

'This little gem of a book gives you a wealth of simple strategies to easily bring mindfulness into everyday life.'

RUSS HARRIS, AUTHOR, *THE HAPPINESS TRAP*

Second Edition

mindfulness

for
busy people



turning
FRANTIC AND FRAZZLED
into
calm and composed

Michael Sinclair, Josie Seydel
and Emily Shaw

Praise for *Mindfulness for Busy People*

‘Mindfulness can be elusive ... The “I’m too busy” thoughts show up and get in the way. The trick is to bring brief respites of mindfulness into a multitude of simple tasks we do each day. In this second edition of their wonderful book the authors have added, updated and upgraded ideas for bringing the power of mindfulness into our busy worlds. Get it and reap the benefits of simple mindfulness.’

Kevin Polk, PhD, Psychologist and ProSocial Matrix Trainer

‘The great thing is, we can all be a lot more mindful, even if we’re way too busy to meditate. This little gem of a book gives you a wealth of simple strategies to easily bring mindfulness into everyday life, thereby making it a lot more satisfying and lot less stressful.’

Russ Harris, author, *The Happiness Trap*

‘Mindfulness has probably become more popular in concept than in practice these days. So many of us could benefit from training our attention and our self-compassion, if we could just find practical ways to integrate mindfulness into our daily lives and busy schedules. These authors provide the practical tools that you need to actually put mindfulness into practice, and to benefit from transforming your mind, without having to pack up to live in the mountains. This book is fun, usable, and helpful.’

Dennis Tirch, author, *The Compassionate Mind Guide to Overcoming Anxiety*

‘Accessible, actionable, insightful and user-friendly. This book will help even the busiest of people find more contentment, joy, calm and connection especially on the busiest of days.’

Aisling Leonard-Curtin, Chartered Psychologist; Co-director, ACT Now Purposeful Living; author, *The Power of Small*

‘Fun, engaging and practical – this book is elegantly written by experts to help you learn the skills of mindfulness – and to apply them to this busy, stressful, modern world we live in’

Joe Oliver, Director of Contextual Consulting; co-author, *ACTivate Your Life*

Mindfulness top tips to-go

In this chapter, you have learned how it is helpful to:

- ▶ Watch your tendency to try to secure everlasting happiness and a blissfully stress-free time (it will only make you busier and more stressed).
- ▶ Notice how many of your attempts at being less busy can dampen down your rich life experience.
- ▶ Let go of worrying that there is no time for you, as this will only create the illusion of there being less time.
- ▶ Switch up old habits to find even more time in the day.
- ▶ Watch your habitual tendency to over-identify, struggle and get caught up in judgement, with your experiences of stress (in the form of thoughts, feeling, sensations and behaviours).
- ▶ Try not to buy into unhelpful thoughts (we are going to look more closely at how you can do this in Chapter 6) as they will affect your mood, self-confidence and general stress experience negatively.
- ▶ SLOW down to manage stress and help you reconnect with what is really important.

CHAPTER

To be or not to be busy?

MINDFULNESS FOR BUSY PEOPLE

Most of us busy people spend a lot of time frantically rushing around on autopilot, unaware of the varied habits that we have that are the real cause of our stress and busyness. As we have seen, these habits come in many forms – we have our:

- ▶ **busy story** that our minds produce and we tell and repeat to ourselves tirelessly and to anyone else that can bear to listen (I have too much to do, there is no way that I can get all this done in time, it is not fair, my life is overwhelming)!

And we have our:

- ▶ **superhero fantasies** that we buy into and live by.

These include our:

- ▶ **perfectionist pursuits, busy behaviours** that are motivated by fear and we use (not so wisely) in an attempt to eradicate all discomfort and bring about everlasting peace and quiet!

We can remain unaware of all that we do that creates our sense of busyness in life. If we want to feel less busy and stressed, then we need to start to wake up to these habitual ways of being. The more we rush around, the more we become increasingly frantic and, as in Sayed's case that follows, this lack of awareness just leads to more agitation and a growing sense of helplessness and hopelessness.

