

Outdoor Mindfulness Exercises





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What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is being in the moment, not being distracted by external influences or even your own thoughts and feelings. It's derived from meditation and yoga, where being calm, focused, and in the moment are key parts of their philosophies.

By practicing mindfulness on a daily basis, we become more aware of our:

Thoughts:	"I can never do this"
Feelings:	sadness, hopelessness
Behaviours:	withdrawing, procrastinating
Physiology:	muscle tension, headaches

Being mindful allows us to be more present in the moment. With practice, you can learn to catch your thoughts and feelings before they begin to influence your behaviour. The more you incorporate mindfulness into your daily life, the better at being in the moment you will be. This will make it easier for you to increase your ability to focus on tasks and ignore distractions.

This booklet is full of mindfulness exercises and information that you can use in your everyday life. Each exercise has a beginner and an intermediate exercise level accompanied by an example. Simply practice each beginner exercise before moving on to the intermediate version.

Outdoor Mindfulness Exercises

As a way of connecting with your surroundings outside and disconnecting from the feeling of being cooped up inside, try doing one or two of the following exercises, whichever one you find feels right for you.

First, go outside into your yard or on your balcony and get comfortable. You can sit in a chair or on a cushion or sit or lie on the ground; whatever is most comfortable.

Try to do each of these exercises for 5–10 minutes. As you practice them more, you can increase the time.

Touch & Sensation Based Exercise

Close your eyes and take a few breaths, taking note of the feeling of your lungs expanding and contracting. Expand your attention to other parts of your body, feel the sun on your skin, your face, hands, arms or any place exposed to the sun. Keep attention on all the parts of the body where you can feel the sun for 1 or 2 minutes.

Next take note of the feeling of any air moving across your skin. After doing this for a minute or two, concentrate on a specific part of their body where you can feel the wind. It could be the tip of your nose, your hands or the back of your neck. Again, keep your attention on this for 1–2 minutes.

If you are making contact with the ground, focus your attention to the parts of your body touching the earth. It could be your feet or the whole lower half of your body if you are sitting or the whole back of your body if you are lying down. Focus on the feeling of the grass or dirt beneath you; the length of the individual blades of grass, their texture, are they smooth, rough? Is the texture and the temperature of the earth soft? Hard? Damp? Warmed by the sun? Concentrate on these sensations for another 1 or 2 minutes. When you are ready take another few breaths and gently open your eyes and return your attention back to the wider space.

Smell Based Exercise

Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth.

As you inhale through your nose take note of any scents that you can pick up. Continue to breath and pick up scents. Try to identify a few different smells. Each time you detect a scent, focus your attention on it, think about what might be giving off the smell. Flowers? The dirt? Perhaps you can smell someone cooking something?

Hold the picture of the object in your mind for a few breaths and on your final exhale let it go from your mind and move on to the next scent.

Sight Based Exercise

Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Then open your eyes and focus your attention on the first thing you see. Take note of what it looks like. What colour is it? Does it look smooth? Rough? Soft? Hard? Is it moving in the breeze or is it something that stands strong?

Try not to get distracted by any thoughts that come to your mind. If they do, acknowledge them but let them pass by and remain focused on the object.

When you are ready to look at something else close your eyes again and take a few more deep breaths and then open your eyes again.

Sound Based Exercise

Close your eyes, take a few deep breaths, then direct your attention to the sounds around you.

See if you can focus on the calls and movements of birds, vehicles or any other sounds within earshot. Your attention will naturally dip back into your thoughts. Be aware of this and bring your focus back to the sounds every minute or two.

Notice how some sounds come and go, while others are constant. Notice how some get louder and softer. Focus on the sounds and try to notice the sounds around you that you don't normally hear in day-to-day life.

When you are ready, take a few breaths and gently open your eyes and return your attention back to the wider space.



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