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PAUSE

AN INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS
FOUR-WEEK MEDITATION SERIES & ACTIVITY BOOK

BY NEW LEAF FOUNDATION

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY BOOK

This 4-week activity book is designed to introduce you to mindfulness. Mindfulness can be done anytime and anywhere. We're often practicing mindfulness without even realizing it! Everytime we pause and pay attention to what's happening around us in a curious way, we're being mindful. In this pause, we have a chance to be fully in the present moment, which can be helpful when we're feeling stressed or overwhelmed, worrying about the past or the future. Mindfulness can help us build focus, manage anger in positive ways, sleep better and generally feel better mentally, physically, and emotionally.

While mindfulness often leads to a feeling of calm, it's not always peaceful. Like building a new muscle, it takes time and practice to develop a new skill, and our experiences will be different from day to day. Be easy on yourself, try to stay curious about the process, and know that there is no such thing as a perfect mindfulness practice.

HOW IT WORKS

You'll be given a series of short 2-5 minute meditation recordings along with reflection activities and writing prompts.

Try to do the weekly meditations as often as you can—it could be once per day or a couple of times a week. We've included a chart for each week so you can track how often you tried it.

You don't need to sit in a fancy position to meditate. You can sit any way that's comfortable to you, lie down, or even listen to a meditation while walking. It's best to choose a position that allows you to stay awake while still feeling as relaxed as possible.

Write your answers for the reflection activities down on a piece of paper or in a notebook. You can do them once or try them a few times—it's up to you!



INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS

CLICK HERE OR VISIT <https://soundcloud.com/newleaffoundation/introduction>

WEEK ONE

START WHERE YOU ARE

“You can’t go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending.” - C.S. Lewis



Sometimes it’s easiest to start practicing mindfulness by noticing things about our surroundings before we practice focusing more on ourselves. Often we can get so lost in our thoughts that we don’t even notice what we’re experiencing or taking in where we are right here, right now. Bringing our attention to details about what we see and hear, for example, can keep us tuned into the present moment and increase our focus and attention.



FIVE SENSES MEDITATION

CLICK HERE OR VISIT <https://soundcloud.com/newleaffoundation/week-one>

ACTIVITIES

Make a list of the things you noticed during the meditation. Was there one sense that felt easier to bring your attention to?

Take a walk either inside the building you live in or outside in your neighbourhood. Turn off your cell phone if you have it with you. **Take time to observe what all your senses are taking in.** Make a mental note of what things that you see, hear, feel, or smell.

Write a 5 senses poem. Choose an environment (a room or any other place), pause, take in what you notice through each of your senses and write it into a poem. It can be short or long and include all the senses or just a few.

Example: Sunny skies (Sight) // Birds singing together (Listening) // Cool breeze touches my face (Feeling) // Fresh flowers blooming (Smell)



MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN

TRACK HOW OFTEN YOU TRIED THE MEDITATION BY CHECKING THE BOXES

KNOW YOURSELF

“Learn to know yourself... to search realistically and regularly the processes of your own mind and feelings.” - Nelson Mandela

Becoming more aware of how we feel in our bodies and what thoughts are coming up can give us insight into how we're doing. For example, when our breathing is short or shallow, it might be a sign that we're feeling scared or nervous. When our breathing is slow or deep, it might be a sign that we're relaxed.

This week we will check in with ourselves by bringing attention to what our bodies are telling us.



THE WORLD WITHIN MEDITATION

CLICK HERE OR VISIT <https://soundcloud.com/newleaffoundation/week-two>

ACTIVITIES

Each day, set a timer for 30 seconds (or if you don't have a timer just write until you have nothing left to put down on paper). **Free write as many words as come to mind about what sensations you felt during the meditation.** This could be things like tightness in your neck, discomfort in your low back, tingling in your hands, etc. Write without editing yourself. After the time is up, read your list of words and circle any that surprised you. At the end of the week, notice what feelings came up most often.

Choose 1-2 sensations from the lists you made in the activity above. **Write or consider what those sensations could be telling you about how you're doing or feeling** (example: eyes felt heavy—this is telling me I'm tired from not sleeping last night).

