



## **Meditation, Mindfulness, and Gratitude Guide for Beginners**

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Welcome to your journey of internal awareness. Practices such as meditation, mindfulness and gratitude are experiences that leave you feeling more at peace with yourself and your physical presence in the moment.

Implementing these practices will decrease stress, enhance your connection with the world and people around you, all while harnessing more positivity within your thoughts. The more you focus on the things you are grateful for, the more you will attract these aspects in your life.

This guide is to introduce these practices into your life. Note that there simply is no wrong ways to practice these techniques. Some days are more challenging than others, but allow yourself the time to learn and grow within the practices themselves.

## Meditation

Meditation brings one into tune within body by letting thoughts come and go. This can be done sitting with the eyes closed in a quiet space, or walking with eyes open in a noisy neighborhood. I will give you some of the more common forms of meditation so you may practice reaping the benefits today!

The most common way to meditate is to focus on your breath. You simply start by taking deep inhalations and full exhalations within the body. You can concentrate on expanding the ribs through the front, side, and back of the body to create full expansion. From there, count your breaths from backwards or forwards to 10, then repeat. During this practice, simply let the thoughts come and go. Give yourself permission to let thoughts enter your mental frame of reference and gradually exit like clouds in a blue sky.

Once you feel comfortable, you may advance this action by focusing on the sounds around you. Not thinking about the sounds but rather hearing them, noting what they are, and continue breathing and living in the moment. This is a great technique to utilize if you are meditating in a space that is not 100% quiet, or if you are participating in a more advanced walking meditation.

Lastly, you can repeat a mantra of your choice as you sit in silence. A mantra is a phrase or a short saying that is personal to you. For example repeating the phrase "I am strong" can be a mantra. Make sure to choose a mantra that leaves you feeling uplifted and inspired. It can be as simple as one word, or a couple of sentences that are unique to you.

Meditating can be a challenge, especially with all the clutter builds within our brains. However, allocating time for a practice will not only relieve stress in the mind and the body, but it also is an incredible way to practice self-care.

## Mindfulness

Mindfulness, similarly to meditation, is being fully present in a moment and utilizing all your senses to create a memorable experience.

Mindfulness is vital in today's world where we are constantly distracted by electronics and moving from task to task. These distractions hinder our presence in conversations with loved ones, can cause us to overeat, and keeps our cortisol (stress hormone) levels elevated which can cause a plethora of issues.

Here are a few ways to practice mindfulness:

- **Put the cell phone away.** We have all experienced the situation when you are out with someone, whether it be a friend or a family member, and they are on their phone while you are with them instead of engaging with you. Or when you are at an event, like a concert, where everyone has their phones on recording rather than full immersion in the moment. Put the phone away and allow yourself to have real connections and memories. Fully engaging will help you retain memories as it allows all your senses to be involved. When we experience joy, our system of your body works more efficiently.
- **Sit and eat a meal without any distraction or rush.** Choose one meal you can do this with and fully chew your food, taste your food, and appreciate every bite. Our foods carry vibrations and energy within them as whatever you are eating was once a living organism. When we are fully mindful in what we are eating or cooking we extract the food's vibrance from its source and help our bodies absorb all the nutrients while also digesting the food more efficiently. Think of the last time you ate a meal with your loved ones. Did the food taste fantastic? Typically sharing a meal with special people while in a good mood heightens our senses and creates a grander experience.
- **Be okay with sitting in silence for a couple minutes out of the day.** This allows you to be at one with your thoughts. Are things coming up that are uncomfortable for you to think about? Can you work through a problem rather than escalating it in your mind? Using headphones can also be distracting which hinders you from fully concentrating on your current task. Instead of trying to eliminate the surrounding noise with more noise, note the sounds around you and challenge yourself to fully focus on your task, or just simply let yourself be present.
- **While you are being physically active, you can utilize mindful techniques by slowing down and really feeling / listening to your body.** Ask yourself if you are engaging the proper muscles. If you are breathing, how is your body feeling? Is your form correct? By utilizing this method, you are creating better neuromuscular pathways that enhance muscle contraction, establishing better muscle memory, and decreasing your risk of injury.
- **Utilize reflection at the end of the day to recap what happened.** By allowing yourself a brief review when you get home, you can release the negative thoughts the day from your system. This practice should be done well before you go to

bed in order to not excite or overload your brain. This technique lets you sleep faster and sounder..

## Gratitude

Gratitude allows us to focus on the positive aspects of our life over our future wants and desires.

While it's a pretty simple task, it's certainly not always easy. You can either write, say out loud, or think about a handful of things you appreciate. Practicing this in the morning starts us off on a good path., Focusing on gratitude at night helps us see the good aspects of our day, which promotes feelings of peace and tranquility.

A great example implementing this is your like could look like the following. At the end of the day when you reflect on all the events, list 5 things you are grateful for that are specific to that day. Write a little about each of them and be mindful of your feelings. Repeat each day and watch the results manifest!

For ways to put these 3 practices into action while also implementing a healthier lifestyle through fitness and nutrition check out my 8 week fitness program, Aligned To Thrive, as well as my other service offerings at [ShannonDolanFitness.com](http://ShannonDolanFitness.com)