

# A GUIDE TO MINDFULNESS

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What It Is and How to Practice It

[MYPRACTICECOUNSELLING.COM.AU](http://MYPRACTICECOUNSELLING.COM.AU)

MYND

# Welcome to MYND Practice

*Hi There!*

MYND Practice was founded to help our emotionally crippled society heal by providing compassion, communication, and a sense of belonging. We are dedicated to social change that helps bring about initiatives that better people's lives.

MYND Practice believes it can make a difference in the way society approaches mental health, helping to create a more stable, happier, and fulfilled society.

MYND Practice has been dedicated to fulfilling its mission of inspiring and giving people hope by assisting them in making positive changes in their health, relationships, businesses, and finances.

Counselling isn't just about making a bad life good, but making a good life great. It's about building a brighter future for yourself and your loved ones. Our single focus is helping you achieve what's most important to you.

*Jonathan Riley*

## MYND PRACTICE FOUNDER

Hi, I'm Jonathan Riley. I have dedicated my life to the field of mental health as a writer, educator, counsellor, and speaker.

No matter where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.



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# INTRODUCTION

## "Happiness is an inside job"

The purpose of this workbook is to help you in developing a mindfulness plan for your personal growth. While the workbook may be helpful, you can also see a therapist or counsellor who can help you make much faster progress with your mindfulness.

There are a number of things that are vital in supporting your mindfulness plan. These include developing a vision of where you want to be and planning how you are going to get there. This workbook is a tool to help you map out what you want to change so you can actually make it happen.



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PART **1**

## WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

We'll show you how to start, feel better, reduce your stress, and enjoy life a little more.

PART **2**

## DO I NEED MINDFULNESS?

12 questions to assess mindfulness of thoughts, experiences, and actions in daily life

PART **3**

## HOW TO PRACTICE MINDFULNESS

Learn the skill of paying attention to the present moment by noticing when your mind and thoughts

PART **4**

## THE MINDFULNESS CHALLENGE

How to implement gratitude, empathy and mindfulness in your daily life.

PART **5**

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Reflect on what you valued most about practicing mindfulness.

My Practice Counselling

# LET'S GET STARTED

Live One Day at a Time, You'll get there

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# DO I NEED MINFULNESS?

- |           |  |                          |                          |
|-----------|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>1</b>  | Do you feel that too many demands are being made on you? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>2</b>  | Do you feel irritable?                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>3</b>  | Do you feel lonely or isolated?                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>4</b>  | Do you feel tired?                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>5</b>  | Do you have too many decisions to make?                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>6</b>  | Do you feel tense?                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>7</b>  | Do you feel you're in a hurry?                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>8</b>  | Do you have many worries?                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>9</b>  | Are afraid for the future?                               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>10</b> | Do you have too many things to do                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>11</b> | Do you feel mentally exhausted?                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>12</b> | Do you have trouble relaxing?                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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# WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness is a practice or set of practices that develop the capacity for a calm, focused mind that is open, responsive and sensitive for optimal teaching, advising, management, and learning. Based on neuroscientific research, mindfulness has been proven to help participants reduce stress and revitalise their professional and personal lives by promoting awareness, presence, compassion, concentration, and focus.

Those who practice mindfulness often report

- Feeling more positive
- Reduced emotional reactivity
- Cultivation of compassion of oneself and others
- Minimised drama in everyday life
- Lowered stress levels, even in hectic times
- Appreciation for the small things in life
- Greater connection to values and goals

In practicing mindfulness, we invite ourselves to notice experiences as they unfold from moment to moment.

