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# MINDFULNESS

## A Young Adult's Guide to Meditation



Ruth Colón-Wagner, LMSW

NYAPRS



The Community Technical Assistance Center of New York (CTAC) and the Managed Care Technical Assistance Center of New York (MCTAC) are a training, consultation, and educational resource center serving all behavioral health agencies in New York State. We help agencies strengthen their clinical and business infrastructure through training opportunities focused on implementing evidence-based practices and addressing the challenges associated with the recent changes in regulations, financing and overall healthcare reforms.



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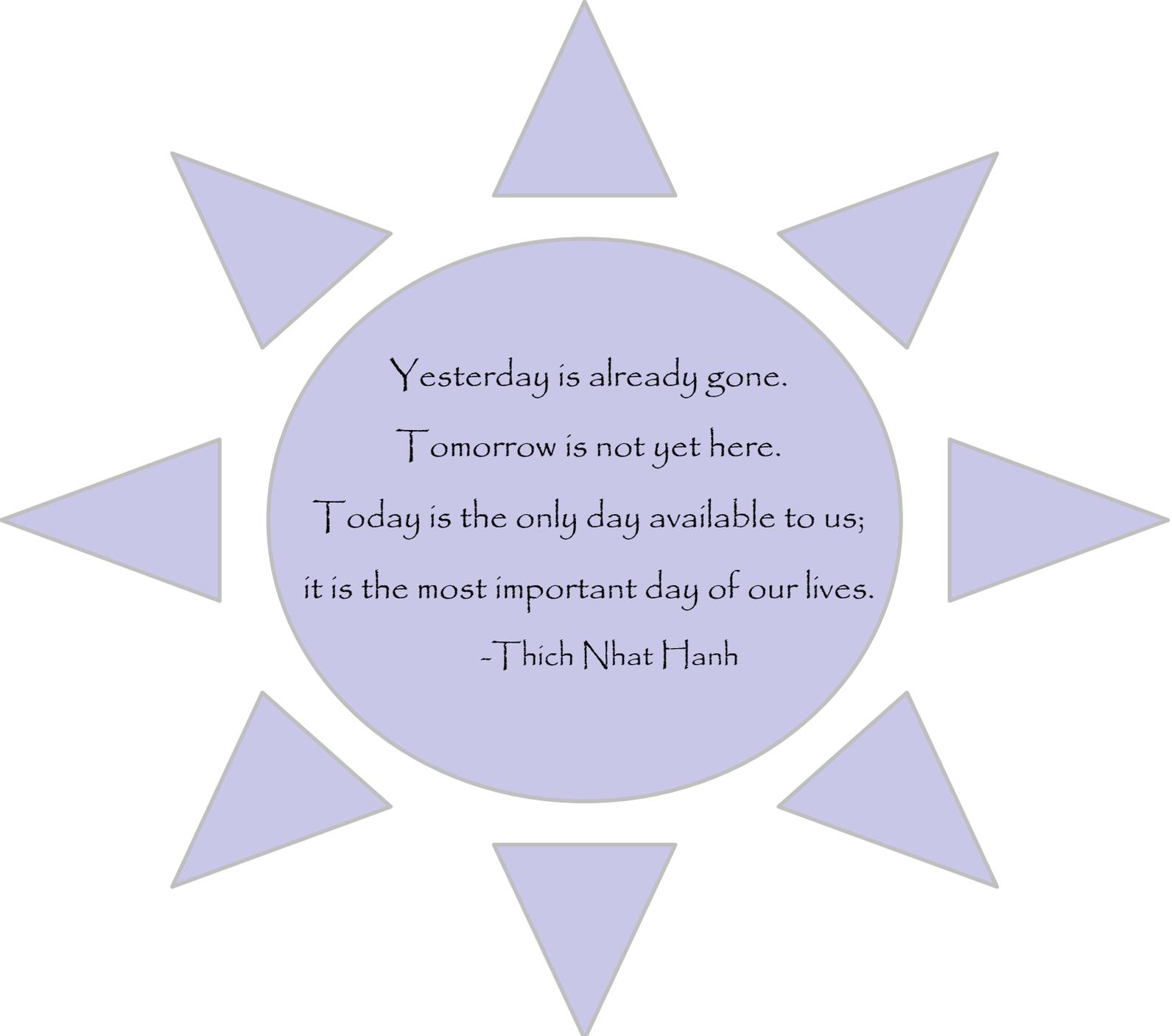


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*Click here to access all audio files. Or, visit: <https://ctacny.org/mindfulness-guide>*

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Yesterday is already gone.  
Tomorrow is not yet here.  
Today is the only day available to us;  
it is the most important day of our lives.  
-Thich Nhat Hanh



## CHAPTER 1

# You are in control of feeling better

“We’ve all been there.” I’m sure you’ve heard that before. Well, it’s true but no one can really know you but you. No one can understand the struggles... but you. People can sympathize and people can empathize. People can relate and people can be insensitive and unsympathetic. It’s likely you’ve been exposed to them all. One thing you can rely on is you. You may not realize it yet, but you’ve just started a journey. Let me share a bit of me and why there are some people out there who can understand the struggles.

Have you ever had that “aha” moment when all of a sudden something just clicked and you knew instantly and with conviction what you KNOW now?

Later in life, I had my “aha” moment, at a moment when deep sadness permeated every fiber of my being. I wish it had happened sooner but there you go. At least it came.

I know – not the same thing as you. What I’ve learned is that while our experiences are different, they are so much the same. The pain, the sadness, the loneliness. Those feelings are universal and when you find the right person, we can empathize by simply knowing what that feels like.



Unquestionably, I was and am in charge of my life even though I didn't know it. That simple revelation was the cornerstone of my future. I had to give tomorrow a chance. My hope was fortifying me, and my time would come. It did.

There's a little voice inside of us, a small spark of something trying to gain purchase and find enough oxygen to sparkle brightly and be noticed - from just being that gnawing feeling in our gut, to an understanding in our minds, then to a knowing in our hearts.

That's tomorrow asking you to give yourself time. You are in control of feeling better. Picking up this Mindfulness Guide can be the first of many steps you are taking to move in that direction. I hope this means that you have found your hope. Now, you will shape your future.





## CHAPTER 2

# Before you begin: Tools you will need

Your breath.

It's a simple tool and we don't even need room in our purse, bookbags or even our back pockets.

People will tell you that you don't need much to begin to integrate meditation into your life. And then they go and tell you about a mat or meditation cushion, a gong, incense, and maybe a book or two.

In reality, you just need your breath. You can engage in meditative exercises anywhere and anytime. You can be sitting, standing, laying down, walking. And it doesn't have to be by the beach or in the sun. It can be anywhere. Anywhere that you are, your breath follows.

Breathing is a natural tool we have that actually serves as a guide for us as we meditate. Its rhythmic nature is like a grandfather clock pendulum. Our breath, a timekeeper of sorts, allows us to train ourselves to focus on the experience of the "now". More on "now" later.



That is not the only reason we incorporate breathing into meditation. There's actually science behind it. Our breathing bodies are like a waste-disposal system. We breathe in life-giving oxygen and we breathe out carbon-dioxide. We literally take in life and breathe out poison.

There is a mind-body connection. According to *The Science of Breathing*,<sup>1</sup> there are numerous benefits to breathing, besides keeping us alive. Breathing supports a healthy immune system, and illnesses such as hypertension, asthma, and psychological or stress-related disorders<sup>2</sup> including depression and anxiety. When one is stressed, our body releases the stress hormone called, cortisol, and deep breathing alleviates this!

