

# Tap the Power *of Mindfulness*

A GUIDE TO  
LESS STRESS &  
MORE JOY

TOTAL  WELLNESS



# Welcome.

HR professionals are more stressed out than ever.

Most HR pros have a LOT on their plate (Who doesn't? But they really do!) It turns out that going lean, working faster, doing more with less — are not that effective for long-term success. Truly forward-thinking leaders recognize that managing their stress is good for them and their organization.

With that in mind, we have created this guide to help you reduce your stress levels through relaxation, meditation and mindfulness.

So take a deep breath and let's get started.



# Introduction.

Mindfulness has been a buzzword over the last couple of years, but what does it really mean? And more importantly, how does being more mindful actually impact your day-to-day life?

First of all, let's define mindfulness. Mindfulness is not a technique. It's a skill. It's the skill of being fully present and fully aware. According to Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D., a meditation teacher, writer and scientist, it's about paying attention in a particular way. On purpose, in the present moment and non-judgementally.

Mindfulness also involves acceptance. This means paying attention to thoughts and feelings without judging or reacting to them. When you're mindful, there is no "right" or "wrong" way to think or feel in a particular moment.

The beauty of mindfulness is that it's just about training the mind. When you're in tune with the present moment and how you're feeling, you're better equipped to handle stress.

And that's why it's so appealing.

Mindfulness is the key to achieving reduced stress levels. Instead of worrying about decisions made in the past or things too far ahead in the future, mindfulness keeps us committed to the present.

So read on to discover eight ways that you can practice mindfulness in as little as a few minutes each day.

# The Science.

Analysis of 163 well-designed academic studies found that mindfulness practice had a particularly positive and substantial effect on factors including stress and anxiety management.

Sedlmeier, P. et al. (2012)

# A Myriad of Benefits.

## Mindfulness Improves:

- Focus
- Memory
- Immune System
- Creativity
- Relationships
- Compassion
- Quality of Life

## Mindfulness Reduces:

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Insomnia
- Addiction
- Blood Pressure
- Pain

**Real Life Example:** Aetna instituted a mindfulness training program designed to teach employees how to take short breaks to center themselves through meditation and yoga. More than a quarter of Aetna's 50,000 employees have taken part. Mindfulness scores increased as expected, but incredibly, on average, stress levels dropped by 28%, sleep quality improved by 20%, and pain fell by 19%.

# More Scientific Studies.

Research has found mindfulness practice leads to significant improvements in critical cognitive skills after only four days of training for 20 minutes per day.

Zeidan, F et al. (2010)

*8 Easy Ways  
You Can Practice  
Mindfulness*

# Start Your Day With Yoga.

The first moments of each day are precious. It's a time where we can influence how we are going to think, act and respond for the rest of the day, so it makes sense to make that time positive and inspiring.

Yoga has a myriad of benefits no matter what time of the day we practice. But there's just something profoundly special about rolling out your mat at the start of the day, that even a 10-minute practice can do wonders. By taking the sacred time in the morning to clear your mind, deepen your breath and choose your perspective for your day, you are actively creating the day ahead.

