

URSA
PSYCHOLOGY

The Mindfulness Mini Course



This resource is a short, four-week course designed to assist you in developing your ability to attend to the present moment and come home to your body. Read through the session summary at the start of each week, and then practice the mindfulness skill each day of the week.

Mindfulness Mini Course with Dr. K - Session 1

Goal: Learn about mindfulness and how it can help manage anxiety.

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness means paying full attention to what is happening in the present moment, noticing your thoughts, feelings, and sensations without judging them as good or bad.

Examples:

- When you eat, notice the taste, texture, and smell of the food.
- When you walk, feel your feet touching the ground, look at your surroundings, and notice the sounds around you.

Benefits of Mindfulness:

- Reduces stress and anxiety.
- Helps you stay calm and focused.
- Improves your overall well-being.

How Anxiety Affects Us

Anxiety can cause:

- Feeling stuck in our worries.
- Physical symptoms like a fast heartbeat or sweaty palms.
- Difficulty concentrating.

Mindfulness helps by:

- Making you aware of anxious thoughts.
- Teaching you to respond to stress calmly.

Mindfulness Exercise #1: The Body Scan

The Body Scan is a mindfulness exercise where you focus on different parts of your body, from your toes to your head.

How to Do a Body Scan:

1. **Find a comfortable position** – Sit or lie down in a quiet place.
2. **Close your eyes** – Take a few relaxed breaths to help quiet your mind.
3. **Focus on your toes** – Notice any sensations in your toes. Are they warm or cold? Do they feel tense or relaxed?
4. **Move up your body** – Slowly bring your attention to your feet, ankles, legs, and so on, all the way up to your head.
5. **Notice and accept** – Just observe what you feel without trying to change anything.

Home Practice Assignment

Goal: Practice the Body Scan meditation daily to get comfortable with mindfulness.

Steps:

1. **Find a quiet time and place** – Set aside 10-20 minutes each day.
2. **Use a recording** – Follow along with a guided Body Scan meditation. *Click here* for a good example of a resource available online.
3. **Journal about your experience** – Each day, note down any thoughts or feelings you had during the practice.

Journal Prompts:

- *How did you feel before the Body Scan?*
- *What sensations did you notice in your body?*
- *How did you feel after the Body Scan?*

Tips for Practicing Mindfulness

- 1 **Be patient** – It's normal for your mind to wander. Just gently bring your focus back.
- 2 **Start small** – Even a few minutes of mindfulness each day can help.
- 3 **Find what works for you** – Try different mindfulness exercises to see which you enjoy the most.

Reminder

Mindfulness is a skill that takes time to develop. Be kind to yourself as you practice. The goal is not to clear your mind but to become more aware of your thoughts and feelings. The 'practice' of mindfulness is gently and repeatedly returning your attention to your experience/body when your attention undoubtedly wanders away.

Mindfulness Mini Course with Dr. K - Session 2

Goal: Learn mindful breathing and increase awareness of thoughts and feelings.

Mindful Breathing

Mindful breathing means paying attention to your breath. It's a simple but powerful way to tune into our body and activate our parasympathetic (rest & digest) nervous system.

How to Practice Mindful Breathing:

- 1. Find a comfortable position** – Sit or lie down in a quiet place.
- 2. Focus on your breath** – Notice the sensation of your breath as it enters and leaves your body.
- 3. Breathe naturally** – Don't try to change your breath. Just observe it.
- 4. Bring your mind back** – If your mind wanders, gently bring your focus back to your breath.

Examples:

- When you feel stressed, take a few moments to focus on your breath.
- Before a test or a big event, practice mindful breathing to calm your nerves.

Benefits of Mindful Breathing:

- Reduces anxiety and stress.
- Helps you stay present and focused.
- Improves concentration.

Mindfulness Exercise #2: Mindful Breathing

Let's practice mindful breathing together.

