



The National Self-Represented Litigants Project

# Considering Mindfulness

How you can use Mindfulness to increase your focus and relieve the stress of representing yourself






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# How and when to use this primer

“ Mindfulness means being awake.  
It means knowing what you are doing.

– Jon Kabat-Zinn

Congratulations for considering Mindfulness!

The information you’re about to discover can help you relieve the inevitable stress of representing yourself.

Julie Macfarlane (Director of the National Self-Represented Litigants Project) met Charlotte Thaarup on a trip to Australia to talk about self-represented litigants (SRLs). At one event, Charlotte approached Julie after her presentation and asked if she might be interested in collaborating on something tailored to the needs and experiences of self-represented litigants. And this Primer was born.

What you’re going through as an SRL isn’t easy. It’s kind of like a marathon. But one where you’re not sure of the weather conditions, or how long your race will actually be.

Adopting a daily Mindfulness practice can help you stay calm in the moment – and more easily handle whatever comes your way.

We’ve created this primer especially for people representing themselves in family or civil court. But you may find that what you learn here can be used as a way of being, long after your legal case is behind you.

For some, Mindfulness may even become the practice of a lifetime.

## Mindfulness works *with* your other self-care routines



In our introductory primer ***So you’re representing yourself***, we give you a bird’s eye view of the legal journey you’re about to undertake. And we begin that primer by encouraging you to make self-care a priority.

You already know that engaging the legal process can be intellectually and emotionally difficult, especially in family and civil situations, which are very personal.

Staying calm and centered during your legal ordeal may not be easy. But we believe that it’s possible!

In ***So you’re representing yourself***, we cover:

- Getting into a successful mindset
- Getting a good night’s sleep
- Eating healthy and exercising
- Making time for relaxation
- Getting support from family and friends
- Arranging to have support in court

**All of these are important.** And Mindfulness is a practice that fits in nicely with any of these self-care efforts.

Please note that a Mindfulness practice is not a substitute for counseling or acute care. **If you’re feeling intense distress, anxiety, or depression, please seek professional help.**



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# How this primer will help you

By the time you're finished this primer, you'll understand what Mindfulness is, what it can do for you, and three types of Mindfulness practices you can start right away.

As you're reading, take it a step at a time. It's not a race. You may be on a steep learning curve right now so don't make this a burden.


Consider putting aside ten to thirty minutes a day at a time that is consistently quiet for you. Read this primer, then try out the exercises when you're ready.

If you keep doing Mindful meditations, they'll begin to feel like second nature. One day, you'll find that your Mindfulness practice flows easily, and you're no longer "learning," you're just being.

In time, you'll be able to do these practices anywhere. At the beginning of your day. Or on a break, to ground yourself during a mediation. Or when you want a clear mind before you make your opening statement at your trial.

In time, it'll be *your* practice: there whenever you need it.

## How this primer is organized

 Throughout this primer, we use "self-represented litigant," "person representing themselves," and "SRL" interchangeably.

**We've divided *Considering Mindfulness* into the following sections:**



### **Part 1: Three "must-do" stress busters for SRLs**

This section helps you recognize the symptoms of stress common to SRLs. And it gives you the three best self-care activities you can adopt to help you manage your stress – and stay focused.



### **Part 2: The science behind Mindfulness**

This section briefly summarizes the hard science supporting a Mindfulness practice. And exactly what Mindfulness meditations can help you achieve.



### **Part 3: Getting started with your Mindfulness practice**

This section gives you step-by-step instructions for three types of Mindful meditations, so you can put your learning into action. Plus downloadable audios you can take anywhere.



### **Part 4: If you're interested in learning more**

In this section, Charlotte invites SRLs who are interested in learning more about Mindfulness to keep in touch.

