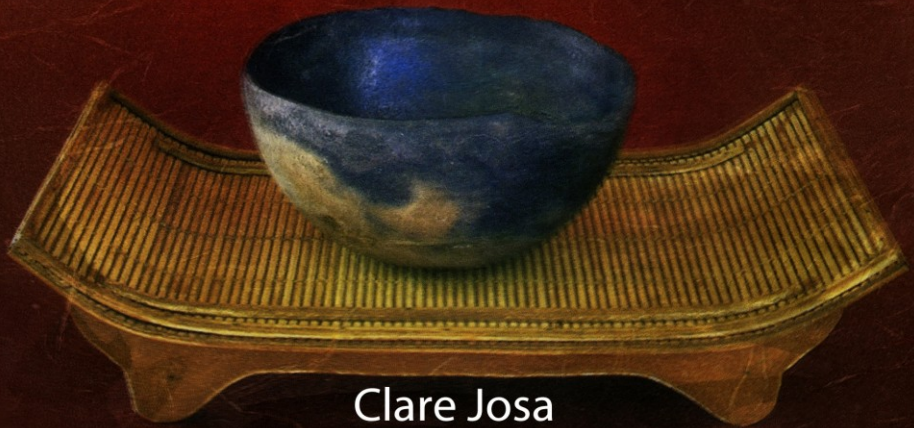


# 52 Mindful Moments

Inspirational Mindfulness Techniques To Take You  
From Stressed To Smiling In Under Sixty Seconds



Clare Josa

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Inspirational Mindfulness Techniques To Take You  
From Stressed To Smiling In Under Sixty Seconds

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**Dedication**

This book is dedicated to HH Dalai Lama and Thích Nhất Hạnh. Thank you for everything you have taught me and for living a life of mindful compassion, inspiring us to see the beauty of who we really are and the interconnectedness of all beings.



## Thank You

I extend my heart-felt gratitude to some of my greatest teachers, without whom I would never have been able to create this book for you.

To the inspirational Thích Nhất Hạnh and HH Dalai Lama – thank you for your life-long dedication to helping people discover how to find the peace they were looking for, deep down inside, no matter what is happening in their lives.

To Chris Barrington and Savitri MacCuish from [www.DruWorldwide.com](http://www.DruWorldwide.com), who have been my meditation mentors: thank you for your decades of abhyasa and your generosity of spirit, sharing so much with us all and helping to inspire me on my journey.

To my children, who have taught me so much about living in the moment, the many ways we curb our true spirit through life, along with how to undo those old choices, and also how to be patient. I wrap you in my deepest love.

To my husband, Peter, and my gorgeous boys, for their flexibility and patience, whenever my need to write and teach is too great to ignore. Thank you for your support – both moral and physical.

To my Dream Team, thank you for believing in the work I share and for being my cheer leaders, when I need you most. Thank you for being there.

To you, my reader, thank you (in advance!) for going and using this stuff. Each time you move yourself back towards feeling at peace, you create a gentle wave that will ultimately change the world. Namaste!



## How To Get The Most From This Book

When you're feeling stressed, tired or in need of inspiration, you often don't have time to wade through hundreds of pages in a 'how to' book.

That's why I have written **52 Mindful Moments** for you, to make it easy for you to discover mindfulness techniques (both ancient practices and some modern twists) that can help you to de-stress, unwind, get more clarity, feel calmer and happier, in just a few minutes.

You can either:

- read the book from cover to cover, testing out and learning from your experience of each technique as you go along (perhaps even focussing on one each week?)
- or you can close your eyes, set the intention of finding the technique you need most in this moment, and open the book at random.

My hope is that these 52 ideas will inspire you to have all the stress-busting tools you need, well-practised and ready to use, whenever you need them.

This book doesn't go into the details of 'how to fix stress' or 'how to change your life' – that's not what you have time for, when you're in the middle of 'life' - though these techniques will help you to de-stress and change your life. Whenever you are ready to go deeper, my other books and courses can help.

In the meantime, these mindfulness techniques will be waiting for you, whenever you want to experiment with them, ready to take you back to that place of inner peace and calm, deep inside.

## Bonus Resources For Readers

**52 Mindful Moments** comes with plenty of bonus resources for readers.

By registering as a member of the **Readers' Club** (it's free!), you get:

- **A 15 minute mindfulness meditation MP3**  
It's ideal for those times when you want to take your experience of inner peace even further.
- **Extra MP3s, videos and articles**  
These help you to have an even more powerful experience with the more in-depth techniques.
- **Exclusive private online community**  
Readers' Club members get to join in with a special discussion area for the **52 Mindful Moments** book, in our private online community – Soul-Sized Living. It's a great place to share your experiences, get answers to your questions and connect with others who are enjoying the techniques in this book.
- **Monthly Soul-Sized Living Newsletter**  
Members of the Readers' Club also get my monthly Soul-Sized Living newsletter, packed with the latest inspirational articles, life-changing techniques and members-only goodies.

**Register today at:**

[www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub](http://www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub)



# **52 Mindful Moments**

## **Kick-Start Guide**

## **Welcome to 52 Mindful Moments!**

To get the most from this book, I strongly suggest you begin by spending a few minutes flicking through this Kick-Start guide, before you dive into the techniques. It doesn't take long and it will lay useful foundations for the rest of this book.

It covers:

- the problem with 'mindlessness'
- what is mindfulness
- how it can help you
- how to avoid the most common life-change excuse
- how to spot the progress you're making

My invitation to you is to enjoy experimenting with these 52 mindfulness techniques. They have been specially designed to be easy to learn, as well as helping you to shift yourself from hectic to calm in under a minute.

Do them with a light heart and a smile on your face. Don't make the mistake of 'trying too hard' or 'forcing' the techniques to work. You'll get the best results by letting the exercises flow and discovering how they work for you. There's no 'right' or 'wrong' with mindfulness.

You don't need to add another 'should' to your daily 'to do' list. **All you need to do is spend a minute, a couple of times a day, playing with the technique.**

## *Kick-Start Guide*

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Some of the techniques might take more than 60 seconds, the first time you do them. But with practice, they'll be under a minute.

Some of the techniques are drawn from ancient spiritual wisdom traditions. Other are adapted and combined with insider secrets from modern psychology, to make it easy for you to experience mindfulness, every day, no matter how busy your life is.

Just imagine - a couple of minutes a day, each week, for a year and it will transform your experience of life.

Namaste,

*Clare. ♥*

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## **What's The Problem With 'Mindlessness'?**

*Being mindful is a state of being – a particular way of choosing to experience life, in the present moment - rather than letting your mind run riot over past mistakes and future worries, whilst sleep-walking through what's actually going on around you.*

*We're normally too busy doing "mind-full" to be mindful.*

### **Some common symptoms of 'mindlessness' or being 'mind-full'.**

- Do you find yourself 'listening' to someone, whilst actually thinking more about your response? Do you realise you didn't really hear what they were

saying?

- Do you find yourself getting to the bottom of a cup of tea or coffee, without remembering drinking it?
- Do you forget where you put things?
- Do you walk into a room, but don't remember why you went there?
- Do you find yourself arriving at a destination, but not remembering the route you took?
- Do you find it hard to remember people's names?
- Do you find yourself getting stressed about not having enough time?

All of these - and plenty more - are symptoms of a mind so full of yesterday, tomorrow and 'what ifs', that it can't enjoy the present moment.

## **What Is Mindfulness?**

I'm going to give you a practical definition of what mindfulness is, rather than a spiritual or religious definition:

*Mindfulness is about actually experiencing life, while you're living it.*

We tend to spend most of our time running away from our experience of life – hiding from it – perhaps because the stories our Monkey Mind tells us can create pain. Mindfulness is about being present to your experience of life, as it truly is, rather than wanting to change it or believing the drama and the stories.

*The 'present moment' - 'here and now' is the only time you have.*

## *Kick-Start Guide*

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Yesterday is done and dusted. Tomorrow isn't here yet. If you want to actually live your life, then **now** is the only time you can do it. Want to make changes in the future? Then you need to do them **now**. Want to create a past that you're proud of? Then you need to take action **now**.

But that's tough, when we don't even notice eating our breakfast or driving to work!

Being mindful means dragging yourself back into the present moment - away from the 'to do' list, the housework, next week's big meeting, last week's presentation and everything else that normally fills your mind to bursting point.

When we are 'mindless', we're living in the past or the future, rather than the 'now'. We are disconnected from the part of us that makes the unconscious choices about how to think, feel and act in every moment. It is hard to see what is 'real' and what is our Monkey Mind's story.

*Are you too busy pretending you're a 'human doing'  
to be a 'human being'?*

We might feel scared that, by being in the present moment: the 'to do' list will get forgotten; the shopping won't get done; the kids won't get fed. (Don't worry - they'll remind you!) But, in fact, *it's the other way round*.

By focussing our experience right here, right now, we can develop a clarity that somehow creates more time in our day, meaning the 'to do' list gets shorter and becomes less of an obsession. It creates more spacing for living and actually experiencing life, as it is happening.

*When you are totally aware of what you are doing –  
'doing with awareness' – it's amazing how much  
more easily life flows.*

This then gives you the clarity you need to take inspired action, to make the changes that matter the most – more easily and effectively.

As a meditation technique, mindfulness is about using your focus and concentration to be aware of the present moment, rather than being lost in the future or worrying about the past. However **it's not about pretending that there isn't a future or a past.**

*It's about drawing your awareness back into your  
physical body and experiencing life through all of  
your senses; being truly present – and alive!*

It is the kind of experience you get when you look into somebody's eyes and you really connect. You know that they're there and so are you. Rather than talking to them whilst perhaps thinking about your shopping list and what you have got to cook for dinner, you're really 'present' with them.

**Mindfulness is about living life as the sensory experience that it really is, in your physical body, rather than being stuck in your thinking mind.**

It's ideal for a multi-tasking mind, because it gives your mind something to do! It gets to help run the process of 'being here'.

### **Just imagine...**

- actually tasting your tea, as you drink it
- really feeling that cuddle
- really hearing the birdsong
- really smelling your coffee
- really seeing the beauty of the sun, peeping through the clouds
- really hearing what a loved-one is saying - and seeing the look in their face, when they know they have been heard
- actually feeling the comfort of your clothes on your body
- feeling your feet connect with the earth, with every step

### **Why settle for half-living?**

The back of my business cards has a provocative quote, that sometimes gets me into trouble... It is:

**Just because you're breathing, it doesn't mean you're alive.**

But it sums up beautifully the difference between a life that is lived from the position of the Monkey Mind and a life that is lived with awareness – mindfully.

*Mindfulness can bring your experience of life alive.*

It is something you can do at any time, in any place, it feels great - and it's free! One of the great bonuses of mindfulness is that, as you become more familiar with how to practise it, **it doesn't take up any extra time**. You can do it wherever and whenever you want to, no matter how busy you are.

## How Mindfulness Can Help You

Mindfulness can help you to:

- de-stress
- feel more calm
- feel more relaxed
- reconnect with your sense of inner peace
- think more clearly
- feel more healthy, as your body is no longer flooded with stress hormones and it becomes easier for you to make healthier life choices
- consciously choose how to experience your life
- set yourself free from living on auto-pilot

The power of mindfulness to change the way we think, feel and behave is so strong that even traditional medical doctors are now using mindfulness to help people who are suffering from, for example, clinical depression.

Universities are researching it. Mindfulness is also used in the training for many sports, where athletes really need moment-to-moment concentration and focus.

Imagine living your day actually being 'here' rather than, as I often call it, off on another planet!

*Mindfulness is an amazing de-stressing, relaxation technique, which comes with the added bonus that life comes to life.*

## **How Can You Get Back Into The Present Moment?**

By getting out of your head and back into your senses.

That's the only way we can experience the present. Anything else – like a thought, feeling, word or action, is a reaction to the physical, sensory experience. And, by virtue of the way our brain chemistry functions, by the time we respond to something, that 'something' is already in the past.

By practising mindfulness, we'll get to a stage where any activity, be it walking, housework, giving a presentation or even picking the kids up from school, can be done with a level of awareness that means we are truly experiencing life and always have a choice.

*By allowing the constant drone of "to do" lists and life analysis to fade into the background, it's much easier to feel calmer, less stressed, happier and more in flow with a vibrant experience of being alive.*

### **It's about that split-second choice to come back into the here and now.**

Here are some really quick ways you can do this:

- When you talk to someone, make eye contact. Actually look them in the eye and allow that connection to take place, just for a moment. It brings you back into the "now" and can transform the outcome of tricky conversations.
- Stop whatever you're doing and take a deep breath in, breathing out with

an “ahh” sound. That’s got you back into your body, instantly.

- Stop doing three things at once and choose to just do one – and really focus on it.
- At any moment, ask yourself: “What can I see / hear / smell / taste / feel, right at this moment?”

The **52 Mindful Moments** exercises have been specially designed to help to increase your awareness and become more mindful, in the present moment.

With regular practise, this can easily become your ‘normal’ way of experiencing life. But it does take practice and an ongoing commitment to choosing to be aware and present.

## **Dealing with the #1 life-change excuse, once and for all!**

But I Don’t Have Time!

How do you find time to make changes in your life?

This is one of the most common reasons I hear from people about why they don’t make changes... and I have to confess that I have lost count of how often I have used it myself!

When you’re stuck in the middle of ‘doing’ your old habit, it can feel difficult to take the time out to stand back and become aware of what you are doing and which bits you want to change. Yet that time will repay you every single day, for

the rest of your life.

*Someone I was talking to recently about changing her life was raving about wanting to de-stress. And she was excited about the idea of being able to lay the foundations, day by day, in the comfort of her own home. But when I asked her if she could spare a few minutes a day for it, her answer was, "No! I'm way too busy!"*

*She was so convinced by her excuse that there was no room left for her to change.*

*She would rather spend the next fifty years going through the pain of feeling super-stressed – and all the 'dis-ease' that brings with it – than dedicate a few minutes a day to making the shifts she said she wanted.*

Is it really true that our lives are too full to find time to de-stress?

Surely much of our time is used up by the very stress patterns we want to shift?

### **How To Magically Create More Time**

It is true that we often believe that we don't have enough time. But there's a difference between truth and belief.

We believe our stories and excuses, telling them to ourselves so often that they become a pseudo-truth that we no longer question – like 'received wisdom'. We even start to believe in other people's excuses! But is it really true?

It's funny how, for example, if we fall in love, we suddenly find plenty of evenings and weekends to spend with that wonderful new person:

- we watch less TV
- we read fewer magazines
- we spend less time on the internet
- we spend less time on chores
- we use our time more intentionally
- we work more efficiently
- we drop anything that's not essential

Is it really too much for your mind, body and soul to ask for a few minutes of your time each day for something that can dramatically impact your life?

There are many 'important jobs' and distractions during the day that steal our time; things that crop up unexpectedly, where we give them our immediate attention. Everything else falls off the table, including the time we had set aside for working 'on ourselves'. Yet if we were to tell those distractions, "I will come back to you later," it's amazing how they either go away or take up less time.

*The classic example is a phone call.*

*You're in the middle of something important, but you answer the phone anyway. The conversation takes ten minutes. Then you go back to what you were doing.*

*You found ten minutes for the interruption.*

*So why do we find it so hard to find even a few minutes to change our lives...?*

### **Little And Often**

You will notice a much faster, deeper-acting impact from your mindfulness practices if you do them 'little and often', rather than blitzing them, once in a blue

moon.

I encourage you to remind yourself, each day, to experiment with one (or more!) of these exercises, to allow them to create shifts in your experience of life.

*Inspiration can give us the idea. Motivation can get us started. But it's routine and habit that create the change.*

Make a commitment to yourself, today, to spend a few minutes learning mindfulness techniques that can shift your experience of life.

It's worth pausing for a moment, just now, to decide **how you are going to remember to do these exercises.**

## **How To Spot The Progress You're Making**

It's easy to miss the changes we make in our lives. We're too busy 'doing the living' to notice them. So make sure you keep a radar on for those shifts.

Some people find it helpful to keep a journal. Others find they like to take time to reflect, every few weeks, to compare how they used to handle life 'in the olden days' with how they're handling it now.

Whatever you choose, it's important to allow yourself to spot those shifts – and to take a few moments to congratulate yourself on those changes. It's the best way to ensure your mind brings you more of them!

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**Snapshot: Where are you now?**

One of the easiest ways to notice the progress you're making is to learn to take a 'snapshot' – to notice 'where you're at' at the moment. If you do this every few weeks, you'll really see the shifts.

Here are some simple questions that can help you to figure that out.

You might find it helps to write the answers down.