1. **Find a comfortable position** – Sit or lie down in a quiet place.
2. **Close your eyes** – Begin to take some slow, relaxed breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth.
3. **Focus on your breath** – Notice the sensation of your breath as it enters and leaves your body. Can you feel a tickle around your nostrils, or a cool sensation in the back of your throat on your in-breaths?
4. **Breathe naturally** – Just observe your breath without trying to change it.
5. **Bring your mind back** – If your mind wanders, gently bring your focus back to your breath.

Awareness of Thoughts and Feelings

Mindfulness helps you become aware of your thoughts and feelings without judging them. This awareness can help you manage anxiety by recognizing unhelpful thoughts and not letting them control you. It gives you some space from your thoughts by helping you to view your brain as a 'thought-generating machine' and reducing the sense of urgency or the emotional intensity associated with our thoughts.

How to Observe Your Thoughts and Feelings:

1. **Notice your thoughts** – When a thought pops into your mind, just notice it without judging it.
2. **Label your thoughts** – You can mentally label your thoughts (e.g., “worrying,” “planning”). You might even simply label your thought “thinking.”
3. **Notice your feelings** – Pay attention to your emotions and where you feel them in your body. Can you name your emotion? Do you feel any heaviness/lightness, emptiness/fullness, heat/coolness etc. in your body? Where?
4. **Accept without judgment** – Accept your thoughts and feelings as they are, without trying to change them. Meet yourself where you are with curiosity and self-compassion.

Examples:

- When you feel anxious, notice what thoughts are running through your mind.
- Pay attention to how your body feels when you're stressed (e.g., tight muscles, fast heartbeat).

Mindfulness Exercise #3: Observing Thoughts and Feelings

Let's practice observing thoughts and feelings together.

1. **Find a comfortable position** – Sit or lie down in a quiet place.
2. **Close your eyes** – Take a few relaxed breaths to start.
3. **Notice your thoughts** – Allow your thoughts to come and go without judgement.
4. **Label your thoughts** – Mentally label your thoughts if you find it helpful.
5. **Notice your feelings** – Pay attention to any emotions and where you feel them in your body. Note what sensations (e.g., pressure, temperature) you feel.
6. **Accept without judgment** – Just observe and accept your thoughts and feelings.

Home Practice Assignment

Goal: Practice mindful breathing and observing thoughts and feelings daily.

Steps:

1. **Find a quiet time and place** – Set aside 10-20 minutes each day.
2. **Practice mindful breathing** – Spend a few minutes focusing on your breath. *Click here* for a good example of a resource available online.
3. **Observe your thoughts and feelings** – Notice and accept your thoughts and feelings without judgment. *Click here* for a good example of a resource available online.
4. **Write in your journal** – Each day, note down any thoughts or feelings you had during the practice.

Journal Prompts:

- *How did you feel before and after practicing mindful breathing?*
- *What thoughts and feelings did you notice?*
- *How did you feel after observing your thoughts and feelings?*



Mindfulness is about noticing, not fixing.

Mindfulness Mini Course with Dr. K - Session 3

Goal: Learn how to bring mindfulness into your everyday activities and practice staying present.

What is Mindfulness in Daily Life?

Mindfulness isn't just about sitting still and meditating. You can practice mindfulness throughout your day by paying attention to what you're doing, no matter how simple the task.

Examples:

- **Mindful Eating:** Pay attention to the taste, texture, and smell of your food instead of eating while distracted by your phone or TV.
- **Mindful Walking:** Notice the sensation of your feet touching the ground, the feel of the environment (e.g., temperature, breeze), and the movement of your body as you walk.

Why practice mindfulness in daily life?

- 1 Reduces Stress** – By staying present, you can prevent your mind from dwelling on past worries or future anxieties; you stop 'time travelling' and allow yourself to just be.
- 2 Improves Focus** – Paying attention to the present moment can help you concentrate better on tasks. Mindfulness exercises like mindful breathing can help your brain stay focused, even when there are distractions. Practicing mindfulness regularly can make it easier to concentrate on what's important, whether it's at school, work, or in daily life.
- 3 Enhances Enjoyment** – Mindfulness can help you appreciate simple pleasures in life that you might otherwise overlook.

