

A PATH TO Presence

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37
**MINDFULNESS
PRACTICES FOR
MEDITATION &
DAILY LIFE**



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INTRODUCTION

The concept behind Mindfulness is easily understood:

“Mindfulness is the natural human capacity to intentionally direct one’s attention to the present moment.”

Jon Kabat-Zinn, founder of MBSR

How long are we able to be fully present from one moment to the next? How do we bring our minds back when we get lost in day-dreaming, worrying, ruminating? Teachers from many different traditions of wisdom implore their students to:

PRACTICE – PRACTICE – PRACTICE

Throughout the years I have enjoyed the never ending path of practice and am happy to share some of the Mindfulness Exercises with you.

Mindfulness is not an end in itself. I see Mindfulness in relationship with one’s states of mind, not as a state unto itself.

This practical booklet is intended to support you in various ways:

- ❖ If you are new to Mindfulness Practice you can find some simple introductory exercises – applicable to being at home or within your daily routines.
- ❖ If you are already practicing Mindfulness, you might find some variations of exercises and feel inspired by completely new ones.
- ❖ If you are an experienced practitioner you might find yourself reminded of aspects you had lost track of.
- ❖ You might find it a support while travelling and choose from exercises on your smartphone.

I recommend practicing on a regular basis. My experience is that it is more important to practice for short periods regularly than for longer ones at times. Even a very simple informal practice in your daily life, for example the first one, can change qualities in your state of mind and foster well-being.

ENJOY!

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

Next to each exercise you find two types of icons.

Icons indicating the level of difficulty:

●○○ easy ●●○ middle ●●● advanced

If you are a beginner I recommend the “easy” exercises for at least six months. If you already have some experience, you might want to select whatever practice suits you best at the moment.

Icons indicating different types of practice:



Exercises for formal
Mindfulness Sitting Meditation



Informal Mindfulness Practices
applicable to daily activities



Movement or body awareness exercises

In Acrobat Reader
open
„bookmarks“ or
„table of contents“ –
you will find
a list for further
orientation.

1| OPEN FOCUS



Our minds get sucked into different screens – often for hours without a rest.

TRY THIS:

- ❖ Look up from your computer and gaze into the distance from time to time.
- ❖ Give your focusing mind a short rest.
See what you see out there with an open focus.
Let your eyes go where *they* want to go.
- ❖ Allow yourself some space!
- ❖ Feel the effect on your mind and also on your bodily sensations, before you go back to the screen.

2| POSTURE



Here is a suggestion for finding an upright posture for the core practice of Mindfulness Meditation:

If you sit on a cushion, cross your legs with your knees lower than your pelvis. If you sit on a chair, sit at the edge of the seat with both feet flat on the floor. Sense the contact with the floor.

- ❖ Find an upright position for your spine by moving your whole trunk back and forth and then settling in in the center, right above your sitting bones.
- ❖ Move your shoulders a bit and find a position for your shoulders that allow your chest to open.
- ❖ Rest your hands on your thighs.
- ❖ Imagine your neck lengthened, chin drawn back slightly. Let the tip of your tongue touch the gums above your upper teeth, with a little space between your lips.
- ❖ Keep your eyes open, if possible: look down in front of you on the floor with a soft gaze, without focusing on anything. If this is uncomfortable, close your eyes.
- ❖ Keep your head upright. Imagine the top of your head connected to the ceiling by a thread.

3| TRACKING THE BREATH



After settling in (see exercise 2) bring your breath into the center of your awareness.

- ❖ Observe each breath as it comes in and as it streams out – from moment to moment.
- ❖ Just observe *how* breathing feels, don't interfere by wanting to change it.
- ❖ If you are drifting away, just return to sensing your breath. If you drift away a hundred times, come back a hundred times. Returning is the training impulse for your presence!

4| PATTING YOURSELF AWAKE



This is a very simple exercise to support you in connecting to your body quickly: right after standing up in the morning, before a sitting meditation or in the midst of the day, or ...

- ❖ Find a stable standing position, feet parallel.
- ❖ With your right hand start to pat along the outside of your left arm (beginning at the outside of your left hand) up to the shoulder. Then come back down tapping the inside of your left arm down to the palm of the left hand.
Do this whole sequence three times.
- ❖ Pause for a short moment and feel the effect: how does the left arm feel, how does the right arm feel?
- ❖ Then start tapping your right arm with your left hand (outside up, inside down).
- ❖ Now take both hands, reach back and start patting strongly on the middle of your back, pelvis, down the backside of both legs all the way down to your feet.
- ❖ Continue by patting on the front of your feet and come up again tapping the front of your legs, pelvis and belly.
Do this whole sequence three times.
- ❖ Close the exercise by standing quietly for some time and sense your body.

