



#TREbit – Practice Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a state of active, open attention to the present. This state is described as observing one's thoughts and feelings without judging them as good or bad. Practicing mindfulness can help us cope with uncomfortable emotions.

Exercises to try:

Breathing exercises

We use our breath every few seconds yet often don't give it a second thought. So why not bring it to the forefront now?

The 4-7-8 approach is designed to rein in your focus and bring you to a place of relaxation. Here are some steps to follow:

1. Find a quiet spot, get comfortable, and exhale out of your mouth.
2. Breathe in deeply through your nose for 4 seconds.
3. Hold your breath for 7 seconds.
4. Exhale loudly out of your mouth for 8 seconds. It's fine to work up to this number if you find a long exhalation difficult at first.

Focusing only on your breathing for a short period of time, such as 5 minutes, is a great way to begin to practice mindfulness. If you feel your mind drifting, just slowly bring it back to focus on your breathing. Science shows regular practice can “permanently rewire the brain to raise levels of happiness, lower stress, even improve immune function.” (Shawn Achor, *The Happiness Advantage* 2010)

Scan for sensations

Using body scanning is a good way to quiet noise from the outside world and recognize how you're feeling.

1. Lie down in a comfy, quiet space. Close your eyes and let your muscles relax.
2. Then, starting from the top of your head, slowly move down your body, paying attention to any sensations. Focus on these for up to a minute, then let your thoughts drift away as you move to the next area of your body until you reach the tips of your toes.

Mindfully move

Heading outside? Make your walk mindful by really paying attention to your surroundings and the impact on your senses. What sounds do you hear? What scents can you smell? How does moving make you feel? What colors do you see? How does the air feel against your skin?

Increasing your awareness of elements such as these can help slow things down and instill a sense of calm.