

Introduction to Mindfulness

Mindfulness is an essential part of behaviour change. Unfortunately, there's a common misconception that developing a successful mindfulness practice requires hours of dedication, sitting in one spot in the middle of a field with your legs crossed and the sounds of Tibetan chimes playing in the background while you empty your mind of unwanted thoughts. If this is something that you're already doing, or something that you've got the time and capability to start doing, then please do it. In no way am I judging this type of mindfulness practice, as it's a well proven, and successful way to bring a sense of peace and harmony to your personality system. However, it's important to understand that there is no one way, and definitely no right or wrong way, to practice mindfulness effectively. Many people in society today, myself included, don't have the time, and in some cases the desire, to take on this type of practice in a whole hearted way.

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~Steven Morris RP.

This is why the mindfulness approach of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) was so appealing to me. I was able to build it into the things I was already doing, I didn't have to take time out of my busy day to make it work. It also didn't mean I had to join a group of people that were going indoctrinate me into a cult, or take me off to live on a commune somewhere in the Canadian prairies, as this was a wildly disproportionate misconception I was carrying around with me about the type of people who practiced the mystical art of mindfulness. In actuality, there are many opportunities on a daily basis to develop our skills in this area, and it's the development of our abilities to Observe and Describe what's happening in our thoughts and feelings that provides the insights we need to understand our behaviours.

Mindfulness is not the answer to all of our problems though, and in some cases, it can become just another way to avoid our unwanted and uncomfortable emotional experiences. Watching them float away on a big white cloud or disappear on a leaf down the river of discontent doesn't mean that they won't come back any time soon. In fact, its usually the case that the emotional experience does keep coming back, time and time again. This will keep happening until we learn how to recognize the stories that are activating the emotional experience in the first place.

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Recognizing our stories, and the parts of our personality that are reacting to them, is pretty much impossible without a mindfulness practice. Using the many different skills of DBT gave me the ability to make this a successful, and effective part of my journey. Without mindfulness, the awareness just isn't there, so I can't emphasise enough the importance of building a mindfulness practice of some kind into your daily routine as soon as you possibly can.

On the following page are some reflective questions to help you contemplate your current mindfulness practice, and explore what you would like to develop in this area of your life. Take some time to answer these questions, then sit with what it would take for you to implement the type of mindfulness practice you describe into your daily routine and structure.

What does my current mindfulness practice look like?

Describe the ways you currently practice mindfulness on a daily basis. List the ways this is helpful and what you think is missing in this area of Living the Life you Want to Live.

What are the benefits of developing a mindfulness practice?

Describe the ways in which a daily mindfulness practice could support you in your foundation for change and Living the Life you Want to Live, being the person you want to be, in areas of life that are important to you.

What stops you from developing a mindfulness practice right now?

Describe the things that get in the way of you building a mindfulness practice. If you have one in place already, list the ways you could increase the effectiveness of your practice to support you in Living the Life you Want to Live.

What would you like your mindfulness practice to look like moving forward?

Describe the ways you currently practice mindfulness on a daily basis. List the ways this is helpful and what you think is missing in this area of Living the Life you Want to Live.