5| OUT-BREATH



Here is a variation for your core practice of Mindfulness Meditation.

- ❖ After having settled in your sitting posture start by bringing special attention to your out-breath. Without changing anything, observe your breath as it streams out.
- ❖ Now pay attention to the moment after breathing out – that little pause of emptiness before the next in-breath follows.
- ❖ Continue like this for at least 5 minutes.

How do you feel after this meditation?

6| COUNTING EACH BREATH

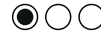


While sitting in Mindfulness Meditation it is sometimes helpful to give our thinking mind a point of reference to stay present.
TRY THIS:

- ❖ While lightly placing your attention on your breath add the number ONE to the out-breath. Add TWO to the next out-breath and so forth. When you have arrived at SEVEN, start over with ONE again.
- ❖ If you get lost, just start with ONE again. Take care that your breath does not follow the number, but rather that the number follows your breath.

Before closing your meditation, feel the effect of this practice.

7| PAUSE – RELAX – RECONNECT



- ❖ While sitting at your desk take a minute to pause:
With your eyes open or closed lean back and feel the back of your chair.
- ❖ Relax and focus especially on your out-breath.
Notice the small pause after breathing out.

How does it feel when you reconnect to your activity now?
Play with this little but powerful practice wherever you are ...

8| WALKING MINDFULLY



We can use walking mindfully as a time keeper for the present.

- ❖ Wherever you find yourself walking – in the street, in your office, at the airport, at home ...
each situation provides you with an opportunity to open up to physical sensations with each step you take.

- ❖ An Extension

Slow down and observe the beginning, middle and end of each step you take.

9| JUST THIS!



- ❖ While practicing The Sitting Meditation say to yourself from time to time: “Just this” while feeling your breath in the background of your awareness: just this posture, just this breath, just this moment.



- ❖ After having started a project (e.g. preparing a presentation for a meeting, writing a text) we often find ourselves being interrupted – by something outside or by ourselves. Apply the practice of saying to yourself “Just This” from time to time to stay focused: just this listening, just this walking, just this cleaning up the kitchen, **JUST THIS LIVING MOMENT.**

Enjoy your presence!

10| SHORT REST: RELAXING YOUR EYES



Our eyes are very much challenged when our work-lives consist of looking into screens for hours ...

TRY THIS:

Cover your eyes with both hands so that there is no light coming in. Sense your eyes – are they moving or are they still? Imagine your eyeballs sinking back into your head. Feel the effect in your whole body.

This exercise is most relaxing in a reclining position, but also can be done in a sitting position.

11| “NOWHERE TO GO AND NOTHING TO DO”



- ❖ Say this sentence to yourself while sitting in meditation.
- ❖ Say this sentence to yourself whenever you feel hurried or tense because you are obsessing with the tasks of the day.

Monitor your state of mind as you use this sentence to free up space in a tense situation.

And then happily proceed heading to ...

12| ROCKING YOUR PELVIS



- ❖ Sit on a chair, both feet flat on the floor. First scan your posture as it is. Then slowly start to move your pelvis back a little so that you feel your spine curving. Come back to the upright position. Now start to arch your pelvis forward. Come back to the upright position.
- ❖ Continue rocking your pelvis slowly back and forth and sense your whole body. How is your spine following the movement of your pelvis?
- ❖ Now let your eyes consciously participate: look up towards the ceiling as you arch your pelvis forward and let your spine follow the movement. Look at the horizon when you come back to the upright position. Look down at the floor as you move your pelvis backwards simultaneously with the curving movement of your spine.
- ❖ Feel your whole body and also observe your breathing: when are you breathing in, when are you breathing out? After a while let the rocking movements become shorter and take a rest in the middle position, looking at the horizon.

13| SMILING



While sitting in meditation observe your current state of mind first.

- ❖ Then start to move both corners of your mouth gently towards your ears. Feel your face. What else is happening?
- ❖ Repeat this movement again and again – independently of your current emotional state.

If you like continue this practice throughout your day:
sitting at your desk, walking in the street, meeting people ...

14| SWINGING ARMS



Find a stable standing position with your arms hanging at your side.

