

Mind **over** matter

Use the ancient practice of mindfulness to soothe your senses and boost your wellbeing



Mindfulness is the practice of bringing your attention to the present moment without judgement. The best thing about mindfulness is that it has a host of benefits and it's incredibly easy to get started. Meditation teacher Ellen Shilling gives us ten easy ways to bring mindfulness into your daily life.

1 Start your day the mindful way Mindfulness invites you to live in the moment no matter what you are doing, so as you start your journey into work or as you drive the kids to school, become mindful of your environment. Turn off the radio and pay attention to your surroundings. What do you see? What does the sky look like? What people do you notice? In doing so you will arrive at your destination calm, centred and ready to start your day.

2 Just breathe Your breath anchors you into the present moment. It also tells you a lot about your stress levels. Each day you will take approximately 20,000 breaths and when you are stressed, each one will be short, rapid and may feel constricted or tight. By changing your breath, you change your

physiology and your stress levels. When your breath is calm, so too is your mind and body. Schedule time to take five to ten long, deep breaths at intervals throughout the day.

3 Ditch the multitasking We live in a world of multitasking and often our day is rated according to how many things we get ticked off our to-do lists. A research group at Stanford University studied multitasking and they found it takes longer, you make more mistakes and it's more stressful. Also it:

- › Reduces efficiency
- › Decreases quality, effectiveness and performance
- › Hampers creativity
- › Kills overview (we literally can't see the wood for the trees)
- › Reduces wellbeing (increases stress) and drains energy

Imagine what a better, happier day you would have if you gave 100 per cent of your attention to every single thing that you did? Mindfulness invites you to ditch the multitasking and become a single-tasker. How? By simply doing only what you're meant to be doing in that moment. That is, while you're walking, just walk. While running, just run.

4 Become aware Be conscious of what you're doing right now in the moment. Have you ever driven from A to B and not remembered the journey? We are all on autopilot but don't realise it. So wake up, switch off the autopilot and be aware of simple things, such as walking to the coffee machine, having a cup of tea, emptying the dishwasher, talking to a friend etc.

5 Wiggle your toes When we're busy, we're up in our heads thinking, planning, organising. For a little breather, wiggle your toes and notice what they're feeling, touching, are they hot or cold etc. This serves to bring your attention away from the thousands of thoughts racing through your head and gives you a little breather.

6 Eat a meal slowly Set some time aside for your meal and put away your phone, newspaper etc. Notice your food. What does it look like? What are the shapes, colours and textures? What are the flavours? Chew slowly and taste each morsel. Not only will

you enjoy your food more, you will find that you'll also eat less.

7 Drive the car We generally spend a lot of time in the car. For some people that can be stressful but it can also be a great opportunity to practice mindfulness. On your next trip, turn off the radio and be mindful. Notice how it feels to drive, noticing both internal body sensations and what you see externally.

8 Listen mindfully Most of the time we are somewhat distracted while talking to others. Mindful listening is a lovely gift to give and in doing so makes the person talking feel like they have been truly heard. To do this you just listen – fully, intently and compassionately. Giving no advice or judgement, you listen and resist the urge to talk about yourself. You might just be surprised at the results.

9 Marvel at the beauty of nature There's nothing like nature to help us be truly present. Remember the nature walks you went on as a kid? Take one as an adult. Bask in the beauty that is all around you but which you might hardly ever notice. Go to a park, run your fingers along the bark of a tree, smell a flower, lie in the grass. Bliss.

10 Just be We spend all our life doing, rushing around getting things done, completing tasks, achieving goals. However the body and the mind need rest, so give yourself permission to spend a few minutes a day doing absolutely nothing. It's invaluable. **WW**

“Mindfulness invites you to ditch the multitasking”

A six-week mindfulness course with Ellen Shilling commences on February 27 in Blackrock Village, Co Dublin. For more information about Ellen log on to www.xhale.ie