



Mindfulness Daily at Work

Introduction to the 40-Day Mindfulness Daily program

Tara: Welcome to *Mindfulness Daily at Work*. I'm Tara Brach and with Jack Kornfield, we've brought our many decades of teaching experience together to create a powerful 40-day program designed to help you work with greater wellbeing, less stress, and more clarity. Through this course, in less than 15 minutes a day, you'll develop a transformative meditation practice and, importantly, you'll learn how to bring that wisdom and balance to the challenging situations that arise at work and in your life. Here's the first lesson from Jack on mindful basics.

Jack: Welcome to *Mindfulness Daily at Work*. In this first section, which we call mindful basics, we will introduce the key skills you will need as a foundation for mindfulness training for work. We begin by exploring the first step in mindfulness, pausing to become present.

We live in a stressful time with the demands and fast-pace of our culture and we can easily lose connection to ourselves and to what matters most. We can be like a character in James Joyce's story who "lived a short distance from his body." We're not here in the present where our lives are actually taking place.

Whether you're a service professional or executive, team member or consultant, healthcare worker, or new to the workforce, you've been drawn to mindfulness training to make your work and life better. Maybe you want to enhance your mental clarity and performance, maybe you're looking for a way to feel more relaxed and balanced, or you might feel

trapped in habits that aren't serving your relationships at work and home.

The way to change begins right where you are with increasing awareness. Mindfulness invites you to arrive in the present moment. It teaches you to be comfortable in your own skin, to feel at home with others, and to release stress and anxiety.

A hospice worker who accompanied hundreds of people in their dying process said that one of the greatest regrets she heard expressed was that they had not lived true to themselves. We can spend a whole lifetime trying to meet the expectations and standards of others and end up never having lived our own lives.

When Harvard researchers tracked the thoughts and happiness levels of thousands of volunteers using a phone app, they found out that, half of the time, their thoughts were wandering and not related to the activity they were engaged in. But they also learned that we're happiest when we are present and focused on exactly what we're doing, whether that's having a conversation at work, walking down the street, or doing the dishes.

Mindfulness is paying attention to what's happening inside and outside you in the present moment. This begins with something that's incredibly simple: a pause. Imagine being in a movie theater, immersed in a fast-paced thriller; suddenly, the screen freezes. No longer swept away in the action, you become aware of where you are, the people around you, the sounds and colors, the pulsing tension in your body and what you're thinking and feeling. This is what's available to you in a pause.

Learning to pause in the midst of your life brings you back to what's actually happening. You're not caught up in the movie, and in the space of pause, you can see more clearly and confidently what you were thinking and feeling and what's going on around you.

So, imagine one of these scenarios: getting stuck in traffic on the way to work, or your laptop crashes and you lose valuable hours of work, or your boss unexpectedly criticizes you, or your stressed coworker throws a temper-tantrum.

When you learn how to apply mindfulness, it's possible to pause, breathe, and instead of reacting, you will find a space of more clarity and empathy. You can then respond in a more skillful, kind, and balanced way.

Consider Martha Postlethwaite's poetic instruction: "Do not try to save the whole world or do anything grandiose. Instead, create a clearing in the dense forest of your life and wait there patiently, until the song that is your life falls into your cupped hands." With even a short pause, creating a clearing, you can begin to sense more aliveness, clarity, and heart. So, let's begin our practice, pausing for presence.

Mindfulness Practice

Find a posture that allows you to be comfortably at rest, sitting upright to help you stay alert, but also relaxed. You can sit in a chair or on the floor. If you're in a chair, it's ideal to sit forward a little rather than leaning against the back. Allow your hands to rest easily on your knees or your lap. Let your eyes close gently or, if you prefer, leave them open with a soft, receptive gaze. While in this and future practices, we will refer to sitting. If for some reason you're unable to sit, it's fine to stand, arms relaxed by your side, or to lie down, arms and legs uncrossed, though you want to make sure you stay awake.

As you settle into stillness, sense that you're pausing, arriving in presence. With a gentle attention, notice the state of your body right now.

Take a full, deep breath and release it slowly – slowly enough that you can feel the sensations of the exhale as your breath moves through your chest, your throat, and your nostrils. Now, allow your breath to resume its natural rhythm and sense that you can relax. Feel the pull of gravity and how the earth is supporting you. Notice in this simple presence, without judgment, the state of your body just now, warm, cool, ease, or tension.

Notice, too, the state of your heart and mind just as it is – racing or quiet, joyful, or sad. Hold it all with a kind attention. Continue to simply be aware that you are here, feeling the settled sensations of being present in this moment. Notice that you can become present in the midst of whatever’s going on for you, whether it’s pleasant or whether there’s pain, or worry, or tension. Mindfulness notices and relaxes around it all with a spacious and kind presence. Notice whatever is present just now and take a minute to relax with it all.

Feel the benefit of simply coming into the present and know that you can return to this again and again. A sounding of the bell will close this first mindfulness practice. Let your intention be to carry this simple presence with you as you enter your next activity. At the conclusion of each session, we’ll recommend a practical exercise that you can integrate at any point in your workday to deepen your mindfulness and grow with it.

Today’s Mindfulness Homework

With mindfulness, you can take a moment to pause after you write an email before you hit send, or pause before a difficult conversation, or take a pause even when you get in your car before you start to go to work. Right in the midst of your ordinary activities and your workday, you can pause for a moment or two and simply be present. Notice what it feels like to do this.

Tara: Thanks for listening to the first session of *Mindfulness Daily at Work*. Our goal is to support you in developing a practice that brings you clarity, ease, and open heartedness. Please join us on this 40-day journey. Cultivating mindfulness and compassion not only enriches our own lives. It’s part of the healing of our world. Let’s explore this and practice together.

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