- ❖ Start by swinging both arms dynamically back behind you, then let go allowing your arms to come back forward by themselves.
- ❖ Continue swinging your arms back and forth.
- ❖ Allow the movement to flow through your whole body (repeat it at least 10 times).

15| SPACES IN BETWEEN



One of the previous practices was noticing space in our minds while meditating: for example the tiny empty space following the out-breath.

This is a complementary exercise for daily life:

How about noticing the empty spaces between objects and also between people?

Just gaze into this empty space and sense how that feels. This is a refreshing practice when time and space seem close in.

16| SITTING LIKE A MOUNTAIN



Take some minutes to find a stable sitting position.

- ❖ If you sit on a cushion feel the contact of your bottom on the cushion and your feet and legs to the floor. If you sit on a chair feel your feet on the floor and your bottom on the seat. This is the base of your “mountain”.
- ❖ From there sense your spine: 24 vertebrae one upon the other – connecting your pelvis through your trunk up to your head.
- ❖ Allow your arms to relax and your hands to rest on your thighs: come out of the “doing mode” and slowly settle into your physical self in stillness.
- ❖ Sense your entire form while you are sitting.
- ❖ Now: with eyes closed invite an image of a mountain. Once the image is there hold it with your attention and feel how that feels. Of course this mountain is breathing ...

17| GAINING CONTROL BY GIVING UP CONTROL



- ❖ Find your seat and sense your entire self as a receiving "vessel".
- ❖ During the first minutes you will maybe notice your monkey mind springing about. Give your thoughts a free reign and just observe how they come, disappear, turn back, circulate and sometimes even dissolve. Every time you want to control a thought or a feeling, let it go and notice what happens next.
- ❖ Notice clear empty spaces appearing now and then: how does that feel?

18| COMPLETING BY ACKNOWLEDGING



Our brain and whole organism function well if movements, activities and thinking processes find completion within a cycle. We can consciously support this completion by choosing to take a short pause between one activity and another or even within projects.

In addition to forming a new habit of implementing short pauses regularly, the act of acknowledging, it will give you some energy. Even if the project you are currently working on is not finished yet, you might "close it for now" with an affirmative "yes" and start a new cycle within the same project: new beginning, new middle, new end!

Weird?

Notice how it feels and what it does to your energies.

19| CHOOSING WELL-BEING



Research has shown that beneficial experiences need an active integration: We need to stick with a beneficial experience for 5 to 30 seconds in order to enhance lasting change and learn from it (negative experiences are stored right away in long-term memory).

LET'S TRY THIS:

After having settled into yourself, bring your attention to your breathing process. Feel your entire body. Once you start feeling some space in your mind and body, take time to actively register pleasant feelings somewhere inside yourself. Hold them intentionally for 5 to 30 seconds.



Of course you can transfer this to any beneficial experience in your daily life: a pleasant warmth somewhere in your body, a tasty meal, a pleasant breeze on a hot summer day etc.

20| AIMLESS WANDERING



Choose a place to practice outside. This might be a park, a garden or a forest. Find a surrounding where you feel inspired.

- ❖ Begin by strolling about in the place, without an agenda. Be led by what catches your eye, by sounds, or perhaps just by your intuition saying: “Let’s see what lies ahead.”
- ❖ Feel free to pause, whenever you like, to sit or examine something in detail. As you are exploring, do your best to remain at a feeling and sensing level, without mental analysis.
- ❖ If you notice that you’ve gotten lost in thoughts about the past or the future – no problem – simply bring yourself back to the practice: to wandering about ...
- ❖ When your allotted time for the practice is up, or when your intuition tells you it’s time to end the session, sit down. Notice how you are feeling in your body right now.
- ❖ Then bring that energy into the rest of your day!

21| SETTLING IN BY FINDING THE CENTER



- ❖ Check your posture when you are settling in for a Mindfulness Sitting Meditation. Start moving your whole upper body (this time with a long back) forward and backward – feeling when you pass the center-line.
- ❖ How does it feel leaning forward, how does it feel behind the centerline?
- ❖ Now, slowly, slowly find the middle between these two spaces and settle into the center-line. Feel the sitting bones of your pelvis contact the cushion or the chair and then the whole alignment up to your skull.
- ❖ Imagine the top of your head connected to the ceiling by a thin thread.



During the meditation check how thoughts might influence your posture and come back to uprightness and centeredness. How does that again influence your state of mind?



22| SITTING UPRIGHT IN THE MIDST OF TURMOIL



Find your seat.