Mindfulness Exercise #4: Mindful Eating

Mindful eating means paying full attention to the experience of eating and drinking, both inside and outside the body. This can turn even a simple snack into a more satisfying experience.

How to Practice Mindful Eating:

1. **Choose a small piece of food** – Something like a raisin, a slice of fruit, or a piece of chocolate.
2. **Look at the food** – Notice its color, shape, and texture.
3. **Touch the food** – Notice its weight in your hand and its feel between your fingers.
4. **Smell the food** – Take in the aroma before you eat it.
5. **Take a small bite** – Notice the flavor, texture, and how it feels as you chew.
6. **Eat slowly** – Focus on each bite, noticing how the taste changes and when the flavor fades.

Mindfulness Exercise #5: Mindful Movement

Mindful movement involves paying attention to the physical sensations of your body as you move, whether you're stretching, walking, doing yoga, or even brushing your teeth.

How to Practice Mindful Movement:

1. **Choose a gentle movement** – This could be stretching, walking, or another light activity.
2. **Focus on your body** – Notice how your muscles feel as you move. Which muscles are activated? Pay attention to your breathing.
3. **Move slowly and deliberately** – Slow things down. Be aware of each part of the movement. Notice the subtle sensations in your muscles, joints, and skin as you move.
4. **Notice your surroundings** – Notice the sights, sounds, and smells around you.

Example: If you're lifting your arm, be aware of how your muscles contract, how your skin stretches, and the way your arm feels as it moves through the air. This kind of awareness helps you stay connected to your body and the present moment, making the exercise more meaningful and effective. It can also help prevent injury by ensuring you're moving with care and attention.

Home Practice Assignment

Goal: Integrate mindfulness into daily activities and continue practicing mindfulness exercises.

Steps:

1. **Practice Mindful Eating** – Choose one meal or snack each day to eat mindfully.
2. **Practice Mindful Movement** – Take a mindful walk or practice gentle stretching, paying attention to your body and surroundings.
3. **Journal your experiences** – Write down your thoughts and feelings after practicing mindful eating and movement.

Journal Prompts:

- *What did you notice when eating mindfully that you didn't notice before?*
- *How did you feel during and after practicing mindful movement?*
- *How did these practices affect your mood or stress levels?*

Reminder

Mindfulness is about paying attention to what you're doing right now. Every moment is an opportunity to practice being present, whether you're eating, walking, or just breathing.

Mindfulness Mini Course with Dr. K - Session 4

Goal: Learn how to bring compassion and gratitude into your mindfulness practice to improve emotional well-being and reduce anxiety.

What is Compassion in Mindfulness?

Compassion in mindfulness means being kind and understanding towards yourself and others. It's about recognizing that everyone has struggles and that it's okay to be imperfect.

How to Practice Self-Compassion:

1. **Acknowledge your feelings** – Notice when you're feeling upset, anxious, or down.
2. **Talk to yourself kindly** – Use gentle, encouraging words as you would with a friend.
3. **Treat yourself with care** – Do something comforting or nurturing, like eating a nutritious meal, giving yourself a hand massage, or talking to someone who supports you.

Example:

- If you make a mistake, instead of being self-critical and ashamed, remind yourself that everyone makes mistakes and that it's an opportunity to learn.

What is Gratitude in Mindfulness?

Gratitude in mindfulness involves focusing on what you appreciate in your life. It's about noticing the good things, even when times are tough.

How to Practice Gratitude:

1. **Start a gratitude journal** – Write down three things you're grateful for each day.
2. **Express your gratitude** – Tell someone why you appreciate them or do something nice for someone else.
3. **Focus on the positives** – When you're feeling down, try to remember something good in your life, no matter how small.