1. Which emotions do you feel most often, during a typical day?
2. How would you describe your stress levels?
3. What speed does your mind typically think?
4. How would you describe your energy levels and your physical health?
5. Why are you choosing to learn mindfulness?
6. How often do you actually taste your food, as you eat it?
7. If you could make one change in your life, what would it be?
8. How will you know when you have made that change?
9. If you could give one piece of advice to yourself, right here, right now, what would it be?

Now it's time to dive in and experience the first of these 52 mindfulness techniques.



# **52 Mindful Moments**

## The Mindfulness Techniques

## **The 52 Mindfulness Techniques**

### **1. Three Mindful Breaths**

This is such a simple mindfulness technique, yet it has the potential to shift you from feeling stressed to feeling calm in just 3 breaths.

The more often you use it, the more your body and mind will become anchored into its effects and it will begin to work even more quickly for you.

Eventually, you'll find yourself starting to return to equilibrium as soon as you remember to do it – even before you actually do the technique!

- It releases physical tension.
- It releases mental tension.
- It shifts your focus back to 'here and now'.

Not bad for 3 simple mindful breaths?

This '3 Mindful Breaths' technique is a foundation mindfulness technique and it is often used at the beginning of other mindfulness exercises.

It is so core to experiencing mindfulness that perhaps I should have called it technique zero, instead of #1?

It's a great way to bring you 'back down to earth', when you have been stuck in your 'stress-head', getting you ready for the more in-depth techniques. So it's worth practising this one, until it becomes second nature for you – it doesn't take long.

### **How To Do 3 Mindful Breaths:**

1. Stop whatever you are doing and sit or stand with your back fairly straight, rather than slouched.
2. Take a deep breath from your belly area, breathing all the way in through your nose.
3. Breathe out through your mouth, with an 'ahhhh' sound' (it can be silent, if you need it to be!) Really experience the physical sensations in your body as you do this.
4. As you breathe out, imagine you are releasing any stress and tension from your body and your mind.
5. Do this 3 times. Smile. **Notice the difference.**

Once you have practised this a few times, it can help you shift from feeling stressed in just 3 breaths.

The more often you do it during your day, the more you will be anchored into it bringing you back to a mindful state of being and the more effectively it will create that shift for you.

### **How might you remind yourself to do this?**

- Perhaps each time you look at your watch?
- Or each time you hang up the phone?
- Or each time you boil the kettle?



## **2. Have You Forgotten How To Breathe?**

Before we start, I invite you to take a moment to notice where in your body you're breathing right now. I know that sounds like a strange question: "Where are you breathing?" But, for most of us, we have no idea where we are breathing and it's often not where it should be.

**To test where you're breathing:** place your hand over your diaphragm – that is the bit of your belly above your belly button, below your ribcage. Notice whether or not it moves when you're breathing for the next few moments. **Still can't quite tell?** Look in the mirror and see whether your shoulders or upper chest are moving.

### **Most of us have forgotten how to breathe.**

When you watch a baby breathe, it naturally breathes from the tummy area, in a smooth, effortless, gentle rhythm. That's the way our body is designed to breathe: the diaphragm moves down, causing the rib cage to expand, opening up the lungs, filling them with oxygen-rich air. Then as you breathe out the diaphragm moves up compressing everything, naturally expelling the air. It should be a pretty much effortless process.

But when we get stressed or stuck in our thoughts, our breathing tends to move up to the chest area. We end up using the intercostal chest muscles to breathe, instead of the diaphragm. And if we're really stressed our breathing moves up to the shoulders and even the throat. Not only do we end up working too hard to breathe, but we're not getting enough oxygen into the body, which causes physiological stress and starves the brain of oxygen-rich blood, making it harder

to think clearly.

The mind and body are linked, so if the body feels stressed, then the mind starts thinking stressful thoughts, stressful hormones go round, we feel more stressed, we experience stressful emotions and the cycle continues.

**You can put a “pause” in this by subtly shifting how you’re breathing - mindfully.**

As usual do this within your comfortable limits. *If you’ve got breathing issues or severe asthma you might want to talk to your medical professional first.* **If you can’t do this breathing exercise, visualise it, imagine it. It will have a similar effect.**

1. Putting your hands on your abdomen, over your diaphragm, just above the belly button area, with your fingertips lightly touching.
2. Allow your chest to expand as you breathe in. Allow it to gently sink towards your spine as you breathe out. (It’s not the time to be thinking about flat tummies, it’s ok for your stomach to move!)
3. As you breathe in from just above your belly button, you should notice your fingers slightly moving apart, as your chest expands.
4. As you breathe out they return together, as your abdomen contracts.
5. Feel the cycle – the gentle rhythm – of your breathing. Allow your breathing to continue, at a slightly slower pace than usual, for a minute or two, letting your awareness rest gently on the physical experience of breathing.

Continue until you feel the ‘shift’ as your body relaxes and you return to the present moment.



### **3. Turning Your Awareness Inside**

We spend most of our time in our heads – or at least not in our bodies. If you were to interrupt someone in the course of their day and ask them how their physical body was feeling, most would be totally unaware.

We take the input from our senses and we analyse it, critique it, compare it, have long discussions with ourselves about it, but we rarely *experience* it.

What's the problem with this?

*Your head isn't where your life is.*

We are souls, here to have a physical experience of life, not just an intellectual one.

By coming back into your body, you will nearly instantly:

- Cut your stress levels, as you allow your body to stop producing so many stress hormones, rebalancing your sympathetic ('fight or flight') and parasympathetic ('relaxation') nervous systems.
- Get more clarity, as your thoughts slow down.
- Shift your focus from your Monkey Mind's projections and stories to sensory perceptions of "what's real?"
- Feel more centred, grounded and at peace.
- Allow your body to more easily go about its daily tasks, even at a cellular level.

**How to turn your awareness inside:**

1. Start with 3 Mindful Breaths [from technique #1]
2. Breathe in, with your focus gently resting on the physical experience of breathing. Consciously choose to bring your awareness back into your body.
3. Breathe out and relax into your physical body. Gently close your eyes.
4. As you breathe in and out, gently send your focus around your body, experiencing the physical sensations of being 'in your body' in each area for a few seconds.
5. As you relax into this exercise, you may even become aware of the rhythms of your body, including your breathing, your blinking and your heartbeat.
6. Accept any bits that ache. Perhaps say 'thank you' to each part, as you move around your body with your inner focus.
7. When you feel ready, move your focus to one part of your body, for example, the big toe on your right foot. Allow yourself to become fully absorbed in noticing the physical sensations in that big toe. How does it feel if you wiggle it? How does it feel when you let it rest? Allow all of your focus to rest in that big toe.
8. If your Monkey Mind needs a job, tell it to describe the physical sensations, without judgement.
9. When you feel you are back 'here and now', release this practice.

This is a lovely exercise to be guided through, so there's a bonus MP3 audio of it for you at:

[www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub](http://www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub)



## **4. Is It Time To Be Like A Tree?**

Most of us live in our heads, somewhere in the past or the future, rather than in our sensory bodies, in the present moment.

It's a modern epidemic. We're not really 'here'.

There's a side-effect of this. It's as though all of the mental energy we are using stays stuck in your body, like static electricity. Then, just like static, if it connects with something that accidentally earths it, you get a shock.

That shock often comes out as an unexpected emotional outburst or even a physical pain.

### **So grounding that 'static' is really important.**

Here's a mindfulness exercise that works with your breath and with visualisation. Note: if you don't 'think in pictures' and find it hard to visualise, that's fine. You can imagine or get a sense of this technique in any way that works for you.

### **Time To Be Like A Tree**

1. Stand up and start with 3 mindful breaths [see technique #1]
2. Imagine there is a cord at the crown of your head, gently pulling upwards, allowing your posture to straighten, slightly tucking under your tailbone, and allowing your spine to lengthen, vertebra by vertebra. When you can sense a tiny space between each vertebra, your spine will still be gently curved, but your posture will feel taller and your centre of balance may have shifted.

## *52 Mindful Moments*

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3. Tuck your chin under slightly, which releases tension and lengthens the back of your neck.
4. Allow your shoulders to relax and let a gentle smile rest on your face. Your body feels strong, but relaxed and supple.
5. Now send your focus to the soles of your feet. Imagine – visualise / feel / get a sense of that connection - between your feet and the earth beneath you. Feel yourself putting out roots into the earth, growing and anchoring you deeply and firmly. Feel and see those roots getting stronger and deeper, spreading in all directions.
6. When you can sense those roots, imagine you are breathing in from the earth, through those roots, through the soles of your feet. And breathe out through the soles of your feet, back into the earth. Continue for a few breaths.
7. When you feel ready, as you breathe in, draw the anchored and grounded earth energy in through the soles of your feet and up to your chest area.
8. When you breathe out, release ‘static’ and tension down from your chest area and out into the earth, through the soles of your feet.
9. Continue this cycle for at least 7 breaths.
10. Know that, like a tree, your roots are grounded in the earth and your branches can choose to sway gently in the breeze.
11. When you feel fully grounded, smile and release the exercise.



## **5. Getting Ready For Your Day**

How often do we get up and run our early morning on auto pilot? How often do we taste our tea or coffee? How often do we actually experience getting showered? How often do we remember anything we did, before leaving the house?

Early mornings can be a whirlwind of stress, tension and rush, which sets the tone for the rest of your day. Is that what you really want?

Instead of rushing, fixating on your 'to do' list or worrying and telling yourself stories about things that might never happen, how about using your morning routine as a chance to reconnect with the present moment, cut your stress levels and leave the house with a smile on your face?

Here's a simple mindfulness exercise to get your day off to a great start. And it doesn't take up any extra time.

### **Brushing Your Teeth – Mindfully**

Brushing teeth is something we do (hopefully!) twice a day. Research shows that the average length of time that people brush their teeth for is just 18 seconds – a long way short of the two minutes that dentists recommend.

Yet keeping your teeth and gums healthy is about more than time. If you brush your teeth while you're thinking about your 'to do' list and everything else that is going on in life, the likelihood of you doing a good job is pretty low.

## *52 Mindful Moments*

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Fortunately brushing your teeth mindfully not only improves your tooth and gum health, but it also helps you to de-stress, relax and smile.

It's really simple:

1. Take 3 mindful breaths, to centre yourself and come back to 'here and now'.
2. Mindfully pick up your toothbrush and put the toothpaste on it.
3. Mindfully brush each tooth, one at a time, brushing the whole tooth and gum area (safely!), before moving on to the next tooth.
4. If your mind wanders, bring it back to brushing your teeth.
5. If your mind needs something to do, how about getting it to say 'thank you' to your teeth and your toothbrush?
6. When you are done, mindfully rinse your mouth out, put your toothbrush away and smile.

Notice how different you feel?

Imagine how you could apply this type of mindfulness to other aspects of your morning routine, all by using mindful awareness?

- Washing your hair
- Having a shower
- Getting dressed
- Having breakfast
- Putting on your coat?



## 6. Taste Your Tea

Have you ever drunk a mug of tea or coffee, got to the end of it and realised you have no memory of drinking it?

It's a common symptom of 'mind-fullness', when we go onto auto-pilot, living in your head, not your present moment.

As an antidote, today I am going to invite you to taste your tea. Of course, it's a metaphor for shifting your experience of life.

It's a classic exercise that you can do to practice mindful awareness. And the great thing is that it doesn't take up your time, yet it brings huge benefits - fast.

The next time you make yourself a drink, hot or cold, I invite you to:

**1. Sit down with it.**

Don't drink it on the run.

**2. Before you pick it up and drink it, actually look at it.**

Really drag all of your awareness into the process of seeing what you see. Notice the glass, cup or mug it's in. Really see how the light reflects off it. Allow yourself to see the textures. There might be steam or ice-cold bubbles.

**Notice what you notice, in minute detail.**

**3. Pick it up and notice the tactile feel of the cup or glass.**

How does it feel in your hands? Perhaps there is a warmth or a coolness? How heavy is it? Is it smooth? Textured? Really allow your full awareness to

rest in your fingertips for a few moments as you hold the drink.

4. **Before you drink the drink, take a sniff.**

Spend a moment allowing the smell to fill your awareness, letting your concentration gently rest on your drink.

5. **As you start to drink, sipping gently or gulping, it's up to you, allow yourself to really taste your drink.**

Taste your tea, taste your water, whatever it is you're drinking. Experience the sensation over your tongue and your taste buds. And, as you swallow, allow yourself to hear the sound.

Be fully present to the experience of 'tasting your tea'.

Once you are used to playing with this, it takes no time at all. Your cup of tea (or whatever you're drinking) becomes an automatic unconscious anchor to help you remember to be mindful - to come back to the 'now' - to experience life, rather than your mind's story of life.

Even if you are talking to someone or working on your computer, as you drink your tea, each time you pick up your mug for another sip, you can return to that calm place of being mindful, even if just for a few moments.

Normally we would make a cup of tea in a hurry, get to the end of it and wonder where it went. We drink unconsciously, we eat unconsciously, we live unconsciously, as though we are half-asleep.

Practising mindful interaction with every day experiences is the fastest way to learn mindfulness – and shift your experience of life.



## **7. How To Make Sure You Never Lose Your Keys Again**

I remember, a few years ago, running an NLP seminar for a group of business executives and asking them what the number one thing was that they wanted to learn that day. One of them piped up that he was fed up with losing his keys. He spent ages, each day, hunting for his keys, especially when he was in a hurry. And the rest of the group wanted to fix that one, too.

It wasn't quite what I had expected them to say, but fortunately I was able to share with them a simple mindfulness process that helps you make sure you never lose your keys again, as well as reminding you to come back to the present moment, each time you hold your keys.

It works equally well for anything you handle regularly, which you can't find easily!

The reason we lose our keys is because we are being 'mind-less' or 'mind-full' when we put them down.

We are usually having conversations with ourselves about everything else that needs to be done – or reviewing, analysing and critiquing our day. So it's no wonder that the 'key-thing' is running on auto pilot and we don't consciously remember where we put them.

Here's how to make sure you never lose your keys again:

- 1. Before you even start with this one, could you choose a special place to put your keys, whenever you come home?**

A hook? A shelf? A drawer? Creating a routine around your keys saves you having to remember where you put them.

2. **When you get your keys to open your front door, allow yourself to take 3 mindful breaths**

[technique #1] (don't worry – you won't need to do this every time – it's just while you're anchoring yourself into this new mindful key behaviour!)

3. **Open your door and then say to yourself: "I mindfully put my keys \_\_\_\_\_" – wherever your special place is.**

4. **Put your keys there and actually experience it with your senses:** what do you see as you do it? What do you hear? What are the tactile sensations?

5. **When your keys are there, take a moment to see them and know they are there.**

Know that you'll remember it now.

6. **Do this each day for a week** and you'll have created the new habit.

How do you remind yourself to do this in the first place?

You could tie a big and colourful luggage label on your key ring, to tell you to be mindful about them!

You could stick a Post-It by the lock on your front door?

I'm wondering: is there anything else you misplace regularly, where a little bit of

mindfulness could help?



## **8. Raisin Mindfulness (Or Chocolate!)**

Surely life is too short to stay stuck in your Monkey Mind's stories and miss out on how fabulous a raisin (or even a piece of chocolate, if that's your thing!) can taste?

Most of us eat raisins by grabbing a handful, throwing them in and giving them a quick chew before swallowing. We rarely even taste them. This next raisin (or piece of chocolate) is going to be a quite different experience!

### **How To Get A Raisin To Help You With Mindfulness**

**1. Grab a raisin – just one.**

Or a small piece of dried fruit / piece of chocolate, if raisins aren't your thing.

**2. Sit comfortably.**

It's time to wrap your senses round your raisin.

**3. Look at it. Really see it.**

What do you notice? Can you see its texture? What about the bumps and lumps? How does the light reflect off it?

**4. Have a sniff. What does it smell like?**

Let your fingertips really feel the shape and texture. How light or heavy is it? Allow yourself to become fully absorbed in the experience.

**5. It's ok if your mind wanders.**

If your mind wanders during this experience, just allow it to be gently guide it back to your raisin.

**6. After a few minutes, pop the raisin in your mouth - but it's not time to chew yet!**

Spend a little while focussing on what it feels like in your mouth, with your tongue and your teeth. Notice what you can taste already.

**7. Then, when you're ready, take a bite, have a good chew.**

Notice the full experience of the raisin's flavour – how it builds in your mouth. How incredibly sweet it is.

**8. When you have swallowed the raisin, you'll notice you can still taste it for a while.**

How did this experience compare to your usual raisin-munching experience?

