



# 30-DAY MINDFULNESS CHALLENGE

**MINDFUL COMPASSIONATE CARE**

[www.mccare.org](http://www.mccare.org)

# WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

**Mindfulness** is the practice of becoming aware of the present moment, non-judgmentally and completely, rather than dwelling in the past or projecting into the future. While mindfulness has origins in Eastern philosophy and Buddhism, there is no necessary religious component to the practice. Anyone can enjoy the benefits. Mindfulness is an excellent skill for coping and caring for yourself during withdrawal – a time when you may be prone to worrying thoughts about symptoms and recovery. It can be used to take a step back from your situation and to reduce the impact that withdrawal may be having on your life. It is also a valuable tool to use in everyday life.

The key to success with using a mindfulness approach in withdrawal is to not struggle against the symptoms, to observe without making judgments, and to make it okay to feel however you feel. If you're having a meltdown, that's what is happening. If your anxiety is high, anxiety is high. If the thoughts keep looping, you observe them without judgment. Allow whatever is happening. Resistance will only add to your stress levels. Let what comes come; let what goes go.

## WHY 30 DAYS?

Developing an effective mindfulness practice requires repetition over time. While a moment or two of mindfulness can be useful 'in the moment', regular practice of mindfulness can help you immensely in a more consistent way. If you can commit to these 30 days of using a mindfulness approach, this challenge can positively impact your experience of withdrawal and your life post-recovery.

## SIMPLE MINDFULNESS EXERCISE

Find a position that is comfortable for you. Bring your attention to the touch and feel of the weight of your body on your seat or bed.

Take a few deep breaths, breathing naturally and however feels right for you.

While you are breathing, allow whatever is taking place in your body (any sensations, pain, thoughts, etc.) to happen without resisting them or judging them as good or bad.

Now bring your attention back to your breath. Notice what it feels like as it enters through your nose and goes down through your throat.

Notice the rise and fall of your stomach and chest as you breathe in and breathe out. Allow your breathing to be natural.

Now bring your attention to the feeling of your breath in your nose. Feel the sensation, paying attention to each time you breathe in and you breathe out.

Notice if your breath feels cool as you breathe in and a little warmer as you breathe out.

If your mind wanders or you feel distracted or in pain, just notice what is happening without judging it as good or bad, send compassion to yourself... to whatever you are feeling, and gently bring your attention back to your breath... Breathing in and breathing out.

Observe your breath and allow thoughts and feelings to come and go in the background.

There is no right or wrong way. There is no judgment. Just breathe.

Do this for a few minutes and when you are ready, gently bring your attention back to the feel of your body on your seat and allow your eyes to open, bringing your attention back to the room.

# HERE ARE 30 MINDFULNESS IDEAS TO GET YOU STARTED

1. Be as compassionate as you can when it comes to challenging and confrontational people, instead of being reactive to their moods.

2. Make a cup of a non-caffeinated beverage and pay attention to your process of making your drink. As you drink it, feel the warmth and texture as it enters your mouth and as you swallow.

3. Take a leisurely walk (even just in your home if you are housebound) without listening to your headphones plugged in and remain mindful of the sights, sounds and scents of your surroundings. If you have tinnitus, akathisia, inner trembling or any other troubling symptoms, observe them without needing them to stop, and continue with your walk.

4. If you have a houseplant that you like, just sit for a while and notice it. Look at the patterns on the leaves, the colour, feel the texture, observe the pot, the colour of the pot, the material it is made from. Keep your awareness there for a while and focus on its beauty.

5. As often as you remember, whatever you are doing, bring your attention back to the present moment when you feel your projecting into the future or consumed with drifting “What if?” thoughts.

6. Observe your mood and any feeling that surfaces, but without getting caught up in thoughts about it, without analysing it or needing it to stop. Just observe in a non-resistant and gently allowing manner.

7. Do a short mindfulness exercise where you focus on your breathing but observe and allow any thoughts, any pain and sensation, any symptom you are experiencing without judgement and without needing to change what is happening, and then gently take your attention back to your breath.