It sounds like a miracle drug. Where has this been all my life? Oh, yeah, right here.

An article published by Harvard Health states that “breath control helps to quell errant stress responses”<sup>3</sup>. Have you ever heard of “fight or flight” moments?

According to them, many of us experience a stress response during “fight or flight” moments as we prepare to confront or avoid danger. We know this and this is natural. We encounter

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<sup>1</sup> Novotny, S., & Kravitz, L. (2007). *The science of breathing*. *IDEA Fitness Journal*.

<sup>2</sup> Harvard Health Publishing Harvard Medical School (2015, January). *Relaxation techniques: Breath control helps quell errant stress response*.

<sup>3</sup> Harvard Health Publishing Harvard Medical School (2015, January). *Relaxation techniques: Breath control helps quell errant stress response*.



problems when this response is persistently present in our lives. Can you imagine always feeling like you are in “fight or flight” mode? It’s no joke that most people are consistently worried about life events or situations. They are not in “fight or flight” situations, but our body are reacting as if they were. While, of course, we can’t avoid all sources of stress, we can develop healthier ways of responding to them. The authors share that we can invoke the “relaxation response” by engaging in deep breathing exercises.

Deep breathing → relaxation response → physical and mental health benefits

*It can be as easy as breathing.*



You can engage in deep breathing anytime you feel anxious or stressed. The idea is to reduce our cortisol levels (the “stress” hormone) and invoke our relaxation response.

Here's an example of a deep breathing exercise:

## Meditation 1: Breathing Deeply<sup>4</sup>

Let's begin by settling into a comfortable position. Straighten up by elongating your neck and softening your shoulders.

If you are comfortable doing so, slowly close your eyes or you can choose to lower your gaze and gently focus on an object. Let's begin breathing deeply. Breathing in through your nose for 2 counts and out through your mouth for 4 counts. Holding for a count of 1 in between each in and out. I will walk you through this.

Breathe in... 1, 2

Hold 1

Breathe out... 1, 2, 3, 4

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<sup>4</sup> Colón-Wagner, R. (2020). *Courage to be mindful. Manuscript in preparation.*



Hold 1

Breathe in... 1, 2

Hold 1

Breathe out... 1, 2, 3, 4

Hold 1

Breathe in... 1, 2

Hold 1

Breathe out... 1, 2, 3, 4

Hold 1

Continue on your own for a few deep breaths more.

Now... return your breathing back to its natural rhythm. However fast and deep is best for you. Be aware of the immediate sense of calm and relief you're experiencing right now.

When ready... and only when ready, open your eyes. Throughout your day, whenever needed, just practice breathing deeply to get yourself back to a state of calm.



## CHAPTER 3

# What is Mindfulness?

“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.” – Jon Kabat-Zinn<sup>5</sup>



While this picture fascinates me, it's not quite accurate. When I first heard of mindfulness, I thought to achieve it you had to find a state of emptiness. Like the small child in picture. I imagined it a wonderful space where my mind would be perfectly free of, well, I thought, of everything!

There's nothing in Jon Kabat-Zinn's definition that speaks to anything resembling emptiness. Needless to say, I never

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<sup>5</sup> Kabat-Zinn, Jon (2013). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. Bantam books.



achieved it which only reinforced my reality, that mindfulness was all hokey. I believed that mindfulness was all “airy fairy” like pixie-dust, full of prettiness but no substance.

Now, I'll get to the “now”.

Mindfulness is experiencing the current moment, the “now”. You might be thinking this is beyond ridiculous because we are always in the now. Yes, we are. However, our minds are constantly wandering. Anxiety and stress are experienced when people are thinking on the past or the future or even in persistent evaluation of how things “should” be. When people think on the past, they potentially think of some mistakes, or regrets. When people think on the future, they may worry about what will happen.

Mindfulness allows us to experience the present moment. How many of us have said, “time flies by so fast!” or you may have heard some older folks say, “where have the years gone?” This is because as we live our day-to-day lives, our minds are rarely present. Over half of our waking hours are spent thinking of the past or the future. Mindfulness provides an appreciation for the current moment, or the “now”. Heard of the phrase, “stop and smell the roses”? It's an appreciation for the moment. And, when one centers their mind on the now, it serves to calm and soothe.



## CHAPTER 4

# Why is there a monkey in my mind?

Learn from my mistakes. Don't expect an empty mind. As a matter of fact, I promise you that when you begin mindfulness, chances are that you will experience a barrage of thoughts and feelings... about the past and the future, even while you are in the middle of trying to meditate. It'll be like your mind is on overdrive and it keeps pestering you, like Goldilocks knocking on your door and then just waltzing in. It's like when your hanging out on social media and right then, your family won't stop talking to you. Yeah, you know what I mean.

That's called "Monkey Mind". And it's not just you or me. It's such a natural part of the experience that they even gave it a name. How do we get rid of the Monkey? Give it a banana? Nah, that won't work but you can try by giving it a job to do. This is where you will use your tool – your breath. By focusing on your breath, your mind is using this tool to help get you focused and to keep you focused.

*"Take a deep breath in... and take a deep breath out.*

*Breathing in through your nose... and out through your mouth.*

*Breathing in peace and calm and breathing out all that you don't need right now."*



This way, we will train our brain, like a muscle, to focus on the present moment. As a matter of fact, mindfulness is you being aware of the present moment so when you're practicing and the Monkey Mind gets activated, the trick is in the noticing when the Monkey is present and then recentering yourself to help you focus on the now. That, in and of itself, is mindfulness. You are being Mindful just by realizing that, right now, in this moment, your brain is either in the past or the future and not on the now. The more you become aware of those Monkey moments, the more you train your brain to focus on the present moment during meditations.

There are some meditations that may help you better with the refocusing. Over time, you will find the kind that work best for you. My Monkey Mind can get really bad, so I gravitate towards Guided Meditations. They are named such because they guide you through a scene or even a story where we use our imaginations to picture the scene, smell the scents, hear the sounds and even feel around you. These kinds of meditations place me at the center of a story, with all my senses activated and that allows me to focus and reduce the Monkey.

Guided Meditations are not just for relaxation, although that is a lovely byproduct of the exercise, but they help us to reexamine thoughts we have about ourselves, our relationships, lives, etc. It's like meditation and a good friend all combined.



## CHAPTER 5

Don't you get that attitude with me!

So far, you know...

That mindfulness is healing. Did I mention that already?

You have learned a lot so far! You know...

- ✓ **What mindfulness is.**
  - ✓ **You have the tool you need.**
    - ✓ **You know the goal is to experience the present moment.**
      - ✓ **And you know how to get rid of the Monkey.**



Now, it's time to learn the foundational attitudes of mindfulness practice. There are seven attitudes and according to Jon Kabat-Zinn<sup>6</sup>, they are:

1. Non-judging
2. Patience
3. Beginner's Mind
4. Trust
5. Non-striving
6. Acceptance
7. Letting Go

They are called "attitudes" because they provide us with a set of guides to use as we practice mindfulness.

We can't just assume a lotus position and breathe and expect to find healing. We actually have to approach mindfulness in a particular way, using these 7 attitudes as a guide.



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<sup>6</sup> Kabat-Zinn, Jon (2013). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. Bantam books.



It's not complicated but I'll walk you through each attitude so that we can actually understand why they would be helpful.