Sayed

Sayed was at his wits' end and run ragged when he came for mindfulness sessions. He explained that he wanted the therapy to take away all his problems. Recently retired, he had planned renovation work on his home and the builders were being unreliable, which he felt really aggrieved about and was taking up much of his time to resolve. Further to this, he was often taking care of his grandchildren, which he felt his son was not appreciative of. His wife was still working, so he found he was often doing many of the household chores.

He spent 40 minutes of his first 50-minute session ranting about how busy he was, how unfair the situation was, how he didn't expect his retirement to be like this, how he was feeling let down, how there just wasn't enough time in the day, how exhausted he was, how his wife didn't understand his stress and how they argued a lot of the time as she thought that he was always complaining– and so on and on! When he wasn't fixated about all this in the session, he was either checking

messages on his mobile telephone placed next to him on the couch or answering calls. Here's how some of the therapy conversation went towards the end of this first session:

Psychologist: Well, Sayed, it seems that our time is now up considering that you wanted to end the session earlier than we had scheduled?

Sayed: What? Is that it then? You haven't even said anything, I've been doing all the talking and I don't feel any better for it at all.

Psychologist: Yes, and when you *think* those thoughts, how do you feel right now?

Sayed: Well, even more stressed and like I have wasted my time and still have all this to sort out.

Psychologist: Well this was indeed your time and I can hear that your mind is telling you that you've wasted this precious time and still have so much to do. Although I am sure it seems important for you to focus on those thoughts and to talk about how awful everything is for you right now; and that it seems crucial to you to check and answer your telephone as often as you do, I wonder if you weren't *thinking* those thoughts and doing all that then you might feel slightly differently right now. I wonder if all that stuff was not in the way, then you may have had a different experience coming here today.

We have already seen that, when we feel blocked on our way and our stress level rises, simply noticing the process of ranting in our mind is a great way to come back to the present moment where there is no stress – just this one breath, just this one moment, just this ranting. If you are stuck in a queue somewhere or waiting for a delayed train and getting stressed and angry, simply notice that reaction. You then have a choice to keep the frustration alive or do something else more productive and worthwhile with that time (sounds like a great opportunity to practise some mindfulness to us). Remember, mindfulness helps to improve our decision making; it allows us to use our time effectively, as we base our life choices and actions on the clarity that comes from awareness and considering what might be most helpful to do right now, rather than allowing habitual reactions (such as ranting) to drive our actions.

Next time you wake up to your mind's ranting about being held back and delayed, how about getting mindful of your phone, tablet or whatever device you have at hand. We know you would probably have one of these in some form or another handy – what the hell would we do without our trusty gadgets to take us away from our boredom and frustrations? The

common reality is that often we become more frustrated once we have pulled them out from our pocket and been bombarded with the endless messages and emails we feel compelled to respond to – *immediately!* So, how about doing something completely different with your mobile phone?

The purpose of the next exercise is to get acquainted with your mobile phone, like you may never have before, a bit like a young child would curiously admire a present that she has just received for her birthday. It is all about reinforcing the ability that you have within yourself to break habits and act in accordance with how you wish to behave (mindfully), rather than be dictated to by some other fearful or uncomfortable part of yourself (that usually may motivate you to constantly check your messages as soon as your phone is in sight or you are bored and frustrated being delayed somewhere).

The intention of the exercise is to cultivate a non-judging awareness of your experience of your phone, nothing more and nothing less; to pay attention to your mobile phone and to your experience of your touch and sight of it.



Practice 5.1: I haven't got time for this!



Getting acquainted with your mobile phone

- ▶ First sit, with your mobile phone on a table or other surface in front of you or become aware of it in your pocket.
- ▶ Reach out and lift your phone up in your hand, notice its weight and acknowledge how your hand and body is now one phone heavier.
- ▶ Next, while you hold your phone in your hand, gently move it around, flipping it over in the palm of your hand, using your fingers, thumb and hand, notice how its weight becomes lighter and heavier on different parts of your fingers and hands.
- ▶ There is the weight of the phone and then there is you, noticing its weight.
- ▶ Allow its weight to take centre stage in your awareness.
- ▶ Now, hold your phone still once again, allow it to rest in the palm of your hand and now run your thumb over its surface in all directions, notice the texture, the smoothness versus the bumps and indentations.