- Chances are it was much more vivid?
- Did you notice things you wouldn't normally notice?
- Did you enjoy it more?
- Do you think that you might eat less, if you actually tasted your food?
- What have you learned about how being mindful – aware, in the present moment – can impact your experience of eating a raisin?
- How could you take these learnings and apply them elsewhere in your life?

If you'd like to watch a video to take you through this technique or if you'd like to share your experiences with it via the private online forum, check out the links in the Readers' Club:

[www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub](http://www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub)



## 9. Mindful Eating

How often do you get to the end of a meal without tasting a single mouthful?

Eating is one of the activities that we do most mindlessly. We pile food onto a fork, put it in, chew a couple of times while we're getting the next forkful ready, pop that in (often before we swallow the last one) and load up the next fork.

We all have to eat. It's part of staying alive. So if you think you don't have time to practise mindfulness, how about challenging yourself to take 5 mindful forkfuls, next time you eat?

1. **Start by taking 3 mindful breaths** [see technique #1], to bring your focus back to the present moment.
2. **Look at your plate. See your meal.** Notice the colours, the textures, the patterns. Smell your food. Become fully aware of it.
3. **Put some food on your fork, being aware of the physical sensations** as your fingers, hand, wrist, arm and shoulder muscles work together for this.
4. **Put the food in your mouth** and, for a moment, before you chew, allow your focus to rest on the food in your mouth. Put your fork down!
5. **Now chew your food – slowly, mindfully and with full awareness.** Chew for longer than you usually would. Taste it! Be present to the flavours in the different areas of your tongue – and the textures – and even the sounds.  
*We scarcely chew our food. Yet that's what teeth are for! Chewing your food breaks it down and allows saliva to start the digestion process. If un-chewed*

*food enters your stomach, the stomach acids have to do the work of your teeth and mouth, which can lead to digestive problems. It is harder for the body to absorb nutrients from food that hasn't been chewed!*

6. When you are ready, **swallow your food. Pause for a moment**, to notice how it feels to eat mindfully. How did your body react to that mouthful?
7. Now move on to your next mindful forkful.

Deepak Chopra (a Medical Doctor and spiritual teacher) has proved that eating mindfully helps you to be more aware of the body's "I'm full" message. It can help you to manage your appetite and to stabilise at your ideal weight.

### **Want to take this further?**

How about becoming aware of the impact your food has on you? One great way is to spend a few days keeping a 'mood-food diary'.

Draw a line with the hours of the day on it. Write down everything that you eat and drink during the day, against the relevant time. Then, at least once an hour (set yourself an alarm?) write down next to that time how you are feeling – physically, emotionally and mentally.

It doesn't take long for you to be able to spot trends. And, as we've already discussed, awareness is the first step towards change.

There's a bonus article to accompany this technique, called "***Are You Eating Yourself Miserable?***". Check it out via the links in the Readers' Club:

[www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub](http://www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub)



## 10. Coming Back To Your Senses

*Just because you're breathing, it doesn't mean you're alive.*

I sometimes put this on the back of my business cards. It can get me into trouble, but it does sum up the problem with 'mindlessness'.

When we're in flow, we experience how vibrant life can be. It's as though our senses are on fire.

Henry Miller, who was a prolific and talented writer and artist, summed up how mindfulness can help us enter that state of aliveness:

*"The moment one gives close attention to anything, even a blade of grass, it becomes a mysterious, awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself."*

That's exactly what we're experimenting with, when we practise mindfulness.

Giving your full attention - directing all of your awareness - to any one thing creates a miraculous chain reaction:

- It drags you out of your Monkey Mind (the chattering commentary bit!) and back into the present moment.
- It can help you instantly let go of stresses and worries.
- It helps you to reconnect with the Earth beneath your feet, rather than the illusory version of it in your mind.

- It helps you to reconnect with what's 'real', letting go of what is 'story' or drama.

So the effects are so much more than simply being able to see the object or think about the experience.

**Coming back to your senses.**

1. Choose an object – any object – but if you can choose something made by nature, it seems to work even better.
2. Take 3 mindful breaths [see technique #1], to bring you back to this moment.
3. Now look at this object and set the intention to see it with your heart, rather than your head.
4. Notice what you notice. See every contour, the way it reflects the light, the patterns, the textures, the colours.
5. If your mind wanders, that's ok; bring it back to the object.
6. If it's something you can touch, hold it and feel it under your fingertips or in your palm. Allow yourself to be fully absorbed by observing the object.

Any time you need to de-stress, the easiest and quickest way to do it is to come back to your sensory experience.

It brings you back to the here and now and out of your Monkey Mind, back into your physical body. It helps you let go of the stories and opens you up to creative solutions.



## 11. Give Your Day An Instant Lift With A Mindful Smile

Sometimes it can be easy to fall into the trap of thinking that we have nothing to smile about, but smiling can be transformational and it can be an amazing way to cut your stress levels and dump life's drama. And smiling mindfully means you'll benefit even more from it.

The sympathetic nervous system is our fight or flight response – the primal part of the brain (the hypothalamus) – which is responsible for short term survival-style decisions, which diverts fuel from non-essential bodily processes and organs, to help give you the energy to escape from imminent danger. It's the bit we drag into action when we're feeling stressed, which floods your system with stress hormones. The parasympathetic nervous system is all about relaxation and allowing your cells to carry on with their vital health-giving moment-to-moment tasks.

When you smile you trigger the endorphins that rebalance those two systems dramatically cutting the stress levels in your body.

*Smiling, even if you're not in the mood, triggers the release of the body's happy chemicals, which cheer you up.*

Your body doesn't care whether it's a real smile or a fake one. If we do it for 30-60 seconds, the hormones start flooding round the body and the happier feeling grows, so the smile soon becomes real!

So if you want an instant mood lift, get smiling.

**Want to test it out?**

- Sit down for a moment and slouch.

Really get that sloping seating position where your head is verging on doing a nodding dog impression. Yes... that's it.

Now frown. Look really grumpy. Notice how you're feeling?

Ready for the contrast?

- Sit up as straight as is comfortable for you, lift your chin slightly and scrunch up your eyes tightly for 3 seconds before opening them again – that releases the tension around our eyes, which we need to do before the next bit.
- Now: gently allow the corners of your mouth to turn upwards, ever-so-slightly, then a little bit more.

You are now smiling! Not a lame little smirk. We're talking full-on smiles – teeth and all, if that's your thing. Smile with your eyes, smile with your mouth. Smile with your heart. Think 'smiley' thoughts. Feel the lift as you do it for a full 60 seconds.

Now let it go and notice what you notice.

Chances are you'll be feeling better. Your face should feel more relaxed, your mood should have lifted and you should be aware that you are generally feeling more positive.



## 12. Are You Wearing Your Shoulders As Earrings?

One of the most simple things you can do to de-stress is to get more oxygen flowing to your brain. And you can do it mindfully, to help you really notice the difference it makes.

Stress leads to poor posture and stiff shoulders. Anything that we do (or think!) that causes tension in the upper back, the neck or the shoulder area will restrict the oxygen – the blood flow – to your brain, making it harder to concentrate and making you feel tired and even more stressed, as well as potentially leading to long-term health problems.

This mindfulness exercise releases upper back, neck and shoulder tension. It feeds your brain with its life-force: oxygen. It gives you more clarity of thinking and it brings you back to the present moment, by connecting your breathing with the physical movement.

### Here's How To Mindfully Stop Wearing Your Shoulders As Earrings

1. **Become aware of your posture** – how are you sitting right now? 'Where' are your shoulders? Are they hanging nice and loosely? Or are they half way up to your ears?
2. **Take three mindful breaths** from technique #1.
3. **Gently (within your own comfort levels) lengthen your spine.** Imagine there is a string from the crown of your head gently lifting up, pulling all the way through your spine. It's about subtly lengthening the space between each vertebra until you feel the lift, all the way through the

neck to the crown of the head.

And then tuck your chin under slightly, which lengthens the back of your neck. Can you feel the difference already?

4. **And now, as you breathe in, really lift your shoulders up as close to your ears as you can get them**, both at the same time.

Give them a good squeeze and hold it for a few seconds (keep it safe and comfortable!).

Allow yourself to be fully aware of the physical sensations.

5. **Now give a big sigh as you release your shoulders.**

Just let them drop. Does that feel good?

**Do it again!** Pull your shoulders up to your ears as you breathe in... and sigh as you let them drop. And one more time, breathe in as you lift your shoulders, scrunching them up to your ears, then sigh as you let them drop.

6. Next, doing this within your safe comfort limits, **roll your shoulders forward, lift them up and roll them behind you in a circle**. Do that two or three times just to release the tension in all of the muscles in that area. And you might find that **you want to reverse directions a few times**.

7. To finish off, give yourself a mindful shoulder and neck rub. And smile.

Can you feel how much clearer your mind feels? Can you feel how much more relaxed you feel? And it was just a few moments of mindfully releasing shoulder and neck tension.



### **13. Time To Get Hands-On?**

Did you know that a decent hand massage activates acupressure points that impact your whole body? Just as with the foot in reflexology, the hand contains tiny pressure points that are connected with the rest of your body. So massaging your hand can help the rest of your body to relax.

And, if you combine the massage with intentional mindfulness, it can cut your stress levels and help you to smile, by relaxing your mind, too.

#### **Mindful Hand Massage**

1. **Start with 3 mindful breaths** [see technique #1]

2. **Take a ‘snapshot’.**

Briefly scan your body and mind, noticing how you are feeling and any areas of tension. noticing what kind of thoughts you are thinking and the speed your mind is running at.

3. **Look at the hand you are going to massage.**

We all know the saying about “knowing something like the back of your hand” – but would you actually recognise the back of your hand – or your palm, if you were shown a picture of it? Most of us wouldn’t. So spend a few moments really seeing the palm of your hand – noticing its patterns, its textures, how the light reflects, any old scars.

4. **Now allow your awareness to rest in that hand.**

Become aware of the physical sensations and any areas of tension, any warmth, any pressure, any tingling or buzzing.

**5. Squeeze that hand into a tight ball.**

Then release it. Do it again.

Now stretch your fingers as wide as you can. Release and relax.

What has shifted? What do you notice?

**6. Begin to use your other hand to massage your hand.**

Start with the palm and work, mindfully, all over the palm and, one by one, along each finger. Relax and enjoy this massage.

**7. Finish your hand massage.**

Notice the physical sensations in your hand. How have they shifted?

**8. Take another ‘snapshot’.**

Now repeat that body and mind scan, taking another snapshot. What has shifted? How have the tense areas changed? What has happened to your thoughts?

This is a mindfulness exercise you can do in under a minute, once you have practised it a few times. It can really help to cut your stress levels. Imagine using it next time you're stuck in traffic? The next time you're waiting for the kettle to boil? The next time you're feeling bored and fed up? It might make all the difference.

This can be a potent mindfulness exercise, so if you'd like to share your experiences of it or ask any questions, please check out the link to the Readers' Club forum at:

[www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub](http://www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub)



## 14. Could This Be The Solution To Not Having Enough Time?

How often do we spend our time fretting about not having enough time? It seems to fly by. And the more stressed we are, the faster it goes.

I'd like to share with you a near-magic-wand for creating more time in your day.

No, it's not a time machine. And you don't have to give up sleeping. It's a single gratitude phrase – a mantra - that you can choose to say, with mindfulness. And its effects can feel miraculous.

*The way we feel about time is determined by the stories we tell ourselves about it.*

When we're hiding away in the realms of the Monkey Mind and its stories of stress, time is a scarce resource over which we have no control. We run the mantra, "I don't have enough time." And we prove ourselves right. In fact:

*Whether you think you have enough time or you think you don't, you're right.*

Time is largely a matter of perception. When we convince ourselves that we don't have enough time, we trigger the body's sympathetic nervous system's 'fight or flight' stress responses, setting off chemical reactions that pump you full of adrenalin and other stress hormones. These shift your thinking to the primal part of the brain, responsible for life-or-death short-term decision making, meaning it's harder for you to concentrate and you will get less done.

**It's as though getting stressed about time steals time from you.** Yes,

#### *14. Could This Be The Solution To Not Having Enough Time?*

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sometimes we don't have enough time. But mindfulness can help you to make the most of the time you have.

We all have the same number of minutes in a day. And, within reason, we have a huge amount of choice over how we spend them. The whole concept of 'have to' and 'not enough time' is a story concocted by the good old Monkey Mind, based on the diet we have fed it over the decades.

So how can you magically create the feeling of having more time?

*By being grateful for the time you have.*

Giving gratitude for the time you have lets go of the Monkey Mind's stress-stories and helps time to expand. So if you feel rushed and need more time, here's what you can do:

1. Take three mindful breaths (see technique #1)
2. Allow yourself to settle in your body, rebalancing the body's stress and relaxation systems for a few moments.
3. Now allow yourself to experience the effects of the mantra:  
*I am grateful for the time I have.*
4. Consciously choose to focus, mindfully, on feeling grateful for the time you have. Notice the shift – you'll feel it in your body and mind.

After all, this moment is all the time we're ever going to get, so why on earth waste even a moment of it by feeling grumpy about it?



## 15. One Mindful Minute

This mindfulness technique is lovely because it not only helps you to return to the present moment, coming back 'here and now', it also helps you to practise acceptance.

Acceptance is crucial for cutting your stress levels and feeling happier.

Most of the time, feeling bad about things is a result of the stories we have been used to telling ourselves. We want things to be different, we want people to behave in other ways, but we're too busy telling those stories to be able to actually change things – or we want to change things that are beyond our control.

*Acceptance is about acknowledging – in this moment – how things are and pressing pause on the stories. Then you can choose whether or not to take inspired action.*

Then you can choose whether to stick with that sense of "It's ok" or to use mindfulness techniques to get clarity over which actions you *could* take.

**There's a difference between 'acceptance' and 'acceptable.'** If something is genuinely unacceptable (rather than what I call 'stroppily unacceptable!'), then it's important to take action and to make changes.

You can accept that something is currently unacceptable, without condoning it or pretending that it is ok. (Brain in a spin yet?!) But if you haven't accepted how

things currently are, how can you make changes?

*It's like refusing to accept what your SatNav tells you is your current location, but expecting to plan a successful route.*

**Here's an exercise to help you practise mindful acceptance.**

1. Take 3 mindful breaths [see technique #1]
2. Whatever you are doing, pause and simply be still for a minute.
3. Allow yourself to be 'in your body' and to experience what is happening, in this moment. Slow down.
4. See what you see. Hear what you hear. Feel the sensations. Smell what you smell. Taste what you taste. If your mind wanders, gently but firmly bring it back to this mindful moment.
5. Allow a wave of acceptance – of 'ok-ness' - to wash through this experience, in this moment. It is how it is and – in this moment – it's ok.
6. Allow your breathing to relax and your mind to slow down, as that wave of acceptance of this moment helps you to let go – in this moment - of any need to control or to change your experience. Feel the relief as you let go and relax into this moment.
7. Notice what has shifted, as you release this exercise.



## **16. Breath Awareness**

Full breath awareness, often called ‘mindful breathing’, is one of the foundation techniques for learning mindfulness meditation.

It is something you can do wherever you are, whatever is going on around you, and no one will notice.

It also has the potential to transform your experience of life. And it’s free.

Not bad for such a simple idea?

Mindful breathing helps you to gently move out of your ‘Monkey Mind’, with its stories, dramas and stresses, back into the present moment, experiencing life ‘here and now’.

By becoming aware of your breathing, you are helping yourself to:

- Learn how to concentrate – it’s amazing how your mind can wander, even with such a supposedly simple task. It’s great brain training.
- Calm and slow your mind, as it switches from multi-tasking to a few moments of just concentrating on one thing.
- Rebalance your body’s stress hormones - as your focus on your breathing, and only your breathing, gives your body the signal to stop flooding your system with adrenalin and other stress hormones, allowing your body’s relaxation response to come back into play.

This technique is a wonderful de-stressing tool, as well as being useful mindfulness practice. The benefits are huge. Want to give it a go?

1. Stop whatever you are doing and take a deep breath in to your belly, just above your belly button. Breathe out with an 'ahhhh' sound, as you relax your body and mind (you can make this silent!). Do this 3 times.
2. Now allow your breathing to settle into a natural, comfortable rhythm.
3. Bring all of your focus to your breathing. Allow your mind to rest, watching, listening to and feeling the physical sensations of your breath.
4. If your Monkey Mind needs a job, as you breathe in, you might like to mentally say, "I breathe in."
5. As you breathe out, you might like to mentally say, "I breathe out."
6. If you are feeling particularly stressed, you might choose phrases such as "I breathe in relaxation; I breathe out stress and worry."
7. If your mind wanders, that's ok. Gently bring it back to following your breath.
8. Repeat this for at least a minute. Do it in a relaxed way, with a gentle smile on your face.