### 1. Non-judging

This is a very useful attitude to have! How many times do we berate ourselves? Thinking we're doing something wrong, or can't get it right, or can't live up to expectations, even our own expectations! Here is where having a non-judgmental attitude is brilliant. When we begin to practice mindfulness, the Monkey comes over as if invited and disturbs our concentration. Yes, I've said to use your breath. However, you will notice that the Monkey is not just baiting you into thinking on the past or future in a very straightforward way. The Monkey plays with our minds even more deeply than that. When we are observant during these times, we can see that our minds are constantly generating judgements and emotional reactions, and mostly in the negative about ourselves.

We know that people are more likely to identify their weaknesses with greater ease than they are to identify their strengths. This is universal and is such a failing of the human condition. So, you are not alone in experiencing these judgements and emotional reactions.

But we cannot be bystanders and allow that to continue. Consistently thinking negatively about ourselves is a huge



problem that will have negative consequences throughout our lives. So, let's work on getting this under control.

As an example, you may have had some of these thoughts while practicing mindfulness:

*"This is too hard!" or "This isn't working!" or "I can't do this!"*

These are all judgements you are making of yourself. When they pop up, it's important to recognize them and say, "Hey, I see you there judging me" and then remind yourself to see it for what it is and push it aside. It'll come up again, in different ways. But the technique is the same. Acknowledge it and push it aside.

Your ability to do this, is again, training your brain as you would a muscle. Over time, you will experience less and less self-judgments during meditation.

## 2. Patience

Jon Kabat-Zinn says, *"Patience is a form of wisdom. It demonstrates that we understand and accept the fact that sometimes things must unfold in their own time. A child may try to help a butterfly to emerge by breaking open its chrysalis. Usually, the butterfly doesn't benefit from this. The*



*butterfly can only emerge in its own time, that the process cannot be hurried.”<sup>7</sup>*

What this teaches us is the value of patience. Society is extremely impatient, as are most of us. When we want to know something, we don't have to go to the library or even call a friend. We can find answers right now using technology and doing a Google search. We can be half a globe away and instantly be able to communicate with anyone. I can hardly believe that decades ago, before this technology, people would have to write letters and wait for the mail to deliver it, wait for the person to write and then for the post office to deliver it again. People had patience then because they had no other choice. Now, with our instantaneous world, we're living the dream of instant gratification!

When we assume the attitude of patience, we are intentionally reminding ourselves that there is no need to rush or have strict expectations of ourselves because then we will return to judging ourselves. By being patient, we accept the fact that we will get it in time. You may not want to be a Mindfulness Master. We can leave that for the

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<sup>7</sup> Kabat-Zinn, Jon (2013). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. Bantam books.



monks and others. But we do need to be kind to ourselves... don't rush it.

### 3. Beginner's Mind

When we take the attitude of having a “beginner's mind” we are willing to see everything as if for the first time. This allows us to see and to be open to new ideas and experiences. This prevents us from getting stuck in our previous experiences. This is our perception of us and the world. Let's do an exercise. It's simple really:

The next time you see somebody who is familiar to you, ask yourself if you are seeing this person with fresh eyes, as he or she or they really are, or if you are only seeing the reflection of your own thoughts about this person, and your feelings as well.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Kabat-Zinn, Jon (2013). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. Bantam books.



#### 4. Trust

Imagine you are engaging in a mindfulness exercise led by someone else. This could be in-person, YouTube or a Podcast. If something in your gut told you that this “doesn’t feel right” or makes you “uncomfortable”, what would you do?

This foundational attitude of trust asks us to approach mindfulness with trust in ourselves. Even if you make mistakes here or there, it’s better to place trust in yourself – in your own intuition, your own authority and feelings than it is to do something that doesn’t feel right or, as in the case of yoga, you feel you would be physically hurt. Under no uncertain terms should you engage in activities that are designed to support your emotional health and compromise yourself in the process. Your priority is you, so place that trust in yourself and honor it.

trust  
yourself



## 5. Non-striving

Now this is interesting. Meditation is “non-doing”.<sup>9</sup> It’s the ultimate experience for us to just be ourselves. Of course, you are already yourself, duh, but during meditation, your knowledge of yourself will expand as you yourself begin to open up to this experience and gain an appreciation for who you are and who you are becoming.

Almost with everything in life, there is a goal to achieve. Even when we are relaxing, maybe our goal is to binge watch an entire season of a show. Maybe you find yourself spending hours on YouTube just trying to find something interesting! We have a goal in mind always. With mindfulness, assume a non-striving attitude. Essentially thinking, I’ll get there when I get there!

What if you realized you were berating yourself? You know, judging yourself. This doesn’t magically disappear by practicing mindfulness. When this happens, you return to awareness. Remember, we talked about this in the first attitude of non-judging? Through awareness, acknowledge your negative self-talk, “Hey, I see you there judging me” and then let it go. The attitude of non-striving also adds other things you will notice and then consciously push aside.

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<sup>9</sup> Kabat-Zinn, Jon (2013). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. Bantam books.



So, if you are in physical pain, you are not striving to relieve the pain (right then and there) but you are aware of it, acknowledge it and push it aside to deal with it later.

So, non-striving is the practice of “non-doing” because you are there to just be you, without the stress and worries. The Monkey will fling stuff forward to your mind. You notice it and then push it aside. You can do this because there is no end result here. The result isn’t for you to have a great meditation where you “master” your thoughts... I don’t think even The Buddha did that! Your goal is to just experience you. Use these attitudinal skills to help you experience more of you during your meditations.

## 6. Acceptance

The attitude of acceptance asks us to see our life circumstances and “accept” them. This is not always easy. You may feel frustrated because you want to be independent but you can’t afford to move out on your own yet. Accept it. You might have had a recent diagnosis of cancer. Accept it. Wow, this is not easy.

The attitude of acceptance asks us to accept things as they are in the present moment during meditations! “During” being the optimal word here. Our task during meditation is



to experience the present moment, and we can't do that if we sit there ruminating about cancer.

This attitude of acceptance doesn't stop us from taking care of ourselves! Outside of meditation, we continue to strive towards our life goals. Whether that's to live independently or get treatment for cancer.

