

## #5 – Forms of Mindfulness Practice

Just as with other new thing you start in your life, mindfulness takes practice. If you want to experience acceptance and awareness of your thoughts, you need to cultivate it with repeated practice.

If you are running a marathon you don't start by running the entire 26.5 miles (or whatever the length of the race) without starting out slowly by building stamina, frame of mind, etc. No matter what you start, you will almost never start at the highest levels of stamina.

So too with Mindfulness. We need to cultivate mindfulness in order to fully integrate it into our lives and use it properly.

If you want to use mindfulness properly, start by using it every single day. In order to do this you need to pay attention to what is happening in the moment but not so much that you end up altering your everyday life.

Notice the sensations of all of your senses. If you are eating, notice the texture of the food, the smell of the food, that taste of the food. You might think that you have noticed this before but when you stop and become mindful, taking all other thoughts out of your mind for the moment, you will experience eating in a different way.

If you go for a walk, for instance, take notice of the birds. What are the colors of the bird? Is the bird chirping? What is the sound it is making? Is there a babbling brook or a lawn being watered? Notice your walk itself. Listen to your footsteps. Notice your breathing. Don't pay attention to the traffic noise, the kids screaming and yelling (if you are at a park), etc.

Notice every single thing about the moment. Take mental notes and you will see things differently the next time you go for a walk.

You could also go to meditation classes and participate in formal meditation. Formal meditation within this type of setting allows you to stop everything in your world and concentrate on the present moment. You don't have to go to a class, you can do this anywhere.

When you meditate, you are choosing an object where you focus all of your attention. If you choose breathing, for example, each time your mind wanders off you can return your attention to whatever it is you have chosen.

Mindfulness meditation involves directing your mind to whatever begins to predominate it. You do this by centering on how the event is experienced in your body. Is there a part of your body that is aching? Is there an emotional experience bubbling up that is affecting your body? By that we mean something such as a lump in your throat that you feel with sadness.

Whatever it is that is bothering you, practicing mindfulness can help you in experiencing the present moment with acceptance.

Another way you can practice mindfulness is by attending a retreat. A retreat gives you the opportunity to experience nothing but cultivating mindfulness. There are retreats over a period of time which allows you to formally practice by manifesting things such as sitting meditation, walking meditation, etc.

This type of practicing mindfulness is usually conducted in silence. There is very limited interpersonal interaction.

At a meditation retreat, everything you do during the day such as showering, eating, doing chores are all done in silence so that you can practice Mindfulness. You are learning to be fully present in moments hence the silence.

Take the time to learn how to quiet your mind and rid yourself of all the stories in your head. Quit comparing yourself to others, quit daydreaming about the future and live in the present.

Attending a retreat allows you to become aware of many insights and how your life can truly become transformed.