Mindfulness Exercise #6: Loving-Kindness Meditation

Loving-kindness meditation is a practice where you send warm, caring thoughts to yourself and others. It helps build compassion and positive feelings.

1. **Find a comfortable position** – Sit or lie down in a quiet place.
2. **Close your eyes and take a few relaxed, full breaths** - Relax your body and focus on your breathing.
3. **Think of someone you love** – Picture them in your mind and silently say, “May you be happy, may you be healthy, may you be safe.”
4. **Send these wishes to yourself** – Say, “May I be happy, may I be healthy, may I be safe.”
5. **Extend these wishes to others** – Think of friends, family, or even people you don’t know well, and repeat the phrases.

Mindfulness Exercise #7: Gratitude Practice

Gratitude practice involves focusing on what you’re thankful for, which can boost your mood and reduce anxiety.

1. **Find a quiet spot** – Sit down with your journal or just relax and think. Before bedtime is often a helpful opportunity to reflect on your day.
2. **Take a few relaxed breaths** – Clear your mind and focus on the present.
3. **Reflect on the positives** – Think about the good things in your life, like supportive friends or small daily pleasures.
4. **Write it down** – If you’re journaling, list three things you’re grateful for today.

Example: These might be as simple as having a cozy bed or eating a good meal.

Home Practice Assignment

Goal: Practice self-compassion and gratitude daily, and continue integrating mindfulness into your life.

Steps:

- 1. Daily Compassion Practice** – Each day, practice being kind to yourself when facing challenges. *Click here* for a loving-kindness meditation you may find useful.
- 2. Daily Gratitude Practice** – Write down three things you're grateful for each day.
- 3. Mindfulness Integration** – Continue practicing mindful breathing, mindful movement, and incorporating mindfulness into daily activities.
- 4. Journal your experiences** – Reflect on how these practices affect your mood, stress levels, and overall well-being.

Journal Prompts:

- *How did practicing self-compassion change the way you dealt with difficult emotions?*
- *What impact did focusing on gratitude have on your outlook during the day?*
- *How have your mindfulness practices evolved over the past four weeks?*

Tips for Cultivating Compassion and Gratitude

- 1 Start Small** – Begin with simple acts of kindness towards yourself and build from there.
- 2 Be Consistent** – Make compassion and gratitude part of your daily routine.
- 3 Share Positivity** – Spread gratitude by telling others what you appreciate about them.

Wrap-Up: Mini Course Key Takeaways

As you conclude this four-week mindfulness program, here are the key takeaways to remember:

- 1 Mindfulness is a skill that grows with practice** – The more you practice, the easier it becomes to stay present and manage stress.
- 2 Mindful breathing and movement help anchor you in the present** – These practices can reduce anxiety and improve focus.
- 3 Awareness of thoughts and feelings without judgment leads to greater emotional balance** – Recognizing and accepting your emotions can help you respond more calmly to life's challenges.
- 4 Compassion and gratitude enhance emotional well-being** – By being kind to yourself and appreciating the good in your life, you can build resilience against anxiety and stress.
- 5 Mindfulness can be integrated into daily life** – From eating to walking, every moment is an opportunity to practice mindfulness.

Reminder

Mindfulness is a journey, not a destination. Keep practicing and be gentle with yourself along the way. The benefits will grow over time, bringing more calm, focus, and joy into your life.

Resources for Further Learning

Books:

- “The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook” by Kristin Neff and Christopher Germer
- “The Miracle of Mindfulness” by Thich Nhat Hanh
- “Wherever You Go, There You Are” by Jon Kabat-Zinn

Apps:

- Ten Percent Happier
- MyLife Meditation
- Headspace
- Calm

Websites:

- <https://www.tarabrach.com/>
- <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/mindfulness>
- <https://www.mindful.org/>

Thank you for being part of this mindfulness journey. I hope you continue to explore mindfulness and carry these practices forward in your life!

- Dr. K