**Ready to start?  
Great – let's dive in.**



# Part 1: Three “must do” stress-busters for SRLs

“ We are in desperate need of a new way of being – in ourselves.”  
– Dan Siegel

Charlotte’s personal welcome for SRLs  
(video) (2.5 minutes)

Watch it here:  
<https://youtu.be/WOux9rha9YM>



Participating in any legal process is stressful, let alone the stress involved in also representing yourself.

As an SRL, you are going to face mental stresses as you learn legal rules, etiquette, and language. Then there’s your emotional stress related to your case, and facing the emotions of your opponent on the other side. Perhaps you’re experiencing a painful separation, or other upsetting conflict: that’s difficult enough on its own.

Add to all of this time pressures, as you meet legal deadlines while managing your regular life.

Yes, you’re likely experiencing a great deal of stress. And left untreated, stress will take its toll.



## What your emotional reactions really are

Have you ever lashed out? Taken an immediate action based on your emotional state, rather than thinking it through? At one time or another, all of us have.

And being an SRL can make even the calmest person emotionally reactive. Maybe you’re in the emotional situation of transitioning to co-parenting. Maybe you’re facing a hurt partner (or you are the hurt partner). It’s not easy.

Your emotional reactivity is based on your past experiences, plus your tendency to go into “survival mode” when threatened. But reacting emotionally during a legal case can backfire, making a legal resolution more difficult.

**A Mindfulness practice can help you not just react but intentionally *respond* to difficult situations.**



### Are you experiencing these stress factors?

Stress shows up in your thinking, emotions, and behaviour. It can affect your memory and thinking ability at a time when you need it most.

- sleep difficulties
- loss of appetite or over-eating
- poor concentration or poor memory retention
- performance dip
- uncharacteristic errors
- missed deadlines
- anger or tantrums
- violent or antisocial behaviour
- emotional outbursts
- increased alcohol or drug abuse
- nervous habits
- high level of irritation
- low sense of empathy
- being inconsiderate
- sadness or hopelessness



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# The three best ways to get a handle on your stress



In our primer *So you're representing yourself*, we stress the importance of self-care for SRLs, and give you many self-care ideas.

But if you only adopt three, make them these.

The three most important things to do to reduce your stress are:

## 1. Get enough sleep (and enough good quality sleep)



*You've had this happen, right?* Your body is exhausted. But your mind is going around and around – and sleep feels like a distant dream. The next day, you feel sluggish. And you're not as positive or productive as you could be.

Yes, Mindfulness can help with this common problem. But even before you start a Mindfulness practice, you can organize your day to get enough good quality sleep at night.

Here are two things you can do today:

- Go to bed at a time that will give you **8 hours of sleep**. An adult needs between 7 to 9 hours, on average.
- Do some **light exercise before bed**. This will help your body find a healthier sleeping pattern.

## 2. Move your body!



This may sound obvious. But it's so important for managing stress. You don't have to train as if you're competing (unless you love hard workouts). Even simple movement is beneficial.

When you exercise, you lower the stress hormone cortisol in your body. And you increase your endorphins, which are associated with good feelings and pleasure.

Here's something else you can do right this second: schedule exercise breaks on your calendar.

Choose types of exercise you'll actually do:

- Workouts at the gym;
- Walking or biking;
- Ten-minute stretching breaks twice a day;
- Gardening, or mowing the lawn; or
- A brisk walk with your dog.

## 3. Start a daily Mindfulness practice



Mindful meditations are one of the “top three” stress-busters for SRLs.

By adopting Mindfulness, you'll learn how to **intentionally use your mind to change your brain**. So instead of responding with stress, you'll respond more calmly to what's happening around you.

This calming influence is sometimes called “downregulating.” Or smoothing out painful emotional and physical reactions to stress.

This primer, *Considering Mindfulness*, will introduce you to Mindfulness, how it works and how it can help you. Plus, it will give you three types of Mindful meditations you can use anytime to unhook from stress.



