



Seven Attitudes of Mindfulness

Contributed by Engagement RX

According to Jon Kabat-Zinn, Director of the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, seven attitudes are necessary for the foundation of mindfulness being. Here are some paraphrases from his book Full Catastrophe Living (pp 33-40)[1]:

1. Non-Judging:

Become aware of the constant stream of judging and reacting to inner and outer experiences that we are normally caught up in – observe it, and step back from it. Just observe how much you are preoccupied with liking and disliking; be an impartial witness.

2. Patience:

Accept the fact that sometimes things must unfold in their own time. We need to intentionally remind ourselves to not be impatient with ourselves because we are tense or agitated or frightened, as that can cause more tenseness.

3. Beginner's Mind:

Look at things as if it is the first time seeing them. Allow yourself to be receptive to new possibilities in order to prevent us from getting stuck in the rut of our own expertise. No moment is the same as any other – each one contains unique possibilities.

4. Trust:

Develop trust in yourself and your feelings as an integral part of meditation training. It may be better to trust in your intuition and your own authority, even if you make some mistakes, than constantly looking outside yourself for guidance.

5. Non-Striving:

Meditation's only goal is for you to be yourself. If you think, "I am going to get relaxed, control my pain, or become a better person," you have introduced an idea in your mind of where you should be, and that you are not OK right now. This attitude involves simply paying attention to whatever is happening.

6. Acceptance:

We often waste a lot of energy denying and resisting what is already a fact. When we do that, we are trying to force situations to be the way we would like them to be, which only makes for more tension – and that may actually prevent positive change from occurring!

7. Letting Go:

Letting go is a way of letting things be, without grasping and pushing away. If you have difficulty picturing what letting go feels like, picture holding on.

Strategies to Practice Mindfulness

You can use your mind to manage stress, anxiety and even your ailments.

Whether you are in physical pain or are experiencing tension, worry or anxiety, mindfulness may benefit you. Being mindful is a state of being in the moment.

Here you challenge yourself to not remember things of the past or think about what may (or may not!) happen in the future. Below are ways to practice mindfulness.

1. Positive Talking

Say positive affirmations aloud. How positive (or how negative) you outwardly speak allows insight into what you must be saying internally to yourself. Even if you don't feel positive in the moment, consciously choose to say something positive.

2. Positive Thinking

Learn how to monitor and challenge a negative internal dialogue. For example, if you find yourself waking up in pain and saying, "I'm going to be miserable all day; I won't get anything done," tell yourself instead, "I've got some pain this morning, so I'll start with some relaxation and stretching exercises. Then I'll do some of the less demanding things I want to get done today."

3. Relaxation

Mindful journaling – when done on purpose – helps to focus on the moment by writing down your thoughts, feelings, and possible action plans. You can pick up a premade journal with prompts for staying in the present. You may visit your local bookstore or check out some online.

4. Imagery

Thoughts, words, and images that flow from your imagination have a very real effect on your body. Oftentimes your brain cannot distinguish between whether you're just thinking about something or if it is really happening. Try to close your eyes and vividly imagine yourself by a still, quiet pool or relaxing on a warm beach or even taking a walk on a nature trail with all of its sights, sounds, and smells. Your body may respond to some degree as though you were actually there. Where would you like to be at this moment? Now, make it happen!

5. Visualization

Vision boards are a great way to visually display things we want to focus on and remember, or ideas, plans and dreams we hope will come true. Dedicate an area at home, work, or other personal space where you can include pictures cut out from magazines, newspapers, or printed from online sources to create a visualization of an intended story. What does your joy look like? Which dream do you want to follow next?

6. Planned "Worry Time"

If we ignore worrisome negative thoughts, they have a way of thrusting themselves back into our consciousness. Schedule a "Worry Time" – set aside 10 to 30 minutes that you may devote to exploring what is the problem. Also ask yourself the following: How likely will this problem occur? What's the worst/best thing that could happen? How would I cope with this problem? What are some possible solutions? What course of action may I take, starting today?

[1] Kabat-Zinn, J., & Hanh, T. N. (2009). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. Delta.