You might find it easier to concentrate if you close your eyes.

Even if you're not feeling stressed, you can still benefit hugely from regular practise of mindful breathing throughout your day. It can help you move into the present moment much more easily. And the more you practise it, the easier it gets. It has a subtle, profound impact on all aspects of your experience of life.



## **17. Ten Mindful Steps**

Practising mindfulness while you walk is amazingly powerful, as a way of training your mind to come back into the present moment, but without taking up loads of your time.

You may have 'done' mindful walking before, or it may be new to you. Either way, I invite you to let go of any preconceptions and release anything you have previously tried, coming to this 'ten mindful steps' process with fresh eyes (or feet!).

Walking, mindfully, is a potent and incredibly useful, for 3 main reasons:

- Walking is something we all do, every day, so there's no excuse not to practise! Even if you can't walk, you can visualise walking, and achieve the same benefits.
- Many people find 'silent sitting' meditations difficult, because their Monkey Mind chatters. Combining mindful meditation with movement quiets your mind more easily – and gives it something to do.
- Walking is a very physical process, which most of us do on auto-pilot, so it's perfect for training ourselves to come back into the present moment and to increase your awareness of physical sensations – the sensory experience of life.

And, rather than aiming for 10 minutes of mindful walking, how about going easy on yourself and doing just ten mindful steps? It's simple to follow. Don't 'try' too hard. Just flow with it and let it be enjoyable.

**START:** This walking can be done anywhere - outside in nature or even walking up the stairs or around your kitchen. Choose somewhere that you can be on your own, for the first few times. **Take a 'snapshot' of how you are feeling** ~ physically, emotionally, mind-wise. We'll come back to this at the end.

1. **Take 3 Mindful Breaths** – to centre yourself and come back to the 'here and now'.
2. **Start walking.** Slow your speed down by at least 50%.
3. **Focus all of your awareness on your feet.** Become fully aware of the physical sensations of your feet on the floor, as they connect with the Earth. [Doing this barefoot on grass or sand is a special treat - though not essential!]
4. **Take ten slow and mindful steps.**
5. **It's ok if your mind wanders.** If your attention wanders, **gently guide it back to feeling the physical**, tactile connection of your feet with the earth.

**END:** when you feel ready, release your practice and take that snapshot again. How are you feeling - physically, emotionally, mind-wise? Compare that to the snapshot from the beginning. With practise, you'll notice that the mindful steps make a tangible difference.

At first, just do this for ten truly conscious, 'present' steps. As you get used to it, aim to build up to a full minute. Walking up and down stairs, for example, is an ideal way to experience this technique.



## 18. Mindful Walking

Building on the ten mindful steps [technique #17], full-blown mindful walking has many variations. In this one, I want to share with you a way you can turn any walk, whether in a beautiful forest or the car park at work, into a sixty second mindful de-stressing meditation.

### **START:**

**Take a 'snapshot' of how you are feeling** ~ physically, emotionally, mind-wise. We'll come back to this at the end.

#### **1. Slow down.**

As you walk, at a slightly slower pace than usual, allow your awareness to rest in the soles of your feet. If your mind wanders, that's ok, bring your focus back to your feet contacting with the earth beneath you.

#### **2. Feel the physical sensations.**

When you're in the rhythm of walking, become aware of the physical sensations in your body.

#### **3. Notice your balance.**

Feel those amazing muscles, tendons, ligaments, bones, joints and nerves doing such an incredible job of keeping you safe and upright.

#### **4. Notice your arms moving.**

You don't have to change anything; just become fully aware of the physical movement.

**5. Notice your posture.**

Feel the physical sensations, if you tweak the way you are holding your body.

**6. Really feel the soles of your feet with each step.**

Feel it, as they take your weight as you walk.

**7. Connect with the Earth.**

Then, when you're ready, return to simply being aware of each step, connecting with the Earth.

**8. Say 'thank you'.**

Once you are comfortable with this process, you might like to add in a silent 'thank you', perhaps to the Earth, for supporting each step, without agenda or judgement.

**END:**

**Take that snapshot again.** How are you feeling - physically, emotionally, mind-wise? Compare that to the snapshot from the beginning. With practice, you'll notice that the mindful walking makes a tangible difference.

There are so many different ways to approach mindful walking that you could spend years studying it.

If you'd like to learn more, Thích Nhất Hạnh has written a beautiful book on it. You can find out more via the Readers' Club area on this book's website.

[www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub](http://www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub)



## 19. Emotional First Aid – Time To Come Back Down To Earth?

Here's a mindfulness quick fix for whenever you're feeling stressed or worried. You can do it any time, any place – even when you're surrounded by people.

And once you know how to do it, it will become second nature, helping you to gently let go of whatever is bothering you, in a matter of seconds.

I call it a 'grounding breath' because it is as though you are physically grounding – or earthing (like an electrical cable) – the emotions that have been stuck whizzing around.

- ✓ By consciously connecting with the emotions and choosing to release them, you help to quieten your mind and your thoughts.
- ✓ This then impacts the chemical reactions in your body that had been fed by your Monkey Mind's stories.
- ✓ Your body can then return to its equilibrium state of relaxed alertness, rather than being stuck in its 'fight or flight' mode.

### Grounding Breath

If you are feeling tense, stressed, worried or annoyed, this mindfulness exercise takes less than 60 seconds to release those feelings.

*If the emotion you want to let go of is particularly strong, imagine you are looking at another 'you' on the other side of a glass screen, and imagine watching **them** going through this process, until the feeling diminishes. The first few times you practise this, I suggest you pick emotions no stronger than a 5 out of 10 on your emotional scale.*

### *19. Emotional First Aid – Time To Come Back Down To Earth?*

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1. Sit or stand still and close your eyes.
2. Focus on your feet contacting with the floor and imagine yourself growing strong roots, deep into the earth, like a tree. You might imagine seeing or feeling these roots growing, anchoring and grounding you.
3. Focus for a moment on the feeling. Ask yourself, “Where in my body do I feel this?”
4. Repeat again: “Where in my body am I feeling this?”
5. Breathe in to that area, with the breath absorbing all of that emotion. Breathe out, down through your feet into the earth, letting that emotion go.
6. If the location of the emotion moves that’s fine.
7. Breathe into that area of the body: breathing in, the breath absorbs the emotion; breathing out through the legs and the feet into the earth, feeling the sense of relief flooding through you as you let go of that emotion.
8. And when you’re ready, take a deep breath in, breathe out with a sigh (it can be a silent sigh, if you are in a meeting or with other people!) and smile a gentle smile, as you release this exercise, coming back to the here and now.
9. Now, is there any inspired action you need to take, as a result of this?

Much easier than spending the day wallowing in that old emotion? Want to share how you got on? Check out the forum link in the Readers’ Club:

[www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub](http://www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub)



## 20. The Magic Of The Mundane

I had a friend who was a Buddhist monk. He told me a story about when he was in his earliest days of training. The newest students had to do all of the ironing for the rest of the monastery. With the flowing robes of the monks, that meant an awful lot of ironing. And this young monk didn't enjoy it.

He went to his master and complained. Why should he do the ironing for the other monks? Why couldn't they do their own? It wasn't fair! He was feeling bored and fed up.

### **It's amazing how often we begrudge day-to-day tasks.**

How often do we do things with a heavy heart? With a sense of resentment? And how does it feel when we do it that way? Do we enjoy it? Does it feel good? Or does the burden become heavy beyond the weight we would expect for such a task?

The simple act of choosing, instead of feeling obligated, sets you free to experience that everyday task in a revolutionary way. And if you do it with mindfulness, it can help you to de-stress and feel happier, too! Instead of being a burden, it becomes a path to freedom.

And the student monk? One day he had done enough ironing that he realised that the ironing was teaching him to experience the 'here and now', to let go of the stories his Monkey Mind was telling him and to feel truly grateful for life, with each breath. And, funnily enough, as soon as he 'got' the lesson, he was taken off the ironing rota.

### **The Magic Of The Mundane**

I invite you to pick an everyday task that perhaps bugs you a bit. That way you'll experience the shift this exercise creates even more clearly. Whether it's taking out the rubbish, clearing up after the kids, doing the washing up or cleaning the toilet, it doesn't matter.

1. Start by remembering some of the recent times that you have done this task. Remember how it feels. Remember the kinds of thoughts you think while you are doing it. Remember how your body feels, physically, while you're doing it. Where are you holding tension?
2. Now, do that task, but instead of feeling obligated, start by saying to yourself:

*I choose to do this.*

3. As you carry out the task, wear a gentle smile on your lips, soften your jaw and eyes / eyebrows and each time an irritated or grumpy thought comes up, say a silent mantra: "It's ok. I choose to do this."
4. You might find it helps to use this mantra slowly, throughout the task.
5. Allow yourself to be fully present and aware, experiencing the task with all of your senses (yup! Even the toilet cleaning. Ok, definitely not your sense of taste!)
6. When you have finished, pause and say a heart-felt "thank you" to yourself, for having completed the task. How different did that feel?



## 21. What Are You Thinking?

Despite the fact that your Monkey Mind is racing at the speed of thought, we are very rarely aware of what it is actually thinking.

Yet those thoughts have a direct link to the body's hormones and chemical reactions. Think a sad thought and your body fires off its 'sad stuff' auto-pilot responses, filling your system with all the bits that are needed to create 'sad', physically and emotionally. Think a happy thought and your body triggers endorphins, so you end up feeling good.

There's more... Your Monkey Mind filters your experience of life: it chooses how to interpret what is happening, based on its own set of assumptions and beliefs.

We usually don't spot the story until the body has already done its bit. And we have spent a lifetime learning to ignore its behaviour and pretend it isn't there. But do you really want all of that running on auto-pilot?

*When you consciously observe your thoughts, without judgement, it becomes easier to choose which to feed and which to let go.*

Although you might not be aware of where the thoughts come from, you can do something about them. You can gently, but firmly, train your Monkey Mind to choose thoughts that bring relief and happiness, rather than stress and gloom.

**Becoming aware of your thoughts is the first step to reclaiming your power to choose.**

Sometimes your Monkey Mind is trying to get a message through to you. It might be worried that you're going to forget to do something; sometimes it's telling you about things we are afraid of; sometimes it's just used to filling in the chatter, to avoid us feeling lonely; sometimes it has just got into the habit of running an unconscious commentary about everything we are seeing and doing. Often, if you listen without judgement or interaction, the Monkey Mind can have its say and then relax.

If we fight our thoughts, or try to ignore them, chances are your Monkey Mind will shout louder. So here's a mindfulness exercise to help you take the first steps towards becoming the conscious observer of your thoughts – and eventually choosing which ones to feed.

1. Take 3 mindful breaths, to centre yourself and return to the present moment [see technique #1]
2. Sitting or standing quietly, take an imaginary step back from your mind and allow yourself to observe the thoughts that are running through your head. Don't interact with them. Don't try to change them. Simply observe them and accept them, without judgement or commentary.
3. If a thought that makes you feel good comes up, enjoy it. If a thought that makes you feel bad comes up, let it go.
4. Any thought, left to its own devices, will drift on through in a matter of seconds.



## 22. How To Tame A Multi-Tasking Mind

When did multi-tasking become such a prized skill? Most of us are addicted to it. We have trained our minds to need to think of many things at once. It's a real skill. Unfortunately, it can make you feel tense and stressed and it can make it harder to get things done well.

But thinking itself isn't the problem. **Thinking isn't bad.**

An out-of-control mind produces thinking that is 'unconscious' and 'unaware'. This feeds our love of drama, creating painful emotional states and keeping us stuck worrying about the past or stressing about the future.

So it is 'untamed' thinking that is the issue, not the presence of the thoughts. And it is our attachment to the thoughts that causes the pain, not the fact that they exist.

*It's believing what you're thinking that's the problem.*

Want to find out how to press pause for a multi-tasking Monkey Mind? It is based on an interesting question (that sends your mind into a spin!)

1. Take 3 Mindful Breaths [see technique #1].
2. Rest for a moment and observe your mind. Notice how it is thinking, without commenting on or engaging with any of your thoughts.
3. Ask yourself the question:

*What won't happen if I don't think of three things at once?*

What won't happen if your mind doesn't chatter three conversations at once? Just let an answer bubble up for you, without analysing or judging it. This can help you to unlock the key of why you have been telling your Monkey Mind that it needs to run at full-speed. And notice where you feel it in your body. Chances are there will be an area that tenses up, in response to this question.

Are you scared of silence? Are you scared things won't get done? Are you trying to avoid thinking about something else?

Usually the answer to that question contains hints on how to set yourself free from that old grasshopper mind habit. If the answer feels uncomfortable, don't dive into the drama.

4. When you know what has been keeping you stuck, multi-tasking with your thinking, then you can start to take action about it.
5. Be gentle, but firm, with your Monkey Mind.

*It's ok to think of just one thing at a time. The world  
won't come to an end.*

6. Remember that with every breath we can choose to make a fresh start. Anything the Monkey Mind is telling us about our past belongs just there.

Having chosen to go on a mindfulness journey, you're already taking positive steps towards creating a new future.

All you need to do now is to remember to practise!



## **23. Do You Really Want To Feed That Thought?**

It is a fact of life that we tend to get the things that we give our attention to.

*I remember when I was learning to drive that I would unconsciously steer towards whatever I was looking at - in the direction of my focus. If I looked over at my driving instructor, he knew that he was going to have to grab the steering wheel – fast.*

Life is just the same. We tend to move towards that which has our focus and attention. But most of the time we're running on auto-pilot, so we don't even notice where that focus and attention is. We are at risk of thinking our way into a future we don't really want, without even noticing!

*You can choose which thoughts to feed.*

You don't have to be at the mercy of thoughts you're not enjoying. Whilst it can be really difficult to totally empty your mind of thoughts or to control which thoughts pop up, you can gently, but firmly, train yourself to choose which thoughts to feed. Without being fed, a thought – left to its own devices – will disappear.

For most of us, our Monkey Mind is like a tantruming child – constantly doing whatever it takes to grab our attention. If that means it needs to shout and crank up the drama, it will. If that means it needs to focus on quiet worrying, to create anxiety, it will.

It doesn't mean that our Monkey Mind is 'cruel' or 'unkind' or wants to hurt us in any way. It's simply that we have spent decades teaching it to tell us the stories that we, at some deeply unconscious level, want to hear; need to hear. While we

let our mind run riot like an undisciplined child on a sugar-rush, we will experience the effects of its chaotic stories.

### **How do you return to choice with your mind's thoughts?**

**The first step is to become consciously aware of them.** And that's where this mindfulness technique comes in.

*The first step to choice – and change – is awareness.*

1. Start with 3 Mindful Breaths [see technique #1]
2. For the next few moments, sit quietly, having done your 3 mindful breaths.
3. Let your body settle and allow yourself to become aware of your thoughts.
4. There's no need to engage with them or to hold a conversation. This exercise is simply about observing them.
5. Accept each thought as it arises and be a compassionate observer of it, without judging or trying to change anything.
6. Then, when you are used to observing your thoughts, you are ready to ask yourself, do I want to feed this one? Do I want to let it create my reality? If not, let it go and wait for the next thought.
7. Notice that there is a gap between your thoughts.

### **The second step?**

*Choose to believe that you can influence the thoughts you feed.*

It's a choice. That's it. And mindfulness makes it easier.



## **24. Floating Through The Sky Of Your Mind**

I have lost count of how many times students have complained to me that they can't "shut up" their Monkey Mind. And I remind them that very few people can.

In our modern society, where we bombard ourselves with stimuli from every direction, all day long. It's no wonder our minds are chattering. Then you need to add in the decades of training we have given our Monkey Minds, to critique, to analyse, to judge, to re-tell stories and to keep a running commentary of our day. It's no wonder we can feel like our mind is teeming with thoughts.

The great news is that you don't have to make your mind go completely silent, to be able to de-stress and feel happier.

*All you need to do is to accept your thoughts and perhaps allow them to slow down.*

### **You might be surprised at the sense of relief that brings.**

Is it time to remind your mind who's boss and calm it a little? You are the boss of your Monkey Mind, whether it accepts it or not!

### **Here is a mindfulness exercise that can help.**

1. Come back to the present moment by taking 3 mindful breaths [see technique #1]
2. Imagine that your thoughts aren't fixed, but are floating through your mind – like clouds in the sky or like boxes on a conveyer belt.  
If you choose to be still and just observe them, without interacting with

them, they will simply float on by.

**3. If your thoughts are mainly words:**

How about telling your thoughts to slow down?