# MINDFULNESS ASSESSMENT

- |           |  |                          |                          |
|-----------|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>1</b>  | I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the present.        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>2</b>  | When I'm doing something, my mind wanders, and I'm easily distracted.          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>3</b>  | I am fully present when I am around other people.                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>4</b>  | I have the mental energy to be creative.                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>5</b>  | I am able to stay calm under pressure.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>6</b>  | I am aware of how I am feeling from moment to moment.                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>7</b>  | I have a tendency to do multiple tasks at the same time.                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>8</b>  | It seems I am "running on automatic" without much awareness of what I'm doing. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>9</b>  | I tend to be uncomfortable sitting still and prefer to be doing something.     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>10</b> | I tend to walk quickly without noticing my surroundings.                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>11</b> | I worry about work even when I am not working.                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>12</b> | I have trouble sleeping because thoughts keep me awake.                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

# HOW TO PRACTICE MINDFULNESS

When we first start to practice mindfulness it can be frustrating, overwhelming, aggravating, and hard to do. That's okay; you're not alone if you are feeling like this. Over time, with practice and patience, you'll hopefully notice those feelings dissipate. There are a few things to keep in mind while practicing mindfulness that might help to ease some of these frustrations.

**Here are some considerations to keep in mind while you practice:**

**Timing:** Finding the right time and place to practise mindfulness can be difficult. You'll want to find some space within your daily schedule and try to practice daily!

**Location:** You'll also want to pick a space that is quiet and brings you peace. Especially when you are first starting out, it can be helpful to have the space be free of distractions such as your phone.

**Breathwork:** This is often a common skill throughout mindfulness practice. In order to practice breathwork, you want to pick a part of your body that you feel comfortable focusing on that moves while you breathe naturally such as your nostrils, stomach, or chest.

**Sitting:** If a mindfulness exercise requires sitting, you'll want to sit comfortably either in a chair or on the floor. If you choose to sit in a chair, sit with your feet flat, shoulder width apart, and try to sit comfortably upright. You'll also want to rest your hands on your knees or somewhere comfortable, like in your lap.

**Pestering thoughts:** Remember that we need to acknowledge those thoughts, accept them for what they are, and move on.

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# THE MINDFULNESS CHALLENGE



We hope that the daily mindfulness prompts and questions we have prepared for you will help you get started on your journey.

Each day, you will be presented with new questions to consider, each of which will explore the concept from a different perspective and help you delve deeper into mindfulness. These mindfulness prompts are intended to help you pause, reflect, delve deep, and learn more about yourself. So, we want to challenge you this week to take 5-10 minutes every day to reflect on the events – both good

and bad – that you experience each day. Mindfulness can assist you in learning from adversity and expressing gratitude for the good things in your life. Studies have shown that just a few minutes of mindfulness a day not only helps you unwind, but also inspires self-confidence, improves communication, enhances your memory, shifts your perspective, and helps you achieve your goals.

## S.T.O.P. Practice

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**S.T.O.P. Practice** is a mindfulness practice for stress that helps us to come back to the present moment and gain perspective. It helps us to mitigate the negative effects of stress and instead see that we have the ability to control our response to the pressure of stress.<sup>1</sup>

**S**

### **STOP.**

When you feel stressed or overwhelmed and feel like reacting, stop and get into a comfortable position.

**T**

### **TAKE A FEW DEEP BREATHS.**

Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Allow your body to fall into its natural rhythm of breathing.

**O**

### **OBSERVE.**

Notice where there is tension or tightness in your body and observe the thoughts and feelings in your mind. Simply be aware of your experience in the moment and just let it be whatever it is.

