

ONLINE MINDFULNESS RESOURCES AND PRACTICAL TIPS

Meditation Apps

- Insight Timer: Free guided meditations from Thich Nhat Hanh and many other teachers (Jon Kabat Zinn, Tara Brach, Jack Kornfield, Kaira Jewell etc.)
- Headspace: guided meditations, animations, articles and videos (free and paid versions)
- Stop, Breathe & Think: guided meditations (mindfulness & compassion)
- Plum Village: guided Zen meditations.
- MindBell (Androids Only): Meditation timer with bell and can be set to ring periodically during the day as a reminder to stop, breathe and smile.
- Spire: mindfulness, breath and activity tracker. ‘

Websites:

www.heartspace.ca - Online meditations by Dr. Shira Taylor

www.mindfulwaythroughanxietybook.com Free audio downloads of short meditations from The Mindful Way Through Anxiety.

www.mindfulselfcompassion.org - website on Self-Compassion by Christopher Germer, PhD. Free downloads of meditations, including many focused on Loving-kindness and Self-Compassion.

www.self-compassion.org - website on Self-Compassion by Kristin Neff, PhD.

www.soundstrue.com Guided meditations or talks by various teachers such as, Tara Brach, Pema Chodron, the Dalai Lama, Joseph Goldstein, Jon Kabat-Zinn, Jack Kornfield, Sharon Salzberg and Thich Nhat Hanh.

www.tarabrach.com - Website contains text, talks and guided meditations.

www.themindfulnessclinic.ca - Toronto-based psychotherapists who integrate mindfulness in their practice

www.wisebrain.org Website on the interface of meditation and neuroscience by Rick Hanson Ph.D. Contains text, talks and guided meditations.

GUIDELINES FOR CREATING HOME PRACTICE

- 1) **Practice:** You will only be able to deepen your practice by actually doing practice. Just like reading a menu at restaurant is not going to fill your belly, reading books about mindfulness is not the same as actually practicing. It can help to find a time of the day that works best with your schedule and life circumstances to support you in creating a new habit.
- 2) **BREATHE.** Breathing deeply slows the heart rate, relaxes the muscles, focuses the mind, and is an ideal way to begin practice.
- 3) **Release unnecessary tension and stretch.** Stretching loosens tension in the body enabling you to sit more comfortably. Additionally, stretching helps to bring our awareness into our body and aids in the process of connecting within.
- 4) **Being Aware of Frustration.** This is very common for beginners as we think “hey, what am I doing here” or “why can’t I just quiet my mind already”. When this happens, let the thoughts pass and come back to the breath. It will come with time. If you are still struggling, speak to an experienced teacher and ask for support.
- 5) **Experiment.** Give yourself permission to experiment with different types of meditation. Try walking, standing, sitting, lying, eyes open, eyes closed, etc.
- 6) **Create a regular space in your home to meditate.** If possible, try to keep the space free of other activities. Try to create a conducive space for you to practice.
- 7) **Draw inspiration from books, apps and online resources.** Preferably an instructional guide AND one that describes the benefits of meditation. Reading stories of practitioners can also get you motivated. John Kabat-Zinn’s *Wherever You Go, There You Are* is a great book especially for beginners.
- 8) **Commit for the long haul.** Meditation is a life-long practice, and you will benefit most by NOT being discouraged by the outcome of your daily practice. Just do the best you can every day, and then let it go!
- 9) **Bring mindfulness to your moment-to-moment experience.** Finding your breath and “being present” while not in formal practice is a wonderful way to evolve and deepen your meditation habits.
- 10) **Limit the Amount of Distractions.** Turning the phone off, closing the door, wearing comfortable clothing and taking care of urgent matters on a daily basis etc. Minimizing distractions that are within your control can help set the tone for your meditation.

11) Pay Attention to your body. Becoming aware of how you can support your body in meditation can help shift a meditative practice from one of frustration to one of renewal. Some adjustments can involve using props while others can be very subtle.

12) Use an object. Sometimes meditating with eye closed can pose a challenge to beginners. If this is the case, you can soften your gaze and allow some light in.

13) Cultivate Equanimity. Remind yourself that by setting an intention and bringing attention to your practice, you are doing the best you can. No matter what happens during your meditation practice, we can learn to accept our practice as it is. This includes thoughts, sensations and emotions positive and/or negative that may arise before during and after your practice.

14) Strength in Numbers Meditating with a loved one or a group of practitioners with the right intention and understanding of the practice can be very beneficial. It can also serve as a source of motivation.

15) Express Gratitude. At the end of your meditation, set aside a few minutes to express gratitude towards your mind, body and spirit. Be grateful that you have the ability to take time to yourself.

16) Notice when your interest in meditation begins to wane. Meditation takes effort, commitment and can be hard. You may come to a point where it becomes almost impossible to practice. Finding inspiration from online talks and books can help to renew your commitment. Losing the ability to focus on meditation could be an indication that you are losing balance in some other areas of your life and getting support from a counsellor or experienced meditation teacher can help.

Overcoming Hindrances to Practice: Practical Tips

Sleepiness/exhaustion

- check if you are sleeping enough. If not, what is in the way?
- Do walking meditation, try movement before sitting
- Splash cold water on your face
- Remember that with time this will pass
- Increase breath intensity
- Narrow or expand the area of focus
- Massage the ears
- Try meditating at a different time of day

Restlessness

- Start with physical practices – if yoga is difficult try walking, speed walking or running, swimming, or something aerobic.
- Use pranayama/breathwork first
- Recognizing restlessness as a physical/mental state and slowly begin to expand your tolerance for the discomfort
- Shifting the point of focus to something more peripheral in the body or to an external object such as sound.
- Grounding exercises – see handout

Self-doubt/self-judgment/perfectionism

- Setting realistic goals
- Practice self-compassion meditation instead for a while
- Look to inspiring examples of others have overcome obstacles
- Connect with a practice community

Lack of confidence in teachings/techniques

- Remind yourself of why you are here in the workshops
- Remind yourself of positive experiences you have had with practice
- Experiment with alternatives if something is not working for you
- Ask questions!
- Look into inspiring examples and read motivational literature
- Listen to online teachings and discourses
- Connect with a practice community

Lack of Motivation/Difficulty with Accountability

- Do yogic exercises to increase energy and motivation
- Find a partner and set up a buddy system
- Use an app that connects you with others in practice
- Connect with a practice community