

## Mindfulness Practices for Thriving in Stressful Times

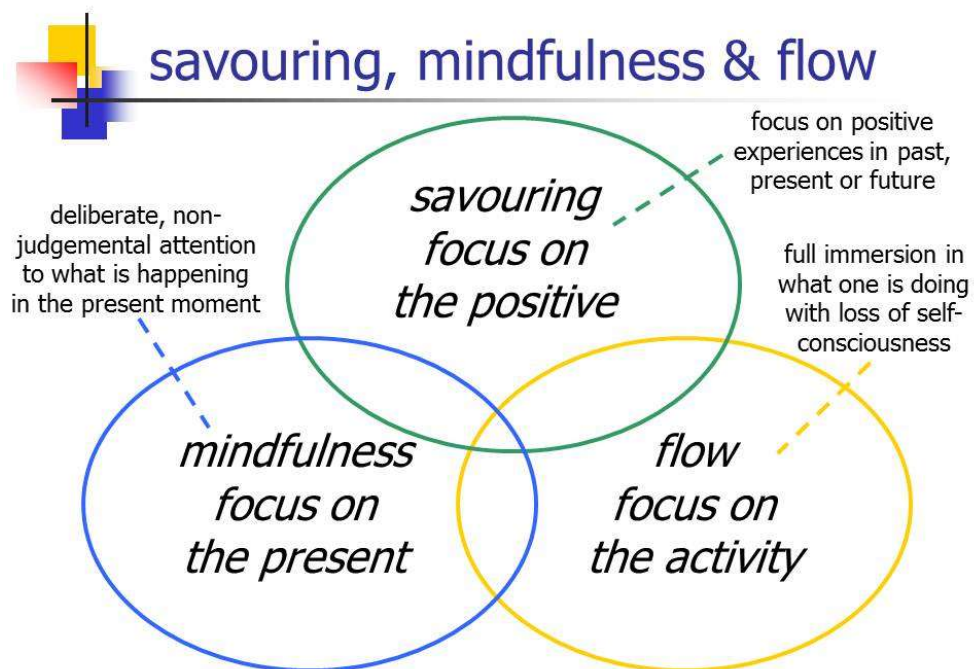
Working in uncertain times can be challenging. As events emerge that we cannot control and anxiety increases, self-care is often neglected and retaining focus can be difficult. Could you help yourself and others by making time for mindfulness practices?

### What is mindfulness?

“Mindfulness is a form of attention and awareness **training** that helps people relate more effectively to their day to day experiences. It involves **paying attention** to thoughts, feelings and body sensations in a way that increases **awareness, acceptance and self-compassion** to help manage difficult experiences, and create space to make wise choices. Mindfulness is the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to things as they are.” Jon Kabat-Zinn 1994.

### How can it help me at work?

Studies have shown that regular mindfulness practices can **increase your focus tenfold**. They will **boost your immunity** more than regular athletic practices. Mindful practices can **decrease your anxiety** levels by 30% while **increasing your overall wellbeing** by 65%.



Ask yourself - what can I do to become more mindful?

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Try this for the next few days and see what happens:

## GOT 2 MINUTES?

1. Just as you are **waking up** and your mind starts to race with all that has to be done, stop and give yourself **2 minutes** to breathe. Belly breathe, meaning breathe down into your belly, perhaps putting your hand on your belly to feel it rise and fall. As thoughts try to elbow into these two minutes, refocus on your breathing, especially on your outbreath.



2. As you **drive** into or home from work, keep the radio off, your phone off and just be. See how much you notice in each moment that you are moving from your home to your work place and back again. Notice the flowers and the birds. Are the trees swaying because it is windy or are they still? Just notice (and pay attention 😊) and breathe. If you are with others, perhaps invite them into this quiet practice.



3. Throughout the day schedule in **Mindful Performance Breaks**. These can be 1 – 3 minute breaks to practice focused belly breathing in order to ground yourself. These breaks will help prevent resorting to your conditioned auto-pilot patterns and/or lapsing into action addiction.

## What else can help?

- ❖ Find a positive and personal trigger or a reminder that brings you back to the current moment as soon as you feel yourself spiraling into a negative or unhelpful story. Take 10 – 20 seconds to bring yourself back to the present by breathing deeply, focusing on the outbreath. It could be an image (a rainbow, a sunrise), a sound (birds singing), a piece of jewelry (a ring or pendant)



- ❖ Start meetings, even if they are virtual meetings, with 1 – 2 minutes of silence in order to allow everyone to get fully settled into the space.



- ❖ Practice deep listening in meetings. Notice when your mind wanders and gently bring it back. You may need to do this several times.



- ❖ Leave your desk periodically to walk around while staying present. Take some breaths of fresh air by just walking outside – even for a moment.



- ❖ Listen to some soothing music while drinking a cup of tea/coffee and allow the music to shift your emotions while you practice breathing.



- ❖ Take a few heart-centered breaths by placing your hands over your heart and breathe in for 5 seconds and out for 5 seconds. Focus on something that evokes gratitude, grace and joy.



- ❖ Notice changes in your body, when does it tense up, withdraw, or become combative? Learn about these and the conditions that cause them and then find ways to retrain yourself to react from a more grounded and conscious place.



- ❖ Pay attention to what you are eating. Ask your body what nourishment it needs and when. Avoid eating mindlessly because you're bored or upset. Pause before you go to get lunch or a snack and just listen and then act from that place of knowing. Your body will celebrate!



## Resources:

### Centering Practices and Guided Meditations to aid in Mindful Performance Breaks:

- <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/centering-practice-leadership/id469874675?mt=8>
- <http://www.transformbda.com/centering-exercises/>
- <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/mindful-leadership/id777820403?mt=8>
- <https://itunes.apple.com/app/apple-store/id1093360165?mt=8>
- <http://app.shambhala.org/>
- [www.getsomeheadspace.com](http://www.getsomeheadspace.com)
- [www.mindapps.se](http://www.mindapps.se)
- [www.mentalworkout.com](http://www.mentalworkout.com)
- <https://www.simplehabit.com/quentin-finney>