

1-Minute Mindfulness Exercises

By Dr Michelle Mulvihill

Interested in doing mindfulness meditation but don't think you have the time? Below are 9 mindfulness exercises you can do in a minute or under.

1. Yawn and stretch for 10 seconds every hour.

Do a fake yawn if you have to. That will trigger real ones. Say "ahh" as you exhale. Notice how a yawn interrupts your thoughts and feelings. This brings you into the present.

Then stretch really, really slowly for at least 10 seconds. Notice any tightness and say "ease" or just say hello to that place (being mindful – noticing without judgment). Take another 20 seconds to notice and then get back to what you were doing.

2. Three hugs, three big breaths exercise.

Hug someone (or yourself!) tight and take 3 big breaths together. Even if they don't breathe with you, your breathing will ground them.

3. Stroke your hands.

Lower or close your eyes. Take the index finger of your right hand and slowly move it up and down on the outside of your fingers. Once you have mindfully stroked your left hand, swap and let your left hand stroke the fingers of your right hand.

4. Mindfully eat a raisin.

Take a raisin or a piece of chocolate and mindfully eat it. Slow down, sense it, savour it and smile between bites. Purposefully slow down. Use all your senses to see it, touch it, smell it, and sense it.

Then gently pop it into your mouth and really savour it. Savour its texture, its taste, how it feels in your mouth. Let it linger and then swallow it. After you have swallowed it, let your lips turn up slightly and smile. Do the same thing for each raisin you eat or bite you take.

5. Clench your fist and breathe into your fingers.

Position your fingers and thumbs facing down. Now clench your fist tightly. Turn your hand over so your fingers and thumbs are facing up and breathe into your fist. Notice what happens.

6. STOP.

Stand up and breathe. Feel your connection to the earth.

Tune in to your body. Lower your gaze. Scan your body and notice physical sensations or emotions. Discharge any unpleasant sensations, emotions or feelings on the out breath. Notice any pleasant ones and let them fill you up on the in breath.

Observe. Lift your eyes and take in your surroundings. Observe something in your environment that is pleasant and be grateful for it and its beauty.

Possibility. Ask yourself what is possible or what is new or what is a forward step.

If you find yourself being reactive, try the following steps:

- Pause and take one to three big breaths.
- Say “step back.” (You don’t have to physically step back, you can just do it in your mind.)
- Say “clear head.”
- Say “calm body.”
- Breathe again. Say “relax,” “melt” or “ease.”

7. Mindful breathing for one minute.

Lower your eyes and notice where you feel your breath. That might be the air going in and out at your nostrils or the rise and fall of your chest or stomach. If you can’t feel anything, place your hand on your stomach and notice how your hand gently rises and falls with your breath. If you like, you can just lengthen the in breath and the out breath or just breathe naturally. Your body knows how to breathe.

Focus on your breath. When your mind wanders, as it will do, just bring your attention back to your breath. You might like to say ‘thinking’ when you notice your thoughts and just gently shepherd your attention back to your breath.

This can be done for longer than one minute. However, even for one minute it will allow you to pause and be in the moment. Or you might just like to breathe out stress on the out breath and breathe in peace on the in breath.

8. Loving-kindness meditation.

For one minute, repeat ‘May I be happy, may I be well, may I be filled with kindness and peace.’ You can substitute “you” for “I” and think of someone you know and like, or just send love to all people.

9. An aspiration.

Decide on an aspiration. Just ask yourself this question: What is my heart’s aspiration? Pause for about 20 seconds. Do this a second or third time and write down what comes. Perhaps it is to come from love, or to be kind to yourself or others or to be patient.

Once you decide which aspiration you like best, say that at the beginning of the day. This will set you up for your day and your interactions with others (and even with yourself).