

24 Practices to Reduce Stress and Increase Joy During the Day

An important part of mindfulness practice is *remembering* to be mindful *during* the day.

“Whatever the patterns of feeling and perception might be, they are brought into balance by our attitude towards them. The attitude of wise attention is the integrating, balancing agent. This is how the moment is held skillfully. If there is a grasping at or a pushing away of it, we are out of balance. The practice of attending, receiving, fully participating in this moment brings a quality of balance and integration...When mindfulness and wisdom recognize the qualities of this moment as simply patterns of nature...the effort is peace, ease, and clarity” p. 276, *The Breakthrough* by Ajahn Amaro.

So what helps us to remember? Here are some practices that people have found useful. *Over time some of them simply become part of your day.*

Develop a morning ritual: Uplifting the heart

1. More embodied

- a. Mindfulness while practicing yoga, tai chi, chi gong, Pilates...
- b. Bringing mindfulness to something you do every day—shower, brush teeth, the morning coffee/tea ritual, putting on your clothes, feeding your pet, etc.
- c. Taking a few minutes to be quiet or taking a walk and contemplate gratitude, appreciation, joy, beauty, nature, connection.

2. More mental

- a. Setting an intention for the day—to slow down, to pause, to be thankful, etc.
- b. Reading: a passage in a book, a short prayer, poetry
- c. Writing in a journal
- d. Reflecting on these questions: What uplifts my heart? What makes my spirit smile?

At work:

3. Attention to breath:

- a. When you get to work, taking a few slow, deep breaths: before you leave the car, get off your bike, or enter the building. Do the same thing when you get home.
- b. Taking a few seconds to pay attention to breathing during transitions: before or after lunch, at the beginning or ending of a meeting, seeing a client, etc.
- c. Taking breath breaks during the day to simply pay attention—to breath, body, and/or mind. You can take these at your desk, while walking down a hall, or at other times.
- d. When you sit down at the computer, taking one or more slow breaths before you start.
- e. Using everyday occurrences in your environment as reminders to breathe: phone ringing, waiting in line, walking down the hall, opening doors, etc.

4. Attention to body:

- a. Occasionally paying attention to bodily sensations. When we bring a curious and gentle mind to our bodily sensations, the body naturally relaxes.
- b. Bringing mindfulness to walking: bring your attention to your body for part of the walk; bring attention to what you see, hear, and touch.
- c. What does this feel like in your body, in your breath when you are rushing? What would happen if you pause or slow down, even if only for a few moments?
5. When choosing passwords on your computer, thinking of ones that might remind you and/or make you smile, e.g., Slower12, Breathe12, Smile 12, Giggle12, Yogibooboo22, etc.

At work and any time:

Reminders:

6. Keeping inspiring photos or ones that make you laugh on your phone.
7. Wearing a bracelet, necklace, ring, keep something in your pocket, or a post-it note or a picture by your computer or bulletin board that reminds you to breathe, to appreciate life.
8. Carrying a stone with a word on it: calm, peace, etc.
9. Writing down or look up helpful quotes: “Let go or be dragged;” “I choose what I have.”
10. Remembering laughing doll, the NOW clock.

Practices

11. Of the heart
 - a. Looking for opportunities to smile, to notice beauty, to practice gratitude.
 - b. Practicing generosity—to yourself and to others
 - c. Practicing loving-kindness or “just like me”
 - d. Taking time for yourself each day, even if it’s only a few minutes.
 - e. Spending more time in nature, even simply looking at trees out your window.
 - f. Developing daily habits that uplift your heart: in nature, meditation, yoga, tai chi, gardening, reading books and poetry. [For a list of books and poems, email me.]
12. Choosing to eat a snack in silence, or just savor the first few bites of a meal.
13. Paying attention to the quality of your mind or breath when waiting at a stoplight or in line.
14. Focusing on getting outside the box: use your non-dominant hand, notice a specific color, look up, shift your awareness from objects to the space around the objects, notice smells, sounds, transitions. See *How to Train a Wild Elephant* for more ideas.
15. Finding a mindfulness partner and check in regularly on the phone, in person, or via email
16. Remembering to relax the ideals; reduce the frequency of words like “should,” “have to,” “ought,” “not good enough,” etc.
17. Before and after using cellphone or email or the computer (e.g., Facebook), checking in with your body and breath. Many have noticed tension before and after using various technology. [Email me for the handout I have used with my students.]

Technology

18. Getting apps for your phone. Some free and inexpensive ones include: Insight Timer; Smiling Mind; Stop, Breathe & Think; Calm; Aura; The Mindfulness App; Omvana
19. Watching You Tube videos, for example Get service at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LfeXxkbgCVE>
20. Subscribing to blogs that have inspirational stories each day, for example dailygood.org, servicespace.org

At the end of the day

21. Reflecting on the day, especially what good you did.
22. Taking time to read or to journal.
23. Reflecting on the four essential components of health: adequate exercise, adequate rest, good nutrition, healthy connections: to yourself, to others and to the environment
24. Your own ideas?