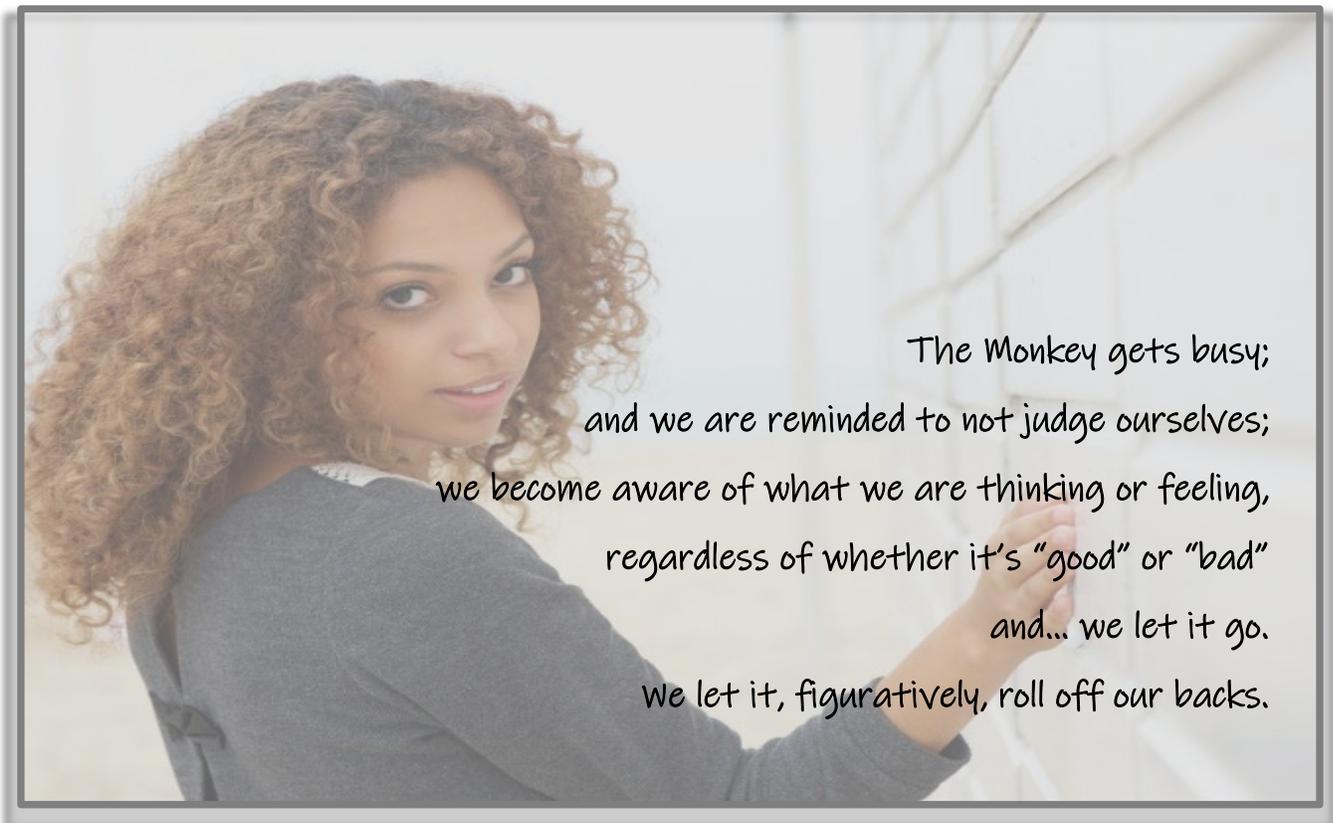
Got it?



## 7. Letting Go

Do you find that you have certain thoughts or feelings that you just have to hold on to? I think we all do, really. There are those feelings of love of family, friends, romance, that we may not want to let go of. On the contrary, there are thoughts and feelings that we may desperately try to get rid of... and can't. You know what I mean. Those may be experiences that were particularly difficult for you or regretful and you just can't seem to let it go.

Instead of working on letting go of the "bad" ones and keeping the "good" ones, the attitude of letting go asks us to let it all go. Thankfully, the strategy for this is consistent with what we have already learned.



Imagine yourself cultivating this 7<sup>th</sup> attitude of letting go.  
What would your world look like?

We still love and care for people and we are still motivated to go to school, work, engage in our goals, etc.... this is because, that is not what we are letting go of! With continuous practice of mindfulness, we will train our brain... you know what I'm going to say.... like a muscle. Then one day you will surprise yourself, when in a stressful situation, you are able to stop, become aware of your surroundings, your thoughts and emotions, and then think about putting it all into perspective and letting it go. **The simple act of stopping and deciding what to do IS MINDFULNESS!**

YOU GOT IT!



## CHAPTER 6

# Of course, I love myself!

I would hope that we can all be so adamant in our conviction of saying, “Of course, I love myself!”. Let's assume that it's true.

Regardless of how we may feel sometimes, deep down, we love ourselves. We deserve that self-love and compassion. So, assuming we love ourselves, the question is, are we kind to ourselves?

I had an experience where a young woman was so upset with herself and with everyone around her that as she was combing her hair, and in her fit of anxiety and rage, she combed so hard she was hurting her scalp and pulling out her hair. She took out her anger on herself. It was a sad thing to watch. She loved herself but in that one moment, she was not kind to herself, I would say, she was even cruel.

I know there are other stories of people doing many more harmful things to themselves. Pain, grief, isolation, loneliness, all of those emotions and life experiences can lead us to not feel much kindness towards ourselves.

So, to help nurture kindness and compassion for ourselves, there is a type of meditation that specifically focuses on our need to be kind to ourselves. We can think of this as an 8<sup>th</sup> attitude! Loving-Kindness meditations help us to have unconditional regard and love for ourselves. These kinds of meditations help us to expand



our capacity to love and appreciate ourselves and to find compassion within.

In addition, there are meditations that expand on this idea of compassion and loving-kindness and they extend it to others in our world. Remember the brief exercise on page 26? That exercise asked us to see the person with fresh eyes. However, for now, let's stick to loving-kindness and compassion for ourselves.

A loving-kindness meditation helps us to cultivate self-acceptance despite any and all of our perceived imperfections. According to Benjamin Decker<sup>10</sup>, by practicing loving-kindness and self-compassion meditations you will cultivate:

- Increased positive emotions and good physical health
- Reduced pain
- Reduced stress
- Reduced inflammation
- Better communication with others and empathy
- Self-compassion and acceptance
- Longevity

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<sup>10</sup> Decker, B. *Practical meditation for beginners: 10 days to a happier, calmer you*. Althea Press, 2018.



Some of these outcomes are in keeping with what we have already learned so far. To cultivate loving-kindness, many authors share the use of mantras, most of them are very similar.

*Mantras are repetitive statements infused into some meditations to help the person meditate (similar to the breath) but it also serves to deliver a specific value or feelings and infuse it into our lives.*



Here's a quick practice:

## Meditation 2: I Love Myself<sup>11</sup>

Find a comfortable and quiet area. When ready, gently close your eyes or soften your gaze.

Focus on your breath. Breathing in through your nose... and out through your mouth.

Think on a time when you felt joy. Visualize yourself smiling and laughing. Place one hand over your heart and say the following affirmations:

May I be happy

May I be safe

May I be healthy

May I live with ease and be peaceful

Repeat these affirmations for the next minute. Remember to continue to breathe with intention, breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth. When you feel ready, you may bring your attention back to your space and send yourself some gratitude for taking these few minutes out of your day to be kind to yourself.

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<sup>11</sup> Colón-Wagner, R. (2020). *Courage to be mindful. Manuscript in preparation.*



For the first few times, you may need to use this script or listen to the audio. This is perfectly okay. The more and more you use loving-kindness meditations, you will begin to shape them to better fit your uniqueness. You may even begin to expand the loving-kindness to others in your world.



## CHAPTER 7

### I don't have time for this!

Let's do a cost benefit analysis (a/k/a pros and cons):

PROS	CONS
Reduced stress	Inability to cope with stress
Improved health	Static or worsening health
Improved ability to moderate emotions	Things may feel the same
Increased ability to find happiness with others and self	Work harder to find joy in life
Love yourself and experience self-kindness	Love yourself but not always conscious of when you are not treating yourself kindly
Autonomy and greater awareness and control of self	Reactive responses to life events and stressors
Increased resiliency	Inability to 'bounce-back' as quickly
Improved sleeping with greater awareness of thoughts and practice	Difficulty sleeping because of inability to control thoughts
Improved self-esteem	You don't think about change
Investing time in yourself	Takes work, practice and personal effort



Anything else you would add for PROS?	Anything else you would add for CONS?

