

MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION TOOLS

IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING WHILE FINDING MORE PEACE AND HAPPINESS

Melanie Carvell, PT

Basic Meditation Practice

- ✚ Choose a time when distractions are limited. Sit in a comfortable position, ideally, in a quiet space.
- ✚ Slowly breathe out through your mouth while drawing your belly in, and breathe in through your nose while allowing your belly to expand; imagine a balloon deflating and inflating. Allow your breath to settle into its natural rhythm, noticing the rise and fall of your abdomen with each breath.
- ✚ When distracting thoughts arise, notice them, but let them go, returning to your breathing. Counting your breaths or using mantras or visualizations can help keep your breathing focused. Start with one minute and gradually increase duration.

A Quick Shot of Calm: Tactical Breathing

- ✚ Begin by slowing your breathing, lengthening your in and out breath.
- ✚ Breathe in for four counts, pause for four counts, breathe out for four counts, pause for four counts. This exaggerated slow breathing can instantly calm your nervous system in any stressful situation.

Gratitude Meditation

- ✚ Close your eyes and begin breathing slowly.
- ✚ Think of three people and then three things for which you are grateful.
- ✚ Open your eyes. You're done.

Loving Kindness Meditation (my favorite)

- ✚ Sit or lie comfortably, breathing in a slow, easy rhythm.
- ✚ With each deep breath repeat these intentions to yourself, **"May I be well, may I be happy, may I be at peace."** You can personalize your intentions to what might work best for you.
- ✚ Now think of those you love or care about. Repeat these good intentions for them as well. **"May _____ be well, may _____ be happy, may _____ be at peace."**
- ✚ Now widen your circle and repeat these same intentions as you move on to people you may be in conflict with. Keep this going, as you wish wellbeing, happiness, and peace for those you consider to be non-friends. You can take the circle as wide as you wish.

Rise and Shine Meditation

- ✚ Upon waking, sit on the edge of the bed with good posture. Close your eyes and connect with your breath, taking five long, nourishing breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- ✚ Set your intentions for the day. For example, "Today I will be kind to myself," or "Today I will be patient with others and give generously," or "Today I will stay grounded and eat mindfully;" or anything else you feel will help you be more connected and fulfilled during your day.

Coffee Shop Meditation (or anytime you are waiting in line)

- ✚ Connect your feet to the ground as you stand in line. Instead of being annoyed to be waiting, connect with your breath and your surroundings. No cheating and reaching for your phone, just simply breathe.

Traffic (or Red Light) Meditation

- ✚ **A: Attention**, to the road and surroundings. No reaching for your phone.
- ✚ **B: Body scan**, starting with your feet on the pedals, your rear in your seat, hands on the wheel.
- ✚ **C: Connect with your breath**, feeling the inflation and deflation of your belly/ribs.

Mindful Eating Meditation

When we overeat, or eat unhealthy food, it is usually because we are stressed, tired, or over-hungry. Instead of feeling powerless, we have a choice to respond in a better way. Practice peaceful eating, slowing down to breathe deeply and savor your food. As you eat mindfully, aim to stop eating when you are eighty percent full. If you don't love it, don't eat it. Make mindful choices based on what you truly enjoy.

- ✚ Take three long, slow, deep breaths before eating.
- ✚ Rate your hunger on a scale of 1-10. We often eat for many reasons besides hunger.
- ✚ Choose one or all of these mantras to repeat to yourself as you breathe:

"I choose foods that will provide my body what it needs to be healthy and happy."

"I choose what to put in my body and what not to."

"I have the power to say yes or no."

Favorite Resources

- ✚ ***Unplug - A Simple Guide to Meditation*** by Suze Yalof Schwartz
- ✚ ***Meditation for Fidgety Skeptics*** and ***10% Happier***, both by Dan Harris
- ✚ Ted Talks by Judson Brewer on Habit Change and Emma Seppala on Breathing Happiness
- ✚ ***Real World Mindfulness for Beginners*** by Brenda Salgado
- ✚ Apps by Calm, Insight Timer, Headspace, and Unplug
- ✚ ***The Mindful Athlete*** by George Mumford
- ✚ ***The Practice of Groundedness*** by Brad Stulberg