

Lesson 3

Mindful movement

Introduction

If you're struggling to bring your attention to the present, mindful movement can be a more active way of helping you achieve that Zen like state.

Don't get me wrong, mindful movement can be hard work, but Zen Buddy is here to guide you.

Fancy the challenge?

In this lesson, you'll learn the benefits of mindful movement. You'll be invited to join me on a mindful walk in our video.

Science

A study found that the combination of being active as well as being mindful reduced negative emotions in university students. Because they also moved in and out of mindfulness throughout their day, it suggests ways of managing and improving our emotional reactions. Experts call this, emotional regulation.

Another study on mindful walking, but this time with older adults, found a decrease in stress, anxiety, and depression.

Bringing awareness to your day through mindful walking is an informal way of practising mindfulness meditation. Keeping safe by sustaining awareness of your moment to moment experience as it occurs can limit distractions about future thoughts or past regrets. It therefore interrupts your auto pilot.

Value

With practice, mindful movement will empower you to be more aware of and accepting of your current state.

Bringing more awareness to your day will help reduce any stress, anxiety or low mood.

Combining physical activity with mindfulness will help reduce any negative emotions and help you react to emotional experiences in a more manageable way.

Exercise 'Practice with me: A mindful walk'

This exercise will take 8 minutes to complete, but if we want to continue after it ends, we can do.

The aim of our mindful walk is to 'Stop and smell the roses.' In short, this means, bringing awareness to our bodies as we walk, our surroundings, and all our sensory sensations.

We'll start our walk somewhere quiet, safe, and not crowded. We can walk in a large room, hallway, park, or street. For me, my favourite place to do a mindful walk is in the countryside.

So, we'll allow our arms to dangle by our sides, or clasp them in front of our bellies or behind our backs.

We'll start to walk, being aware of our feet lifting up from the ground, then making contact again with the ground beneath them.

Noticing how our legs move as we walk, the rise and fall of each leg as we pull up our knees and feet and lower them down again...

Now paying attention to our surroundings. What we can hear. Not labelling or judging sounds to be pleasant or unpleasant, just noticing them. If any thoughts come into our minds or any other sensations, gently bringing our awareness back to what we can hear.

Next, focusing on smells. Again, not labelling. If there's nothing we can particularly smell, we'll not try to smell something on purpose. Focusing, accepting, being aware.

And onto what we can see. Taking in our environment, but this time, through our eyes.

Now returning our attention to the movement in our feet and legs as we walk.

We'll choose with intention when to stop.

Wrap

It can be difficult to imagine how such a simple thing like mindful movement can bring about such healthy emotional gains, but it does!

Pairing gentle physical activity with mindfulness is so easy yet so effective that it begs the question, why wouldn't you?

A healthier life awaits you and is just round the corner if you're willing to grab your walking boots. Thousands of people are already practicing it, so how about you join them?

CTA

Have a go at a mindful walk every day over the next week. Notice any improvements in your focus and wellbeing.

Our last lesson looks at the body scan and its ability to anchor you to the present.