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18 QUICK & EASY WAYS TO BE MINDFUL, NOT MIND FULL, AT WORK

Tip #1: Short Mindfulness Breaks

Set the reminders on your phone to go off at 3 different times during your work day for a few 1-minute mindfulness breaks. Just stop, close your eyes, relax, and take a few cleansing breaths (breathe in through your nose for a count of four, hold for a count of five and breathe out through your mouth for a count of eight).

Tip #2: Tell Yourself It's Someone Else

When you're anxious about something, speak to yourself in the third person and avoid using first-person pronouns. Research from Dr. Kross at the University of Michigan's Emotion & Self Control Lab says, "If a friend comes to you with a problem it's easy to coach them through it, but if the problem is happening to us we have real difficulty, in part because we have all these egocentric biases making it hard to reason rationally. The data clearly shows that you can use language to almost trick yourself into thinking your problems are happening to someone else."

Tip #3: Journaling

Journaling is a great tool for some people. Sit down and give your monkey mind time to run wild, once a day, for 20 minutes. Just let yourself write and write, whatever comes to mind.

Tip #4: Ask Yourself

Ask yourself two questions throughout the day. First ask, "What am I feeling right now?" Then ask yourself, "Why am I feeling this way?" It might be something as simple as noticing that you're feeling hungry and then you can see that you feel this way because you haven't eaten in a few hours. Other times, though, you might notice that you're feeling agitated or anxious and it's important to identify why you feel this way. It's not always about "doing" anything about your feelings. Just identify them, understand why, and move on.

Tip #5: Repeat a Mantra

A mantra is usually a word or phrase which you repeat over and over again either aloud or silently in your head. It's meant to help you concentrate in a mindful way. A mantra can be as simple as one word like "love" or "compassion." It could also be something you're thankful for or an affirmation of some kind. Choose a mantra based on what you think you need in that moment. Say it over and over in your head a few times throughout the day. Use it if you notice yourself getting anxious or "caught up" in your day.

Tip #6: Wait to Answer the Phone

Don't pick up the phone on the first ring. When you hear your ring tone, let it be a reminder for you to stop, get centered and take a breath before responding. Don't be distracted when you answer. Being in the here and now will make you less reactive and more deliberate and thoughtful.

Tip #7: Wait to Send that Email

Just like you did for Tip #6, this tip is all about taking a breath and not responding too quickly. So, write that email and then minimize it for a moment. Do something else (take a call, work on that spreadsheet you've been avoiding, write another email, or just take a breath and have a sip of water). Now, open that email back up and re-read it from a calm space. Make sure it's what you want to say and then hit send if it all feels all right.

Tip #8: Set Intention

Setting intention is an awesome way to focus your brain and get into the here and now. And, it's so quick and simple. Before you do something, you want to stop, take a breath and set your intention for whatever you're about to do. Hustling into a meeting? Take just a second and set an intention to listen and be open. Just parked your car and getting ready to walk into work? Take a breath and set an intention to be productive and patient. About to meet with your boss and you're feeling anxious? Give yourself a minute, close your eyes, take a deep breath and set an intention to be calm and relaxed.

Tip #9: Mindfully Walk

Getting up from your desk and moving is always a good idea. You can incorporate mindful walking easily by focusing on just that: walking. Getting up to go to the bathroom? Mindfully walk there. Feel your feet hit the floor, notice how you're feeling. Are you anxious? Hungry? Bored? Angry? Just notice and feel yourself walking to (and from) the bathroom. Need to print something? Hook up your computer to a printer in another room and mindfully walk to the printer every time you print something. Going to the break room to get a snack? Same thing. These little breaks of focus will help clear the fog and leave you feeling refreshed.

Tip #10: Shoulder Shrug

The shoulder shrug is one of my favorite things to do because you can, literally, do it during a meeting, sitting at your desk or standing in line waiting for your tea. Shrug your shoulders up high all the way to your ears and hold for a few seconds. Now stick out your chest and squeeze your shoulder blades together in the middle of your back for a few seconds (my kids call these your "wings"). Now simply let your shoulders drop. You'll notice how much more relaxed you feel right away as it's common to "scrunch" our shoulders without even realizing it.