**Cutting the speed at which your mind is speaking can help cut your stress levels.**

And when you have played with that, how about changing the volume, making it quieter?

You could experiment with changing the tone of the conversation that you are hearing in your head and making it sound kinder and softer.

**4. If your thoughts are mainly pictures:**

How about slowing down any movement in the pictures? This can really help you to relax.

If the pictures are bright and colourful, you could tone them down a little.

If they are big, you can make them smaller.

**5. Got stories running wild in your Monkey Mind?**

How about telling yourself one of my favourite quotes from HH Dalai Lama:

*"This too will pass."*

Nothing lasts forever – life changes. If we keep telling ourselves yesterday's stories, chances are that our experience of tomorrow will stay the same, even if life changes. So reminding yourself that current stresses are transient, not permanent, can help you feel more at peace with the situation – and more empowered to do something about it.



## **25. Are You Running From A Mountain-Sized Molehill?**

Sometimes in life we face problems that are genuinely big. But usually we don't.

*The size of the problem is dictated by the stories we tell ourselves about it.*

And the bigger the problem feels, the more likely we are to run from it – to try to avoid it.

*“What you resist persists.” ~ Carl Jung*

It's all about the situations, the conflicts and even the thoughts that we would do anything to avoid, which cause us massive amounts of stress – and we all have them... What they all have in common is the effort that's required to keep resisting them and the low level, or sometimes even the high level, stress that this can cause.

If you run from something that makes you feel uncomfortable, it will still catch up with you, even if just in your mind. You are giving it power over how you feel. When we think about that problem – when we imagine it – we trigger those same physiological reactions as if it were actually happening. Your body fires off the same stress responses as though the event were real, here and now.

*Things are rarely as bad as the stories your Monkey Mind tells you.*

It seems crazy to tell ourselves these stories; to run away from these molehills and to build them into mountains, making us feel stressed and miserable. But it's

a habit that most of us have

If you take a deep breath and mindfully turn to face that mountain-sized molehill, you'll find it's much smaller than you thought it was – you can begin to live the life that is real, that's nowhere near as stressful as the one in the stories.

Not only do your Monkey Mind's stories instantly lose their power, but our inner drama disappears and our responses to the situation change.

*When we run from the molehill, it becomes the size of a mountain. When we turn to face it, we regain perspective, cutting it back down to size.*

1. Take 3 Mindful Breaths [see technique #1].
2. Is there a situation for you at the moment where you might be running away from a molehill sized mountain?
3. Instead of running, turn to face it. [Note, if it's a 'biggie', do technique #19 first!]
4. Imagine setting yourself free from that old stress and fear, by taking a deep breath and deciding, just for a moment, that you are going to stop running and deal with it? Or at least look at it and see what's true.
5. What inspired action could you take? Even a baby step? Today?

It's an amazing way to cut your stress levels – simply by shifting the stories that your Monkey Mind is telling you.



## **26. It's Ok To Let Your Thoughts Slow Down**

When your mind is racing, it prompts your body to chuck out adrenalin, cortisol and other stress responses, getting your primal 'fight or flight' system running at full pace.

There's a difference between low-stress 'quick thinking' and 'mind racing'.

When you're 'quick thinking', it feels as though you have the clarity of a mountain stream as the snow melts in spring – and you can easily leap from one stepping stone to the other, making fast progress.

When you're 'mind racing', you are in that 'fight or flight' near-panic space.

You can't keep up with the thoughts as they arise, your breathing shifts to your upper chest, so your brain gets less oxygen (its 'thinking food') and your hypothalamus takes over (the primal bit of your brain), which specialises in short-term survival-type decision making, rather than clear strategic thinking.

One of the simplest ways to move from 'mind racing' to 'quick thinking' is to use mindful breathing and to allow your thoughts to slow.

Here's how.

1. Take a moment to do a 'snapshot' – to notice how you are feeling, in your body, emotionally and in your mind.
2. Start with 3 mindful breaths [see technique #1]. Allow your breathing to settle and slow down a little.

3. As you rest in the 'here and now', allow yourself to become aware of your thoughts and the speed at which they are running.
4. As you breathe in, say to yourself:

*"I notice what I am thinking."*

5. As you breathe out, say to yourself:

*"I accept what I am thinking."*

6. Continue this for a few breaths.
7. Now that you have linked your breathing with your thinking, slow your breathing rate down a little (keep it comfortable!). Keep saying to yourself the phrases as you breathe in and out, slowing your speed down a fraction.
8. Now pause and observe your thoughts for a few moments.
9. Take a moment to do another 'snapshot'.

What has shifted? How has the speed of your thoughts changed? What impact has that had on your body? And your emotions?



## **27. Relax Your Face!**

When I'm running a meditation class, one of the really important things we do before we meditate is a deep relaxation. In fact, I sometimes wonder if it's the main reason that most people come to the class! If you're tense, you can't concentrate, so it's hard to meditate.

One of the favourite guided relaxations we do involves tensing each area of the body in turn, with full awareness, and then relaxing it, to release tension.

We start with the feet and move up through to the crown of the head. But where is the area that produces the biggest sighs of relief and the most smiles as people let the tension go? The face.

When you are feeling tense and stressed, it's likely you'll be holding tension in your jaw, you might be clenching your teeth, you'll probably be holding tension around your eyes and your eyebrows, you'll most likely hold tension between your eyebrows and you can even hold tension around your ears and in your scalp.

So if you'd like to combine deep relaxation with mindfulness, to help you de-stress, here's a sixty second technique that can help you to feel better, fast.

1. Take a snapshot of how you're feeling, right now. If you were to concentrate on your head, where are the areas of tension?
2. Move your focus to your neck and throat and when you next breathe out, imagine releasing the tension from your throat. Become fully aware of the physical sensations in your neck.

3. Then move to your jaw and give it a wiggle – slowly – side to side, up and down, round in a circle. Let your focus mindfully rest on releasing tension from your jaw.
4. Stick your tongue out and trace the letters of your first name with it (sorry if it's a long one for you!). This releases tension from the tongue, mouth, jaw and even the bottom of the ears.
5. Move up to your eyes and scrunch them closed, then release them. Then open them wide and release. Raise your eyebrows as high as you can. Then release. If your mind wanders, bring it back to the physical sensations in your face.
6. Scrunch your whole face up really tight – and release. Then open / stretch everything really wide – and release.
7. Finally give yourself a face and scalp massage with your fingertips (visualise it or get a sense of it, if you're somewhere that this wouldn't be safe!). Finish with a gentle smile on your face.
8. Take a snapshot. How do you feel? What has shifted? How have your tension levels changed? How are your thoughts now?

There's an MP3 audio in the Readers' Club, if you'd like to be guided through this exercise:

[www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub](http://www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub)



## **28. Are You Still Telling Yesterday's Story?**

When we get stressed, we tell ourselves stories about it. Those stories go round and round in your head.

And, just as in a game of Chinese whispers, the way those stories started out isn't necessarily how they'll finish up. Your good old Monkey Mind tends to embellish those stories. They get little nuances added. We add in some 'what ifs' which, over the space of a day, are no longer 'what ifs'; they feel quite real.

The more we tell the story, the more real it feels. Researchers have proven that we believe the stories we tell ourselves – and we would even pass a lie detector test for them, we are so convinced by them.

The problem with the story is that it triggers exactly the same chemical reactions in the body as if the event were actually happening. So we might have had a stressful event first thing in the morning, but if we tell ourselves that story all day, we keep that physiological and emotional stress alive, well beyond the point when it might have been useful.

While you keep on telling yesterday's story, how will you create a different tomorrow?

**How Can You Stop The Story Cycle?** Err... Mindfulness...

**Becoming aware of what's 'story' and what's 'Truth' is key to pressing pause.**

And luckily there's a simple question you can ask yourself, to take you back to the Truth of things, fast – as long as that's where you're prepared to go. (Many of us

are addicted to our stories, so letting them go can be a challenge).

1. Take 3 mindful breaths (from technique #1)
2. Think of a story you've been telling yourself. [Note: if it's a big emotional drama, you might want to use technique #19 first].
3. Consciously set the intention to press pause on the story cycle.
4. Now ask yourself a question and be very honest about the answer:

**What specifically is the problem?**

*When we tell the story, we're generalising. And we use things like 'always' and 'never', which might not be the case at all:*

*"He always does that!" or "She never gets it right!"*

*That just keeps the drama going.*

*The word 'specifically' helps to break through these generalisations, helping you to get to the root of what's 'real'.*

**What, specifically, is True, right here, right now?**

5. If you find your mind diving back into the drama, with stories and blame and 'not fair' and 'but', then ask yourself the question, again.

When you know what the issue is, it helps you to get out of the drama and to be clear about the issue. When you are clear and mindful about the Truth of the issue, rather than re-telling the old story, you will find it easier to have clarity in your thinking and to spot inspired solutions.



## 29. Getting Into The Gap Between Your Thoughts

Your mind is doing its best. And it doesn't realise the hassle it's causing. In fact, it's doing exactly what we have trained it to do – over the decades.

It tells us stories. It passes comment. It evaluates. It tells us what to do and how to feel. But it can only speak from the perspective of the filters, experiences, beliefs, habits, hopes and fears it has picked up over the years. So its view is biased.

If it tells us we can't do something, we believe it. If it tells us that our dreams are unrealistic, we believe it. If it tells us that things will go wrong, we believe it. If it tells us that something is stressful or that we should feel stressed, we believe it.

Just because your mind tells you something is so, it doesn't mean it is.

*Don't believe everything your Monkey Mind tells you.*

It's ok to question what our mind tells us. It is full of opinion, prejudice, assumptions and leaped-to conclusions, based on a lifetime of practice.

When it sees a stress trigger, it automatically dives into telling us stories about previous stresses. It triggers the unconscious mind's auto-pilot programmes for reacting to those stress triggers. It effectively removes our choice.

And if we're in the habit of feeding that adrenalin with more stories, then we're likely to indulge in telling ourselves (and others) stories about that stress trigger that keep the hormones running high and the adrenalin pumping. We all love a good drama; and the more emotionally charged, the better! In fact, many of us are so attached to our stories that it becomes an addiction.

**But there's some good news:** All you need to do to reclaim your choice over how to respond is to spot that you are telling yourself a story – then you can choose whether or not to feed it.

**How do you get things back under control?**

*Look for the gaps between your thoughts.*

When you get into the gap, you reclaim your power of choice over which thoughts to feed.

**How to get into the gap between your thoughts**

1. Start with 3 Mindful Breaths [see technique #1]
2. Sitting quietly, allow yourself to become the conscious observer of your thoughts. Don't interact with them. Don't critique or analyse or engage with the thoughts. Simply let them pass through.
3. Watch a thought arise, grow, begin to fade and then pass through.
4. When you have done this for a while, you'll notice that there can be gaps – pauses - between your thoughts.
5. When you spot a gap, don't try to cling to it – it will disappear. Simply acknowledge it and enjoy it, while it lasts. It might be a split-second gap or one that lasts quite a while.
6. And when the next thought pops up, repeat #3.
7. Over time, you'll easily be able to relax into that gap and to feel the peace and stillness, whenever you need it.



### **30. A Secret Truth Your Unconscious Mind Needs You To Know**

There's a truth about your unconscious mind, which could be keeping you stuck where you don't want to be, if you don't know it yet.

And most people don't. It's a trap that most of us fall into.

It keeps you thinking about what you don't want; it keeps you looking for signs and experiencing life through the filters of what you don't want; it stops you from moving forwards and can keep you feeling miserable.

*Your unconscious mind doesn't understand 'not'.*

What do I mean by this?

*Whatever you do, right now, don't think about a pink donkey climbing up a prickly purple tree with a yellow dog barking at the bottom.*

What happened...? Point made?

To be able to do a 'not' or a 'don't', your mind first has to imagine the 'thing' or 'scenario' and then adds in the 'not'. It is how it is wired.

"Don't run!" is processed as "Run!" and then "Don't!"

"Don't mess up the presentation!" is translated as the instruction to "Mess up the presentation!"; triggering all of your auto-pilot scripts for imagining (and creating) messing up the presentation. The 'not' gets lost in the footnotes.

All those times when we're talking about what we don't want, guess what we have to imagine first? And that imagining triggers off the same emotions and

physical hormone and chemical reactions in your body as if it were actually happening.

We get what we focus on. If we keep thinking and talking about what we don't want and what we don't like, that's what we'll see more of in our lives.

What has this got to do with mindfulness? Well, spotting the thoughts that cause us to fall into the 'negative' trap is the essential first step to breaking free from this habit. Awareness is the first key to change.

By practising mindful awareness of your thoughts, you get a chance to press pause and to ask yourself the magic question that can help to turn this around:

*What do I want instead?*

Then use your answer as a spring-board for taking inspired action.

1. If you catch yourself thinking or talking about what you don't want, press pause.
2. Take 3 Mindful Breaths [see technique #1] to help you get out of the story and drama and back into what's 'real', here and now.
3. Ask yourself: "**What do I want instead?**"
4. If more 'not' phrases come up, or if more drama resurfaces, go back to #2.
5. Once you are clear about what you want instead, decide on one action – even if just a baby step, which could take right now to move towards it.



### **31. Is Your Monkey Mind Telling You The Truth About Stress?**

Have you noticed how your Monkey Mind likes to tell stories about stress? Even when you're not feeling particularly stressed, if it spots a stress trigger, it uses it as an excuse to start up the story machine again.

And it likes labels. It likes to put things in boxes: "That's a stressful thing. That's a difficult thing. That's a happy thing." When the stuff is in boxes, it makes life easier for your Monkey Mind, because then it knows which auto-pilot scripts and old habitual behaviours to run.

*Is this really stressful? Or am I just telling myself it is?*

Life is an objective, sensory experience, until you label it and attach the event to a story. As soon as we use a label or put an experience into a particular box, we lose our flexibility and choice over how to respond.

The experience is automatically connected to your body's chemistry set, triggering the hormones and chemical reactions that impact your physiology and emotions. The label – the story – impacts every cell in your body, without you consciously doing a single thing about it. But it's all a fib, because:

*'Life' isn't stressful. The stories we tell ourselves about life create the stress. It is believing your thoughts that causes the pain.*

The phenomenon of 'stress' comes from believing the stories your mind is telling you about it. Yes, some events have the power to trigger more stress than others, but ultimately it's up to us to choose how to experience life.

You are the author of your own story. So you can choose which story to write.

**How to get your Monkey Mind to tell the truth – and reclaim your choice.**

1. Start with 3 Mindful Breaths [see technique #1]. This brings you back into the present moment and into your body.
2. Say to yourself: "I choose to press 'pause' on the story." And mean it. Wait for the gap to arrive.
3. Ask yourself: "What is *real* in this situation?"
4. Be firm with yourself. If stories and drama surface, press pause on them and ask yourself again what's real.
5. If you get stuck, go back to describing the physical sensory experience, e.g. *"When my boss said I have to do a presentation next week, I noticed the pit of my stomach tensing up and I clenched my jaw."*
6. Sensory descriptions bring you back to what's real and helps you to drop the label-addiction.
7. When you distil the situation back to the essence of the sensory experience, and let go of the labels and the stories, it always feels better.
8. If you want to try out solutions to the problem, imagine them and ask yourself how they *feel*. Your body will tell you whether the solution creates physical sensations that feel worse or whether it brings genuine relief. It's easier to make decisions, when you work with your body's internal barometer.



## **32. Are You Suffering From ‘Should-Itis’?**

When you go to do things, are you usually thinking about how happy you feel about doing them? Or are you thinking about how fed up you feel about them?

Are you telling yourself stories about everything you ‘have to’ do? Are words like ‘should’ and ‘must’ your best friends?

Then you’re probably suffering from ‘should-itis’. It’s a modern epidemic.

With a mild case of should-itus, there’s just a general feeling of dis-ease. You’re feeling ok and happy, but you feel like you don’t get to be in control of how you spend your time, very often.

As should-itus progresses, the symptoms get stronger. We feel more and more out of control, as though life is ‘happening to us’, and we feel that we have no choice or freedom. Simple tasks become a burden that we resent. And we tell ourselves stories about it, to justify how we’re feeling.

Sounds familiar?

Fortunately there’s a mindfulness-based solution to all this.

How are you feeling about your choices? Our choices in life (whether it’s the laundry or your career) are usually made from a place that is far from freedom. You can spot it in the language we use:

I have to... ~ I must... ~ I ought to... ~ I should...

But these are just phrases we use to ourselves. They’re not ‘real’.

*Freedom is a matter of mindset.*

Why do we set our minds to feel trapped and not free? Habit. And because we believe the stories we tell ourselves about it.

