

## Mindfulness in Five Minutes or Less!

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The strive for a “work/life balance” is often heard in this profession. Work/life balance is a buzzword constantly being heard around offices in times of stress. It is mentioned in one-on-one meetings, staff meetings, and at home at night to our families, partners, friends. It is a constant that professionals are trying to achieve.

There are times however, where it becomes physically hard to set boundaries to leave work at five o’ clock to get that run in for the sake of destressing, cook a great meal, or take an hour yoga class. This can build up both physically and mentally, and professionals in this field are not helping themselves. This is where the art of mindfulness in five minutes or less can help professionals be the absolute best version of themselves in a profession where sometimes there are late nights running recruitment tabulations, 3 a.m. phone calls on the duty phone, or living out of a suitcase eating airport food for weeks on end.

The Harvard Business Review says, "Mindfulness Can Literally Change Your Brain." It’s stated that mindfulness shouldn't be considered a "nice-to-have" for executives, but a "must-have" in a way to have effective decision-making capabilities and to protect ourselves from toxic stress. It is crucial that five minutes a day are committed to being mindful, and that can be done in the following ways:

- 1) Meditation:** Meditation has now become more accessible and more realistic for the everyday person. Meditation no longer is limited to yogis and gurus, but it can be accessed right through a cell phone. The app, “Headspace,” allows you to sit and meditate for three minutes a day while listening to a guided voice. It also allows you to set calendar reminders to meditate. The app is free, but there are options to purchase more meditation packs.
- 2) Journaling:** Journaling is helpful by taking a few minutes to write down your current feelings in that current moment and acknowledging what the present is. A great recommendation is the “Five Minute Journal.” This journal takes five minutes a day, and it is written in both the morning and at night. Every morning there is an opportunity to journal what you’re grateful for, what you can do to make the day great, and it gives you a daily affirmation. In the evening, there is a reflection component to journal three amazing things that happened during the day and one thing you could have done to make the day better.
- 3) Breathing:** Taking two minutes to breathe and focus on your breath is one of the easiest ways to quickly practice mindfulness. Breathing is proven to help reduce stress and reduce anxious feelings. A quick way to do this is to sit comfortably where you are (may be at home, your office, kitchen table, your car, the options are limitless!) and begin to inhale through your nose with your mouth closed. You simply should inhale for three seconds, hold for three seconds, and exhale for three seconds. You can increase time as you go through this exercise.



- 4) **Color:** The adult coloring book has become popular for a reason. Take five minutes a day and color. Many of these coloring books having intricate patterns and designs, so it is easy to focus on that project at that moment to increase mindfulness in one's day to day practice. Coloring is an easy way to "tune out" for fraction of time.
- 5) **Mindful Eating:** While it is hard to always control what one is eating during times of stress and ever-changing calendars, one can practice mindful eating every time they eat. To do this, make sure to listen to your body and stop when you are full; eat when you're hungry and energy is low; set times to eat with others instead of sitting in offices alone; and make sure you're eating nutritious options. Lastly, try not to multitask while eating. By practicing mindful eating, we can be the best professionals for our students.

Mindfulness, like any other hobby, takes practice and consistency. Mindfulness is also recognizing what the reality of the present is and being with that. While the present may not always be great, by recognizing and owning that experience one can move forward with their own feelings and emotions. With having five "go to" quick tricks, professionals can better themselves in five minutes or less day by day. This will allow us to show up better, with clearer minds and more presence.

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