

Why Meditate Worksheet

Circle the benefits that would improve your life the most in the left column.
Once you are clear on the benefits to you, create a commitment to your practice.

<p>benefits of mindfulness practice</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Improve my focus, concentration, and precision.2. Enhance the quality of my communication and relationships.3. Heighten the clarity of my thinking and intentions.4. Improve my efficiency and safety.5. Deepen peace of mind and sense of flow.6. Master stress.7. Deepen my insight and intuitive wisdom.8. Awaken more authenticity, heart, soul, and caring in how I show up in life.9. Increase my resilience to change.10. Strengthen my faith, discipline and self-confidence.	<p>What I want:</p> <p>Write a paragraph or sketch an image of what you want from a meditation practice:</p>
---	--

4 Steps to Mindfulness Practice

by Robert W. Roeser
for Meditate

1. **Just Breathe**
2. **Be Here Now**
3. **Let Go**
4. **Begin Again**

The first step in mindfulness training, “Just Breathe,” is about stopping, breathing, and calming down before deciding what to do.

Research shows that stopping and taking a few deep breaths, with a slight elongation of the out-breath, is a trustworthy way of calming our fight-flight arousal system (e.g., amygdala) and clearing our minds (e.g., PFC) so we can think more clearly when stressed out.

This slows down emotionally reactive behavior. A singular focus on natural flow of the in-breath and the out-breath is a key form of mindfulness training used to develop “one-pointed, focused attention.” The practice of following the breath coming in and going out at its natural pace is an excellent place to begin the practice of mindfulness.

The second step is “Be Here Now.” By breathing, and relaxing the body and the mind, we can enter into the present moment and exist therein — instead of ruminating on the past or planning for the future always, being in the present moment with whatever is happening turns out to be an important means of self-awareness and self-regulation. We learn not to become over-engaged with experience or to suppress or avoid certain experiences. We become more aware of our body sensations, our senses, our feelings, our thoughts, and the imagery in our minds. It's

simple, but not easy to practice. The importance of being here now, in the present, cannot be over-estimated given that here, now, is where our life is unfolding, forever and always. It is here, now, that we can make choices that make a difference in what happens next. Using the breath as our guide and anchor, we can always find our way back to the now and ask ourselves, what is happening right now and how might I respond to this specific moment in my life after I calm down?

The third step is to “Let Go.”

One of the insights of mindfulness meditators is that much of our stress is caused by unnecessary worry, rumination and anxiety.

There is a beautiful teaching by a Buddhist teacher called Shantidevi who wrote: “If a problem can be solved, why be unhappy? And if it cannot be solved, what is the use of being unhappy?”

We might ask ourselves in any moment of upset or stress, after breathing, what kinds of expectations, desires, and fears might I be able to let go of in this moment to reduce the stress I am putting on myself unnecessarily? The classic example my students report is of being caught in traffic. They apply the practice to this situation and realize that to get upset about a situation that they cannot change is unhelpful and unnecessary. Letting go can be a liberating act.

Finally, and perhaps the most important of the steps is number four, “Begin Again.” Mindfulness practice is not

about performance or focusing on the breath or the mind in a perfectly performed manner. Rather, mindfulness is about trying again and again to be here now, to stay calm, to enter the present moment calmly and clearly, and to let go of unnecessary psychological burdens so we can see ourselves and each other more clearly.

During mindfulness practices, our minds wander; we become distracted, we get caught up in the very feelings and thoughts we are trying to notice and label quietly, in a dispassionate way.

This is the practice. We are not trying to stop the mind — indeed, we cannot! This is not the goal. Rather, we are trying to befriend and familiarize ourselves with our bodies and minds, to develop a new relationship full of self-compassion with them. We do this by starting again after distractions during the practice and by assuming a gentle attitude towards ourselves. The effort to know oneself and to use that awareness in compassionate ways for growth of self and one's relationships is the path of mindfulness. The goal in practicing mindfulness, no matter what happens, is to continually “begin again” without self-judgments or emotional reactions. In this way, over time, expertise in understanding, accepting, and regulating our own minds and bodies results.

Robert W. Roeser is a Professor of Psychology and Human Development at Portland State University.

Is Your Meditation Practice Effective?

for Meditate

Rate on a scale of 1-5. 1 is a problem. 5 is an asset.

Rate 1-5 1 = bad 3= so-so 5 = awesome	When I don't do meditation practice	After a week of strong commitment to meditation practice
Ability to concentrate		
Quality of my communication		
Clarity of my thinking		
Connection to my deeper intentions		
My overall efficiency		
My body awareness and safety		
My ability to make good decisions for my body, my work, and my life		
Managing stress		
Access to my intuition or inner compass		
My ability to change and be un-stuck as I navigate life		
My ability to be intimate and connected in relationships		
My experience of inner peace		

After filling out the chart above — describe the effects of your practice here.