Could it be as simple as flicking a switch, to make that shift? Yes!

I have lost count of the number of times I have used this technique with myself and with clients - and it works every time – if you choose it to!

*“Any choice made from freedom creates more freedom.” ~ James Twyman*

*Note: Some of us are quite attached to feeling trapped. If that's you, please go and get some professional help to let go of that old habit.*

**Here's the not-so-secret antidote to should-itis:**

1. When you spot yourself thinking “I have to...” or one of its friends, press pause and take 3 Mindful Breaths [see technique #1] to help you come back to what's 'real', here and now.
2. Swap your 'should', 'have to', 'must' and 'ought' for 'I choose to...'  
Try it out now – even with something mundane!  
Do you prefer: *“I **have to** do the laundry.”* or *“I **choose** to do the laundry.”*  
Which one feels better?
3. Put a smile on your face and mindfully make that choice. If it helps, you could practise technique #20, while you're at it!



### **33. How Does This Choice 'Feel'?**

If you're feeling stuck about which decision to make, there's a mindfulness exercise you can do to get an insight into the answer.

It's about handing the decision over to your body.

We normally think that we have to make decisions with our heads, but your body is much better at telling you which answers resonate for you than your Monkey Mind will ever be.

And mindfulness is, as you have probably experienced by this stage of this book, a great way to reconnect with your body, in this moment.

Your body never lies to you. If you come back to the 'here and now' and allow yourself to become aware of the physical sensations you are experiencing, you'll quickly learn how to tune in to your body's barometer.

#### **How to make more mindful choices.**

Your body can help you not just with the big decisions in life, but with moment-to-moment responses to what's happening, here and now.

A scary amount of our behaviour is running on auto-pilot – quick-fire responses and behaviours triggered by the re-running of old memories. Some, like taking action to avoid an accident, are useful. Others, like responding emotionally to someone's behaviour, can be destructive.

They are based on 'old programming' from past experiences and can get out of date.

It keeps us stuck in old behaviours and habits, long after they have finished serving any useful purpose.

Taking a deep breath and relaxing can give you a moment to consider how you really want to respond this time, giving you back your choice.

And if you're not sure about which choice to make, here's a mindfulness exercise that can help you tap into your body's inner wisdom, letting you know – loud and clear – which option to choose.

1. Ask your body to give you a sign, whenever an old habit that you're ready to release comes back to play.
2. When you feel – sense – that sign, pause and take 3 Mindful Breaths [see technique #1]
3. Ask yourself:  
Do I really want to respond that way this time? Or would I like to choose another path?
4. Your body will tell you the answer. Pay attention to feelings of tension and feelings of relief.
5. If a choice is in alignment with where you're at or ready to 'be', then your body will feel good. If it's not – and if it's going to create inner conflict for you – then your body will give you a clear signal to warn you!

Your body holds the answers, if you learn to mindfully tune in to it.



### **34. Be Careful Who You're Letting Rent Space In Your Head**

When you spend your time and energy telling yourself stories about someone else's behaviour, you're giving them power over how you feel. If you're feeling irritated and stressed, whenever you think about the situation, then your Monkey Mind's story machine is in overdrive.

If you're spending time talking to others about it, then you're reinforcing the thought patterns that are making you feel bad. That person has moved in, set up their furniture and hung their pictures on the walls.

You're letting that other person – who is bugging you! – live in your head, rent-free, and you're letting their issues impact your thoughts, emotions and actions.

*Watch out who you're letting rent the space in your head. It's ok to evict any tenant who's dragging you down.*

It's a surprisingly common problem. It can lead to stress and worry, with a massive dollop of negative thinking and generally feeling bad.

#### **What can you do, when someone else is camping out in your head?**

Let go of the story!

It's not about rejecting the other person. It's not about saying that the other person's behaviour was ok. It is about setting clear boundaries (with yourself!) and accepting responsibility for the fact that who and what you let hang around in your head will impact your experience of life – and we always have choice.

Here's a quick – but highly effective - mindfulness exercise to help you.

**1. Start by taking your 3 mindful breaths.**

Allow your body and mind to settle for a few moments.

**2. Ask yourself (very honestly!): what's true in this – and what's drama?**

Let go of everything that's drama, not matter how 'right' or 'vindicated' or 'good' the drama has been making you feel.

It will feel better – instantly – especially if you do this from a place of compassion, rather than anger. [Remember: all criticism is borne of someone else's pain – see technique #39.] This isn't about pretending the other person's behaviour is ok. It's about you taking charge of whether or not you want to live in the drama.

**Ask yourself: do I need to take any specific action to improve this situation?** If yes, do it. If no, let go and move on.

**3. Each time that person pops back into your head space, lovingly remind yourself that you have chosen not to play that game any more.**

Choose to think of something else. If you find that hard, you can always experiment with the 'waterfall meditation' exercise [see technique #35].

If this exercise is challenging for you, it's time to look at 'secondary gain' – what are you getting from letting the other person hang around in your head? How is it supporting your position, perhaps as being 'right' or being a 'victim'? The answer might surprise you.

Mindfulness can help you gain insight into the deeper patterns you're running, giving you back your choice, so you can take action to set yourself free.



## 35. Magic Mindful Scissors For Moving On

Sometimes, even if we want to let something go and move on, it can still hang around. It goes round in your head. You tell yourself stories about it. You keep it running on repeat. The harder you try to get rid of it, the more firmly it stays.

Fortunately there's a really simple technique you can use, to send it on its way. Interested?

*When it's time to let go of an old habit, belief or thought pattern – or a memory from the past – all you need to do is grab your imaginary scissors....*

The past – be it habits, beliefs or memories – can feel like it is tied to us with invisible bits of string. No matter how often we tell it we are done with it, it can pop back and keep us stuck.

Earlier in this book I mentioned that mindful awareness is the first step towards making changes. Well, here's a great next step: **my favourite 60 second process for finally letting go** (though it might take you more than 60s the first time!).

1. **Take 3 Mindful Breaths**, to bring you out of the story and drama and into the present moment, [see technique #1]
2. **Notice and acknowledge that old pattern, habit, belief or memory.** Notice where in your body it is hanging out. Let your focus rest in that area, becoming aware of the physical sensations.
3. **Then, rather than rejecting it, it's important to accept it – not to resist.** If you're pushing it away, then you are still giving it your power.

4. **Does it have a message for you?** Be mindfully aware; open to hearing it.
5. **It really helps to be able to say thank you to it.** It doesn't mean you have to feel happy about it or pretend that that old experience was ok, but everything we experience can be used for our growth and learning, at some level. You might choose to imagine you can talk to this old thought, belief, habit or memory and perhaps say something like:

*"Even though I might not fully understand why you were part of my life, I thank you for however it was you were trying to help me. Now I choose to let go and move on. Our work together is done."*

6. **Then imagine you can see the invisible cord of energy, connecting you to that old belief / memory.** Take your big imaginary scissors and cut that cord – all the way through. Fill both ends with love, as they melt away. Then allow that old habit / belief to drift away, gone and finished.

Reclaim your power. Feel the power you gave to that old thought, belief, habit or memory returning to you, as you finish cutting those old ties.

When you cut the ties, you are making a choice to let go and release. You can use this process with 'stuck emotions', too. It's exactly the same and it can instantly improve your mood. When you experiment with this, you'll notice you end up with a wonderful sense of relief, when the job is done.

If you're still holding on to the old issue, you can always run the "Eightieth Birthday Test" – it normally sorts things out! You'll find the link at:

[www.52MindfulMoments.com/Readersclub](http://www.52MindfulMoments.com/Readersclub)



### 36. Mind How You're Standing (Or Sitting!)

When you're feeling unhappy or stressed, it's not just in your head. Chances are you'll be slouching over, with your back curved and your head down. Our movements tend to be tired and sluggish. Yet the mind and the body are linked.

So getting mindful about how you're using your body can help you to shift the thoughts that you're not enjoying in your mind. And getting mindful about your thoughts can impact how your body performs.

#### Want to prove it?

1. Sitting in a chair, keep repeating the following phrase in your head:  
*Tired and weak... Tired and weak...*  
Do it about 10 times. Really *feel and experience* 'tired and weak'.  
Now try to stand up.  
Kind of difficult?

**Now for the contrast** – give yourself a shake to let go of the last part.

2. Sitting down again, repeat this phrase 10 times in your head:  
*Powerful and strong... Powerful and strong...*  
Do it about 10 times. Really *feel and experience* 'powerful and strong'.  
Stand up.  
Did you almost fly across the room?

Did you notice the difference? **As I said: mind and body are linked!**

One of the easiest ways to feel happier and less stressed, right now, is to become mindfully aware of your posture – and to make changes that impact your mood.

There's a video to take you through this exercise in the Readers' Club:  
[www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub](http://www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub)

**START:** Take a snapshot of how you're feeling – your thoughts, your emotions and the physical sensations.

1. If you're reading this somewhere where you can stand up, then stand up and give yourself a shake. Have a stretch and a yawn. Do this with mindful awareness for maximum benefit!
2. Now move your body:
  - start with flicking your fingertips, then wiggling your wrists, wobbling your elbows, shaking your arms and shrugging your shoulders.
  - then move to your feet (one at a time!) and wiggle your toes, shake out your ankles, kick your legs and wobble all the way up to your hips.
  - Gently free up your torso with some jiggles and some mindful spinal twists.
  - Gently tilt your head from side to side, to release tension in your neck.
  - Then give yourself a big stretch and a yawn. This wakes you up.
3. Either standing or sitting, imagine a cord from the crown of your head gently pulling your spine and creating a tiny space between each vertebra. Lift your head up and tuck your chin in slightly (to lengthen your neck) and wear a gentle smile on your face (*all within your own comfortable range, of course*).

**END:** Take that snapshot again. How have things shifted?



### **37. Is It Time To Dump Your Spinning Plates?**

Do you ever get to the stage of feeling overwhelmed? As though you're one of those circus acts who has all those plates spinning on sticks, running to and fro to keep all of the plates spinning, because if one of them drops, it'll smash on the floor?

When my 'to do' list gets that way, I call it 'spinning plate syndrome' – where everything we know we *ought* to be doing [see technique #32!], becomes a low-level energy drain.

When we put something off – when we avoid thinking about it or doing it – we might believe that we are free from it, but **the reality is that we have handed our power over to that 'something else'.**

It is probably waking us up at 3am and we're probably feeling guilty about avoiding it – or stressed. We have given 'it' the power to change our emotions – to knock us off our equilibrium.

To justify this, we might tell ourselves stories about how difficult a task it really is, about how unpleasant it will be, about how much we are dreading it, about how unnecessary it really is. So although we're not actually doing the thing, we're still giving it plenty of attention. [See technique #25 – Are you turning things into a mountain-sized molehill?].

**The secret to stopping the plate from spinning is to stop telling yourself stories about it and take action.**

That action might be as simple as changing a thought, or as tangible as actually

doing the thing we had been putting off.

Here's a mindful awareness strategy to set yourself free from spinning plates:

1. **Take 3 Mindful Breaths.** See technique #1 – this brings you out of your 'story head' and back into the present moment.
2. **Is it really your plate?** Before you go any further, be really honest with yourself: if it really your plate to spin? Or are you doing it for someone else? Could you give it back to them?
3. **Answer – honestly – “What is it about this task that I am *really* avoiding?”** This might surprise you. Be honest. You're not looking for 'why' or justifications. You're looking to identify what your block is.
4. **Answer – again, honestly – “No matter what I have been avoiding, will I feel relief when the task is done?”** Almost always it's a yes.
5. **Then choose whether or not to do the task.**

If you choose to do it, take the first baby step now, so that the actions are in motion, breaking the thinking / feeling stress cycle.

If you choose not to do it, assuming that is an option for you, it's important to cut the energetic ties you had to the task. Imagine a cord, connecting you and the task. Gently, but firmly, cut it. Allow the two ends of the cord to be filled with light, to dissolve any fear. Then allow the task to disappear away from you [see technique #35]. Feel the relief!

Is it time for you to get back in the driving seat on this one and get 'active', instead of 'stressing'?



## 38. Do You Need To Press 'PAUSE'?

If you're feeling stressed or there's a powerful emotion running for you, you can use this mindfulness exercise as a kind of 'First Aid', to help you get back to a sense of equilibrium – then it's much easier to see solutions. It is one of my favourite 60 second mindfulness de-stressing techniques.

### It's all about pressing 'PAUSE':

**P** Press the 'Pause' button & breathe. Visualise pressing 'pause'.  
Then take 3 deep mindful breaths, breathing in from your belly to your chest, then breathing out with a releasing 'ahhh' sound.

**A** Accept - accept where you're at.  
Become aware of what's 'real' – rather than the story your mind was telling you. What's physically 'here' for you, in this moment? What is happening in your body? With your emotions? With your thoughts? Accept it - there's no need to change it. Let go and relax into accepting.

**U** Understand – a kind of deep knowing – that this too will pass.  
Nothing lasts forever. Whatever is 'real' for you right now will pass, in time.  
You may need to take inspired action, but it will pass.

The pain is amplified by the stories we tell ourselves about the situation. The stories aren't real. They're just stories (even if they're good'uns!).

Let go of the story and allow your deep understanding – your inner wisdom – to

wash through the situation.

**S** Smile – even if just a gentle half-smile. Smiling, even if you're not feeling like it, releases endorphins (or little dolphins, as my friend's son used to say!) into your bloodstream, giving you a very natural high.

After just a few seconds of smiling, those hormones start to trigger chemical reactions that produce happier emotions, also reducing your stress levels. It doesn't matter if you're faking it, smiling shifts your emotions, mind and body to a better space.

Need encouragement? There's an article in the online Readers' Club with a little experiment you can use to prove to yourself why it's so important to choose to smile, when things get tough.

[www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub](http://www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub)

**E** Enjoy! Whatever is going on in your life, allow yourself to enjoy this moment. Right here, right now, allow yourself even just a few seconds to enjoy this moment. Let go and relax into it, knowing that this space is waiting here for you, 24/7, whenever you need it.

I know this technique can take longer than sixty seconds, the first few times you do it. But the more often you practise, the quicker it will become, until all you need is a mindful moment.



### **39. Why Are They Being So Mean?**

Sometimes people do stuff that's really unacceptable. Yes, there's a sliding scale to 'unacceptable,' but it's still not ok.

It's our tendency to want to retaliate in some way – perhaps by behaving unkindly or even doing something nasty to them. It's easy to hold resentments and grudges and to allow those to taint our experience of relating with that person. We tell ourselves (or anyone else who will listen) stories about their behaviour, to try to make ourselves feel better. We can direct all sorts of painful emotions towards them give them the power over how we feel. But...

*There's a difference between the person and their actions – a person is not their behaviour.*

The behaviour – the actions – are the outward appearance of the person. What is deep down inside, the essence of that person, is different from their actions. At some level, they are running the same kinds of auto-pilot responses that we do. At some level, they just want to be happy, just like us.

Everyone has been through tough experiences. Everyone has experienced pain. Everyone has experienced loss and sadness. And these experiences colour the way we think and the way we behave.

Deep down, most people (no matter how bad their behaviour) are just muddling their way through life, without much of an instruction manual. Their choices might be bad, but that doesn't make them a bad person – any more than it would make you a bad person, when you make choices you later regret.

**There is a difference between the actor and the actions.**

Like actors in a play, what we show the outside world isn't necessarily the truth of who we really are, but is a script – a series of behaviours – that can change.

When we remember that, we can set ourselves free from much of the pain. We create a space between their action and our response, which can allow us to choose a response for the long-term higher good, rather than short-term retaliation.

*All criticism is borne of someone else's pain. ~ Native American saying*

A happy person doesn't do unkind things. So if someone does something unkind to you, it's likely to be because they're feeling pretty bad, deep down inside. Lashing out and projecting that pain onto someone else may seem easier for them than facing and dealing with that pain.

So the next time you feel tempted to lash out and do or say something unkind to someone who has done or said something unkind to you, how about allowing yourself a moment to choose whether that's what you really want?

1. Take 3 Mindful Breaths, to help you to reconnect with your inner wisdom.
2. Pause your Monkey Mind's stories for a moment and ask yourself: "Is this really about me? Or is it something they're feeling, deep inside?"
3. Then, considering your intended response to them, ask yourself, "If I choose this thought / action, will it bring me peace or pain?"
4. Let your body (not your very clever and crafty mind!) give you the answer.
5. It gives you back your personal power and helps you to be less impacted by

others' actions. And it's the key to cultivating compassion.



## 40. What's Going On Around You?

When we're busy and overwhelmed, the last thing we want to do is to open our awareness up to more 'inputs' from the outside world.

