



Remembering to be Mindful

In the ideal world we would all be more Mindful more of the time - but it's hard to remember.

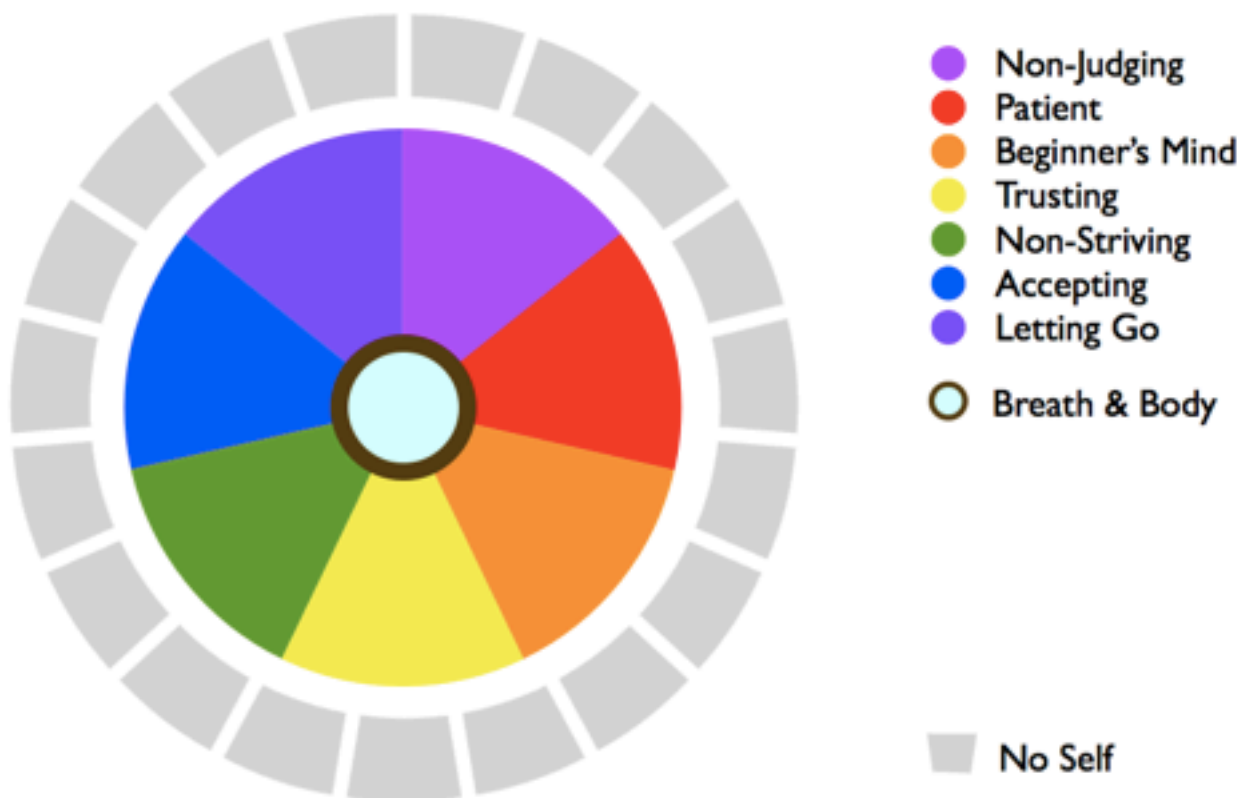
Practice through meditation helps us to be in the right frame of mind to be Mindful, so we are more likely to remember. But we can't meditate all the time, and when we most need to be Mindful there often isn't the time to stop and do a practice.

My intention here is to help you to focus on what it means to be Mindful, so that you will remember to check in with yourself each day, as you go about your everyday life to see if you could be more Mindful.

The 7 aspects of Mindfulness shown in the chart below are the most commonly mentioned.

We can learn to be more aware of these if we choose to pay attention to them.

The Mindfulness Chart



I'll say more about the Breath, the Body and No Self later, but for now, as you progress in learning to be Mindful, see if you can use the following pages to help keep you on track.

7 Mindful Questions



In the box below, describe a particular situation or something that is happening at the present moment in your thoughts, feelings or sensations, that you may or may not be Mindful of. Then consider the following 7 questions and ask yourself "Am I being Mindful right now?"

