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*"Your own self-realization is the greatest service you can render the world."*  
-Ramana Maharshi

### **Various Mindfulness Practices**

Before every practice, find a comfortable, preferably upright position, with your spine fully aligned and check in with your body. What sensations are there? Is there any discomfort or tension? Breathe out deeply and take one full, slow breath cycle (in and out), drop your shoulders, relax your face and any tension you may feel if you can. Set a timer for 10 minutes (I use a meditation app, which uses soothing sounds). Close your eyes or simply drop your gaze, not focusing on anything in particular, then begin...

- Anchor words: when a thought or emotion arises, we simply notice it and give it an anchor, like "anger" for thoughts that upset us or "duties" for thoughts about all the things we have on our to-do-list, and then we let it go. Acknowledge and let go. Acknowledge and let go...
- Thought bubbles: we imagine the thoughts to float into our mind in bubbles and we notice and acknowledge each thought, without judgment. When we let it go, the bubble bursts and the contained thought dissipates. Again, we acknowledge and let go. Acknowledge and let go...
- Follow your breath: follow your breath as you inhale and exhale. Close your eyes, and take a long, deep, slow breath in through your nostrils and follow the sensation of your breath: feel it enter through the nostrils, go into the throat, the chest and into the belly and hold it there for a moment.  
Slowly release the breath now and again follow it from the belly, into the chest, into the throat and out through the nostrils and hold your lungs empty for a moment...Continue for 10 minutes to follow the sensation of your breath. Breathe normally again and open your eyes. What were you thinking about?

- “16 seconds of Bliss”: slowly breathe in on the count of 4, hold the air in your lungs on the count of 4, slowly release the breath on the count of 4 and then hold your lungs empty for the count of 4. Repeat for as many cycles as wanted or necessary. This can be done, going to your next meeting, on your commute, in the elevator, when the kids are losing it or your partner is nagging...
- Counting breaths: simply count your breaths up to 10 and then start over again at 1 – inhale (1), exhale (2), inhale (3), exhale (4) etc. If you catch yourself having counted to 20, simply start over again at 1. If thoughts come in and you forgot to count, simply start over again at 1 once you notice.
- A Body Scan is a very powerful way to check in with sensations in your body, it can relieve tension and pain and anxiety. Follow your sense perceptions throughout your body, starting at the feet, moving all the way to your scalp. I prefer to lie down for the body scan, but you can be seated if you prefer. If you lie down, lie down on a somewhat firm surface, so you do not fall asleep. Close your eyes:
  1. For the next 10 minutes there is nothing to do but to pay attention as best you can. Focus on your feet. You may feel your socks on your feet, or the firmness of the floor. When your mind becomes distracted, gently bring your attention back to your feet again.
  2. Now move your attention to your lower legs, noticing whatever is there. How do they feel? Light or heavy, warm or cold? Just rest in those feelings.
  3. Now move your attention to your knees. Try to relax them. Feel the front, back, and sides of your knees.
  4. Take a couple of breaths and move your attention to your upper legs. Try to relax them and notice all sense perceptions in your upper legs, front and back and sides. Notice the feeling of them lying or sitting on the ground. Are they itchy or sore? After a few breaths, move on to your belly.
  5. The belly always moves when you breathe, rising and falling. What do you feel on the inside? Is it growling with hunger? Do you feel emotions in your belly? Are you angry or under pressure and feel it in the belly?
  6. Next, bring your attention to your chest. Notice it rising and falling as you breathe. Sometimes it’s hard to focus, that’s o.k. Gently focus on the chest again.
  7. Now turn your attention to your hands. Do not move them or do anything with them. They may be touching the bed, or the floor, or somewhere on your body. Relax them if you can, and if not, simply paying attention to your hands for another moment.
  8. Move your attention up into your arms. Maybe notice if you can find a moment of stillness inside you, like the pause at the end of each breath.
  9. Next, focus your attention on your back. How does it feel against the bed or the floor?
  10. Now move attention to your neck and shoulders, letting go and relaxing them. Breathe “into” them. If your mind wanders, that’s fine. No one can pay attention all the time. Just keep returning to noticing your body whenever you find yourself thinking of something else.
  11. And now feel your face and head. What expression do you have right now? What else do you notice in your face, your ears and eyes and scalp? Relax your face.
  12. Finally, spend a few breaths paying attention to your whole body. If it is easier, continue to pay attention to your breath.
  13. After 10 minutes your meditation timer will ring again. Listen to that sound for as long as you can perceive it.
  14. Gently open your eyes and check in with yourself and your body...



- Yoga is also a very powerful way to check in with your body, strengthen it, relieve pain and anxiety and stress and free you from incessant thought through concentration or focus.
- A Walking Meditation can be done in many different ways, I like to integrate it into my daily walking that I already have to do in the city. But one can also do it very slowly, by taking each step very deliberately and noticing not only the contraction of the muscles, the sensation of pressure and relief thereof when touching down on the ground or lifting the foot, but the shift in weight the whole body undergoes and the calibrating movements of the arms to keep the balance. Little kids who learn walking or adults who re-learn it are very aware of all these feelings and the whole mechanism of walking.
- Sound meditation: ring a bell (you can use a meditation app/timer) and listen to the sound as long as you can perceive it. When you can't hear the bell anymore, listen to all the sounds that drift into your awareness. Anchor words like horn, ambulance, dog etc. might help here. Just acknowledge and let go of the sound, become open to whatever sound is present. Set the meditation timer so that it rings again after 1 minute. Again, listen to the sound of the bell as long as you can perceive it. It will help you to close your eyes.

At the end of each practice check in again with yourself and your body...