**P**

### **PROCEED.**

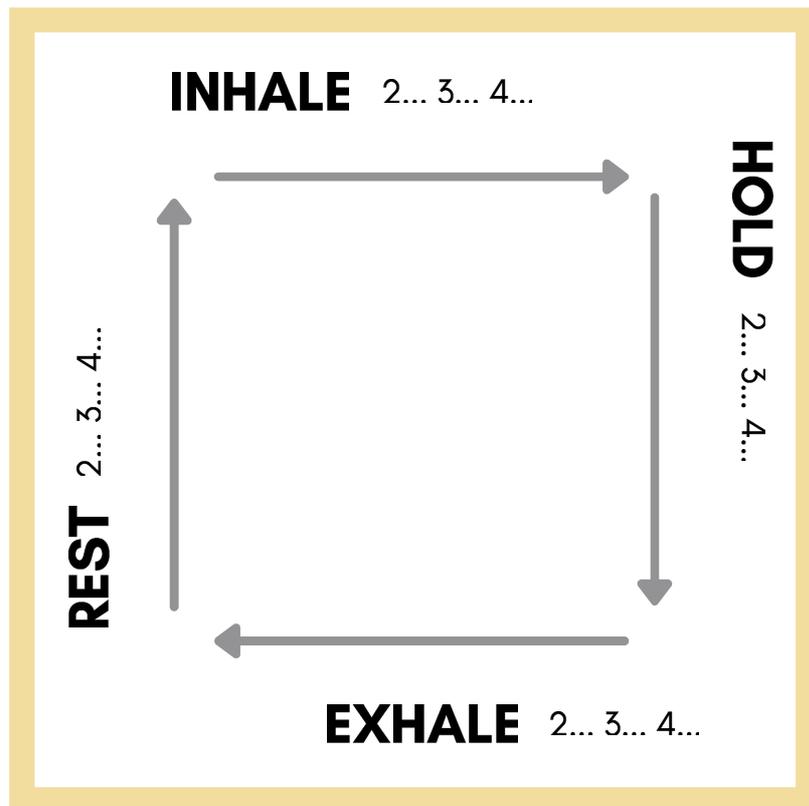
Ask yourself: "What's most important for me to pay attention to right now?" or "What am I needing right now?" Move forward by acting on the answer to those questions.

This practice has been called a "portable" practice for stress because it can be done anywhere at anytime. Whether you are feeling stressed at work, class, home, the library, or even during your commute to campus, this practice can help you to feel grounded and rise to meet the stress you are facing.

# Square Breathing

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**Square Breathing**, also known as "box breathing," involves inhaling for four counts, holding for four counts, exhaling for four counts and resting for another four counts. It is used as a stress management technique, and it can be practiced anywhere at any time. It helps us to slow and focus on our breathing.



Some people find it helpful to visualize the box in their head with their eyes open or shut and to follow the lines of the box as they continue to breathe and count.

If you're new to this practice, consider trying just one full square to start, or shortening the duration of the rest/hold, then returning your breath to its natural pace.

## 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding

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**Grounding** is a practice that helps you breathe and connect to the present moment. It helps you to refocus when you are feeling stressed, anxious, foggy, or even just "off." The 5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique is a helpful way to ground yourself anytime anywhere.

It may take a few times to get acquainted with this practice, but remember to have a beginners mind and be patient with yourself as you complete this exercise.<sup>1</sup>

### **5 Find five things that you can see in the space around you.**

What's in front of you? Behind you? What's above?

### **4 Notice four things you can physically feel in the present moment.**

Are your hands resting somewhere? Are your feet touching the floor? Do you feel a draft or breeze?

### **3 Listen to three sounds that you hear.**

Are there birds? Wind? People chatting? Papers shuffling?

### **2 Pick out two things you can smell, or recall two smells that you enjoy.**

Does the room you're in have a particular scent? Do you smell coffee, freshly cut grass, someone's lunch?

### **1 Describe one good quality about yourself.**

Be kind to yourself.

# Creating a Joy List

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**Creating a joy list** is a great way to be mindful of the good things in our lives. Write down all the things (people, places, activities, songs, etc.) that bring you joy. Then, be intentional about integrating at least one of those things into your life every day. You can also go to this list when you are feeling down or need a pick-me-up.

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_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

# Mindful Reflection

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Mindfulness can be simply creating space for our emotions, thoughts, and habits to be noticed. Journaling and reflection can be a great way to do that. Also, reflecting on how mindfulness is affecting our day to day can be helpful.

What matters most in your life? What do you value?

What helps you to feel enough, whole?

Is there one thing/thought/expectation/should that you can let go of today that might enhance your sense of well-being?

What other reflective questions could you benefit you at this time?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

# Mindfulness & Gratitude

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**Mindfulness and gratitude** go hand in hand. Consciously giving thanks for the good things and people in our lives positively affects our well-being and relationships. Regularly expressing gratitude has been shown to help people enjoy better health and achieve greater happiness.