Not Mindful

Mindful

Impatient	AM I BEING PATIENT, OR AM I RUSHING THROUGH THIS MOMENT TO GET TO ANOTHER 'BETTER' ONE?	Patient
Set-Minded	AM I TOO FIXED, BLINKERED AND SET IN MY WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT THIS?	Beginner's Minded
Un-Trusting	AM I TRUSTING IN MY OWN INTUITION, FEELINGS AND AUTHORITY?	Trusting
Striving	AM I TRYING TOO HARD TO ACHIEVE MY GOALS WITHOUT ALLOWING THINGS NATURALLY TO UNFOLD?	Non-Striving
Questioning	AM I WILLING AND ABLE TO ACCEPT AND SEE THESE THINGS JUST AS THEY ARE, GOOD OR NOT SO GOOD?	Accepting
Clinging/ Rejecting	AM I HOLDING ON, CLINGING TO, GRASPING AND REJECTING THESE THOUGHTS FEELINGS AND SENSATIONS?	Letting Go
Judging	AM I JUDGING THIS TOO QUICKLY ACCORDING TO MY OWN LIKES, DISLIKES AND STANDARDS?	Non-Judging

What did you learn from this?

7 Days - 7 Ways to be Mindful



Using each of the 7 ways to be Mindful - Non-Judging, Patient, Beginner's Mind, Trusting, Non-Striving, Accepting and Letting Go, why not focus on a separate one each day for the next week? You can do this in any order you wish, or you could even focus on one aspect for several days at a time. If you're focusing on being more patient on Monday, then just see if you can notice all the times you were, or could have been more patient, and make a note of this below.

Monday my focus is...	Today I noticed that...
Tuesday my focus is...	Today I noticed that...
Wednesday my focus is...	Today I noticed that...
Thursday my focus is...	Today I noticed that...
Friday my focus is...	Today I noticed that...
Saturday my focus is...	Today I noticed that...
Sunday my focus is...	Today I noticed that...

What did you learn from this?



The Mindful Breath

Breathing is not optional, it's something we do all the time without being aware or thinking about it.

And until someone or something draws attention to the fact of the breath,
we don't even know we're breathing.

Luckily, we don't have to do breathing, the breath breathes itself -
try not breathing for a while and see what happens.....

If we're not aware of our breath, we can't notice the unhelpful ways in which
we might be affecting the way we breathe.

There is the natural effortless breath,
and there is the unnatural forced, stressed or controlled breath.

The stressful breath - comes from trying to save yourself from saber- toothed tigers in trees,
only these days there are no saber-toothed tigers in trees - or very rarely.

The point is, the mind reacts to perceived threat and danger just the same as it always has,
by trying to protect us and keep us safe - we either freeze, fight or run away.

And the breath is key. It's how we get the oxygen into our bodies to fuel and drive our muscles
so we *can* freeze, fight or run away.

This is our survival system and without it we would not, well..... survive.

But what if the mind gets it wrong and over-exaggerates the threat and danger,
and it keeps on doing that?

Well for one thing you can be sure the breath is going to be affected.
We hold our breath, we pull in our belly, we brace ourselves, we breathe faster or slower.

The breath is upset and affected in all kinds of ways.
We even react in the same way to good news, exciting and pleasant things!

Learning to be Mindful of the breath is really useful, because it means we can see what's happening
and we can see it so clearly and smile about the wonder of it.
And in that moment we can decide to let the breath relax and allow it to go back to breathing itself again.
It's great to be able to do that and let everything settle and calm down.
All just by noticing the breath and letting the breath breathe itself.

***The invitation from the Breath is to pay attention to your Breath right now
and notice how it is affected by the way you think and feel
and everything your mind gets swept away with.....***

No need to control the breath

***Just noticing it at the centre of your body in your tummy area
and letting both your tummy and breath relax and settle.....***

Saying to yourself calmly in your mind -

“Breathing in - I know I’m breathing in”.....

“Breathing out, I know I’m breathing out”.....

Settling into stillness in this way - allowing the Breath to breathe itself.



The Mindful Body

Just like the breath, the body reacts all the time to whatever is happening around us.

Loud noise - we jump. Sad face, happy face.... we react to those too.
And everything going on in our mind? The body reacts to it all.

The body is a barometer and temperature gauge of what we're thinking, feeling and experiencing.

The reactions of the body are vital to our survival, but boy do we over-react!

Tensing and clenching every muscle, going into spasms of stress, affecting our posture and gestures, making us move awkwardly and uneasily, slowing us down and speeding us up - even our digestive system, joints and skin can be affected.

A body constantly reacting to what the mind sees and feels and tells us.