Early in this Guide, we shared that you are on the beginning of a wonderful journey, simply by picking up this Guide.

Reviewing the pros and cons will send you in one of two directions, either greater motivation to continue or, I believe the less likely option, you may choose that mindfulness isn't for you.

Regardless of which path you're leaning into, just wait. Let's keep going so you can actually experience meditation exercises and you will find one or two (or three or four or five or six) that you will love.

In life, we make decisions in the moment that can affect the remainder of our lives. So, let's work together. Let's keep going and experience how incorporating mindfulness into your life can support your wellness.



## CHAPTER 8

### Am I doing this right?

It's absolutely normal for us to doubt ourselves as we begin to practice mindfulness. You may be thinking the following:

Where do I go?

What do I do?

What do I think?

What do I feel?



But you have everything you need to begin to have your very own mindfulness practice. Basically, that means, you decide what that practice will look like. Is it every day for 15 minutes? Maybe it's every day, twice a day. Maybe it's once a day only at night or only in the morning.

As you can tell, there is no right answer.



*You do you!*



I'm going to walk you through an exercise that will only take 5 minutes. If you like it, you can be in charge of when and where and how often to use it. The beauty of meditation is that you can use a script from someone else, or you can write your own, or you can just wing-it. So long as you are:

- ✓ Redirecting your awareness to the present moment
- ✓ Using your breath to help with focusing
- ✓ Refocusing when the Monkey visits
- ✓ Don't judge yourself
- ✓ Be kind to yourself
- ✓ Show yourself gratitude for putting yourself first



## Meditation 3: Joyful Shared Experience<sup>12</sup>

We will do this together. In our shared experience, we will find comfort, peace, relaxation and joy. To the best of your ability, find a comfortable and quiet place. Let's begin now.

Beginning with our breath, let's breathe with intention, breathing in through our nose and out through our mouth.

Again... breathing in through our nose and out through our mouth.

We can close our eyes now if we are comfortable doing so, if not, lower your gaze and softly focus on an object.

Continue to breathe with intention.

Now, let's experience joy.

Begin with placing one hand over your heart. Notice what you feel. Can you feel your heart's rhythmic beating? Stay with this awareness as you simultaneously experience your body's natural mechanisms through your heart... and your breath.

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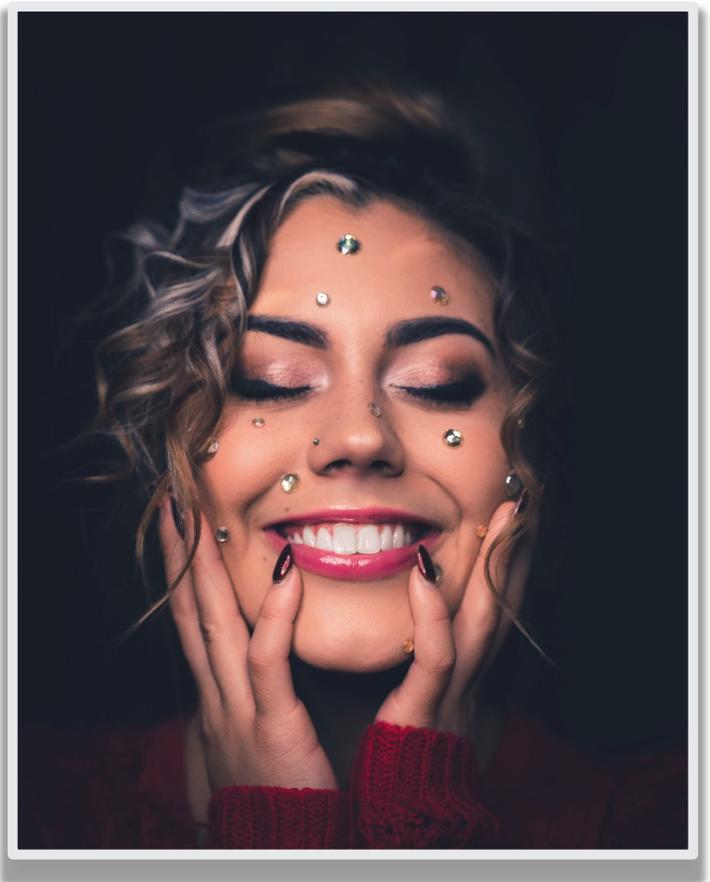
<sup>12</sup> Colón-Wagner, R. (2020). *Courage to be mindful. Manuscript in preparation.*



Now, slowly move your hand up from your heart to your mouth – very gently hover your hand over your mouth so that you feel your lips without exerting pressure. Now, remember a moment when you experienced joy. A time when you smiled and laughed and enjoyed yourself. It can be a time when you were with someone or even enjoying a funny show by yourself.

Remember, how your heart felt lighter... and your face was bright.

With this wonderful memory in mind, bring a smile to your face. Your hand gently covering your mouth feels the expanding of your lips, the tightening of your cheeks as they respond to your smile. Your body tingles with brightness as your face responds to joy. Bring your other hand up to your face, and with both hands now, gently hover them over your face and... smile. Your smooth lips, now taut in delight, your cheeks are broad in their grin, and... even your eyes are smiling. You and me, we are bright, as if lit from within. Full of the warmth of this joyful light.



Bring your awareness back to your breath and to the space that you're in. As we bring our exercise to a close, remember this joyful feeling and gift yourself with it, whenever and wherever you need it.



## CHAPTER 9

# Mindfulness and music ~ a perfect match!

You've probably heard the saying, "Music soothes the soul". Well, yes, but more specifically, it has the power to change your mood. Music can bring you laughter and lighten your heart. The key is finding music that you enjoy that will do this for you... make your heart sing!

I know you're asking, how is this mindfulness? Well, it checks off two of the most important mindfulness boxes. First, it allows you to experience the present moment, the now, this one moment in time. Second, it changes your mood and can calm us: mind, body and spirit... And yes, it can soothe your soul!

Let's do an experiment. But I will need your help here. Before you begin, find yourself a song that you love to dance to. Don't worry, I won't peek as you dance by yourself because I'll be doing it too! Get all of that ready and then we'll begin by taking a test. You didn't think that was coming, did you? Then I will ask you to play your music and then back again for another test.

See you on the next page!



## PRE-TEST

### Meditation 4: Mood Check Survey

Here we have your Pre-test. You will rate your **CURRENT** mood, energy and outlook on a scale of 1 to 10. The ratings are between cranky and happy, low energy to high energy and pessimistic to optimistic.

Answer this question: **How are you feeling right now?**



CRANKY

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



HAPPY



LOW ENERGY

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



HIGH ENERGY



PESSIMISTIC

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



OPTIMISTIC



After you have completed your pre-test, please put down this guide and play your favorite dance song. I will want you to feel the music, experience it in your mind and body. So... dancing is expected! You may want to be in a space where you will be free to dance to your heart's content.

Play your music now.



WOW! I hope you're as out of breath as I am! Okay, so find your seat and wipe the sweat off your brow.

Now, it's time for your Post-Test. Rating your **CURRENT** mood, energy and outlook, answer this question: **How are you feeling right now?**



CRANKY

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



HAPPY



LOW ENERGY

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



HIGH ENERGY



PESSIMISTIC

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



OPTIMISTIC

Do you feel like a science experiment now? Well, you should. For the most part, we followed (albeit "very loosely") scientific protocols. Let's review your results.





Did your mood, energy or outlook improve?