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## How Mindfulness meditations can help you

“Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on the present moment.”  
– Buddha

Recent research demonstrates conclusively that an ongoing Mindfulness practice leads to tangible benefits:

- Increased focus and attention;
- Improved quality of sleep;
- Significantly reduced stress;
- Reduced cellular aging;
- Increased agility in the brain;
- Reduced blood pressure;
- Improved memory;
- Increased calm, and better emotional regulation; and
- Increased experience of joy.

## Why Mindfulness is so powerful

Mindfulness can help you respond to stress in a way that’s, well, *mindful*. In other words, shift you from being unconsciously **reactive** to your circumstances, to being consciously **responsive**.

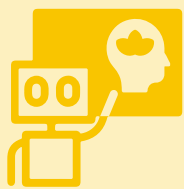
Mindfulness is not passive. It’s mind-training with attitude! This simple, gentle practice helps you *intentionally* use your mind to calm the *reactive* part of your brain. The part that *escalates* your stress, instead of managing it.

Can you imagine how this might be handy when involved in the legal process?

## Choosing what you pay attention to

It seems so obvious that brain function is the key to how we experience life. However, it was only recently that research revealed the extent to which the brain can change – and affect our experience of life.

You may not be able to snap your fingers and change the legal situation unfolding around you. But you do have the power to choose what to pay attention to, and for how long – and that’s where Mindfulness comes in.



## Part 2: The science behind Mindfulness

“Meditation is not evasion. It is a serene encounter with reality.”

– Thích Nhất Hạnh

**Mindful meditations are proven** to be beneficial to the mind, emotions, and body functions.

And it’s a simple practice available to everyone at little to no cost.

Research shows that Mindfulness reduces stress. In life, a little stress is healthy. But the stressed state is not your body’s intended home base. Especially if the stress lasts weeks, months, or years.

Your stress is a reaction to something that you perceive to be a threat.

Think of this “threat” as the gap between the reality of your present moment and where you’d rather be. You might also have a feeling that you might not be able to close the gap – which creates more stress.

When your body and brain are reacting as if you’re under threat, you might go into survival mode. This means that your empathy drops. And you may become prone to constantly thinking (or even obsessing) about the perceived threat.



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Chemically, what’s happening in your body is that stress increases your levels of cortisol and adrenaline. This doesn’t just affect your body, but also the way your brain functions.

Stress especially affects the operation of your prefrontal cortex: the region of your brain that orchestrates your thoughts and actions.

Stress directly affects your ability to:

- Regulate body functions, such as heart rate and digestion
- Attune your communication
- Remain emotionally balanced
- Respond with flexibility to change
- Manage and modulate fear
- Empathize with others
- Have insight into what’s happening
- See different perspectives
- Think and act with moral awareness (social good)
- Tune into your intuition (the wisdom of your body)

You’re probably thinking that these are all essential ingredients to effectively representing yourself in a legal case. Not to mention functioning well in general. And you’d be correct on both counts.

Mindful meditations can be beneficial to **your body, relationships, and quality of life** (and **court case**). And they can help you relieve stress.

## What Mindfulness can do for you

**“Meditation practice isn’t about throwing ourselves away and becoming something better. It’s about befriending who we are already.”**

– Pema Chödrön

Now that you understand why it’s important to manage your stress, and the science behind Mindfulness, let’s get into what a Mindful meditation can do for you and how it works.

### Mindfulness focuses your attention

Have you ever caught yourself obsessing over a painful situation? When you do this, your mind pumps out *more* stress and anxiety, not less.

What you pay attention to will determine your mental state. It’ll also determine how you experience the ups and downs of life. And though you can’t control every aspect of your court case, you can control what you focus on.

### Mindfulness helps you be in the moment

Just imagine: you find yourself in a big emotional conflict. What if you could *observe* your own reactivity in the moment. Directly sooth and calm it. Then instead of reacting emotionally, respond wisely. Would that be helpful?

In Mindfulness, this is training your brain for *presence*. Being present has the potential to improve all aspects of your life, and reduce your stress.