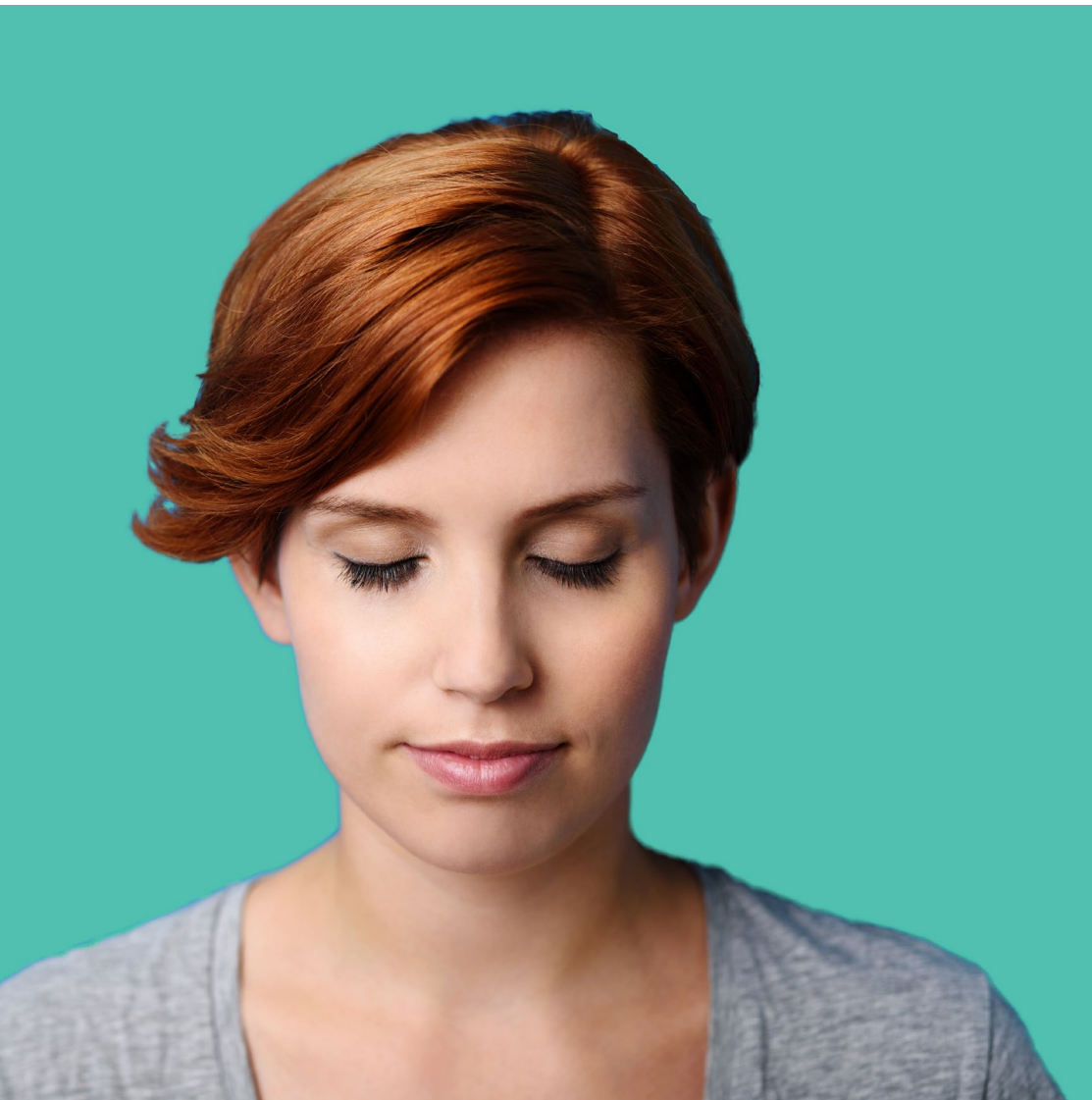
New to yoga? Get step-by-step instructions [here](#).



Practicing mindfulness makes people more likely to be receptive to messages encouraging healthy behavior, and then act on them.



# Observe Your Breathing.



The most basic way to do mindful breathing is simply to focus your attention on your breath, the inhale and exhale. You can do this while standing, but ideally, you should be sitting in a comfortable position.

For one minute each hour, stop everything you're doing and focus only on your breath. Close your eyes and notice where you store stress in your body. As your breath becomes slower and smoother, imagine sending your breath to that area as you inhale. Imagine a knot loosening as you exhale. Repeat this cycle with each inhalation and exhalation.

Not only are you giving your mind a chance to take a break but you will return to your work refreshed. Letting go of a stressful situation and allowing yourself to just 'be' for a moment can bring about a new perspective and/or help solve a problem. It's like trying to remember someone's name, only to remember it later when we're not thinking about it.

# Fill Your Day With Color.



Coloring can be beneficial because it has a de-stressing effect. The act of coloring requires repetition and attention to detail, so you can focus on the activity, rather than your worries. Coloring requires modest attention focused outside of self-awareness. It is a simple activity that takes us outside ourselves. In the same way, cutting the lawn, knitting, or taking a Sunday drive can all be relaxing.

By removing ourselves as the focal point for our thoughts, we become immersed in what we are doing in the present moment. When this is accomplished, coloring becomes very much like a meditative exercise.

[Download our free coloring template to unwind.](#)

# Slow Down Your Lunch.

Many of us eat unconsciously, shoveling food into our mouths, rarely tasting much beyond the first bite. Instead, eat slowly, tasting each bite, thinking about how the food got to the table, and appreciating how it fuels your body.

Slowing down your pace will help you enjoy the tastes of the food as well as prevent you from overeating. Focus on the textures and tastes of your food. Instead of rushing to fill your stomach, try savoring each spoonful.

The more aware you are about how and what you eat, the healthier your food choices become and the more relaxing mealtime will be. Use your lunch break for good!

Mindfulness has been around for 2,500 years and has been part of psychological therapies since the 1970s.





# Notice Nature.

This one is super simple.

It is designed to connect us with the beauty of the natural environment, something that is easily missed when we are rushing around in the car or hopping on trains on the way to work.

Choose a natural object from within your immediate environment and focus on watching it for a minute or two. This could be a flower or an insect, or even the clouds or the moon.

Don't do anything except notice the thing you are looking at. Simply relax into a harmony for as long as your concentration allows. Look at it as if you are seeing it for the first time. Visually explore every aspect of its formation. Allow yourself to be consumed by its presence. Allow yourself to connect with its energy and its role and purpose in the natural world.