Your music has allowed you to experience the present moment and it has elevated your mood. Whether you were cranky or had low energy or just plain old pessimistic. Your mood changed and definitely towards the higher end of the spectrum. How do I know this? Because that's what happens to everyone I do this exercise with... and because it happens to me. Every. Single. Time.

**Music is a beautiful thing.**



## CHAPTER 10

# Mindfulness – the secret to communication

You will now learn the secret sauce to communication. I will teach you ways to communicate that even your caregivers, teachers, bosses, co-workers and nearly every other older adult in your life doesn't know.

Mindfulness techniques have been used to teach Presidents and Executive Directors of companies and organizations. How can a person achieve that level of responsibility and leadership without knowing the basics of proper communication? I couldn't tell you.

But we all know people like that. People in positions of power that abuse that power. Of course, they use communication that robs people of their own power, authority and autonomy. Being around people like this can be suffocating. Let's make sure that you become a person... a leader, that people will want to follow.

I know, I can hear you now. "But I'm not a leader." Well, okay, if you say so. But the truth is that we are all leaders in certain areas of our lives. And if not today, then tomorrow or the day after.

You will become comfortable in a leadership role once you know the secret.



“Mindful Leadership” is actually a thing. According to Workhuman.com, it is the ability to “take an honest look at yourself. Leading without ego and being willing to put the interest of others before ourselves.”<sup>13</sup> With this in mind, let's review some ways we can integrate Mindful Leadership values and techniques into our lives. According to Resonant Leadership<sup>14</sup>, in order for leaders to be most effective they need to practice mindfulness. Specifically, they speak to the ability to control one's own emotions and in turn, control the emotions of others. Controlling the emotions of others is a bit of an exaggeration in my humble opinion, but let's continue. They call this “emotional intelligence”. To accomplish this, you need to renew yourself. They share a lot of information on this, but I will cut right to the information that I find fascinating.

Let's get a little ‘sciency’.

Neuroscience says that people who are naturally optimistic and hopeful have an “approach-mode of mind”. Whereas people who have “avoidant-modes of mind” avoid difficult situations and deny problems. Now, here's the interesting part. They stress that by practicing mindfulness techniques for just 8-weeks can change an “avoidant-mode” person into an “approach-mode” person! Wow! Anything that can do that is worth looking into

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<sup>13</sup> Dasa, Gadadhara Pandit. “5 Traits of a Mindful Leader.” *Workhuman.com*, 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Boyatzis, Richard E., and Annie McKee. *Resonant Leadership: Renewing Yourself and Connecting with others through mindfulness, Hope, and compassion*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2005.



further! They say this leads people to experience a greater sense of meaning and purpose in their lives, have healthier relationships and an increased ability to work and lead effectively. We can create this “renewal” simply by practicing mindfulness for 10-minutes a day for a minimum of 8-weeks.

Exciting as this sounds, this is just one piece of Mindful Leadership. Here are 5 behaviors<sup>15</sup> to practice in your journey to integrate mindfulness into your life.

1. Focus when people talk to you. Give your full attention to the person speaking. When you actively listen, you avoid misunderstanding and your relationships are enriched.
2. Before making decisions, stop and think and then decide. As you think, make certain your decisions are not an emotional reaction. Make thoughtful decisions which include using both your head and heart. By using mindfulness in this way, you train your brain, like a muscle 😊, to regulate your emotions more naturally.
3. Empower the people around you. You don't always have to have the answer or solve the problem. Empower the people around you to make decisions. They may not always make the decision you might have but people need opportunities to grow and they can only do that when they feel comfortable around you. They know

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<sup>15</sup> Dube, Rob. “5 Simple and Compelling Behaviors of Mindful Leaders.” *Entrepreneurs Organization, Inc.com*, 2017.



that you will not berate them for making a different decision than you would have made. It's not about "who's" right. It's about "what's" right.

4. Sleep well at night! I know this may seem like a simple and maybe even ridiculous thing to say, but it's very important. If you don't sleep well, it will be very difficult to react appropriately to life situations the next day. You will want to be refreshed so that you have the energy and the wherewithal to STOP, THINK, and then DECIDE.
5. Have a regular meditation practice. This will allow you to reduce your overall stress, strengthen your ability to STOP, THINK and then DECIDE. But it also increases your resiliency to stress. We all could use us a little bit of that!

NOW, for the *pièce de résistance*! Just so you know, I am giving you every bit of wisdom I have on the subject. I strongly believe that a Mindful Leader needs to know what it is, how to do it (hence the 5 Behaviors) but also needs a strategy they can replicate in order to make this all work. Life is always easier with a Cheat Sheet. Well, here is my SECRET SAUCE! It is called:



## TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS!

Oh my, now that I typed that, I realize how clinical it sounds. Give me a chance. Believe me, this will change your world!



## TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

I like to think of this as Turbo-charged communication!

Transactional Analysis was developed in the late 1950s by Eric Berne<sup>16</sup>. The basis of the theory is that everyone has three different ego states (think of them as roles) that we adopt during conversations with others. The concepts are simple. They take the assumption that throughout our lifespan we have 3 roles:

- Child
- Parent
- Adult



**STOP, THINK, DECIDE**

Unless you are a child, you should never speak like a child. Unless you are a parent, you should never speak like a parent to anyone other than your child. And if you are an adult, speak like an adult. Pretty simple!

However, it gets complicated as each of us dives into each of these roles without ever really thinking about it. We have to consciously and constantly think about how we will communicate and in which role we will be using. Get it?

STOP, THINK and DECIDE!

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<sup>16</sup> Berne, E. *Transactional analysis in psychotherapy*. New York: Grove Press, 1961.



## Can I tell you a secret?

This is EXTREMELY useful in communicating with your caregivers and your romantic partners! Wow, this is powerful stuff!

Why?

Well, have you ever gotten into an argument because you were being accused of something? It happens to all of us. The secret is to identify what role the person is using. Is your romantic partner using a parental role with you? Well, heck, that'll make me blistering mad! BUT being angry and responding in kind would get me deeper in the pile than I was already finding myself in.

What if you used mindfulness to identify the role your partner was using? If you asked yourself, "Hey, what the heck! Why are they speaking to me like if I was their kid?" Now, you've identified that they are speaking to you using the parent-mode.

In a normal situation, if you did not know Transactional Analysis, how would you respond? Maybe, you'd be upset and petulant, angry and ticked off. According to Transactional Analysis, if you responded in that way, you would be responding to them in the child role as if they were your parent! Oh my gosh! It's cyclical, you see? They assume the parent role and treat you like a child, and you respond like a child! We can do something about this.



Our responses in situations like these are all in an effort to be seen, to get our point across, to express our frustration, to demand an explanation, to share our distress, etc. That's all too much work when you really think about it. But we do it all the time and we do it with almost everyone we know.

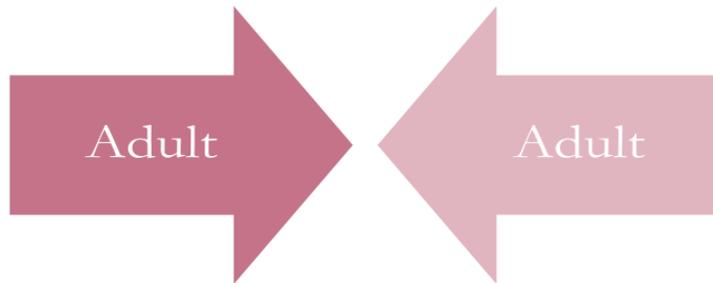
We actually switch between being a child, parent and adult several times throughout the day and not always consistently. So, if you responded like a child to your partner, in five minutes, you may respond to them as a parent!

