

## Engaging Your Mindful Brain

Practice is crucial to developing new skills. Commit to carving out five minutes twice a day to engage in the following practice. Of course, adding more time to each practice will make your experience more robust and will help to lock in your newly developed awareness skills. You can do this practice almost anywhere as long as you aren't likely to be interrupted by someone talking to you.

Closing your eyes promotes a deeper and more profound rendezvous with your senses, but keeping them open if you need to is also fine. Read through the instructions several times to familiarize yourself with the process. Consider making a recording of the instructions to use until your mindfulness practice becomes second nature. As you practice, engage all your senses.

1. Direct your attention to your breath, and without forcing anything, just maintain the natural pace of your breath and focus on each of the following aspects in turn:
  - With the first breath, notice the rise and fall of your abdomen.
  - With the second breath, tune in to the expansion and contraction of your lungs.
  - With the third breath, feel the cool air coming through your nostrils as you breathe in, and sense the warmth of the air you exhale.
2. Repeat the above process three times, noticing the rise and fall of your abdomen, your lungs expanding and contracting, and the temperature of the air as you inhale and exhale.
3. If your eyes are open, visually notice the space you're occupying. If they're closed, conjure up a memory of this space. Label what you see: the color, size, shape, dimension, and movement of whatever surrounds you.
4. Notice the sounds in your environment. Allow them to enter your auditory awareness precisely and without judgment. Label each one, from the roaring lyrics of the lawnmower pressing through your window to the rambling medley of children's voices in play and even to the most subtle sounds: the whistle of the air ventilation duct, the tiny tick of the clock, or the faint hum coming from your laptop sitting on your desk.
5. Invite your nasal passages to join you in your practice, making sense out of scents in the air.
6. Point the needle of your compass of awareness to your tongue. As you take a slow breath in and then release it, notice and label any tastes in your mouth.
7. Direct your attention toward the sensations of anything that you are physically in contact with. Notice your clothing against your skin, a breeze brushing your face, the texture of the surface or firmness of the cushion you're sitting on, the feeling of the ground beneath your feet or the sand between your toes.
8. Turn your attention to your internal world, the world under your skin. If possible, engage in a few simple stretches accompanied by nice, full breaths. Starting with the crown of your head, slowly scan your entire body from top to bottom. Take notice of sensations in your muscles and viscera: energy, fatigue, tightness, tingling, soreness, numbness, strength, queasiness, or weakness, for example. Just notice. Be aware of emotional responses emerging within. You may notice that your inner sensations emit a resonance of sadness, fear, or anger. Just notice this, label it, and allow your attention to rest upon it quietly, observing without appraisal.