Tip #11: Read a poem, sacred text or daily devotional and reflect for one minute

Reading something that brings you to "center" is a great way to take just a couple minutes and refresh yourself. Stash a favorite book of poems, daily passages or religious reading in your desk drawer. Whenever you need to center yourself, read something for just one or two minutes.

Tip #12: Review 2 Bad and 2 Good

At the end of the day, reflect on two negative things and two positive things that happened that day. Review them in your head and try your best to refrain from judging yourself ("How could I have been so stupid?!"). Instead, make an honest assessment and move from there. It's a moment to reflect and get "real" about your day.

Tip #13: Monotask once a day

Once a day do one thing, and one thing only. We so often multi-task without even realizing it. For example, if you drink coffee, do only that for a few minutes. Don't daydream, talk to anyone, check your phone or walk. Just drink your coffee. That's it. Focus on the smell, warmth and taste of your coffee and drinking it. Do not let your mind wander. Just focus. This is monotasking. Do this once a day and you'll start to notice how frequently you multitask. This distraction leads to miscommunications and misunderstandings.

Tip #14: Take a Non-Smoke Break

It's interesting how we have no issue when someone says they need to "take a quick smoke break." However, if someone says they just need a "break" and leaves their desk, we tend to judge. So, take a non-smoke break (no one needs to know you quit two years ago). Go outside. Breathe some fresh air. Take just a minute or two to lift your head to the sun (or clouds) and breathe in the air, check in with yourself and notice how you're feeling. Then, go in and get back to work.

Tip #15: Scan One Part of Your Body

Close your eyes and choose any part of your body and bring your full awareness to it. For example, if you choose your foot, bring your focus to your foot. Flex or scrunch each toe, one by one, and then release. Feel your foot in your sock or shoe. Grip it into the floor. Flex and release your ankle. Spend one to two minutes just completely focused on the sensation in your foot.

TIP #16 HALT

Makesure you never get too Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired. For example, it's very hard to sit and meditate if your stomach is grumbling and you're starving. So, try to eliminate any of these factors as much as possible so you can get and stay self-aware.

TIP #17: The Grandpa Fred Method

I got this one from a client who learned it from his Grandpa Fred (who wouldn't want to give props to Grandpa Fred)? Wrap a rubber band around your middle three fingers to remind yourself to be self-aware or patient or whatever your focus of the day is. Whenever you notice the rubber band and get ready to rip it off your hand, you'll remember to focus on your new intended state of being.

TIP #18: Reset Before Meetings

Any time you meet with 2 or more colleagues, take a moment before you start and do something mindful (all take a cleansing breath, all do a shoulder shrug, ask each person to state their intention for the meeting, meditate for one minute, etc.). This action will start the meeting off right and have everyone in a healthy head space (at least to start).

RESOURCES

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- The UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center has an online guide with audio files as well as a podcast channel to help new practitioners find their way <http://marc.ucla.edu/mindful-meditations>
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- Meditation leads to lower stress levels (lower stress hormone in body): <https://www.ucdavis.edu/news/mindfulness-meditation-associated-lower-stress-hormone>
- Meditation Helps cognition: <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/04/100414184220.htm>
- Meditation & More creative: <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/04/120419102317.htm>
- Meditation & Productivity: <https://hbr.org/2012/10/if-youre-too-busy-to-meditate.html>
- <http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2011/01/eight-weeks-to-a-better-brain/>
- <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/345/6192/75>
- Just think: The challenges of the disengaged mind. Timothy D. Wilson^{1,*}, David A. Reinhard¹, Erin C. Westgate¹, Daniel T. Gilbert², Nicole Ellerbeck¹, Cheryl Hahn¹, Casey L. Brown¹, Adi Shaked; *Science* 04 Jul 2014: Vol. 345, Issue 6192, pp. 75-77; DOI: 10.1126/science.1250830
- <http://www.ibtimes.com/ray-dalio-hedge-fund-genius-says-meditation-secret-his-success-1466108>
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- <https://hbr.org/2016/03/how-to-practice-mindfulness-throughout-your-work-day>