Choose a sound that you hear often (example: a car horn or a phone ringing). The sound should be something neutral—something you notice but doesn't annoy you. **Each time you hear that sound in your day, pause what you're doing, take a breath, find a word for how you're feeling and say it silently to yourself.** Pick back up with what you were doing.



MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN

TRACK HOW OFTEN YOU TRIED THE MEDITATION BY CHECKING THE BOXES

SHOW KINDNESS TO YOURSELF

“Be loyal to your own peace of mind” - The Weeknd

Mindfulness can be a good way to give ourselves a bit of breathing room—time to pause and take care of ourselves. This week we will practice giving ourselves space (or breathing room) to just be—thoughts, feelings, and all. You might feel calm, you might not. You might notice lots of thoughts, or you may have very few. All of that is okay. If you have a habit of being hard on yourself, try noticing what shows up without judging it as good or bad. This can be an act of kindness to yourself.



BREATHING ROOM MEDITATION

CLICK HERE OR VISIT <https://soundcloud.com/newleafoundation/week-three>

ACTIVITIES

Imagine the ideal physical space that would help you to rest and relax—your breathing room. If you could create this room, what are the top 5 things you’d put in it and why? What are 5 things you’d make sure to leave outside of that room (example: things that cause you stress) and why? If you’re feeling creative, draw what you’d include in your room.

Now think about a “breathing room” as something that’s inside of you. What qualities or conditions can you create in your life to help you feel like you have space and time to rest and take care of you? Example: 10-minutes reading each day, 30-minutes to listen to music with no one around.

Choose an activity you do regularly and turn it into an exercise in mindfulness. While doing this activity, see if you can notice your senses, body, breath, feelings or thoughts. For example, while eating, notice what you taste, the texture, smells, temperature, etc.

KEEP TRACK

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN

TRACK HOW OFTEN YOU TRIED THE MEDITATION BY CHECKING THE BOXES

SHOW KINDNESS TO OTHERS

“Be selective in your battles. Sometimes peace is better than being right.” - Unknown



Just like we can give ourselves a bit of breathing room, we can give that to others too. This might look like taking a breath before reacting when someone says something we don't like, hearing someone's point of view and trying to understand where they're coming from, or taking a walk and saving a conversation for another time when we're less upset. When we have this space and pause, it can give us an opportunity to view the situation and the person in a new, kinder way.

This week, we will go through a few different emotions and explore where we feel them in our bodies. Being able to notice what we feel is a good way to recognize when you or another person might need breathing room.



EMOTIONS & THE BODY MEDITATION

CLICK HERE OR VISIT <https://soundcloud.com/newleaffoundation/week-four>

ACTIVITIES

Think of 3 emotions you recall feeling this week. **Draw an outline of a person and choose a colour to represent each of the emotions you experienced.** One at a time, reflect on where in your body you feel each of those emotions and colour in those areas on your outline. If you're feeling creative, you could think of a symbol that represents the emotion (example: fire for anger) and draw the symbols on the outline instead.

Reflect on one way that you can **give a friend or family member breathing room** (Example: when my sister left her socks on the floor, I took a breath instead of yelling at her for the 100th time.)

Pick one friend or family member, **write down some of the qualities or attributes that you admire in them.** If you are comfortable to do so, share this with that person.



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TRACK HOW OFTEN YOU TRIED THE MEDITATION BY CHECKING THE BOXES

WHAT NEXT?

There are countless ways that we can practice mindfulness in our day to day lives. The more that we do these practices, the better we're able to focus, as well as manage our moods, feelings, and thoughts.

Going forward, see if you can include a small mindfulness practice in your day to day life; give yourself breathing room every day, even if it's just in the shower or while having a meal; check-in with your feelings; take a moment to pause when you are feeling overwhelmed and stressed.

You could also:

- Do the activity book again and see how things vary from week to week
- Try our [7-Day Mindfulness Journal](#)
- Try other mindfulness activities like the guided meditation practices at [this link](#)
- Drop us a line to tell us what was helpful about this activity



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