

## **Mindfulness Practice** **Dr. Randy Buzan**

The brain is designed for survival, not happiness. Unfortunately, survival thinking makes us hypervigilant and fearful. In the modern era this mode of thinking is overused and leads to unnecessary anxiety. We must train our minds to let go of survival-mode worrying about the past and future in order to experience the present.

**Mindfulness** means “awareness of present experience with acceptance.”

The idea is to practice being more aware of your body in real time by letting go of the mind’s usual “simulations” of the past and worries about the future. Acceptance means observing and being with whatever feelings arise – painful feelings never last and our attempts to push them away paradoxically can make them more enduring. Be with your experience. Take a vacation each day for 5-10 minutes from your standard anxiety-ridden thinking! Above all, try to make this exercise a fun and pleasant break – not just another item on your “to do” list.

1. Sit in an alert but comfortable posture with hands down on thighs
2. Close your eyes and *take a deep slow breath* in and then let it flow even more slowly out – gently breath/push out all the air in your lungs (do this for 3 total breaths)
3. *Listen* to your surroundings for a few moments. Notice the sounds around you. Let the sounds come to you – be aware of where you are in this moment
4. Let your mind come to rest on your breath moving in and moving out. There is no need to control your breath: just feel this blessing of physiology that constantly sustains you every day and every night. Try to feel every moment of the breath, all the way in and all the way out.
5. When your mind wanders, which it will because that is what it is designed to do!, congratulate yourself for noticing that you are drifting, and gently refocus on your breathing
6. Feel how relaxing and peaceful it is to be in the moment, letting go of your regular list of concerns to be with your life-giving breath
7. When you are ready to stop, repeat to yourself (twice if you have time):
  - *May I be safe*
  - *May I be healthy*
  - *May I be happy*
  - *May I be peaceful*
  - *May I live my life with ease*
8. Extra Credit: When you have time, try adding others to your loving kindness wish list. Thus: *May my wife (or husband/children/the world). . be safe, healthy, happy, peaceful. .*
9. End the break by bringing to mind 3 things you are grateful for – studies show this measurably increases happiness even after 6-12 months

Congratulations! You now have learned a procedure to develop your capacity to feel more fully and savor your self and your life! Enjoy it - if you only have 1-2 minutes per day for this, then start there and call it good. Consistency trumps duration.