- ❖ Rock your pelvis and spine back and forth in order to find the center of your verticality (see the previous exercise). Let all 24 vertebrae find their position, one upon the other starting at the bottom. Feel the elegant S-curve of the spine after having arrived at the skull.
- ❖ Now notice the top of your head imagining a thin thread connecting the top of the head to the ceiling. Feel your uprightness throughout your whole self.
- ❖ While sitting like this, notice whether a thought process or emotion is influencing your posture.

If yes: Notice, examine it and come back to your uprightness. Feel again how coming back affects your state of mind again.

23| RECEIVING – HOLDING – LETTING GO



- ❖ Find your seat. Take some time to settle into yourself and track each in-breath and each out-breath.
- ❖ After some minutes start to open up with intention to what comes to mind: thoughts, images, feelings. Some of these just appear and then disappear quickly.
- ❖ If there is a “louder” thought choose to hold it for a moment and contemplate: is it habitual, surprising, new? How does the thought feel? Does it require action in your work life or in your private life?
- ❖ Then with intention let the thought disappear/dissolve. If letting go is difficult, you might use the image of a cloud that is moving on into space, out of sight or, a cloud dissolving.
- ❖ After one cycle of “Receiving – Holding – Letting Go” feel the empty space before the next thought arrives ...

24| HOW DO YOU TALK TO YOURSELF?



Find a quiet moment and a quiet space for a short Mindfulness Meditation.

- ❖ First settle in by embodying an upright sitting posture and placing your attention on the breathing process. Once you have done that continue sensing each individual breath.
- ❖ This time notice the **content** of your thoughts. Maybe they are planning, reflecting, daydreaming. And maybe they are making comments on yourself: *how do you talk to yourself?*

Noticing first of all how we talk to ourselves supports our awareness of how we talk to others and how we comment on others while listening.

- ❖ And by the way: Don't judge your judgmental mind ...

25| 100 % RESPONSABILITY



Settle into a stable position for a sitting meditation that is a minimum of 15 min. long.

- ❖ Place your attention on your breath. Start to stabilize your attention by tracking every in-breath and every out-breath.
- ❖ After ca. 5 min. move your sensing of the breathing process more to the back of your mind.
- ❖ Now start to notice your thoughts and observe:
Am I blaming people, external circumstances, the economy, the weather, my partner etc. for my state of mind?

Not to worry: it happens often and to everyone ...

Observing such thoughts gives us the chance to change direction, exit victim-states and become 100 % responsible for our own state of mind.

26| DISSOLVING THOUGHTS



- ❖ Find an upright position and start tracking each breath. Feel yourself breathing in and breathing out.
- ❖ Now start noticing your thinking process.
- ❖ Notice specifically thoughts that “sound” like chatter and let them dissolve after breathing out. Let the chatter dissolve into a white cloud that itself dissolves into a clear blue sky.

27| PEELING OFF NEGATIVE JUDGEMENTS



- ❖ Find a seat and take some minutes to settle in by following your breath. Observe if there is any inner commentary emerging about the way you are breathing. If so peel the judgment off. Just notice the in-breath coming by itself and then the out-breath without trying to change anything.

If you want to go further:

- ❖ Now also start to observe your thoughts: are they colored by judgments? If so, again first observe them. (without judging that there has been a judgmental thought ;-))
- ❖ Then take a moment to reflect on the thought. E.g. if you had the thought "I really hate the way, M. was again interrupting me in the meeting, he is so arrogant!", you might now want to peel off the "he is so arrogant" and then perhaps take action: you might talk to M. about your experience of being interrupted repeatedly and see what happens.

28| WHITE CANVAS



- ❖ After some minutes of tracking your breath while sitting in meditation, imagine a white canvas. Then notice how the white empty canvas is changing as inner images, feelings and thoughts appear.
- ❖ From time to time allow the canvas to empty and become white again.

29| CELLULAR BREATHING



- ❖ Find a seat. Take some minutes to stabilize your attention by tracking each in-breath and each out-breath.
- ❖ Don't interfere by wanting to change the quality of your breath: a long breath is a long breath; a short breath is a short breath; shallow is shallow; deep is deep ...
- ❖ Notice what happens just by witnessing your breathing activity and being completely present.



Find a good stable seat for your Sitting Meditation Practice.

- ❖ Take a little more time than usual for settling in: maybe do a short Bodyscan and sense your whole body. After that, feel in particular, the surfaces that support your body at this very moment. Secondly feel the support of your bottom: on the chair or on the cushion. Then feel the support of your hands resting on your thighs: maybe you can allow your shoulders to relax a bit?

