

## Mindfulness Skills

*Most people in Western culture have a difficult time being present.*

*Being able to be present—fully present with your thoughts and feelings and body and others—can be fostered and developed through learning a range of new skills.*

Developing Mindfulness skills takes three basic steps:

- The first is about the radical realization that you are alive now and only now. Not yesterday, not tomorrow, not planning or repenting. Today is all you have.
- The second is about realizing that since you are not present, you are missing life, and are mostly not aware of what is really happening, and decide to stop being on auto pilot and learn to see more clearly.
- The third is about a commitment to a practice to become more present. Being mindful takes the intention of a mindful practice plus the discipline of a daily practice. It is simple, and it works!

Then you need to have curiosity: develop a willingness to slow down and turn inward and observe yourself. Notice the activity and pattern of your own mind and thinking! Realize how powerful it is!

There are several attitudes that are helpful:

- *Being non-judgmental*: be an “impartial witness” to your own experience. Don’t judge or categorize, decide if something is “good” or “bad”, simply step back and notice.
- *Being patient*: be open to each moment, don’t rush, instead let things unfold as they will (they will anyway!).
- *Having “beginner’s mind”*: let yourself see everything as if for the first time, and let go of what you think you “know;” what you “know” really just obscures what is actually there.
- *Developing trust*: learn to have trust in your self, your feelings and intuitions, and the process, and learn to take responsibility for being more fully yourself.
- *Being non-striving*: you do not have to “do” anything, simply pay attention to whatever is.
- *Developing acceptance*: take a radical stance that you are willing to see and accept how things are right now (it is how they are anyway).
- *Developing the ability to let go*: just observe, do not feel attached to a certain outcome.
- Other mindfulness qualities are gentleness, generosity, empathy, compassion, and gratitude.

Learn the basic practices:

- Breathing and observing your breathing.
- Awareness of your body, through body scanning and yoga and mindful exercise.
- Awareness of your thoughts and feelings through meditation.

Find a regular time each day to practice your practice. Even if you do ten minutes you will notice the difference; thirty to forty-five minutes a day is considered optimal.

- Some people sit, or walk, or lie down to practice.
- Some listen to their breathing, some listen to guided practice on CD’s.
- Basic texts to use:
- Goldstein & Kornfield (1987). Seeking the Heart of Wisdom.
- Kabat-Zinn (1994). Wherever You Go There You Are, or Kabat-Zinn (1990/2004). Full Catastrophe Living.

Learning to be mindful works day by day, not through a fake positivity or denial about the world, but through the real powers of presence, observation, self-care and acceptance.

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Some of this material was taken from the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn, Marsha Linehan, and Shauna Shapiro  
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