victor Davich, author of Minute Meditation: Quiet Your Mind, Change Your Life.

With the daily busyness and stressors of modern life, it can take practice and patience to focus on the present moment. Peace and quiet are not commonly accessible and even if we do find it, it's easy to spend that time reliving your day or making a mental to-do list for tomorrow. The key is how you react to your thoughts, and meditation is an ideal tool for finding inner peace.

Three Simple Steps to Quiet Your Mind:

1. **Get into a good position.** Take a deep breath and sigh. Sit comfortably and relax your body as much as you can.
2. **Just breathe.** Close your eyes and decide where you feel your breath most prominently, whether it be your abdomen, diaphragm, or nostrils. Gently focus your attention on your breathing.
3. **Detach from your thoughts.** It is normal for thoughts, body sensations, and images to come to mind within a few seconds. Gently return your focus to your breathing. Continue this for a short time, maybe just 5 to 10 minutes to start.

Whether you choose to practice your meditation in the morning, during your lunch break or before bed, it is important to keep a daily consistent time to focus. Pretty soon it will become as much a part of your routine as brushing your teeth, and will be an important part of an overall healthy lifestyle.

A circular logo with a teal background and a white border. The text "GO LIVE" is in a white, sans-serif, uppercase font, and "Smart" is in a white, script font with a registered trademark symbol.

GO LIVE
Smart[®]

A photograph of three people sitting in a lotus position on a grassy area outdoors. A woman on the left, a man in the middle, and a man on the right are all meditating with their eyes closed and hands in a mudra. The background is a soft-focus green landscape.

Stay connected.

Tried meditating but think it's not working? Check out seven common mistakes people make when starting a meditation practice at:

<https://www.fastcompany.com/40547177/this-is-why-meditation-isnt-working-for-you>

MINDFUL MOMENTS CHALLENGE .

EATING MINDFULLY

There is a lot of information and advice today about what foods to eat and avoid, but the importance of how we eat cannot be overstated. It is common to eat while working, watching TV, or even driving, which can easily lead to overeating. Traditional fad diets can lead to emotional and physical harm as your relationship with food is filled with shame, guilt and your metabolism is damaged.

Learning to eat mindfully can improve your relationship with food, which can help prevent weight gain and help you feel better about your body. And it's not complicated or expensive - you can start today!

Here are 6 ways to be a more mindful eater:

1. **Don't eat until you are full.** By then you may have overeaten. Instead, eat until you feel satisfied or are no longer hungry.
2. **Pace yourself.** Slow down and check in with your pace while eating. Put your fork down between bites and take the opportunity to notice whether you are still hungry or have had enough.
3. **Be picky.** Don't be afraid to ask waiters to tailor your food at restaurants. Get into the practice of really tasting your food, and if you don't like it, don't eat it.
4. **Be forgiving and flexible.** Know that you will overeat on occasion, and don't beat yourself up about it. Know that you can let it go and you will do better tomorrow.
5. **Determine your hunger level before your first bite.** Prevent emotional eating by asking yourself if you are really hungry right now, and what you are feeling.
6. **Break out of old habits.** Think about how and why you eat. Do you eat while multitasking or when you are anxious? Focusing on those areas can help you get on a path to being a more mindful eater.

A circular logo with a teal background. The text "GO LIVE" is in a white, sans-serif, uppercase font, and "Smart" is in a white, script font with a registered trademark symbol. The logo is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the page, overlapping a background image of a family dining.

GO LIVE
Smart®

A background image showing a family of five (a man, a woman, and three children) sitting around a wooden dining table in a restaurant. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. The table is set with plates, glasses, and cutlery. The background wall is made of light-colored stone tiles.

Stay connected.

Dr. Susan Albers is a psychologist at the Cleveland Clinic and New York Times Bestselling author of seven books on mindful eating. A wealth of information is available on her website, including how to tell the difference between emotional vs. physical hunger and how to mindfully change habits. Check out the link below:

<http://eatingmindfully.com/blog>

MINDFUL MOMENTS CHALLENGE .

MINDFUL MOVEMENT

If the idea of meditation is difficult for you because sitting still does not come naturally, then consider turning your daily physical activity into a mindful meditation. Focusing on your movement and breathing can help you appreciate what your body is doing and ultimately you may find yourself enjoying exercise more.

Here are a few ways to bring mindfulness into your exercise routine:

- **Consider your purpose.** Decide the reasons you want to be more mindful and remind yourself why exercise is important to you. Being clear about your intentions can motivate you to get started and keep going.
- **Unplug.** To be fully present during exercise, don't listen to music, watch TV, or talk on the phone.
- **Pay attention to your body.** Appreciate any parts of your body that are working extra hard, or if there are changes in how your body feels today versus your last workout.
- **Notice your breath.** Your breath is always there as a focus point. If your mind wanders, just notice the thoughts and gently bring your focus back to the tempo of your breath as you work harder and cool down.
- **Play with focal points other than your breath.** Maybe it's the rhythm of your feet on the pavement, or the way your bike pedals rotate.
- **Notice your surroundings.** Alternate between focusing on your breath or movement and notice details about the world around you. What do you hear, see and smell? How is the temperature?
- **Accept yourself as you are.** A basic principle of mindfulness is not wishing the present moment to be different than it is, and exercising is a perfect time to practice that. Remind yourself why you started and thank yourself for making your health a priority.
- **Exercise kindness.** Appreciate your current ability just as it is. Don't compare yourself to others, and go at a pace that is right for you.

Source: Mindful: Healthy Mind, Healthy Life. <https://www.mindful.org/how-to-meditate-through-exercise/> Accessed 22 May 2018.

GO LIVE
Smart[©]

Stay connected.

To get started being mindful while you move, try a Mindful Movement practice to bring more focus to your mind and body. Check out this [2-minute Mindful Movement Practice video.](#)