### Mindfulness shifts the focus to your body

What happens when you’re stressed and reactive? Stress can create body sensations that feel urgent. A part of you might even want to get physical: stomp, kick, or scream.

One of the most powerful ways to bring yourself into the moment is to **simply shift your focus to your body**. This is effective, because your body is only experienced in the present moment.

Shifting the focus to your body calms your reactivity. So instead of lashing out emotionally, and possibly escalating a situation, you can diffuse it, and move forward.



#### What to do when someone “pushes your buttons”

The next time someone “pushes your buttons,” stop, and consciously shift your attention to:

- Your breath, or
- How your body is experiencing the seat you’re sitting on, or
- The sense of your feet on the floor, or
- The feeling of your hands in your lap.

The Mindful meditations we’ll teach you in the next section will help you with this.







## Mindfulness regulates and calms your emotions

Mindfulness also trains your brain for *emotional regulation*. This means smoothing out the sharp edges of your emotions, so you're less *reactive* and more *proactive*.

As you can imagine, this can also help save you from unnecessary inner anguish and strife in relationships. When you're representing yourself, remaining calm could also mean the difference between a painful, stuck negotiation, and getting to "yes."

## Mindfulness encourages an attitude of kindness

Mindfulness trains the brain for *kindness*. Embracing an attitude of kindness can make you more mentally flexible. A kind attitude is also good for you physically and emotionally, and can improve your relationships.

During a tense court case, your ability to access kindness at the right moment can help you smooth the rough edges. And may be the difference between moving closer to a legal resolution: or further away.

## Mindfulness helps you see different perspectives

Mindfulness also trains your brain for *mental agility*. For example, the ability to zoom in and out of your predicament and to access other perspectives.

Seeing another perspective is not "giving in." It's more about having the flexibility to see different sides, and possible solutions that you may not have considered before. This could be particularly powerful during negotiations in your legal case.

Now that we've covered how Mindfulness can help you, let's dive into **Three Types of Mindfulness Practices you can try today.**

What you eventually want is for these practices to feel natural to you, so you can do them anytime, without instruction. This won't happen on day one: be patient with yourself. See which ones resonate with you, and slowly add more.



# Part 3: Getting started with your Mindfulness practice

☞ **That's life. Starting over one breath at a time.**

– Sharon Salzberg

**Have you decided to give Mindfulness a try?** Great!

Charlotte has prepared a number of Mindfulness audios and videos just for SRLs. By *reading, listening, watching,* and (most importantly!) *doing,* you'll deepen your learning. And soon, your Mindfulness practice will feel like your own.

In this section, we start by introducing the **Mindful attitudes** to adopt and the best **body posture** to use during your Mindful meditations.

## Mindful attitudes to adopt (NACK)

☞ **Surrender to what is. Let go of what was. Have faith in what will be.**

– Sonia Ricotti

If you're considering Mindfulness as part of your self-care routine, your first step is to adopt the *attitudes* of Mindfulness. They're the essential foundation and starting point of Mindfulness training.



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Individually, these attitudes relieve stress. And they're interdependent. So when you cultivate one, you'll naturally enhance them all.

The core attitudes we're talking about are:

- Non-judging
- Acceptance
- Curiosity, and
- Kindness

We call these attitudes "NACK" for short. Here's some more information on each.

### Non-judging

The human mind tends to categorize experiences in one of three ways: *like*, *dislike*, and *indifference*. Likes and dislikes are often "black and white," either/or statements, with no shades of gray. For example:

- good or bad
- fair or unfair
- thoughtful or ignorant
- right or wrong
- clever or stupid

The problem with this is that holding on to black or white attitudes will tend to make you more rigid, which results in more mental and emotional stress. And as an SRL the stress is very high when navigating the legal process.

Here's the paradox: **non-judging is impossible** – it's human nature! The art of this mindful attitude shift is to *recognize* when you're judging. And then to consider your thoughts, "interesting."

### Acceptance

Awareness is the first step in the process of personal transformation. Acceptance is the courageous next step.

