

Mindfulness Practices

Lisa Grady

Mind-Body Educator

Lisa.grady7@gmail.com

310-545-2302

Mindful Awareness Using the Breath:

In this practice, the object of attention will be the breath. Why the breath? The breath is always available, easily accessible, portable, and simple. There are no complex thought or emotional patterns attached to the breath. With extended, daily practice, the mind becomes more adept at staying on the breath and returning more effortlessly when attention has drifted.

Beginning Your Practice:

1. Minimize any potential distractions:
 - a. turn the ringers off on your phones
 - b. place a note on the door if necessary
2. Find a comfortable place to sit where you won't be disturbed.
3. Sit erect with a straight spine. If this feels uncomfortable, you may wish to place a pillow behind you.
4. You may wish to light a candle or some incense to engage your sense of smell and signal the body that it is time to meditate.
5. Take a few deep, diaphragmatic breaths to begin. Feel your body settle into your chair. Feel the connection between your body and the support beneath it.
6. Allow your shoulders to gently relax away from the ears.
7. If you haven't already, allow the eyes to soften and close.
8. If you choose to leave your eyes open, cast your eyes downward as if looking into a bowl or lotus flower.
9. Your palms can lay gently on your legs, face down.
10. Now allow yourself to breathe normally. Focus your attention on the tip of your nose. Notice how the breathe is received on the inhale. Is it warm or cool? Allow it to leave on the exhale. Has it changed?
11. Innocently be aware of your breathing. Refrain from altering it in any conscious way.
12. As you observe your breath, you may notice that it changes. It may vary in speed, rhythm or depth. There may even be occasions when the breath seems to stop for a time. Whatever happens with your breathing, innocently observe it, without resisting any changes.

13. There is no need to force or concentrate. Just allow.
14. Continue to breathe in this way.
15. Remember, you are not trying to go anywhere or do anything, you are just simply being, here, now, in the present moment.
16. Relinquish any expectations you may have about your practice as you follow your breath.
17. When you notice that your attention has drifted to a thought, a feeling, or sensation in the body, sit with the awareness, without judgement, much like watching clouds drift across the sky. There is no need to force the mind to go blank.
18. Gently escort your attention back to your breath. It is this gentle going back and forth, that will eventually transport you to deeper levels of silence.
19. Continue like this for the suggested amount of time.
20. When your meditation time is up, be sure to spend a few minutes, with your eyes closed before getting up. Use this time to review your intentions and begin to allow the sounds of your environment come into your awareness. Become aware of your body sitting on the chair. You may not realize how deep you were, so it is important to ground yourself before moving back into activity. You may wish to rub your hands together and place the palms over your eyes before slowly opening them.

Note: If your meditation is disturbed for reasons beyond your control, with the exception of an emergency, it is important that you continue to sit in meditation for at least five more minutes.

S.T.O.P. An informal practice to help alleviate everyday stress and anxiety.

Stop

Take a breath

Observe what is taking place; including thoughts, emotions, sensations in the body

Proceed: Now you are responding vs. reacting.

Easy ways to remind yourself to S.T.O.P. are:

pop-up reminders on your computer

a phone ringing

place post-it notes

entering and leaving your car

entering and leaving your house
standing in line

Freeze and Melt (practice for young children)

This is a wonderful practice to do, especially with younger children, when some energy needs to be released. Notice when you or your children have been sitting for a long time, are beginning to fidget more, or get frustrated, lose focus, etc. Invite your children to play this game. Using a small bell, let your child know that when the bell is rung they begin to dance or run around. When the bell is rung again, they need to freeze. While frozen, they take 3 deep breaths and then melt into a puddle on the floor. Sometimes, children like the image of melting like chocolate or ice cream on a sunny day. You can repeat this a few more times.

Note: Children enjoy it when you let them have a turn with the bell while you dance like a crazy person!

Mindful Communication

Use the STOP technique, but this time, use it specifically as it applies to listening and speaking. In this way, practice with your child (especially useful for teens), partner, co-worker, family member or friend, taking turns with mindful communication. While one is speaking, the other stops what they are doing and thinking and takes a breath. They observe what the other person is saying, paying attention to body language and facial expression as well. They notice their thoughts and reactions periodically. When their attention wanders, they bring it back to the speaker. And when it is time to proceed, they choose how they wish to respond. It is simply the invitation for a mental and physical pause to ground the communication in the present moment.

When it reverses, the speaker stops and takes a mindful breath before speaking. They observe how they are feeling physically. Cultivating authenticity as they speak from the heart. Checking in to see if the 'listener' is engaged. Mindful of speaking in an economical way when possible.

Mindful Wishes:

May you be safe
May you be happy and peaceful
May you be healthy and strong
May you be loved.
May you accept yourself just as you are
May you be full of joy

You can pick your own mindful wishes; whatever resonates with you and/or your child. You may wish to pick a 'tickler' to remind you: when you go upstairs, or send an email, see an emergency vehicle, before you go to bed or upon waking. Finally, you can send mindful wishes to anyone. It can be very helpful to do this when you are challenged by someone in your life.

Glitter Mind Jar: (Mindfulness Practice for children)

First put some glitter in a small jar (little glitter works better). Fill the jar with 3/4 warm water. Then add glycerin (craft/grocery stores) to the top. Add four drops of clear liquid soap. Shake and watch the glitter settle. It's great to involve the kids in making their own glitter jar. I try to be very mindful with glitter and younger children, so perhaps they can pick the colors or use a teaspoon to drop into the jar.