**Try practicing gratitude here.** You could be grateful for any number of things: people, places, moments from your day, things, opportunities, etc.

## I AM GRATEFUL FOR...

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If you want to continue this practice beyond the workbook, consider starting a gratitude journal. A few times a week, write down up to five things you are grateful for. Remember to be specific and personal with what you write down. Aim for depth over breadth. See good things throughout your day as "gifts" and write them down in detail in your journal.

# Guided Meditation

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**Guided Meditation** is a script that you listen to, read, etc. that focuses your attention, promotes breath work, and creates calm. It is a great way to get started with a meditation practice.

Mediation has many benefits for our mental health, including: increased awareness and compassion, a sense of calm, and improved focus. It also benefits our physical health by relaxing our bodies and reducing our stress responses in the body, specifically in the parasympathetic nervous system. This helps lower blood pressure, heart rate, and oxygen consumption, resulting in higher energy levels and better sleep, as well as a strengthened immune response.

## Five reasons to Meditate:

- Helps us to better understand ourselves
- Lowers our stress levels
- Helps us feel more connected with others
- Improves our focus
- Helps to clear the chatter in our brains

## Some Guided Meditations to Try:



Insight Timer



Headspace



Goodful Meditation  
(YouTube)

# Mindful Self-Care

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**Self-care** means evaluating your needs and following through on the honest answer. According to mindful.org, it is "the practice of taking an active role in protecting our own well-being, pursuing happiness, and having the ability, tools, and resources to respond to periods of stress so that they don't result in imbalance and lead to a health crisis."<sup>1</sup>

One way to mindfully integrate self-care into your life is to create a self-care plan. This plan can act as a roadmap for times of stress in order to help you get back "home" and find balance again.

## **How to create a self-care plan:**<sup>1</sup>

- Create a self-care activity list organized around different parts of your life. Don't forget to include:
  - Work
  - Physical Fitness
  - Relationships
  - Community

For each area above, write down the activities or strategies that you can call on in times of stress that will contribute to your well-being and help you to find balance. *(See template on next page)*

- Note any barriers that could arise and how to acknowledge and move past them.
- Share your plan with your close friends and community to hold yourself accountable.

# Self-Care Roadmap

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Use this page to create your self-care roadmap. See how-to on previous page for directions.

## Work:

Barriers:  
Supports:

## Physical Fitness:

Barriers:  
Supports:

## Relationships / Community:

Barriers:  
Supports:

## Other:

Barriers:  
Supports:

### Additional self-care ideas:

- Unplug - put your phone away, turn off social media and the news
- Schedule a call with a friend or relative during your lunch break
- Go to bed early
- Ask for help
- Say "no" - and say "yes" to yourself
- Take a stretch break

# Mindful Movement

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**Mindful Movement** allows us to bring full attention to our movement, our body, our breath and how we feel physically. This can take the form of breathing exercises, a walking meditation, stretching, yoga, or bringing your attention to your breath and your body when you feel stressed or overwhelmed. Mindful movement has many benefits including shifting the activity of our autonomic nervous system, which regulates our heart rate, blood pressure and our flight-or-fight response. When we combine physical movement with mindfulness, we combine two highly effective strategies for decreasing stress and bringing a sense of calm to our mind and body.<sup>1</sup>

## **Here are some ways to make your movement more mindful:**

- Be fully present with your body when you work out. Leave the headphones at home and focus on how you feel.
- When walking, ditch the distractions like your phone, and focus on your body and your breath as you walk.
- If you sit a lot throughout the day, make an effort to move and take breaks regularly. Set a timer if needed.

## **A Basic Walking Meditation:<sup>2</sup>**

- Begin by walking at a normal pace.
- Notice how your body feels. Are you tense? Are you relaxed? Are you tired?
- Pay attention to how you walk. What is the pace? How big are your steps? Feel your feet on the ground with each step.
- Tune into what is going on around you. Focus on the sights, sounds, smells around you as you walk.
- Then, turn your attention back to your body and your pace while walking.
- Breathe in and out at a natural pace. Notice how your body feels now that you've taken this time for yourself.