It's rather interesting dynamics. I've taken to learning this and using it as necessary both at work and at home. But don't tell my partner!

Here's a graphic to help us understand this better.



There's a lot more to Transactional Analysis than I will get into here. For our purposes, the important thing to know is that the goal of using Transactional Analysis is to STOP, THINK and DECIDE and figure out a way to get to adult-to-adult communication.



When we communicate in adult-mode, we:

- ★ **Focus on the Here and Now** – we do this so that we're not steeped in the unhealthy habit of pointing out everything someone did wrong in the past.
- ★ **We Engage in Fact Finding** – so, we try to get through the muck of many conversations and stick to facts and ask the person to share facts as best they can. In this way, you release the conversations from unhelpful emotions that may be steeped in child or parent-modes.
- ★ **Remain Calm & Rational** – High emotional states never solve problems so use your mindfulness – your STOP, THINK and DECIDE, to get you to a calm place.



- ★ **Engage in Problem Solving** – When we communicate and find ourselves in disagreements with strong emotions, it's best to engage in problem-solving conversations. Nothing good will come of continued conflicts.
  
- ★ **Be Observant and Self-Reflective** – Be aware of what mode the person you are speaking to is in. Without confronting them on the mode they are using, you can communicate in adult-mode and slowly bring them in. You will be leading by example.
  
- ★ **Explore Assumptions** – Arguments and disagreements sometimes come about when people make assumptions about us. Either about what we've done or not done. Or what we feel or don't feel. When you notice the person expressing their assumption, this is the time to share your fact from your perspective.
  
- ★ **Decide on a Course of Action** – as with problem solving, you are looking to solve the problems rationally and then decide together the next steps.

Let's look at an example to help connect these concepts to our lives.



**TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS**  
**CONVERSATION EXAMPLE**

- ME "I can't believe you! You did it again! Why do you always leave me waiting for you?"
- YOU "What are you talking about? I never leave you waiting."
- ME "Don't start that with me! You know very well that I saw you with Catherine and you were with her and left me waiting! You always do that to me! You don't love me anymore, so let's just call it off right now!"
- YOU "My apologies, but let's stick with today. I can assure you that I did not leave you waiting on purpose. I was with Catherine, but it's not what you think."
- ME "Oh yeah, go ahead, tell me what I think!"
- YOU "It's my guess that you think I am seeing her. Is that correct?"
- ME "Duh, yeah!"
- YOU "I am not seeing her and the reason I was with her today was because we have a project together. I should've told you that sooner, and I'm sorry."
- ME "Oh, please. I don't believe you. This is just like last year."
- YOU "I see that you're upset but I can assure you that I was with her because of the project and nothing more. I don't want you upset and I've upset you."
- ME "You never pick me up on time."
- YOU "Yeah, I think you're right. I've been insensitive about that. I'm not very good with time but I promise I will work on that."



This may take some practice but stick with it and you'll find that you can use the "emotional intelligence" we learned earlier in this chapter. Remember, the author said we can change our emotions AND the emotions of others?! As I said, I think this may be a bit of an exaggeration, but I do see what they mean. We have a lot of power to alter the trajectory of conversations and save ourselves and the other person a lot of grief.

With a lot of power comes a lot of responsibility. So, use your powers for good and calm situations.



*Use your superpowers for good!*



## CHAPTER 11

# What if Buddha had a smart-phone?

It's common knowledge that we are all practically addicted to our smart-phones. I mean, people have been so preoccupied with their phones that they've actually walked into fountains! Dangerous... but pretty funny when you see those videos!

With that in mind, I have a question for you. Would you be able to turn-off your phone and leave it at home – I mean, not use it at all – for a week? If you think that's something you can do, I would highly recommend it. Almost like transporting yourself back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC in Nepal! You and Buddha, best buds.

I love the idea of experiencing mindfulness while in nature. Whether that's my backyard, the beach or some other place, I find that it brings me serenity and allows me to decompress. I may not do a formal breathing meditation when I'm in those environments, but just by my being there, I experience the present moment and with complete appreciation of that moment.

I would imagine that if my phone chirped in that moment, that'd kill the mood.





There's a predominant view that to truly experience mindfulness we need to get rid of technology. Almost like a cleanse! Believe it or not, I actually take the opposite

view. I believe that technology is our friend when used properly. Thankfully, mindfulness is so in vogue that there are many apps, blogs, podcasts, YouTube videos, etc. that actually help us with our mindfulness practice.

When I practice, I love to have music to put me in the mood! There are many on YouTube, all you have to do is search for “mindfulness music” or “spa music”. Most of these are many hours long so that when I meditate, I can be sure that it will play for me the entire time.

I know what you're thinking, and the answer is “no”. I do not meditate for hours. I can very comfortably do 20 minutes. I usually keep the music on after I am done to keep me in my mindfulness zone.

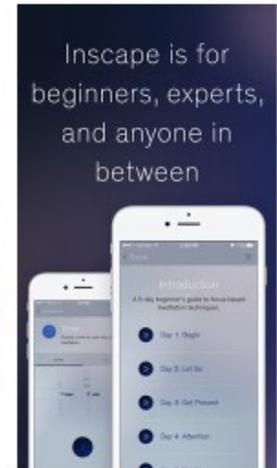
Mindfulness is a money-making industry, so be aware when you are looking into apps or on websites that you are fully aware of what costs what and what is free. Here are some digital resources for you to explore on your own:



## Meditation Apps



iChill



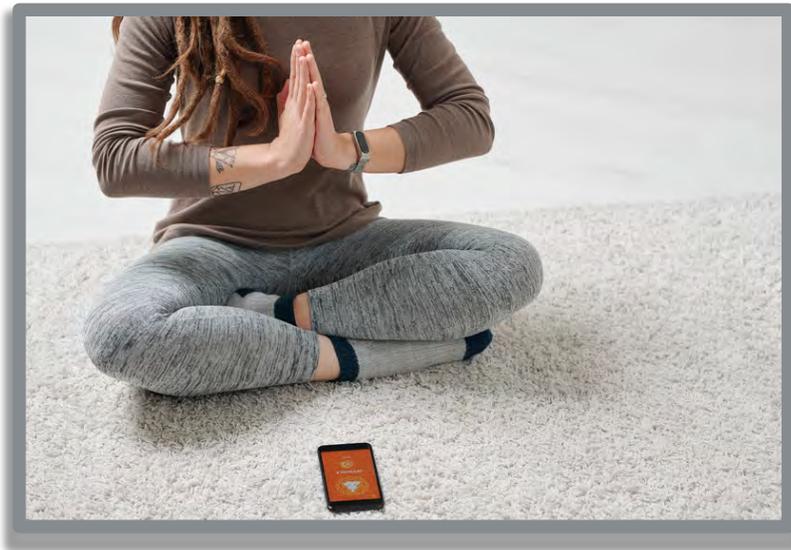
## WEBSITES

- ★ [Mindfulnessexercises.org](http://Mindfulnessexercises.org)
- ★ [Mindful.org](http://Mindful.org)
- ★ Greater Good Science Center – [greatergood.berkeley.edu](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu)
- ★ [Mindfulschools.org](http://Mindfulschools.org)
- ★ The Mindful Movement – [themindfulmovement.com](http://themindfulmovement.com)
- ★ Mindful Hub – [mindfulhub.com](http://mindfulhub.com)
- ★ [nyaprs.org](http://nyaprs.org)



## PODCASTS

- ★ Tara Brach – [TaraBrach.com/talks-audio-videos](https://TaraBrach.com/talks-audio-videos)
- ★ Ten Percent Happier – [TenPercent.com/podcast](https://TenPercent.com/podcast)
- ★ Everyday Mindfulness Show – [EverydayMindfulnessShow.com](https://EverydayMindfulnessShow.com)
- ★ Courage to be Mindful



Yeah, I think if Buddha had a smart-phone, he'd definitely use it!



