



10 Activities to Improve Mindfulness

Activity #1- Managing distressing thoughts and emotions

A helpful mindfulness activity is to look at your thoughts and emotions from a distance. You can do this by figuratively taking a step back. You can take the emotion or thought and put it out in front of you as a way to “remove” it. This will take some imagination. It might help to close your eyes, draw it, or even hold your hands out in front as if you’re taking it out and inspecting it. When you do this, you can ask yourself the following questions:

What’s it like to see my thought or emotion from this perspective?

Does this act change the way I react to the thought or emotion?

Activity #2- Acting with awareness by recovering from autopilot

It’s so easy to go through the motions. Going through the motions can be really helpful if your goal is to multitask and get as much done as possible. But with mindfulness, the goal is quite different. It’s not a call to do more, but to do the one task at hand with special attention. It means setting the intention to be present and act with awareness- to do things *on purpose*. If you find you’ve walked into a room and forgot what you went for, this activity is perfect for you. When you catch yourself saying, “I don’t know what I just did the past 5 minutes,” that is the perfect invitation to regroup and think about what you’re doing. Take a breath and set the goal to do the next few things with mindful awareness.

Activity #3- Catch your “shoulds”

How often do we use the word “should?” Far too often, I’d have to say. Either we tell ourselves we *should* be this or that, or we *should* be doing something else with our time. Or even, we sometimes throw our should at others. Whether they are targeted towards ourselves or others, “shoulds” place judgement. Mindfulness is about offering awareness without judgement, so I challenge you to cut out your “shoulds.” When you find yourself adding a “should” to a sentence, try this statement: “I’m noticing _____ ...and that’s ok.” You might find that this small act frees you up to be just as you are.

Activity #4- Watch the connections



You might have noticed, but life has a way of connecting the dots. Systemic thinking is one that realizes actions are not always linear, but circular and web-like. We live in many systems: a family system, a work-place system, a friend-system. All systems impact our world and the choices we make. Just like the exterior systems in which we live, we ourselves have a system within us. Emotions, thoughts, and behaviors interact and feed off of each other. Do you go from an emotion, to a thought, to a behavior? Or, does a thought arise, impacting your emotional state, which then impacts what you decide to do? The goal for this activity is to notice how each impacts the other.

Activity #5- Walk with mindfulness

Walking is one of those things that we do but don't really think about. What would it be like if we did it mindfully, noticing the sensation of our feet hitting the ground, or our breath as it quickens if we increase our pace, or even our face as it warms with the sun hitting it? Try going on a walk without using your phone for music or to call friends and make a point to pay attention to what's happening within and around you.

Activity #6- Bring awareness to self-criticism

Are you your biggest fan... or your worst enemy? So many of us think that criticizing ourselves is what leads to self-growth, but the truth is that a more accepting position is a better motivator for change. Set an intention to notice your self-talk. When you make a mistake, what do you tell yourself? When you look in the mirror, what do you say? Challenge your self-critical talk with a new voice of self-compassion and acceptance.

Activity #7- Noises while driving

I don't know about you, but driving can be one of those things where I can get going and after a few minutes have no recognition of the past few moments. It's easy to get lost in thoughts while driving. This activity challenges you to turn off the music, put your phone away, and notice the sounds around you. You might find that you hear new sounds you don't typically notice.

Activity #8- Eating

Eating can be a tricky subject. Often times eating is seen as something that helps us accomplish a certain pant size or number on a scale. I invite you to slow down and enjoy a meal by yourself. Chew your food a little longer than normal. Notice the texture of your food. Try to savor the taste just a bit more. Celebrate the way the food is nourishing your body.



Activity #9- Acceptance in relationships

One thing that's taught in the world of psychology is that compassion and acceptance for oneself often gets transferred to relationships. If you're struggling to offer compassion and acceptance to yourself, notice if you struggle with offering them to others. If you find you're often hard on others, or in a rut of nit-picking, see if you also do that with yourself. Think back to the self-criticism activity. As you continue practicing your mindfulness activities, this one offers the opportunity to extend acceptance towards an aspect of a close relationship you don't particularly like, or even an aspect of a person close to you that you might not like. Please hear me! This is not to dismiss abusive behavior. What this activity aims to provide is the opportunity to bring acceptance to a relationship that might need some work. See if you can bring a different view of that one thing about your partner that is just getting under your skin, and instead focus on a quality that you *do* like.

Activity #10- Unplug from technology

Nothing helps us be more present than to take a break from technology. Technological advances are absolutely wonderful and have helped our society in many ways, but in other ways they have led us to be more distracted. Taking a break from technology can help us connect more deeply to ourselves and those around us. Decide how long you want to take your break. It could be a weekend, or you could decide to unplug every night after 9pm. See what works for you. Give it a try and notice how you feel after your tech break!

Thank you for reading! For more activities on mindfulness or other content on relationships and self-growth please see my [online courses](#) and weekly [blogs](#). I will also be posting video courses soon!

Happy rooting,
Amy