

Mindfulness in the Mundane

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Think about the activities you do every day, the ones that become so routine that you barely even pay attention to them: brushing your teeth, taking a shower, getting dressed, getting in/starting your car. Do you ever notice your thoughts during these activities, or does the time spent participating in these activities pass by like a blur? The following script can be adapted for any of these types of activities. The script will help you become more conscious of your actions, while also encouraging you engage your five senses. What are the benefits of such an exercise? First, you will become more present and mindful in your daily life. This can result in an increase in productivity, morale, and feelings of well-being. Second, you will learn to appreciate the small, typically mundane aspects of life. This increases feelings of gratitude and connection to your fellow man, as we are all bonded by our human behaviors and routines. You will break thought patterns that often surface when you only half-engage with your daily life. Adding this new layer of mindfulness will be a welcome disruption to thoughts that repeat themselves over and over – sometimes to an unhealthy and exhaustive extent. By noticing these thought patterns and replacing them with constructive commentary, we begin to guide our minds to align with our bodies, as they engage in the activity. And finally, incorporating mindfulness into an otherwise mundane routine can make it less boring, and that's always a plus.

Instructions (For guidance. Feel free to adapt as you prefer): Choose an activity that you do often, usually without much thought. Follow the script below and adapt it for your needs. By incorporating mindfulness into your activity, you become both objective observer and commentator of your actions, deepening your engagement with your surroundings – and your alignment of mind and body.

Before beginning your activity, take a moment in stillness. Notice where you are. Are you standing or sitting? How is your body feeling? Are you experiencing any thoughts that relate to the activity you're about to start? What about thoughts unrelated? Notice these thoughts without reaction or judgment, and let them float naturally into, and back out of, your mind. Take a few breaths in stillness, and then begin to think about your activity. Notice how the activity is made up of many small steps, actions, and movements. What is the very first step you need to take in your activity? Choose this first step, and begin there.

I am beginning to [insert activity here]. I slow down to mindfully notice each step in the process of completing this activity. First, I _____.

As I _____, here is what I see.

This is what I hear.

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This is what I smell.

This is what I taste.

This is what I feel.

I notice which body parts are engaging, and how the movements make my body feel _____.

I notice thoughts entering my mind. I welcome them, but then let them go. I do not ruminate on the thoughts. I bring my attention back to my activity.

For the next step, I _____.

As I _____, this is what I see.

This is what I hear.

This is what I smell.

This is what I taste.

This is what I feel.

I notice which body parts are engaging in this step. This is how these movements make me feel within my body.

I am mindfully aware of my Self, in this moment, engaging in this small step. I remain present, focusing only on this small action.

For the next step, I _____.

(Repeat this script for as many steps as it takes to complete your activity. Then continue on to end your practice).

I have just completed [activity].

This is what I observed.

This is how I now feel after completing the activity.

I am mindfully engaged and present with my daily routine. I am tuned into myself.

Example of an adaptation of this script:

Activity: Brushing my teeth

I am about to brush my teeth. First, I stand in front of my bathroom sink and mirror. As I stand, I see my reflection in the mirror. I hear the hum of the bathroom fan. I smell the dampness of the water. I taste the stagnancy inside my mouth from my long sleep. I feel my feet rooted into the cold tiles of the bathroom floor.

My feet are engaged with the floor beneath me. My back and neck are engaged as I stand up straight in the mirror. My eyes are engaged as I gaze at my reflection. This combination of movement and stillness make my body feel weary. My body yearns for more movement and energy.

I notice thoughts about how I look enter my mind. I welcome them but then let them go. They are not serving me during this step in my activity. I bring my attention back to the activity.

Next, I pick up my toothbrush and toothpaste. I see the half-empty tube of toothpaste, the bottom of the tube warped from squeezing. I see the colors of the toothbrush, fluorescent bright accents on an otherwise white brush. I see the bristles. I hear the clanking of my toothbrush holder as I take the brush out. I hear the movement of my arms and hands as I reach for the toothbrush and toothpaste. I smell the faint minty toothpaste from my previous brushings. I continue to taste my stagnant, unclean mouth. I feel the tube and brush in my hand. Now, my hands and arms are engaging. I feel my body responding to the increased movement. My blood starts to flow more, and I begin to have more energy. I am mindfully aware of my Self, as I hold the toothpaste and toothbrush in my hands.

Next, I squeeze the toothpaste onto the brush. I see the deep blue gel as it gets squeezed onto the bristles. I see small minty crystals in the gel. I see the white bristles turn blue from the toothpaste. I hear a small popping sound as the toothpaste exits the tube. I smell the minty freshness of the paste. I taste the inside of my mouth, now salivating more in anticipation of the mint flavor. I feel my fingers working hard to squeeze out the toothpaste and hold the brush steady.

My hands and fingers are engaged, doing the dexterous work of handling toothpaste and toothbrush. I am mindfully engaged with this step of squeezing the toothpaste onto the toothbrush.

Next, I bring the brush to my mouth and run the bristles along my teeth. I see in my mirror, my steady movements as I run the brush back and forth on my teeth. I see the toothpaste begin to foam. I hear the sound of the bristles as they scrape across my teeth. I hear the swishing of the mix of toothpaste and saliva inside my mouth. I smell the toothpaste's minty fragrance. I taste the mint. I feel the bristles on my teeth, gums, and tongue. I feel a clean sensation forming within my mouth.

My mouth becomes engaged with this step. The steady movements of my arm and the clean feeling invigorate me. My mind is fully focused on the act of brushing the bristles along my teeth, gums, and tongue.

Next, I rinse my mouth and toothbrush with water. I see the water stream from the faucet, dripping onto my toothbrush and into the sink. I hear the running water. I smell the freshness of the minty toothpaste as it mixes with the water. I taste the coolness as I swish the water around in my mouth. My mouth tastes minty. It feels cool, clean, and energized.

My mouth engages further as I work to swish the water between my cheeks. I can feel my jaw supporting this motion. All of my thoughts are focused on the minty water swishing inside my mouth. I am mindfully aware of this action.

I spit out the water and wipe my mouth dry. I see my newly cleaned teeth in the reflection of my mirror. I hear the silence that was just created by shutting off the faucet. I smell and taste the remnants of mint. I feel the cleanliness inside my mouth.

I have just completed brushing my teeth. I observed the changing energy inside my mouth as I went through each step. I noticed how the energy in my mouth correlated with energy throughout the rest of my body.

Now that I've completed brushing my teeth, I feel invigorated, clean, and refreshed. I am mindfully engaged and present in my daily routine. I am tuned into myself.