**By acceptance, we don't mean being passive.** And we don't mean *liking* a difficult situation. We do mean accepting your emotions, sensations, or thoughts in the moment. And doing so without distraction, engagement, justification, explanation, or a story.

An attitude of mindful acceptance will help you to relax and stay open to the facts of your case. And as your case unfolds, to more easily and intentionally *respond*, instead of lashing out in reaction.

### Curiosity

Can you see how these attitudes feed into one another? Are you getting the NACK of this?

With Mindfulness, what you're doing is using your mind to shift from a rigid state to one that's more relaxed, creative, and open to solutions.

Curiosity is described as "beginner's mind," or seeing things from a child's perspective. Children play. They are naturally curious! But being child-like in this case isn't about being naïve.

According to Siegel (2007), curiosity creates flexibility in your emotional and physical responses. It may help you shift how you adapt and react in stressful situations<sup>1</sup>. Experience life in the present. Move *beyond* the rigid labels and "tiny boxes" of your thinking mind.

Mindful curiosity not only feels better and eases stress, it may also help you see new possibilities in your legal case.

### Kindness

Kindness is the "K" in NACK. And it's been proven to have positive effects on your psychological and physical well-being.

**The first step in cultivating kindness is to be kind to yourself.**

<sup>1</sup> Siegel Dan, "The Mindful Brain" 2007 134-163





What this means is that when doing your Mindfulness training, you'll:

- Hold your thoughts, feelings, and body sensations in an attitude of kindness and tenderness;
- Remind yourself that millions of others have had similar thoughts and feelings; and
- Understand that these uncomfortable feelings will pass.

Kindness dissolves negative states of mind like envy, hatred, anger, miserliness, stress, and so on. Kindness not only weakens negative tendencies, it uproots them.

## Mindful body posture

It's very important to find a body posture that supports your Mindfulness practice. This means a posture that keeps you calm, and yet alert.

Consider the following a sort of checklist. Use it to check in with yourself before all of your Mindfulness meditations. In time, they'll become second nature to you.

- Ground yourself.** Make sure you have a firm connection with the ground beneath you. If you sit on a chair, place both feet on the floor. If you sit on the ground, sit cross-legged or in any other balanced and comfortable position.
- Straighten your back.** Sit with a straight, yet relaxed back.
- Relax your shoulders, arms and neck.** Roll your shoulders up and back to become aware of and loosen any possible tension you're holding.
- Rest your hands.** Place them in your lap and keep them open and relaxed.
- Close your eyes.** Gently close your eyes (so you won't be distracted).

## How to get started

**You cannot control results. Only your actions.**  
– Allan Lokos

Pick a meditation to try for ten minutes a day. Choose a time of day where you're most in routine – perhaps first thing, before you start working.

The easiest way to get started is by listening to the audio downloads [here](#)<sup>2</sup>, so place these exercises on your tablet, phone, or computer. You can also find these on Spotify and iTunes as podcasts under *Mindfulness Alive*.

**As your Mindfulness practice grows, increase the amount of time you spend each day.** Eventually, you may find that you change up these sessions, varying them in length depending on what you need on a particular day.

## Three types of Mindful practices

In this primer, we cover three types of Mindfulness practices, and give you five meditations in total. You can also access more meditations on Charlotte's [audio page](#)<sup>3</sup>, or by going to her website, [The Mindfulness Clinic](#)<sup>4</sup>, and signing up for her [Mindfulness Practice Free Audios](#)<sup>5</sup>.



### How are you doing so far?

**I'd far rather be happy than right any day.**  
– Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*

How did you do with the attitudes of NACK? Did they make sense to you, or do you find yourself arguing with them? Some people struggle with the attitude of Acceptance. It's okay, accept that you're struggling.

If your mind is fighting it, slow down. Maybe spend a couple of days letting these ideas sink in. You don't have to get there all at once. You'll know you're ready when you feel a bit more open to possibility.