## CHAPTER 12

# Journaling



Don't rush to the next chapter just yet. I know journaling is not for everyone. First let me tell you the benefits then I'll ask you to answer a few questions and that's it. You may need to practice some mindfulness right now just to stay with me! Trust me, you might actually find out something new about yourself!

The act of journaling allows us to incorporate awareness into our day. I know, it's obvious that the time you spend actually writing is awareness. However, that is not what I am talking about. Journaling provides us with the capacity to experience moments more fully because we know that we will be journaling at some point about it. This kind of awareness is more expansive and all-encompassing. It actually creates space for us to say, "Hey, yeah, I am feeling this right now about this situation, so I'll remember to write about it tonight."



Journaling also allows us to be present while keeping perspective. As we write, we are more thoughtful and can think more clearly about the feelings and emotions we experienced throughout our day. And this allows us to have a greater sense of self-awareness and confidence as we become more adept at regulating our emotions during the day. I am assuming here that you will be journaling in the evening. You can actually journal at any time of day that you wish. I would recommend trying to stick to the same time every day, that way it becomes part of your routine. That's not always possible but do your best to make a schedule and stick to it.



Now, I'm going to come clean. I personally own 4 mindfulness journals. I actually can't seem to get enough of them! However, I don't actually write in them! I did mention that journaling wasn't for everyone but I'm not giving up on myself because Journals actually give me a lot in return, and I should repay them by writing on their beautiful pages. Journals give me a tremendous amount of inspiration and they alight my imagination! They allow me to organize my thoughts, feelings and goals. The journals provide me with the opportunity to think and plan my own goals – professionally and personally – all this wonderful information and possibility in a beautifully bound journal.



They are so beautiful that maybe that's why I'm not actually writing in them. I want to keep them pretty. Truth is, I am benefiting from them greatly. You see, when you find a Mindfulness Journal, they are more than blank pages. They provide affirmations and information on how to cope with various concerns. As I mentioned before, mindfulness is a money-making industry so journals such as these are not free.

That being said, in reality you don't need that. You just need paper and pen or a phone / tablet / computer / laptop and a writing app. There are actually many beautiful writing apps out there but then again, you don't need anything fancy.

Here are a few questions that I'd like you to read, think about your answer and then write in your answers in the space provided. If you have a digital version of this Guide, I recommend you use any other way to document your answer. It's important to go through the process of writing down your answer and not just saying it in your head. There's permanency to the writing process and also memory retention. Try it:



## Journaling Prompts

1. I reflect on the people in my life who love me and make me feel joy. I feel grateful for:

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2. Take a few deep breaths and focus your awareness on your body's energy level. Do you feel tired, exhausted, energized or invigorated? Write what your energy level is telling you.

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## Meditation 5: Journaling<sup>17</sup>

Let's begin by finding ourselves a comfortable and quiet place so we can find relaxation and become aware of our thoughts and feelings.

When you're ready, slowly close your eyes and enjoy the relief you feel simply by removing the light from your world for this one moment. Bring your awareness to your breath. Breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth. As best you can, continue to breathe like this, at your own pace for the remainder of the exercise.

With the darkness and the rhythms of your breathing, a sense of serenity immediately flows through your body, from your head down through your body. Notice all the physical sensations you encounter as serenity flows through you.

Notice your thoughts and feelings...

Put them all aside. Say, "hey, I see you there. You can go for now and I'll pay attention to you later."

Continue your breathing. Breathing in life-giving oxygen and breathing out all that you do not need right now. Breathing in peace and calm and breathing out all tension and stress. It's time to bring your awareness back to your space and slowly, only when you are ready, open your eyes.

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<sup>17</sup> Colón-Wagner, R. (2020). *Courage to be mindful. Manuscript in preparation.*



**As a result of this meditation, write down what you noticed.** This can be anything – intrusive thoughts, self-judgement, the Monkey, pain or discomfort, strong emotions, peace, joy, frustration, etc.

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How did this feel for you? Don't worry if it didn't change your mind. Just know that journaling is always an option for you. If you are interested in journaling, check out some that are out there either through going to bookstores or looking online. There are plenty to choose from.



## CHAPTER 13

### I'm grateful for...

Do you ever ask yourself the question, "What am I grateful for?"

Of everything that I am grateful for, I am grateful that I am grateful. This may sound silly, but I am grateful that I have the awareness and the wherewithal to recognize my privileges and to have the capacity and heart to be thankful.

Chances are, that at some point in your life, you've experienced a realization that you have things that others do not. Whether that's your neighbor, friend, or people you don't even know. Unfortunately, our knee-jerk reaction is usually the opposite of that... to be more aware of what we do not have, instead of an appreciation for what we do have. When we concentrate greater awareness on what we do not have, we can easily experience envy of what others have that we do not. It happens to all of us.

Having gratitude for what one has and for who one is, is mindfulness. It's a wonderful way for us to examine our world and recognize all the things within our world that we benefit from. Your gratitude can start from anywhere you feel is important to you. That can even be gratefulness for something directly connected to you, on a micro-level. For example, it can be someone in your life or your health.



To have an attitude of gratitude allows us to find peace and comfort in our everyday living and live life with purpose. This doesn't mean that we're sticking our heads in the sand and ignoring our difficulties and challenges. No, last I checked, mine are all still there! However, when we focus on being grateful for who we are and who and what is in our lives, this provides us with an immense opportunity to cultivate happiness and reduce our stress.

It's a way of changing perspective on the way we see our world. If you experience an abundance of worry, regret, envy, and anger; what would you and your world look like in 10 years from now? Would life be better for you because of it?

Chances are that it would not. Being grateful seems so elementary that how can something so simple and even obvious work? It works because it opens us up to hope, optimism, self-esteem and reasons to live - - live life with purpose and happiness. All of this and more, will seep from your pores like an energy field, instead of shielding and protecting you, it expands to others around you, making you a positive force to everyone around you. Your energy begets energy. You will attract people to you simply for doing something so simple as being grateful.

Here are some possible things you can be grateful for. Not all them will apply to you, right now, in this moment in your life. Use this to stimulate your thinking as you identify the people, places, things, feelings, thoughts, behaviors in your life that you are grateful for.



Morning coffee	Pets	Chair to sit on
New day	Clarity	Blankets
Bed	Faith	Television
Food	Bedroom	Money
Shower	Privacy	Kindness
Relationships	Therapy	Prayer
Love	Family	Music
Job	Mobility	Health
Hobby	Independence	Happiness
Books	Warm food	Soap
Knowledge	Laughter	Moments of joy
School	Earth	Universe
Gym/exercise	Mobile phone	Liberty
Bracelet	Mindfulness	Culture
Tattoo	Gratitude	Positivity
Neighborhood	Computer/laptop	Hot sauce
Neighbors	Games	Peanuts