# Enjoy Mindful Movement.

Walking is a great way to integrate mindfulness into your everyday life. Most of the time walking is utilitarian: we go from point A to B. Our mind is focused on our destination, what we aim to do when we get there, or various other concerns.

When we can learn to walk with full awareness, our motion becomes a field for soothing our hearts and training our minds to dwell more completely in the present.

One of the basic methods for cultivating mindfulness is a “walking meditation,” which involves focusing closely on the physical experience of walking, paying attention to the specific components of each step. With practice, an everyday action that you do automatically can become an opportunity for greater focus and awareness—a habit you can try to bring to other mundane activities as well.



# Listen to Music.

Have you ever noticed how certain songs can make you feel relaxed? It's not just in your head—music really can help you calm down and fight stress.

Music can be a powerful way to experience the present moment. Music relaxation techniques have been shown to reduce stress and pain as well as insomnia symptoms. Listening to soothing music (Pachelbel's Canon in D in one study) may have a preventative effect against stress.

A study of college students found that listening to classical music at night improved sleep and decreased depression compared to either audiobooks or nothing.

When choosing music to relax to at home, it's best to pick instrumentals with a calming pace, including classical, light jazz, and stringed tunes as well as nature soundtracks, depending on what you personally find most appealing.

Lay back, turn out the lights, and focus on the melody and beat of the music. Use headphones or earbuds if that helps you focus or shut out external noise. Give yourself permission to only listen to the music, without simultaneously checking your email or refreshing your Facebook feed.

*Music is Good  
for the Soul and  
Your Health*



# End Your Day on a Positive Note.

Even a brief mindfulness meditation practice, for as little as three consecutive days, has been shown to alleviate psychological stress.

Before going to sleep, recollect all the pleasant moments of the whole day. Appreciate all the sweet and small moments. Be thankful for everything. Don't waste time in getting irritated by your stressful moments. You will get nothing in return except more stress. Analyze your depressing moments of the day and look out for a positive solution.

Try a gratitude journal: Write down up to five things for which you feel grateful. The physical record is important—don't just do this exercise in your head. The things you list can be relatively small in importance ("The tasty sandwich I had for lunch today.") or relatively large ("My sister gave birth to a healthy baby boy."). The goal of the exercise is to remember a good event, experience, person, or thing in your life—then enjoy the good emotions that come with it.



# 5 Day Challenge

Would you like a kick start a regular mindfulness practice? We have a five-day challenge to help you get started today. The idea is to develop consistency with a routine and then you can start adding more time as you see fit. We encourage you to continue practicing any one or combination of mindfulness practices after the first five days.

**Day 1:** Watch the trees. Throughout the day, be mindful of the trees around you. The shapes, heights, ways of branching, and colors. Try to observe trees like you are seeing them for the first time.

**Day 2:** Take a moment for yourself today by hitting the “off” switch on your phone. Try this at mealtime, when hanging out with friends/family or on your commute.

**Day 3:** Relax at the end of the day with a guided meditation. Try Guided Meditation: A forest walk video available on YouTube. Click **here** to access.

**Day 4** Try some mindful coloring today (or spend some time fully focused on a creative hobby you enjoy). Aim for 5-10 minutes.

**Day 5:** Work can be so hectic that we forget to take a moment to be present. Try placing a few small stickers or post-its in your work area – on your computer, desk or phone as a reminder to pause, breathe and be present.

*“Peace and happiness are available in every moment. Peace is every step.” —Thich Nhat Hanh*





### **Final Thoughts.**

Much of our time is spent rushing from place to place, so preoccupied with our next activity that we don't really notice what we're doing. We risk not experiencing our life as we live it.

Practicing mindfulness can help. Mindfulness helps us tune into what we're sensing and experiencing in the present moment—it's the ability to pay more careful attention to our thoughts, feelings and sensations, without judging them as good or bad.

Try a variety of approaches to find what sticks. Daily practice works best, but if you have a busy schedule, aim to practice at least three or four times a week. And don't give up if you feel like it's not working on the right away. These mindful activities are like any other skill or workout — the more you do it, the stronger you will get.

# Stress Less With TotalWellness.

At TotalWellness, we love helping people reduce stress-both in life and in the workplace. We have a worry-free wellness program called Beata that your employees will love.

We use the power of positivity to help small to medium-sized business improve the health and performance of their employees. Beata is:

- One of the most affordable wellness options on the market
- Simple to use and easy to implement
- Designed to include support from a TotalWellness consultant who will help manage your program
- Focused on helping you stay on track with easy-to-read reports and program outcomes

Ready to create a happier, healthier, more productive workforce? We'd love to help. Talk to an expert at TotalWellness to get started.

Click [here](#) to learn more.



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