



MINDFULNESS FOR LAWYERS

A Short Handbook

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Table of Contents

Principles of Mindfulness.....	2
Sitting Meditation.....	3
Sitting Meditation: Pointers.....	4
Mindfulness Methods for Daily Life.....	5
Anxiety and Difficult Emotions.....	6
Maintaining a Sitting Practice.....	7
The Mindful Workday.....	8
Mindful Internet Use.....	9
Goodwill Meditation.....	10
Getting Better Sleep.....	11
About the Author.....	12

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Principles of Mindfulness

Being in the present moment
and out of your head.

Observing your experience as
it is, without judgment.

- Seeing thoughts *as thoughts* rather than getting lost in them.
- Attending to *sensory experience* as a gateway to the present moment.
- Turning toward present experience rather than resisting, even when it's unpleasant.

“Accept the present moment as if you'd invited it.” -Pema Chodron

“Be here now.” -Ram Dass

Sitting Meditation

The Posture:

- Straight spine.
- Feet under the knees, flat on the floor.
- Try sitting toward the edge of the chair.
- For more, google “shinzen posture” for Shinzen Young’s guide, “About Posture.”

The Technique:

- Rest attention on the sensations of breath at the nose.
 - When you notice that attention has wandered, gently return to the breath.
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- Breathe normally.

Sitting Meditation: Pointers

- Meditation is not about “emptying” the mind. Let the landscape of sounds, sensations, and thoughts continue in the background.
- Your mind will wander, and that’s okay. This isn’t about stopping the wandering; that’s impossible. It’s about noticing and gently guiding the mind back.
- When you notice you’ve wandered, briefly savor that recognition before returning.
- Apply gentle effort. No need to strain.
- There is no failing at this, no doing well or poorly. There’s only practicing or not.
- Optional: apply a light mental label to a distraction (e.g., “thinking,” “itching”).

Mindfulness Methods for Daily Life

- Rest attention on the breath at the nose.
- Mindful walking: rest attention on sensations in the soles of the feet.
- Mindful eating: eat slowly, experiencing the food with all of your senses.
- Rest attention on an entire sense field (e.g., sound, body sensations).
- Apply a light mental label if helpful (e.g., “thinking,” “tingling,” “heat,” “sound”).
- The mindful pause (good spot treatment for stress-outs):
 1. Take a deep breath
 2. Tune into body sensations
 3. Guide attention to the breath at the nose
 4. Carry on

Anxiety and Difficult Emotions

Resisting or avoiding unpleasant feelings only exacerbates them.

The key: acceptance, not avoidance.

- Let the feeling stay; be willing to feel it.
- Tune into sensations in your body.
- Resist fleeing into anxious thinking.
- Taking a mindful pause (p. 5) can help.
- Mental labeling (p. 5) can also be useful.

“The best way out is always through.”

-Robert Frost

“It’s already here. Let me feel it.”

-Jon Kabat-Zinn

Maintaining a Sitting Practice

Daily practice will transform your day-to-day experience for the better.

- Daily consistency trumps length of sit. Sitting for even one minute is fantastic.
 - Sit first thing in the morning. It's the easiest way. If that's not workable, aim for the same time every day.
 - If resistance arises, mentally shrink the session length until the resistance fades. (*"Could I do 15 minutes? No, too much resistance. What about ten? Still too long; the thought puts me off. Okay, five? Hm, I feel like I could sit for five."*)
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- Use a timer (e.g., "Insight Timer" app).

"Practice now. Don't think you will do more later." -Dipa Ma

The Mindful Workday

- Take a mindful pause (p. 5) at defined points in your daily routine: when you first sit at your desk in the morning, before you get up for lunch, etc.
- Eat lunch mindfully (p. 5). The mental rest and rejuvenation will help your productivity more than working while you eat.
- When you need to walk somewhere -- a partner's office, the bathroom, the water cooler -- practice mindful walking (p. 5).
- Try alternating timed work sessions with short, timed breaks. Use breaks to practice a mindfulness method (p. 5) in a relaxed way. Mindful walking is especially good.

Mindful Internet Use

Resisting distraction while using the internet is extremely challenging. Be patient with yourself.

- Avoid multitasking; take on one internet task at a time.
- Use these three steps to carry out online tasks without getting distracted:
 1. Before going online, declare your purpose.
 2. Acknowledge how easy it is to get distracted online and resolve to be vigilant.
 3. Go online. When you notice the urge toward distraction arising, label it (p. 5).

Goodwill Meditation

A warm, friendly attitude -- even toward people you have caused you problems -- will make you happier and less stressed.

You can cultivate this attitude through goodwill meditation.

- Mentally recite these phrases at a relaxed pace, using them as the anchor for your attention:
 - “May I be safe.”
 - “May I be happy.”
 - “May I be healthy.”
 - “May I be at ease.”
- Repeat the phrases for:
 - Someone you love
 - A neutral person
 - A difficult person
 - Everyone on earth

Getting Better Sleep

As with anxiety, resisting sleeplessness only exacerbates it.

Being less concerned with falling asleep will help you sleep better.

- You can't will yourself to become sleepy.
 - If you're not falling asleep, don't lie there and "keep trying." It will only stress you.
 - Get up, do something relaxing for about 30 minutes, then go back to bed. Repeat as needed.
 - If you become sleepy, great. If not, don't worry about it.
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- Remember: missing sleep is very common and isn't a big deal.

About the Author

Jon Krop is a graduate of Harvard Law School and Brown University. He has been meditating for almost a decade and has studied with teachers from around the world, including the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan master Tsoknyi Rinpoche, and western teachers Gerardo Abboud, Elisha Goldstein, Ph.D, Trudy Goodman, Ph.D, and John Yates, Ph.D.

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