Sensing your whole body and the supporting surfaces in this way might let you find a different kind of **stability** within yourself.

- ❖ Next, place your attention onto your breath and find another stable anchor here: **STAY** present throughout the whole meditation: another factor for your **inner stability**.
- ❖ Now – in this stable state of mind – start noticing **change**. Notice what is appearing and disappearing in your mind, if you don't cling to thoughts, pictures, feelings ... Allow change to happen.

31| LEAVING NO TRACES



- ❖ After having settled in for a sitting meditation begin tracking your breath. Observe what is arising in your mind. See and feel what is appearing and start to wipe out every trace your mind is leaving. It might be helpful to connect this activity with your out-breath.
- ❖ Feel the empty space, it generates and enjoy!

32| EMBODYING DECISIONS



While sitting in meditation or spontaneously during the day, first tune in to your whole self and your immediate bodily sensations.

- ❖ Next find an area where you have to make a decision. Think of three different kinds of solutions that could come to mind.
- ❖ Now, take time to explore each single option in a particular way:
Imagine yourself being involved in some activity or in a specific situation that is related to this option.
Take some time to feel its resonance within your entire self:
How does that specific visualization feel in your body and in your heart?

33| ONE STEP BACK



Sometimes life's circumstances seem to inhibit our movement forward and we might experience impatience or anger about the situation.

- ❖ One way to deal with this is: feel the emotion in all of yourself, also physically. How does the emotion feel and how does the emotion move inside your body?
- ❖ Then imagine doing one conscious step backwards and stay there for a moment. Wait. Breathe. Open your perception to the present moment and re-orient yourself. Feel the space emerging out of how you might decide to proceed.

34| STRONG BACK, SOFT FRONT



- ❖ Take a moment to find an upright sitting position.
Where do you feel the immediate middle position over your sitting bones?
- ❖ Feel the whole length of your back.
Sense your whole front.
- ❖ Next say to yourself: "Strong back, soft front".
Sometimes in life we are hardening our front, maybe closing our heart space and our backs become weak.
Let us return to "Strong back, soft front".
- ❖ Feel the effect on your state of mind.

35| CONNECTING TO YOUR HEART SPACE



Find a quiet moment and a spot to sit where you will not be disturbed for at least 10 minutes. If you like you can settle into an upright position as in meditation, but sitting on a park bench under a tree or somewhere else will also do.

- ❖ Begin by checking in: how does your body feel right now? How about your feeling state? How about your mental activity?
- ❖ Place your attention on the breath and stay connected to breathing in and breathing out for some minutes.
- ❖ Now bring your attention to the area of your physical heart first and then widen the attention to your whole chest. What does it feel like?
- ❖ Stay in your heart space for the rest of the meditation and acknowledge whatever might come into your awareness.



- ❖ Start with a period of sitting practice tracking each in-breath and each out-breath. While doing so bring your attention especially to your chest and feel what you feel. What do you notice? What kind of inner feelings/emotions are present right now? Whatever is present: acknowledge it fully with an inner statement like: "Yes, that is how it is right now".
- ❖ Next, you can choose to address three positive sentences first to yourself and then to three other persons.
The sentences are: May I/you be happy.
May I/you be healthy. May I/you be safe.
Of course, you can find variations that fit best for you and others. After having said these sentences to yourself feel the effect in your body and your heart.
- ❖ Next, choose three different persons and address the sentences above to each person one at a time:
A beloved one, a person you feel comfortable with.
A neutral person, maybe someone you saw in the street, in a shop etc.
A person you have difficulties with.
Take your time doing this exercise and feel how it affects your state of mind.

37| RENEWING THE INTENTION TO PRACTICE



Find a quiet moment and a spot to sit where you will not be disturbed in the next 10 minutes. If you like you can settle into an upright position as in meditation, but sitting on a park bench, under a tree or at the beach will also do!

- ❖ Begin by checking in: how does your body feel right now? How about your feeling state? How about your mental activity?
- ❖ Now take a few deeper breaths and then place your attention on your breath while breathing normally again.
- ❖ I you feel ready, address the following questions in your awareness:
What is my intention for practicing Mindfulness?
What is my innermost request?
- ❖ Let each question resonate inside your whole Self and receive the upcoming sensations and words also. Feel the answers in your whole body.
- ❖ To finish, just reflect if you want to add something to your intention or not. Come back to your breathing and then close your session.