When you're ready to try your first Mindfulness session, read about NACK again. And then learn about beneficial body posture for your Mindfulness practice, and continue.

2 <https://soundcloud.com/the-mindfulness-clinic/sets/audio-downloads/s-2PWtN>

3 <https://soundcloud.com/mindfuleatingaudio>

4 <https://themindfulnessclinic.com.au/>

5 <https://themindfulnessclinic.com.au/mindfulness-practice-free-audios/>





The three types of Mindfulness practice are:


1. **Focus Training:** *Noticing Your Breath*, and *Noticing Your Breath... and counting*
2. **The Body Scan**
3. **Mindful Mini-Moments:** *The 5 Magic Breaths*, and *Dear Body*

If you've never tried anything like this before, expect that it'll feel a bit strange. But keep going. You'll quickly get better at it, by practicing just a few minutes a day.

If you consistently include these Mindfulness practices in your day you *will* notice the difference. It'll open you up to *responding* instead of reacting. And help you feel calmer during the inevitable challenges of the legal process.

# 1. Focus Training

**When to use it:** When you want to increase your mental focus.

 **Focus Training download** (10 minutes): The "ABCD-Plus" Meditation  
<https://soundcloud.com/the-mindfulness-clinic/sets/audio-downloads/s-2PWtN>

**Being able to focus is a very powerful life skill.** As an SRL, you're taking on an intellectually challenging journey: the legal process. At the same time, you'll need to manage the rest of your life as well! So increased focus will be extremely helpful.

Below, we share two variations on Focus Training: *Noticing Your Breath*, and *Noticing Your Breath... and Counting*.

Either of these would be great exercises to do before doing legal research, or just before you speak in a negotiation, or in court. Or anytime you need your mind to be clear and productive.

## If you find you're distracted while doing these exercises

**This is completely natural and normal!** The point of these exercises is to strengthen your attention muscle. This happens when you catch your attention when it's wandering, and then bring it back to your breath or body.

Distractions come from six sources: eyes, ears, nose, mouth, body, and mind. The mind tends to be preoccupied with the past, the future, or commentary about the present. Or it can jump around randomly. A distraction can also be a tickle, a noise, or a body sensation.

It's useful to remember that the mind thinks just like the eyes see. The mind just pumps out thoughts, just as the eyes take in everything in your surroundings. The attentive, trained mind catches itself "straying," and brings the attention back to the breath.

### FOCUS TRAINING #1: *Noticing Your Breath*

This exercise is about simply noticing where you feel your breath. This may be in your nostrils, chest, abdomen, or in the gentle movement of your body as it breathes.

You can notice your breath in many ways. One way is to be curious about the sensations of your breath around your torso. Another way is to listen to the sound of your breath. An additional way is to notice the space between your out-breath and your in-breath.

#### Ready to try it?

- Read about this practice in its entirety.
- Find a timer, such as the timer on your phone.
- Go to a quiet place, where you'll have at least ten minutes to yourself.
- Decide how long you'll try this for today, and set your timer.
- Sit down, and get into a Mindfulness body posture.
- Choose one of the variations below to start. You can work up to all of the variations in one or more sessions.





- Start your timer or the audio.
- **Notice your Breath:**
  - Be curious about the sensation of your breath around your torso;
  - Listen to the sound of your breath;
  - Notice the space between your out-breath and your in-breath.
- **There's no right or wrong.** Go slow and take your time, as if you have all the time in the world.

### FOCUS TRAINING #2: Noticing Your Breath... while Counting

This exercise is the same as the first, with the addition of counting after each out-breath (which helps you further focus). If you can, make your out-breath twice as long as your in-breath.

#### For example

Inhale... 1,2,3

Exhale... 1,2,3,4,5,6

Think of your breath as a marker and influencer of your emotional state. When you make your out-breath longer than your in-breath, you'll naturally become more relaxed. When you move your breath to your lower abdomen, you also become more relaxed.