Our tendency, instead, is to 'shut down' and disappear back into our heads –the realm of the Monkey Mind.

But what if opening up to what is going on around you could cut your stress levels, help you think more clearly and even relax your body?

Those are some of the benefits of the mindfulness exercises that allow us to practise accepting our environment, rather than rejecting it.

In just sixty seconds you can relax into the present moment, letting the noises, smells, sights, sounds and other distractions bring you back to a place of stillness, rather than stressing you out.

As I have already said in this book:

*"What you resist persists." ~ Carl Jung*

and

*"Acceptance is the first step towards change."*

So letting go of fighting or resisting what is going on around us and accepting how it is, in this moment, just in this moment, is a powerful strategy for making the shifts you are looking for.

The key is to turn down the volume on your Monkey Mind's story for a few

moments, so you can experience the calming Truth of what's 'here.'

### **Accepting what's going on around you**

1. Take 3 mindful breaths [see technique #1] to help you come back to the present moment. Gently close your eyes.
2. Allow your breathing to settle into a slightly slower speed than it usually would be, to allow your parasympathetic nervous system (the 'relaxation' part) to balance out the stress of the 'fight or flight' sympathetic nervous system.
3. Allow yourself to experience, for a few moments, the physical sensations in your body, bringing your awareness fully into your physical form, tuning in to its rhythms.
4. Now gently open up your senses to become aware of the world around you. You might initially want to focus on what you can hear, or perhaps the vibrations in your chair as the lorry drives past, or the smell from the coffee machine – whatever it is that is in your environment right now. It's often easier to do this with your eyes closed.
5. Allow a wave of acceptance – of 'ok-ness' to wash through this awareness. It is how it is, and that's ok.
6. When you feel that acceptance is complete, move on to noticing another element of your environment and accepting that, too.

When we let go of the need to control things that are beyond our



influence, it's amazing how much easier life becomes.

## 41. My All-Time Favourite Mindfulness Mantra

You will already have experienced the impact of mantra in some of the earlier mindfulness exercises. A mantra is a phrase (often a sacred phrase, but sometimes an affirmation) that we can use to keep the Monkey Mind focussed on what we are doing. It helps us to concentrate and it also sets our intention for our practice. It has the potential to change your life.

We have already used phrases like “I breathe all the way in” as mantras and you will have felt how they can shift your experience.

In this mindfulness exercise, I’d like to share with you my all-time favourite mindfulness mantra. It’s one that anyone can use, whatever their beliefs or cultural background, and it can work like a magic wand, to bring you back to a sense of peace in the present moment. And it’s much more simple than you might be expecting:

*“It’s ok.”*

This two-word mantra came to me at a time when I needed it most – and it produced the most incredible shifts in a very difficult experience. The wave of ‘ok-ness’ it helped me to create was the first step that I needed, to return towards peace and happiness.

The more often you practice a mindful mantra when things are going well, the more effectively it will work for you, should life present you with challenges.

Of course, you can pick any mantra of your own to work with whilst meditating. However, I strongly suggest that you work with an experienced meditation

teacher or mentor, before choosing a mantra of your own. It's easy to accidentally pick one that makes things more difficult.

*A few years ago, I started working with the mantra "Make me a channel of your peace," from the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi. Within days, my inner peace turned into outer chaos, as life seemed to fall apart and everyone wanted to rage war with me. It wasn't until later, when I worked with my meditation mentor, that I realised I had been putting out a prayer to attract situations where peace was needed – in other words I was asking to have to be a channel of peace!*

**Practising mindful mantra is simple, yet it can feel profound.**

1. Take 3 mindful breaths [see technique #1]
2. Allow yourself to be really present, in your physical body.
3. Starting in your heart area, as you breathe in a natural rhythm, gently repeat to yourself: "It's ok." Use a soothing tone of voice. Say it slowly. You can say it out loud or silently in your head.
4. As you feel you can connect with this sense of 'ok-ness', allow it to naturally grow. Sense it expanding beyond your heart space, gradually filling the rest of your body with a wave of peaceful ok-ness.
5. When you feel ready, still saying "It's ok", you might like to allow this wave of peace to expand beyond your body, effortlessly filling the space you are in and connecting with all the other ok-ness and peace in the world.
6. Enjoy it for as long as you want to!



## 42. Connecting With Your Heart

Contrary to what you might think, your inner wisdom doesn't 'live' in your head. That's the domain of the Monkey Mind. And the Monkey Mind's job is usually to tell us all the reasons why we can't achieve our aim - reminding us of all those limiting beliefs and fears, whilst critiquing and passing judgement on our experience of life.

Your inner wisdom comes from your heart. Your head can come up with the most amazing ideas, but if they don't feel 'right' to your heart, they won't work.

### **How can you connect with your heart's wisdom?**

Quieten the Monkey Mind for a few moments, before asking a question about which actions to choose or which decisions to make. Then, of course, you have to do the one thing that most of us forget to do...

...Listen for the answer.

Most of us spend our time asking, asking, asking. Our chatter feeds the drama of the Monkey Mind and drowns out our inner wisdom, which speaks the language of whispered intuition, rather than brash shouting.

Here's a quick and simple mindfulness technique you can use to calm your Monkey Mind and to help yourself get into a heart-space, to connect with your inner wisdom:

1. **Take 3 Mindful Breaths** [see Technique #1] to bring you back to the 'here and now'.

2. **Allow your awareness to come back to your physical body**, resting gently in the area of your heart. Perhaps imagine that you are **breathing in and out of your heart**. Allow yourself to feel calm and relaxed.
3. **Ask your question** - talking directly to your deepest wisdom, like a trusted friend.
4. **Stop asking!** It's time to listen.
5. **Let go and trust.** You might get an answer immediately, or it might take a few days (or longer!). But it will come.

Your answer might not arrive in the form that you are expecting. Yes, it might be a thought, but it also might be a feeling or something that someone else says, or the words of a song. Be open to receiving your answer, however it arrives.

How do you know the answer is from your deeper wisdom and not your Monkey Mind? **I can always tell a 'wisdom answer' from an 'ego answer' because:**

*The wisdom answer always seems so simple, so obvious and yet so profoundly right.*

If the answer is complicated and difficult, or causes someone else to lose out, then it comes from the thinking mind. Make friends with your inner wisdom. It is there to help you in every way in life.

Being able to take inspired action, from the viewpoint of your inner wisdom, helps you break through limiting beliefs and get past old fears. It truly is your secret helper.



### **43. Are You Really Who You Say You Are?**

By this stage, I'm guessing you're getting pretty good at being mindfully aware of your Monkey Mind's chatter – including how you talk to yourself.

We run a habit in our self-talk, though, that can keep us stuck where we least want to be.

When we're beating ourselves up about life, there are two little words we use that keep our problems running. Think about typical self-talk phrases for a moment:

"I am rubbish at that."

"I'm not clever enough."

"I am so tired!"

*When your mind hears "I am..." it takes it as an instruction.*

"I am ..." is your mind's unconscious instruction to run its pre-programmed auto-pilot scripts, to match whatever comes after the 'am'. It's like placing an order in a restaurant. You get (usually!) what you ask for.

For your unconscious mind, whether the next word is lazy, happy, angry, rubbish, stupid, bad, tired or inspired, your mind dives into its old, well-rehearsed thoughts, feelings and actions, to match the instruction you gave.

It's an essential process, helping us to take short-cuts on life's learning curve – just imagine having to relearn how to walk, each time you stood up! But the whole "I am..." thing is even more important. You are making a statement about

who you are – about your identity – and it colours your entire experience of life.

“Ok, so that’s the role we’re playing today! Cool! I can handle that for you.” says your unconscious mind. Imagine being on a diet while telling yourself, “I am fat,” or studying for an exam while complaining, “I am stupid”?

The auto-pilot scripts mean we don’t have to make conscious choices, which helps us to get through the day in one piece (how to cross the road safely is another one of these auto-pilot scripts). But if you don’t really want to keep what is after the ‘am’, then it steals your freedom.

*The label keeps you stuck.*

**A mindful solution – when you fall into the “I am...” trap:**

1. Start with 3 Mindful Breaths [see technique #1] to come back to the present moment.
2. When you catch yourself saying “I am...”; pause for a moment. Ask yourself, **“Am I? Really?”** and notice what bubbles up.
3. It can help to rephrase your commentary, getting specific about the behaviours and emotions, rather than making generalised judgements about your deepest identity. Talk about “I do...” rather than “I am...”
4. Then ask yourself, playfully, “Is that really who I want to be? No? Who am I? Who do I want to be?” and then choose thoughts, feelings and actions which align with that choice.



## **44. Are You Listening To Hear? Or Listening To Reply?**

Are you really listening? Or are you just pretending? When you have a conversation with someone, is your inner dialogue talking to you about what the other person is saying? Or is it telling you what to say back?

**It's amazing how easy it is to fall into the habit of 'listening to reply'.**

And yet, not feeling heard is a painful experience in any relationship. Not feeling heard can push our buttons and provoke all kinds of behaviour that we'd rather avoid – from yelling and sulking to lashing out or shutting down.

**Not feeling heard can undermine trust, prevent real communication and damage relationships.**

Fortunately, there's a simple technique you can use to become someone who listens to hear: **Mindful listening, with compassion.**

Listening mindfully, with compassion, requires us to:

- Suspend our Monkey Mind's running commentary – few of us can listen to two conversations at once – and concentrate on understanding them.
- Resist judging the other person – you can't listen with compassion if you're criticising the other person in your head.
- Accept 'where' they are – and that what they are saying is valid for them, based on their map of life.
- Let go of the need to prove our point – most of the conversations we have in our heads, whilst listening to others, are about what we will say next to

#### 44. Are You Listening To Hear? Or Listening To Reply?

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prove we are right. We need to let go of our attachment and be present to what is 'here' and 'real'.

Bringing your awareness back to the present moment, focussing on the other person by making eye contact, makes mindful listening easier. If your mind needs to chatter, how about telling it to repeat the intention, "I hear you."?

*"We must learn to listen to one another with understanding and compassion, to hear what is being **felt**." ~ Thích Nhất Hạnh*

#### **Want to practise mindful listening?**

You don't need to wait until you're talking to someone. In fact, it's easier to develop this skill when you don't need to reply – such as listening to the radio.

1. Start with 3 Mindful, to bring you back to the 'here and now'.
2. Gently close your eyes and bring your awareness to the sounds you hear.
3. Spend a few moments noticing the sounds, becoming totally focussed on them, without judgement or commentary. Accept the sounds you hear. Really tune in to them.
4. If you are practising this exercise whilst listening to a person, let your attention rest on the sound of their voice – become fully absorbed by what they are saying, without the need to analyse or form an opinion.
5. Notice how, despite the fact you haven't been multi-tracking in your head, what the other person said is clearer and replying is easier than if you had been 'listening to reply'.



## 45. How Are You Talking To Yourself?

We've all got one – that critic on your shoulder who makes sure you know exactly how rubbish you are in life, just when you most need to find your cheerleader-in-a-closet. And we do everything we can to eliminate that inner loudspeaker of negative self talk. But what if there were a way to sort your inner critic, once and for all? What if there were a way to turn that inner critic from something that feels lousy to something that feels great? And what if you could get started – and make a noticeable difference – in the next minute?

That inner critic works 24 hours a day. Most of us run self talk patterns that can leave us feeling yucky. And there seems to be nowhere to hide. We all know the kind of thing:

*I'm rubbish at that... I'm never invited... I'll look terrible in those jeans... I don't have enough willpower... I'm stupid... It never goes right for me...*

Self talk that makes us feel bad limits our ability to live as the amazing Being we really are. It stops us from taking action. It creates and feeds our excuses. It nourishes our fears. It sabotages our success. Yet most of us aren't even consciously aware of what our self talk tone is – or that we can change it.

### **How can you deal with that inner critic and change negative self talk?**

Your inner critic is simply a commentary, based on what you have trained your Monkey Mind to think, over the years. That's it.

It's not a 'nasty person' or 'bad'. It's simply the way you have previously chosen to talk to yourself – and that can shift – in any moment.

You are the boss and the inner critic is not. Over time, it's even possible to shift your inner dialogue from critic to cheer leader. All it takes is mindful choices about which thoughts to feed– little and often.

**A mindfulness technique for calming your inner critic.**

1. Take 3 Mindful Breaths [see technique #1].
2. Tune in to your inner critic; that voice in your mind. Let it slow down the speed at which it is talking. It doesn't have to rush. It can let go and relax.
3. Gently shift the tone of voice it is using or the images it is showing you, to one that feels more gentle and compassionate – or even comical – whatever works for you. Play with this one.
4. Turn down the volume a little. Adjust the brightness of the images. Keep going until it feels more comfortable.
5. If your inner critic is saying something unkind, let that thought drift on through, without rejecting it or feeding it, just like any other thought [see technique #24].
6. Make friends with it and ask it to find things to say that help you to feel good about yourself.

By accepting your inner critic as being part of you – and worthy of love and compassion – you might be amazed at the miracles that start to happen.

There's a special discussion thread in the Readers' Club for this topic:

[www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub](http://www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub)



## 46. Seeing Who They Really Are

When we're feeling angry with somebody, it's easy to get stuck in the drama of the story. We see them as an actor in a play, giving an Oscar-winning performance in annoying us.

But seeing them that way has a nasty side-effect – it gives them power over our emotions – over how we're feeling. And it doesn't do the relationship any good.

There are many, many mindfulness practices that focus on cultivating compassion for others, especially when they have wronged us, and most of these are beyond the scope of 52 Mindful Moments. But I do want to share with you a mindfulness technique that can help you to let go of the drama and pain, as well as potentially improving that relationship (if that's what you want) or at least setting you free from the stress of it.

In technique #39 we talked about how a person is not their behaviour – how the person deep down inside is not the same as the outer actions.

*You are not your behaviour. Your personality is just a set of clothes you wear when you're awake.*

When you see who someone really is, deep down inside, rather than seeing them through the 'armour' of the personality you both 'wear', you connect with them at a much deeper level. You can see past the ego, past the old pains and hurts, past the fears and worries, to who they really are. And that can be transformational.

It's something you can do, with mindfulness, at any time, even if the person isn't there with you.

1. Take 3 mindful breaths [see technique #1] and set your intention to 'see' the other person, for who they really are, underneath the behaviour.
2. Allow yourself to feel calm and choose to wear a gentle smile.
3. Choose to let your assumptions drop.  
    Be in this moment  
    The past doesn't count, right here, right now  
    The future isn't here yet
4. Let your armour drop. You are safe, in this moment.
5. Imagine connecting, heart to heart, with the other person. Realise that they are just like you – full of old hurts, pain, confusion, trying their best.
6. They are not their behaviour. Who they are, deep inside, is just like you.
7. Know that, in this moment, you can calm the emotions you have been feeling towards them. Connecting heart to heart you can feel compassion and understanding, even if their behaviour has been unacceptable.
8. Imagine looking into their eyes. See the humanity.
9. Release the practice, but perhaps choose to take this compassion with you, throughout your day.

There's a special discussion thread for this topic in the Readers' Club:  
[www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub](http://www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub)



## 47. Setting Your Intentions

If you don't set your intention, you are leaving your happiness to chance.

Yet we are rarely mindfully aware of the intentions we set.

Setting an intention is like telling your unconscious mind which mental radio station to tune in to. If we set the intention to have a positive week, we will spot the things that go well and even challenging situations will feel more easily handled.

Imagine stubbing your toe as you get up in the morning: with no intention set, it's possible that this could set the tone for your day, with you continuing to notice everything that's going wrong – the classic 'woe is me' experience. But with a clear intention set that 'life is ok' or 'I choose to experience this moment', the stubbed toe remains a stubbed toe and doesn't ruin your day.

Without setting our intention, our experience of life is at the whim of our mind's mood.

Setting an intention for how you want to experience the day is a powerful way to create the life you are looking for.

And when you set an intention, and commit to it, the Universe can send miracles your way.

*Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. There is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely*

*commits oneself, then Providence moves too.*

*All sorts of things occur to help one that would otherwise not have occurred. A whole stream of events issue from the decision, raising in one's favour all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, of which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.*

*Goethe*

### **How do you set a mindful intention?**

1. Take 3 Mindful Breaths, to bring you back to the present moment [see technique #1]
2. Ask yourself: "What is my intention in this?"

Pause and rest, observing your thoughts, allowing the answer to surface.

Or

When your mind and body feel calm, tell yourself what your intention is.

3. Experience that intention flowing through your body, through your mind, washing through your emotions and tuning in to every cell. Get a sense of it flowing in front of you, throughout your day.