8. Observe your feelings when participating in different groups that you belong to, when reading your instant messages and emails, and notice how they impact your emotions.

9. Sit in your garden, balcony or by the window with a hot drink and observe the sky, the clouds, the plants and trees, the temperature and anything else that you can see, hear, feel, touch or smell.

10. For at least 10 minutes at a time, intermittently throughout each day, turn off your phone, iPad, laptop and other devices, including when you are in the company of family or friends and interact mindfully.

11. Have your meal without looking at your phone, checking your emails, etc. Eat mindfully, paying attention to the taste, feel and texture, smell and the pleasure you derive from your food.

12. Spend some time being aware of your breathing, before responding to suggestions or interventions from those who support you.

13. Watch a movie or television programme without looking at your phone, checking emails or social media updates and stay focused on the movie.

14. Take breaks throughout the day and tune in to sounds and activities around you without passing judgement, for few moments.

15. Write your accomplishments or jot down encouraging statements in your journal and be aware of your hand holding the pen and of the act of writing, while you are doing it.

16. Listen mindfully and remain fully present, as much as your symptoms allow you to, when family and friends are speaking to you.

17. Observe your thoughts without needing them to stop, no matter how bizarre, frightening or troubling they may be. Don't engage with them or try to stop them. Just observe them and allow them to be and make it okay to feel scared.

18. From time to time, ask yourself, "On a scale of 1 to 10, how present am I right now?"

19. Get into the habit of setting up mindfulness "triggers". You can do things like holding the door handle and becoming aware of the feel of it against the palm of your hand, as you prepare to go through the door, or taking a conscious breath as you prepare to sit down and then feeling the connection of your body with the seat.

20. Go for a gentle, leisurely walk, in a safe space, and leave your phone behind.

21. Pause for a few moments before logging on to your computer and becoming absorbed or overloaded with information. Be aware of the pages and groups you are visiting and observe how they impact your mood.

22. If you are able to drive, you can sit in your car when you arrive at your destination and take a few moments to feel the connection and your body's weight on the car seat and then take a few mindful breaths before leaving the car.

23. Set yourself boundaries including to not check emails and messages after a certain time each day to avoid unwanted stimulation before retiring to bed.

24. Create a 'mindful playlist' of music that makes you feel comforted and calm. Listen to it and observing how it transforms your mood.

25. Reflect on things you are grateful for. You can do this first thing in the morning, before bed at the end of the day, or at any time that suits you best. You can even do it 'mindfully' many times throughout the day.

26. Take a deep breath when answering the phone and stay focused on the person on the other end of the line and what they are saying, as much as your cognition and feelings of connectedness allow you to.

27. Think of a colour and decide to notice that colour throughout the day. Every time you notice the colour stop and acknowledge it.

28. Do the 'withdrawal-modified' STOP sign technique if you find yourself becoming overwhelmed: S = Stop (do nothing) T = Take a breath (or breathe for a few minutes) O = Observe (What are you feeling and thinking?) and allow those thoughts and feelings to be, without analysing or judging them as good or bad or needing to change them. P = Proceed (Continue, knowing that you are okay and all is well).

29. Accept the presence of any thoughts or feelings, no matter how unpleasant or painful. Know that you can't change them, despite how much you resist. If you have a melt-down or you have feelings of terror... whatever surfaces, allow it to be. The more you do this, the less threatened and panicky you will feel. It takes practice, but it is doable.

30. At the end of each day, accept as much as you able to, your reactions to what has transpired and whatever is happening in the present – your reactions to the things you were able to accept during the day and the things you feel you can't. This is the secret. Remember: no judgement, no self-blame, no right or wrong, no good or bad. Whatever happens is okay. You are okay. This is what it feels like to heal. Know that another day of healing has passed and that when you wake up in the morning, another day of healing will begin. You will be one day closer to your recovery.

# NOTES



