

Here are 7 things people who practice mindfulness do differently:

Practice Being Curious

“Because you are alive everything is possible.”

One of the essential attitudes of mindfulness is beginner's mind. This is engaging something as if for the very first time. Novelty is one of the fastest routes to creating new neural connections. Even a meal or snack becomes a chance to pause and reflection how this simple piece of food holds everything in it, the earth, wind, rain sunshine.

“Life is routine and routine is resistance to wonder.” Curiosity leads the mindful person to get back in touch with the wonders and possibilities of life.

Forgive Themselves

Life comes with its obstacles and engaging a mindful life is not too different. Throughout the process there are times when we get too tired to practice, feel too busy, find ourselves doubting the process, get caught in avoiding what's uncomfortable or just feeling too restless. In practicing mindfulness we come to understand that these are not signs of failing at being mindful. Instead they are opportunities for learning about the hindrances of life, what gets in our way, and understanding two things: 1) What we need in those moments and 2) The fastest route to begin again.

The simple phrase of “forgive and invite” can be enormously helpful. When we get caught in an obstacle, we “forgive” ourselves for the time gone by, investigate the obstacle to learn from it, and then “invite” ourselves to begin again.

Practicing “forgive and invite” over and over again in life becomes an incredible strong vehicle for growth

Hold Their Emotions Lightly

When you start paying attention to any emotion you start to experience that it is an energy that is “in motion.” It has a certain nature of coming and going and in experiencing this we can naturally hold them more lightly. This enables us to not get so wrapped up in the difficult feelings, but instead hold them with a gentleness and tenderness. Maybe even learning from them as we get better and better at understanding what we need.

When the comfortable emotions are present we also hold those lightly as we know that are not permanent either, but have this same nature of coming and going. With this experience, people who practice mindfulness can be grateful for the good moments and graceful during the more difficult ones.

Practice Compassion

Compassion can be defined as noticing suffering with an inclination to want to help in some way. A repeated practice of intentionally paying attention to ourselves with a curious and caring attention sends the implicit message to our brain that we're worth caring about. As we start to pay attention to difficult emotions we become less afraid of them.

Instead they become our teachers guiding us to get increasingly better at not only understanding what our needs are or the needs of others, but at inclining to help ourselves or another. This act of self-compassion or compassion is the essential healing agent and facilitates connection which is a cornerstone to happiness.

Make Peace with Imperfection

Many of us are keenly aware of our imperfections and this erupts in a barrage of continuous self-judgment. As we start to practice being present we can't help but see that we are not the only one who is imperfect. To be imperfect is to be human.

The imperfections that arise become less of a struggle and instead a source of recognizing the common humanity of all people. As Zen priest Dogen Zenji said, "To be in harmony with the wholeness of things is to not have anxiety over our imperfections." Easier said than done, but mindfulness leans us in that direction.

Embrace Vulnerability

Our brain's default is to guard against vulnerability with ourselves and with others. However, someone who practices mindfulness comes to understand that vulnerability is where the gold is. From embracing vulnerability we develop courage, trust and connection. It takes courage to take the leap and be vulnerable, as we do this we begin to trust ourselves and others and in doing this we cultivate connection which allows us to feel safe and be happy. Of course this doesn't mean we are vulnerable everywhere and at all times, we can be discerning about this, but slowly we begin to trust ourselves more and more.

Understand that All Things Come and Go

If there is one singular law in life it is that nothing is permanent (except that law of course). When we close our eyes and listen we hear how sounds appear and disappear. When we open our eyes we see how over time the seasons change how nature looks. Food comes in our mouths, the taste is there and then it's gone. We're born on this earth, we grow up and eventually pass away.

As we practice mindfulness, we come to understand this and in this way, life becomes increasingly precious. We begin to put our phones down more often and open our eyes to the sacred moments all around us. As I continue to hear over and over again from any parent, "It all goes by so fast." May we learn to savor this precious life.

Many people ask the question, "How do you start?"

The 15th century poet Kabir said, "Wherever you are that's the entry point."

Winnie The Pooh said:

"What day is it? Asked Pooh "It's today" squeaked Piglet

"My favorite day" said Pooh

