



Mindful Activities to Enhance Your Practice

Mindfulness is bringing your presence to a place of awareness with curiosity, compassion and acceptance. Nikki Nanos

1. It is good to start with just one sense of awareness. For instance. You may pick sound. Today I am going to listen better. Take a little notebook with you, and just simply jot down all the distinct sounds you hear. You may spend as little as 1- 5 minutes with this at different times of the day.
 - a. Sit quietly and just listen. Close your eyes if that helps.
 - b. What does the room I am sitting in sound like?
 - c. Be aware when the air conditioning or heat goes on.
 - d. Do you hear the refrigerator turn on?
 - e. A clock ticking?
 - f. Birds chirping or singing outside?
 - g. Traffic driving by your home or office?
 - h. Airplanes, helicopter's flying by?
 - i. The sound of voices in the near distance?
 - j. Music playing in the background – tune into it at a deeper level, what instruments do you hear?

2. Take your listening on your way to work, or as you are going somewhere with simple awareness.
 - a. What it sounds like when you get into your car, from the sound of unlocking it to slipping into your seat and the sound of the cloth, vinyl or leather as you slip into the seat.
 - b. The sound of the seatbelt snapping. Does the seatbelt make a noise against your clothes?
 - c. The sound of traffic as you drive to work. Car, truck, motorcycle sounds.
 - d. What do you hear when you enter the building?
 - e. When speaking, do you hear your own voice?
 - f. When others speak to you, even if it is a simple “Hello”, be fully present. See how it makes a difference in the way you see people and respond to them.
 - g. Do you hear chairs rolling, phones, staplers, papers being set down?

As you can see, these lists could go on and on of many little sounds we take for granted. Simply jot down the sounds for 3-5 days, working on either 1 or 2 or both. When you choose 2 wait until you are safe and not driving to jot down what you heard. Also make note of what you are experiencing by doing this. What do you notice? Feel?

Don't make it difficult, keep it simple. Below is a personal example:



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Day 1

Water trickles from lake
Hum of pool filtration
Hum from air purifier
Fridge kicked in
Air went on
Bird cawing
Bird chirping
People talking in distance
Hand moving across leg

Day 2

Sound when I sat down
Water from lake
Buzz from laptop
Nose snuffle
Fridge on
Clock ticking
Gate outside clangs
A door opens/closes
Neighbors' voices

Day 3

Outside chime
People speaking Spanish
Child runs w/ loose shoe
Pool gate slams
Outdoor furniture moved
Water splashing in pool
Pool water waves
Fridge
Scratching my neck

We do these activities to heighten our awareness. As you look back on your lists after 3-5 days, you realize, sometimes there are sounds you knew had to be there, yet you did not write them down. We can see how certain sounds pull our attention somewhere else. As I look over my list, I know the air conditioning went off, yet I didn't list it on Day 2 or 3. This also helps us become better listeners and appreciate more when we are being listened to. Inadvertently, doing this type of activity decreases anxiety/stress as we get away from ruminating on anxious thoughts we may be having at the time. We are being more mindful of life around us.

Apply the above principles to each of your senses. Taste, touch, smell, hearing, seeing.

3. Here is where practice being mindfully present in the moment. These are just a few everyday activities we normally do on autopilot. Take time to really notice and feel what you are doing. Check in with yourself and ask which sense is most prominent?
 - a. Eating
 - b. Brushing our teeth
 - c. Washing our hands
 - d. Vacuuming
 - e. Dusting
 - f. Scrubbing sinks
 - g. Watering plants

4. With hands open and palms facing each other, slowly and gently rub your hands together. You may wish to close your eyes, as this helps reduce stimuli around and gives us a heightened awareness.
 - a. Awakens your sense of touch.
 - b. What does it sound like?
 - c. Be aware of how the temperature of your hands change?
 - d. How does it make you feel?
 - e. Do you feel a response anywhere else in your body as your hands touch?
 - f. What word would describe the experience?



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5. Being Present. Sit with yourself for 10-minutes. If you can't do 10-minutes, no worries, do the best you can for where you are at. You can do this on a meditation cushion or sitting in a chair, whatever is most comfortable for you. Close your eyes if you so choose.
 - a. Just breath in and release to the moment.
 - b. Ask yourself ... What do I feel right now? Sum it up in one or two words: At peace; anxious; tired; confused, etc.
 - c. Just acknowledge the feeling is there and don't get attached to it.
 - d. Now ask yourself ... Where in my body do I feel this?
 - e. Place your hand there if you can. If for instance, it is a place on your back you cannot reach, imagine you place your hand there.
 - f. You can give it a color. You might say you feel tired, tired may be gray to you, or perhaps a dark red. You can give it a shape and/or size, or you can simply say, "Tired" and acknowledge "Tired" by simply saying, "Tired, I feel you" "I am aware you are here" or call it "Tommy Tired", it might be a person or comic character, whatever works for you.
 - g. Just sit with your new friend "Tired", don't engage with it.
 - h. Become aware if you feel "Tired" in other parts of your body. And just acknowledge you are aware of where you feel it, and just sit with Tired.
 - i. Ask Tired if it has anything to share with you?
 - j. When you feel you are at a good place to stop, thank Tired and go on with your day.

No matter where you are in your journey, the more you do the practices, the more you come into awareness, even doing one practice a day, the more you will benefit.