Not sure what kind of intention to set? How about something like: "For the next few moments, I choose to experience life from the viewpoint of love"?



## 48. Is It Time To Say 'Thank You'?

There's something about feeling grumpy about everything that's going wrong that drags your mood down instantly – and not just for a few minutes.

Turning your perspective around – and consciously choosing to think of things you feel happy about or grateful for – is one of the most effective ways to re-programme your thought habits. So how do you do it?

*It's about mindfully focussing on what you have,  
instead of what might be missing.*

**1. Take a 'snapshot' of how you're feeling, right now.**

Just a quick 'tour' of your body, your thoughts and your emotions.

**2. Grab a piece of paper and a pen.**

This works better if you write it, rather than type it, because it gets your creative brain running.

**3. Make a list of 10 things you feel grateful for, right now.**

This might feel tough, if you're feeling down. But there will be ten things. No matter how bad things might seem, you're still breathing...

Getting beyond 7 things is important – it helps you to go more deeply into your unconscious mind, making this technique even more powerful.

**4. One at a time, go through the items on your list and focus on them.**

Be really mindful and 'present' as you let your awareness rest on each item. Give it your full attention, mindfully experiencing - the emotion and the physical sensations of gratitude, as you work through the list.

**5. Now let go of the practice and notice what you notice.**

Repeat that 'snapshot'. What has shifted? How much better are you feeling now? Are more things to feel grateful about suddenly coming to mind?

Are you ready to kick the habit of feeling grumpy about what's missing – choosing, instead, to feel grateful about what's already here?

**How To Easily Create This New Habit**

Do one of these lists each day. It works really well, first thing in the morning, before you get out of bed. Many people find it helps to have a special journal, to write these lists in.

You could even get into the habit of sharing some of the items on your Facebook status – we use the hashtag #miracleofgratitude for ours. It's a great way to connect with others who are also choosing to feel gratitude, mindfully.

Some days it feels easy, other days it's more of a challenge. But either way, it sets the tone for your day and gives a clear instruction to your unconscious mind that its job is to find more things to feel good about.

**Just imagine the difference that will make.**

You could even find your favourite things to feel good about and write them on small pieces of paper, sticking them in a jar, so you can pull one out at random, whenever you need a mood lift, and focus on it for a mindful minute.



## 49. Allowing Peace To Grow

Whatever is going on around us in life, there is always the option to return to experiencing it from a place of peace.

The key is to practise resting in that peace, regularly, so that it becomes easy for you.

If you dive straight from drama and expect to find nirvana in the midst of raging adrenalin and other stress hormones, you're unlikely to be rewarded with sustainable inner peace. It's a big shift. As you will have experienced by this stage of this book, little and often brings big rewards when it comes to mindfulness.

For this mindfulness exercise, I'm going to assume that you're used to experiencing mindful breathing and body awareness. If you're new to those, it's worth going back to the earlier techniques to practise those first, though this one will still bring you results, even if you're a newbie.

It's about resting in your heart.

Your heart doesn't chatter, unlike your Monkey Mind. And you'll always find a sanctuary and stillpoint there, waiting for you, when you need to return to it.

*"You can always rest in your heart." ~ Chris Barrington*

By connecting with your chest area and letting your awareness settle there, you can reconnect with the peace in your heart.

Then, if you want to, you can do some pranayama breathing – where you consciously change the way you are breathing - to bring stillness and

compassion throughout your body and your day's experience. See the online Readers' Club for more on this: [www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub](http://www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub)

### **Resting in your heart**

1. Begin by taking 3 mindful breaths [see technique #1].
2. Allow your awareness to come back into your physical body. For the next few moments, notice the physical sensations as you rest and just breathe.
3. When you feel that now-familiar shift (the release or relief of coming back 'here) allow your focus to rest on your chest area; around your heart.
4. Without doing anything or changing anything, let your awareness rest in your heart, knowing that this is your sanctuary space.
5. After a little while, you might get a sense of connecting with a peaceful energy within you. It doesn't matter whether that peaceful feeling is huge or tiny, it's there, waiting for you. Breathe in and out at your heart.
6. Once you have a sense of this peace, allow your focus to rest in that peace, as you let it be there for you, as you breathe in and out at your heart.
7. You might want to slow down your breathing and say to yourself, "I breathe in peace," as you inhale and, "I breathe out peace," as you exhale.
8. Notice how, as you breathe in and out peace, this feeling gently grows.
9. Allow yourself to settle into a rhythm of breathing in peace and breathing out peace into the world around you.



## 50. The Mindfulness Mysteries Hidden In A Candle Flame

Do you need more light?

One of the body's ways of regulating our sleeping patterns and our activity levels is through the hormone melatonin, via the pineal gland. The pineal gland is in the centre of the brain and it is light-sensitive. This means that lower light levels, for example in winter or if you're stuck in an office all day, impact the production of melatonin, which makes us want to be less active and to sleep more – and it also impacts your energy levels, which makes it harder to handle stress.

The great news is that you can bring light to the pineal gland in many ways. You can go for walks outside – even on a dull day. You can buy Seasonal Affective Disorder lights, which many claim have helped. Or you can buy a candle – somewhat cheaper!

The simple act of gazing at a candle can impact the pineal gland, reducing the production of melatonin slightly, helping us to feel lighter, more awake, more energised and even happier – as yogis have known for millennia. It's often called "Tratak".

### **Here's a simple Tratak mindfulness exercise:**

1. Find yourself somewhere still to sit, where you won't be disturbed for a few minutes.
2. Light a candle (safely!) about an arm's length from your head, at about eye level, if possible. Dim the lights, to make it easier to focus on the candle.

## *50. The Mindfulness Mysteries Hidden In A Candle Flame*

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3. Sit upright, comfortably but with a straight spine. Gently close your eyes and take 3 mindful breaths [see technique #1].
4. When you are ready, open your eyes and gently let your gaze rest on the candle flame – it's about relaxed focus, rather than staring.
5. Try to blink less often than usual – allowing your eyes to stay open for as long as possible, without straining. It's easiest if you relax your eyes, rather than forcing them to stay open.
6. Every time your mind wanders, gently guide it back to mindfully concentrating on the light of the candle flame.
7. Allow your breathing to remain relaxed, as you continue to rest your awareness on the light of the flame for as long as it feels comfortable.

It's a great way of relaxing, clearing your mind and improving your concentration levels. Plus the light of the candle acts on the pineal gland in your brain, helping to balance the hormones and even help you feel happier!

And there's an added benefit: while you're gazing at the candle, focussing your whole concentration on it, you are 'in the present moment'. So any time you're near a candle, you can practise mindfulness.

When you experience this technique, you'll notice how resting all of your awareness on the candle causes any stresses or worries to melt away. And it's up to us whether we choose to pick them back up again, afterwards.



## 51. Remembering The Sunshine

Earlier in **52 Mindful Moments**, we talked about how the unconscious mind can't tell the difference between something that is actually happening and something that you're imagining, for example, a stressful situation.

Whether real or fictional, it fires off the same chemical reactions in your body, producing the expected physiological and emotional responses.

*Your unconscious mind can't tell the difference  
between what's 'real' and what's 'story'.*

You can use this to your advantage by replaying a happy memory.

When you need to add a bit of sunshine back into a cloudy day, you can consciously choose to remember something that makes you feel happy.

When you do this with mindful concentration, it will cause your body to produce endorphins (its 'happy chemicals'), to rebalance your nervous systems and to let go of stress, calming your mind. And, with mindfulness, you can then anchor those feelings here in the present moment.

**1. Take 3 Mindful Breaths [see technique #1].**

**2. Close your eyes.**

It makes it easier to engage the creative part of your brain.

**3. Go back to a memory of a really happy, sunny time...**

... just let yourself relax and flick through your mind's photo album until one appeals to you.

**4. Really see that memory clearly in your mind...**

... stepping into the event, feeling the warmth of the sun, hearing the sounds that were around you, getting back into the feelings you had in that sunny memory. Allow yourself to sink into those happy feelings until you feel your mood lift. Re-experience the physical sensations. And stay with it for a few moments.

**5. Visualise those sensory experiences and emotions washing through you...**

... lifting up every cell in your body - enjoy resting in this state for a few moments.

**6. See and feel those experiences and emotions washing into your future...**

... filling your path with sunshine.

**7. And, when you're ready, come back to the here and now...**

... bringing those happier feelings back with you.

Any time you need to get back to that happy memory, you can return there in an instant, by closing your eyes.

Or perhaps, if you have a photo or memento from that time, you could keep it on your desk at work or windowsill at home, so it reminds you to feel happier, whenever you see it?



## **52. The Power Of A Sixty Second Gratitude Spiral**

Sometimes in life, especially when we're stressed, it can be difficult to fall asleep. It's as though the worries of daily life just keep going round and round in your head.

Rather than fighting your thoughts, which just feeds them and keeps them at the centre of your attention, here is a simple technique that costs nothing, but can make a huge difference.

### **Bedtime Gratitude Spiral**

The last thing we're thinking about at bedtime – and the last emotion we're feeling – can have a major impact on the quality of our sleep and even our dreams. It's as though those final pre-sleep thoughts give our mind the unconscious message about what we want to focus on for the next few hours. It then tends to send us dreams that match the emotions we were feeling as we fell asleep – and we're also likely to wake up with those feelings, too.

So it makes sense that mindfully creating a happy mood as we fall asleep can make a big difference. And it's easier than you might think.

One of the simplest ways to achieve that is to think about things you're grateful for. It's amazing how quickly a couple of things you feel thankful for can grow – triggering other things you feel grateful for and creating an ever-growing spiral.

*Note: It's not about pretending that everything is ok, when life is feeling tough. It's not about "rejecting" any worries or negative thoughts you're having. It is about mindfully allowing happier thoughts to creep in and have centre stage for a while.*

1. As you relax in bed, think about something that you feel grateful for. This might be people, experiences, opportunities, weather – it's up to you!
2. Once you have identified something specific, allow yourself to gently rest in the feeling – the emotion – of feeling grateful.
3. Really dive back into the experience that you're remembering – seeing what you would see, hearing what you would hear, feeling the physical sensations you would feel.
4. Allow the intensity of your gratitude to ramp up, perhaps imagining you are turning a dial to increase it.
5. Then think of something else you feel grateful for and repeat the process. You'll notice that the more things you think of, the more things you can think of to think of!
6. Keep finding more and more things you feel grateful for until you feel the shift in your mood or – most likely – fall asleep. zzzzzzzz.....

Once you're used to doing this, to help cement the new habit, reminding yourself to do it each night, pick something you do shortly before going to sleep to act as a trigger. For example, if you read a book before falling asleep, you might like to choose the act of closing the book and putting it down, to remind you, or maybe it's turning off your bedroom light, or putting your head on the pillow.

If you enjoyed this technique, you might like to find out more about **The Miracle Of Gratitude** – via the Readers' Club:

[www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub](http://www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub)



*What's Next?*

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## **What's Next?**

There is so much more I want to share with you!

The hardest thing about writing **52 Mindful Moments** was deciding what to cut out. Each time I created another mindfulness technique for you, there was so much more I wanted to say, to give you. But my focus here has been very clear – to offer you techniques that work fast, without you having to trawl through hundreds of pages of a 'how to' guide.

I hope that these mindfulness exercises have inspired you and perhaps you might be interested in taking things to the next level?

This book is just the beginning. I encourage you to dive in and discover how ten minutes a day (instead of one minute!) of mindfulness and meditation could change your life. You might be interested in **How To Meditate – Made Easy**.

It's an online course (and a paperback /Kindle book) that guides you through, step by step, how to easily create a daily meditation habit, over the course of 28 days.

It brings you all you need to know about how to meditate, but it also uses an inspired blend of ancient wisdom and modern psychology, to help you get past the blocks that would normally cause students to give up.

To find out whether your heart is calling you to take things to the next level, go to:

[www.HowToMeditateMadeEasy.com](http://www.HowToMeditateMadeEasy.com)

## More Resources

I hope you have found the techniques in **52 Mindful Moments** helpful.

Please make sure you have grabbed all the goodies that are waiting for you in the online Readers' Club. To register (it's free!) go to:

*[www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub](http://www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub)*

If you'd like to take your journey further, here are some ideas.

### 1. **Want to take things to the next level?**

How about joining in with our '**Soul-Sized Living**' community? As a member, you will receive:

- exclusive access to all the goodies and conversations in our invitation-only private online community
- all the extra articles, members-only MP3s, worksheets and other life-changing treats via ClareJosa.com
- discounts & priority booking on courses (online and workshops)
- my monthly Soul-Sized Living newsletter (it's the *only* way to get this!)
- moral support on your life-changing journey from other members of the community
- the chance to get answers to your questions – and a place to share your insights and to celebrate your successes
- there's even a **52 Mindful Moments** readers' club
- and much, much more...

You can join today – it's free – as my gift to you: [www.SoulSizedLiving.com](http://www.SoulSizedLiving.com)

## **2. Let's connect on Facebook & Twitter**

Join me at our Soul-Sized Living page and connect with others who have enjoyed this book.

[www.Facebook.com/SoulSizedLiving](http://www.Facebook.com/SoulSizedLiving)

[www.Twitter.com/clare\\_josa](http://www.Twitter.com/clare_josa)

## **3. Find a local class**

If you live anywhere near Forest Row in East Sussex, UK, you could join in with one of my regular face-to-face meditation & mindfulness classes. There are also weekend seminars and workshops, if you live further away.

You can find details at:

[www.ClareJosa.com/workshops](http://www.ClareJosa.com/workshops)

If you're not local to Forest Row, but want to find a good meditation and mindfulness teacher, I have written an article that will help you:

**"Looking For A Meditation Class? 10 Must-Ask Questions For Newbie Meditators":** [www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub](http://www.52MindfulMoments.com/ReadersClub)

And, to give you an idea of the kinds of answers you should be looking for, I've written a second article with the answers I would give. This is at the same link. I hope these help!

## **4. Want to do an online course?**

I have created a range of online courses that you might enjoy – from a 10 week mindfulness course (*How To De-Stress With Mindfulness*), through to *6 Weeks To Spring Clean Your Life* and even Mastermind Groups, where you can

work with me on live calls and Skype workshops. You can find details of all of these here: [www.ClareJosa.com/online-courses](http://www.ClareJosa.com/online-courses)

**5. Check out some of my other books?**

I have written a number of other books that might be of interest to you, if you enjoyed this course. I have also created a range of meditation, mindfulness and deep relaxation CDs. You can find an up-to-date list here: [www.ClareJosa.com/Clare-Josa-Books-CDs](http://www.ClareJosa.com/Clare-Josa-Books-CDs)

Before I sign off, I'd like to say a huge thank you to you for sharing your journey with me.

No matter how often you have practised these techniques, you will have taken you a step closer towards the life you want. None of it is wasted. It all makes a difference.

Wishing you inner peace and happiness on your journey.

With love, Namaste,

*Clare* . ♥  

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[www.ClareJosa.com](http://www.ClareJosa.com)

## **About Clare Josa**

Clare Josa is a certified NLP Trainer, a Meditation & Mindfulness Teacher, a Seminar Leader and a Breakthrough Mentor, who feels passionately about helping people to fall in love with who they really are.



She is the author of numerous books and the creator of a wide range of online courses, as well as face-to-face workshops. They help you to dump your old excuses, let go of limiting beliefs that have been keeping you stuck and give you the kick you needed, to take inspired, practical action towards living the life of your dreams.

Her career began with a Master's Degree in Mechanical Engineering and German, spending a decade in diesel engine manufacturing. She enjoyed discovering how things worked and figuring out how to fix broken processes, but she realised that what she loved most was making people smile. So she combined her problem-solving skills with her passion for psychology and 'how people tick' to move into helping people remember how to feel happier and how to be who they really are.

She studied Neurolinguistic Programming (the 'user manual for your brain' / 'Practical Psychology' - NLP), qualifying as an NLP Trainer (training students up to Master Practitioner level) in 2003. She built on her 20-year enthusiasm for meditation by training to become a Meditation Teacher in 2008, as well as continuing her life-long passion for writing and teaching.

Her engineering background means that the inspirational work she shares is always grounded in practical common sense – to which she adds an intuitive and light-hearted approach.

Clare lives in Sussex, UK, with her husband, three young sons, six very mindful chickens and a bouncy Jack Russell.

*Today's choices create your tomorrows.*

*With each and every thought, you can choose again.*

*With each and every breath, you can choose thoughts that inspire you and make your heart sing.*

*Wishing you love and laughter.*

*Namaste.*

*Clare, ♥*

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