

Seven easy mindfulness activities you may surprisingly enjoy

With the coronavirus epidemic we're currently facing, taking care of your emotional wellbeing has become more important than ever.

After 8 weeks of mindfulness, MRI scans show positive changes in the brain areas that affect^{1 2}:



Mindfulness isn't for me...



...or is it?

Mindfulness activities involve no more than being fully present and engaged in the moment and being aware of our thoughts and feelings without judging them or getting too caught up in them.

There's an enjoyable mindfulness activity for everyone.

1 Mindfulness apps

Many apps have **surprisingly down-to-earth scripts** which direct you to:

- Focus on your breathing
- Notice body sensations
- Accept your mind will wander
- Acknowledge your thoughts without judgement

Quick 3, 5 and 7 mins options can be squeezed into any work break.

You can select sessions for specific needs e.g. reducing anxiety or depression or improving focus and sleep.



2 Cooking

Notice the **smell and texture** of the raw ingredients.

Focus on the **precision** of repetitive tasks, such as chopping and stirring.

Recognise the **taste and smells** of different foods as they cook.

Involve the **family** and reconnect.



3 Dancing

It's simply **dancing like nobody's watching!**

Notice what's your **mood**?

What song have you **lost yourself to in the past** with that mood?

Dance how you want to, instead of what looks good. **Feel the rhythm!**

Notice how the **sounds and lyrics** (if any) make you feel.



4 Gardening

Feel the texture of the soil, the roughness of weeds or the softness of flowers.

Take in the **smells** of freshly cut grass and nectar.

Look at the changing colours, textures and patterns of plants and flowers.

Listen to the sounds of birds, lawnmowers and watering.

5 Yoga

There are plenty of **apps and online videos** to choose from for all ability levels, focus and goals.

- Energetic/relaxing
- Knee/back problems
- Strength/flexibility/balance
- Child friendly

Pay attention to your body. What feels good and what doesn't? Is your breathing becoming shallow?

Notice your body's impact as it meets the mat. Is it light or heavy?

Acknowledge how different moves make you feel. Are you frustrated, proud, determined or relaxed?



6 ANY exercise

Be clear about what you want to focus on before you begin.

Notice sensations such as the wind or sun on your body.

Concentrate on your muscles. How do they feel as you contract them? Can you feel lactic acid release?

How do you feel after? Are you invigorated and alive or relaxed?



7 Be grateful

Write down what you're thankful for. You don't need a journal - scraps of paper placed in a box will do.

Prompts are a great way to start. You can find lots of inspiration online to help, such as:

- What made you laugh today?
- What do you love most about a family member?
- What did you enjoy most today?
- This week I plan to live by these three values...
- By bedtime I want to feel proud of...



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Sources

1. <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2018/04/harvard-researchers-study-how-mindfulness-may-change-the-brain-in-depressed-patients/>

2. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305391293_8-week_Mindfulness_Based_Stress_Reduction_induces_brain_changes_similar_to_traditional_long-term_meditation_practice_-_A_systematic_review

3. A meta-analysis of 47 studies found meditation equally effective to medication for treating depression, anxiety, and pain, without medication's negative side effects: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4142584/>