# A Meditation for Justice

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Mindfulness opens us up to a deeper understanding of ourselves and our world, increases our tolerance with discomfort, and cultivates connection and belonging.

Most of us have ways of thinking about ourselves and others that are limited and riddled with misconceptions and biases. It causes harm to many people and to ourselves when we think about the identities we and others hold in this way.

Mindfulness helps us see the full context for people's actions, decrease our negativity bias, and hold others as equals to ourselves. Mindfulness helps us to tolerate the discomfort that comes from engaging in deeper, richer, more complicated conversations on race, gender, privilege, and more. Mindfulness helps us stay aware in dialogue rather than withdraw.

## **Meditation: Compassion for Suffering of Injustice**

*(inspired by the gathas of Thich Nhat Hanh & Toglen practice)*

- Be aware of breathing in, aware of breathing out
- Be aware of body, releasing tensions
- Be aware of heart, opening heart, tenderness to heart
- Be aware of emotions, holding in compassion, smiling, easing/releasing with breath
- Notice your own suffering of injustice - be aware, notice how it manifests in body, emotions
- Hold this suffering in compassion, ease with breath
- Be aware of this suffering as a pattern in the world - visualize how it affects many people. Hold in compassion, send ease, wish for relief
- Notice suffering of marginalized people. What are you aware of?
- Return to awareness of breath, ease, release of tension
- Notice suffering of privileged people (guilt, disconnection, feel this energy, hold in compassion, release, ease, send relief)
- Return to awareness of breath, ease, release of tension

# Mindful Eating

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With **mindful eating**, we focus on "understanding what foods nourish us and what foods help us stay healthy while also encouraging a deeper appreciation of every meal, every mouthful, and every ingredient," accord to [headspace.com](https://www.headspace.com). It is about being mindful of what our bodies need, being present while eating, and freeing ourselves from restrictions that create feelings of guilt, anxiety, and self-judgement. Bringing mindfulness into eating means a kinder, gentler approach to eating.<sup>1</sup>

## **Six ways to practice mindful eating:**<sup>2</sup>

- Listening to our bodies and stopping when we feel full
- Eating when our bodies tell us to eat (i.e., when our stomach growls, energy feels low)
- Eating with others, at set times and places, putting distractions away (i.e., phones, tv)
- Eating food that are healthy, but also eating foods that taste good to us
- When eating, just eating—again, putting distractions away
- Considering where the food comes from

## **Tips for Mindful Eating:**<sup>1</sup>

- Notice your senses while you are eating. This means you may have to put down your phone, close your laptop, and put away any distractions while you eat.
- Get rid of restrictions. Mindful eating is NOT a diet! Instead of restrictions, mindful eating focuses on savoring our food without judgement and finding what foods feel most nourishing for our bodies.
- Listen to your gut. Your gut knows best when you're hungry, not hungry, too full, etc. Listening to what our bodies are telling us is not only an effective way to be mindful about how much we're eating but also to know what foods don't agree with us.
- Know who you are as an eater. Do you like to graze? Do you prefer snacking? Do you eat a strict three meals a day? Whatever type of eating you do (there's no wrong way to eat!), acknowledge it and it will help you to understand why you eat the way you do.

# Reflection Questions

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Throughout this workbook we have practiced many mindfulness skills and tools:

- S.T.O.P Practice
- Mindful Movement
- Square Breathing
- Gratitude Practice
- Guided Meditation
- Joy List
- Mindful Eating
- and more!

Which of these mindfulness skills / practices would you like to continue?

What have you valued most about your time practicing mindfulness?

How can you keep everyday mindfulness in your life going forward?

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# THANK YOU!

We're so grateful to have you as a customer, and we hope you love what you're getting. Get in touch with us if there is anything else we can do for you.

“Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom” — Aristotle

*Jonathan Riley*

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