

3 Mindfulness Techniques for Living in the Present Moment

Getting into the present moment can be difficult in the best of circumstances. Use these mindfulness techniques to help you be more present and productive.

Life on Earth is an expression of the present moment and a journey with a beginning and end. Living and creating it shapes the concepts of past and future. While reading this you shape a new understanding and create your next move. We're about to tackle two of the most complex concepts of all: mindfulness and presence.

To use mindfulness techniques effectively and efficiently, first we need to understand the basics of mental energy. The techniques won't serve you if you are not capable of managing your mental fluctuations and the emotions produced by them.

Knowing this, we can effectively and efficiently apply a mindfulness technique and get the most out of the present moment.

Scratching the Surface of the Present

The mind is naturally collecting and processing information permanently, so it's constantly occupied. We're filling it up, and we've been doing so ever since we were born: childhood memories, imaginations, habits, traumas, ideas, and so on. Our mind is full of information, but it is not always mindful in a way that makes us aware of that information.

So, how do mindfulness techniques coordinate all this information in the present?

Since the mind is processing thoughts at an incredible speed, sometimes there is awareness of what is going on, and sometimes there isn't. We often lack awareness when dealing with multiple emotions, thoughts, or events at once. Thinking always happens in the present moment, but that doesn't mean we are conscious of what that thinking is producing.

It is not enough to say: 'Yes, there is nothing but the present moment, and yes, I am fully aware of here and now.' And then? What happens when you have to deal with complex conflicts and negative emotions here and now?

You can be well aware of your memories, ideas, and knowledge, but if you fail to understand how they create mental energy, your present moment may end up being occupied with the past and the future.

The Basics of Mental Energy

Our mental energy is developed through five mental fluctuations.

Simply put, a thought is a mental construct that produces certain emotions, such as enthusiasm, sadness, frustration, and happiness. The feeling, or mental energy, is the output or the capacity of the mind you get as a result of your thinking. Be aware that the five mental fluctuations can be applied positively as well as negatively:

1. **Righteous Knowledge** – Cognition of the level of quality values lived in the present moment.
2. **False Knowledge** – Taking the wrong for right; wrong perception or misconception.
3. **Imagination** – The origin of an idea, and the power of creation.
4. **Memory** – A recalling capability of how presence was lived.
5. **Sleep** – A state of re-setting the fluctuations; the replenishment of mental energy, resting of mind and body.

These fluctuations and how they're applied shape you as an individual: your mental energy (emotions) develops from the coordination of these fluctuations.

Knowledge + memories + imaginations + misconception = Emotions

The Present Moment

Presence, which is the ultimate reality of existence on a cosmic scale, untouched by any human concept, is interrupted by our ability to think and use intelligence, which can memorize or imagine a present moment. These mental activities — the recalling and constructing of thoughts — have created the concepts of past and future.

This is also where 'time' comes in as an invention for the means of measurement and communication in our conscious world. We use time to label our past, present, and future but are often more concerned with the past and future as we attempt to rework past memories or plan for future events.

The present moment is difficult to tap into because it feels so fleeting. The past and future feel lengthy, tangible in some way. It is much more difficult to bring yourself to a moment that you know will soon pass. However, it is important to do so if you want to improve your focus and mental health.

The Length of the Present Moment

The present moment is as long as you want it to be. It can be as long as a beautiful melody, as the sound of the crashing waves upon the shore, or as the sound of a slamming door. Your perception decides. And the technique below can help you.

To live in the present moment, you need a continuous, tangible experience. That continuous experience is your breathing. Breathing is so powerful because you will always be able to find it in the present moment.

The longer you are conscious of your breathing, the longer you live in the present moment and the longer your mindfulness is present. Here we come to the mindfulness techniques.

Mindfulness Techniques

The following are techniques to move you into the present moment. Experiment with each of these and find which one resonates with you.

1. Conscious Breathing

This involves closing your eyes and focusing on the sound and movement of your breath. Find where you in your body you feel your breath the most. Some say it's in their chest, others in their stomach. Some people find it helpful to focus on the movement of air in and out of the nose. Wherever you feel it most, focus on that.

If your mind wanders, that's ok. Simply practice bringing yourself back to the breath over and over again.

Some of the benefits of this technique^[1] include:

1. Calming mental fluctuations
2. Enabling identification and distinction of emotions
3. Fading of (negative) emotions
4. Increasing attention and concentration
5. Improving self-inquiry and self-knowledge
6. Improving the quality of imagination, memory, and knowledge

An excerpt from the book *About the Power of Breath* explains the connection between the breath, awareness, and presence:

'The breath is the only natural connection of the mind with the Presence. And this connection between the breath and the mind is constant, permanent, it cannot be interrupted, it cannot be left out while the process of life is happening.'^[2]

Breathe consciously and notice that your mindfulness is given. With this technique, you can stretch the length of your present moment and all mental qualities you wish to acquire will develop as a result in its own time.

2. Gazing

The mindfulness technique of gazing is simple to perform and has an immediate effect. Pointing your eyes at a certain object for as long as you can will bring your thoughts into one place.

Choose a flower, a candle light, or any interesting object you like and just gaze at it. Don't analyze the object; just stare at it for as long as you can, and you'll notice the improvement of your concentration, the awareness of yourself, your state of being, and eventually of your thoughts.

During the gazing you will be able to see, to observe a thought interrupting this mindfulness technique, which indicates the level of your awareness.

Repeat this exercise at least three times a day for a few minutes and make notes of the progress of your concentration and awareness.

3. Humming

The technique of humming is another way to enhance awareness and focus the mind.

1. Close your eyes, looking at the inner side of your eyelids, and inhale slowly and deeply through your nose.
2. Cover your ears with your palms to feel the humming more intensely.

3. Exhale, creating a humming sound that resonates from your belly.
4. Right after the humming is over, before your next inhalation, hold your breath for a few seconds and observe the one-pointedness of your mind.

Repeat this for at least ten breaths and increase this practice as you see fit.

I personally love this technique, as it instantly focuses my mind in the present moment and has an immediate soothing effect on my whole body and mind. Whenever I feel stressed, I do the humming exercise, and it instantly relieves all the pressure.

The subtle vibration of the humming is an inner massage of your body, mind and soul, and makes you one (mindful) with the present moment.

Why Is Mindfulness Important?

Once your awareness moves away from the breath, you become aware of things and activities inside and outside yourself again. You may be gaining knowledge, but the inquiry into your true being and your psychological involvement often cannot take place.

Mindfulness, with practice, will help you focus on what's important and get rid of negativity and harmful thought patterns. You will find that you capture more of the important things happening in life and that you're able to construct positive memories based on what's happening here and now.

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