The question I always remember my Mindfulness teacher asking me, whenever I told her about something I was thinking or feeling, was....

“Where is that in your body?”

I didn't know what she meant and always answered by talking about something else I was thinking. It took a while for the penny to drop, and I'm really grateful to her for persisting in asking the question.

So it makes sense to to me to pay attention to the body, and instead of getting in on the act and making things worse, we learn to pay attention Mindfully.

Everything there is to be aware of, to Notice, Observe and Witness, here and now.

By paying Mindful attention to the different reactions of the body, we have a chance to see when we are unnecessarily over-reacting.

A chance to let the body return like the breath to its natural state of balanced, poised, calm-readiness.

A body that is not constantly clocking up points for stress, and beating us up, but one which is taking care and wishing us well.

The invitation from the Body is to pay attention to your Body right now and notice how it is being affected by the way you think and feel and everything your mind gets swept away with.....

No need to control the Body

Just noticing with awareness every bit from toe to head breathing and allowing every part to relax and settle..... to be grounded in the here and now.

Saying to yourself calmly in your mind -

“This is what (the part of the body) feels right now”.....

Noticing the sensations and the changes, and looking deeply and compassionately into your direct experience, and letting go of any uncomfortable or painful experiences.

Settling into stillness in this way - the Body calms itself



No Self

So the Breath and Body form the core of the Mindful practice of Awareness.

The breath and body are at the centre of our being.
Without them we would not be who we are, would we?

And this is where Mindfulness gets even more interesting,
because there is the teaching of No Self, or that we are to practice being aware of and letting go of Self.

It is hard to explain, but my understanding of this No Self,
is that the mind *creates or constructs* what we believe to be a Self.
A Self through what we do, what we wear, who we know, what we read and believe and so on.
There are many facets to the constructed Self.

In the West in particular, we pride ourselves on achieving a good self-concept and self-esteem.
What could possibly be wrong with that?

Well I suppose nothing - if it causes no harm or suffering to you or others.

The trouble seems to be that the stronger we hold to this belief in Self,
and the more we try to protect and preserve the Self, the more we suffer.
It seems to be built in as a part of the survival system again,
but as we've seen, nature can be a bit extreme.

Our thoughts, feelings, and sensations tell us who we are,
and in Mindfulness we practice letting go of these mental events,
so in truth, is this not the same as letting go of Self?

Gradually this can lead to a shift in view from survival-mode, "Me! Me! Me!",
to a view which is first focussed inwards compassionately towards Self,
and then ever-more focused compassionately outwards towards 'Other'.

This outreaching of the mind is reckoned to be healthy too.
It can lead to a greater sense of well-being, and less suffering for all concerned.
Better for you as a sentient being (rather than a Self),
equal to all others, and I suppose better for the world as a whole.

There is a lot more to it than this, and none of these things are to be proved or disproved;
rather discovered, through Direct Experience as viewed by the light of Mindfulness.
When we experience life directly, we can see reality in actuality.
When we enter into the stream of life we can flow with it
rather than fight against the naturally changing currents.

***The invitation from the Self is to pay attention to your Self right now
and notice how it is affecting and colouring everything you think, feel and do.***

No need to go along with everything the Self says or wants you to do.








***Just noticing with awareness every cry of the Self that keeps you from being nice
or makes you nice just for Self's sake
all keeping you away from Other, and adding more suffering.***

Letting go of Self in Mindful awareness may be the nicest and greatest thing you can do.



To Help Us Remember

*You may have noticed already that these are the 7 colours of the rainbow.
It might be helpful to associate them with the 7 pillars of Mindfulness -
the attitudes of mind to be Mindfully aware of*

IMPATIENT		Red
SET-MINDED		Orange
UN-TRUSTING		Yellow
STRIVING		Green
QUESTIONING		Blue
CLINGING/ REJECTING		Indigo
JUDGING		Violet

And there are also the core aspects of Being to be aware of

THE BREATH		Sky Blue
THE BODY		Brown
THE SELF		Grey

*In this moment
and whenever we remember to be aware of these attitudes of mind
and core aspects of being
we stand a chance of being Mindful.*

Mindfulness is not a technique we use to help us avoid the harshness and suffering of life
Mindfulness is a way of being that helps us to turn towards and embrace life in all its colourful nature.

Mindfulness is never easy.
Shining a light on something that glares right back at you can be hard.
Seeing Mindfully allows suffering and disturbance to settle and clarity to return.
Mindfulness is seeing and Being a part of Life just as it is in reality.