#### Ready to try it?

- Read about this practice in its entirety.
- Find a timer, such as the timer on your phone.
- Go to a quiet place, where you'll have at least ten minutes to yourself.
- Decide how long you'll try this for today, and set your timer.
  - *Hint:* For a 20 minute session, start at 60 and count down to zero, then back up to 50. For a 10-minute session, start at 30, count down to zero, then up to 23.
- Sit down, and get into a Mindfulness body posture.
- Start your timer and begin.
- **Notice your Breath**, and start counting backwards.
  - Remember! Inhale... 1,2,3. Exhale... 1,2,3,4,5,6 and count down on each out-breath.
  - If you can, make your out-breath twice as long as your in-breath.

## 2. The Body Scan

**When to use it:** Whenever you want to calm your anxiety or obsessive thinking

 **Focus Training download** (11 minutes): Body Scan

<https://soundcloud.com/the-mindfulness-clinic/11-minute-body-scan?in=the-mindfulness-clinic/sets/audio-downloads>

**Being able to focus is a very powerful life skill.** As an SRL, you're taking on an intellectually challenging journey: the legal process. At the same time, you'll need to manage the rest of your life as well! So increased focus will be extremely helpful.

This soothing practice is called The Body Scan. It's kind of like going for a little wander through your body, being curious about any sensations that may be present, and noticing these without judgment.

This is a simple yet powerful exercise that brings you "to your senses." In a few minutes, you'll be in the present moment – and much more open in your body.

#### Ready to try it?

- Read about this practice in its entirety.
- Find a timer, such as the timer on your phone.
- Go to a quiet place, where you'll have at least ten minutes to yourself.





- Decide how long you'll try this for today, and set your timer.
- Sit down, and get into a Mindfulness body posture.
- Start your timer and begin.
- **Scan your body.** There's no right or wrong. Go slow and take your time, as if you have all the time in the world.
- Bring your attention to your feet. Be curious about what your feet are experiencing. What sensations do you notice in your **feet**?
- Shift to your **seated body.** Now be curious about how your body is experiencing the surface you're sitting on.
- Finally, shift attention to your **hands.** Notice the warmth that's generated between your hands and your lap, first on the left side, and then on the right side.
- If you have time, repeat. Next time, consider slowing down even further.

### 3. Mindful Mini-Moments

**When to use it:** Anytime you want to decrease your stress, but have limited time.

Mini-Moments are short meditations that quickly bring you into the present. Because they're "mini," they're particularly good during a busy day, or whenever you only have a few minutes.

They'd be great when you're in court or mediation on a break, or just before you're doing your opening or closing statements. They'll help you return to your senses in the present, by observing what you're hearing, seeing, sensing, smelling, or tasting.

Below, we share two Mindful Mini-Moments with you: *The 5 Magic Breaths*, and *Dear Body*.

#### MINI-MOMENT #1: *The 5 Magic Breaths*

The magic in this breathing method is that it can change your physiology, taking you from a stressed state to a rest state.

Do the The 5 Magic Breaths by counting alongside your in-breath (inhalation) and then counting twice as long for the out-breath (exhalation), allowing the breath to fully leave the body.

##### For example...

Inhale... 1, 2, 3, then

Exhale... 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

##### Ready to start?

- Read about this practice in its entirety.
- Find a timer, such as the timer on your phone.
- Go to a quiet place, where you'll have a few minutes to yourself.
- Decide how long you'll try this for today, and set your timer.
- Sit down, and get into a Mindfulness body posture.
- Start your timer and begin.
- There's no right or wrong. Go slow and take your time, as if you have all the time in the world.
- **Notice your breath** where it's most noticeable.
- Still focusing on your breath, gradually focus your **attention on your belly button.** Then return to your breath.
- *Remember!* Breathe in: 1, 2, 3. Breathe out: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.
- **Repeat this at least 5 times**, switching back and forth between your breath and your belly button, with each out-breath twice as long as your in-breath.
- When your timer sounds, come back to just observing your breath while breathing as you normally would.

