

Active Meditation in Daily Life

Overview:

Shining our minds onto our everyday tasks is not very natural for us human beings. We have busy minds that flit from task to task and thought to thought!

Often when we are doing things like washing the dishes, getting dressed, or even talking to someone else, our thoughts may be in the future, the past, or in Chicago. Perhaps we are worrying about an important meeting that's coming up next week. Or still ruminating about someone's comment from a year ago. Or fretting about something we simply can't control. It's common for our minds to chew on stories like a good bone and ignore the rest of our lives.

One way to quiet some of the storylines storming through our heads is to stay focused on the present. To purposely, focus our mind on what we are doing without judgment. In other words, we choose to show up for what we are actually doing, be present, and simply observe.

When we shine our mind on our body's experience when doing a task, we can notice our physical sensations, our movements, and yes even our feelings and thoughts. When we are mindful of the task we are doing, we get more connected to our inner resilience and can tap the core of our calm.

When we try to use everyday mindfulness in our lives, here are some of the benefits.

- Learn to live in the present
- Practice letting go of judgments
- Become aware of a calm, grounded center that can steady us even when our lives are in upheaval
- Become kinder to ourselves
- Tap into new energy from a calm place

Directions:

Decide on some task that you would like to shine your mind on for a few minutes each day – training your brain to elicit a more calming response in your body. Think of something that you do every day: washing your hands, putting on your shoes, making a cup of tea, starting your car. It only needs to be for a few minutes each day -- you are training your brain to focus more on the present.

1. Take a deep breath and settle into your body before you start the task. Pause. Breathe.
2. Place your full and wise attention on whatever you are doing and experiencing.
3. Take in the task and be present with all of your senses. Gently do a mind meld into the sensations – coming to your senses – with curiosity and openness.
4. For example, if you are washing your hands. Sense the texture of the faucet handles, hear the sound of the water, feel the water and its temperature running over your fingers. Tune into the smell and fluidity of the soap. Breathe. Sense the acts of washing and rinsing your hands, turning off the water, and drying your hands. Step by step.
5. Also just observe and gently note any feelings or thoughts as they come and go. Are you bored? Calm? Stuck on a tale? Recognize them and drop the storyline.
6. Whatever task you choose, just sense what is happening in the now and know that training your brain in this way allows you to be in the present and enjoy more calm.