Try to take just Five Magic Breaths – intentional, deep, conscious breaths – as often as you can.





## MINI-MOMENT #2: *Dear Body*

This exercise helps you connect with and reassure the body, when you feel stress coming on.

### Ready to start?

- Read about this practice in its entirety.
- Find a timer, such as the timer on your phone.
- Go to a quiet place, where you'll have a few minutes to yourself.
- Decide how long you'll try this for today, and set your timer.
- Sit down, and get into a Mindfulness body posture.
- **Place your hand over your heart**, feeling the warmth between your hand and your body.
- Start your timer and begin. There's no right and wrong. Go slow and take your time, as if you have all the time in the world.
- Reassure your body by saying aloud: "**Dear Body, it is ok, all is well.**"
- Sit quietly, then repeat this as many times as you like.

**See how simple this one is?** You can do this exercise anywhere, whenever you need it. It's a very useful way to let go of your reactive self, focus on the present moment, and have kindness for your body.

We know we're repeating ourselves. But remember, practicing kindness also means being kind to yourself.



## Part 4: If you're interested in learning more


You are perfect and yet there is room for improvement.




Congratulations for *Considering Mindfulness* during your time as an SRL.

We hope that this introduction helps you as you navigate the ins and outs of the legal system – and beyond.

In this primer, we covered the basics. **Would you like to continue your Mindfulness education?**

 If so, sign up for Charlotte Thaarup's newsletter here: <https://thefmindfulnessclinic.com.au/subscribe>  
It contains **FREE** monthly servings of mindfulness delivered right to your inbox.

Charlotte also offers mindfulness training, retreats, public speaking, and coaching.

 **Visit <https://thefmindfulnessclinic.com.au/contact-us> for more information.**



### Considering Mindfulness

How you can use Mindfulness to increase your focus and relieve the stress of representing yourself



# A list of the primers we offer

## Here are the primers we currently offer

 They're free for you to download here: <https://representingyourselfcanada.com/our-srl-resources/>

### Step 1: Getting ready and starting the legal process





-  **So you're representing yourself:** A primer to help you get ready to represent yourself in family or civil court
-  **A guide for SRLs with disabilities:** Understanding your rights and requesting the assistance you need
-  **A Courtroom Companion (McKenzie Friend)**
-  **The McKenzie Friend: Canadian cases and additional research**
-  **Considering Mindfulness:** How you can use Mindfulness to increase your focus and relieve the stress of representing yourself

### Step 2: Doing your research and preparing your arguments

#### Doing Your Research

-  **Part 1:** Understanding precedent and navigating the CanLII legal database (available in English and French)
-  **Part 2:** Assessing CanLII case reports, and using them to build your legal argument
-  **Reference Guide:** Legal definitions, court abbreviations and Canada's court systems at-a glance
-  **Critical Judicial Decisions for Self-Represented Litigants:** Using important case law that establishes rights for self-represented litigants and how the justice system should protect you from bias
-  **Settlement Smarts** Tips on effectively using negotiation, mediation and Judge-led settlement processes
-  **What you need to know about affidavits**

### Step 3: Presenting your case in court

-  **Coping with the courtroom:** A primer to help you navigate the written (and unwritten) rules of the courtroom
-  **How to order a court transcript**
-  **Working with opposing counsel:** Building constructive working relationships between self-represented litigants and opposing counsel
-  **Tips from the bench:** Advice for SRLs, and the judges who work with them

To keep up with what's happening at the National Self-Represented Litigants Project (NSRLP), visit **RepresentingYourselfCanada.com**.

If you have comments for us, or suggestions for ways to improve our primers, let us know at [representingyourself@gmail.com](mailto:representingyourself@gmail.com).



#### Considering Mindfulness

How you can use Mindfulness to increase your focus and relieve the stress of representing yourself