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Mindful Living

How to change your life in 21 days

Welcome back to our series on becoming more mindful! In case you are new to the idea of mindfulness, it simply means paying attention and being aware of what is going on in the present moment, such as feeling your body and noticing your thoughts. Theoretically, it takes 21 days to form a habit. The purpose of this program is to make living mindfully an automatic part of your life.

Why, really, should you care about mindful living?

If you are stuck in your head, stuck in the events of yesterday, or the "what might happen" of tomorrow, then you are not living in the present. All we really have is the present moment. The past is over, gone, done with, and the future, well, there are no guarantees in life. If we are not in the present we are missing it. Our lifetime is made up of millions upon millions of moments. Each moment wasted is life wasted.

From an energy standpoint, we are all connected. Being mindful can raise your good energy, and good things happen to those with good energy. Plus, the more people walking around the planet with good energy, the more people to positively impact others. A magical ripple effect! Good for you, good for the entire planet!

How to start

For the next 21 days, you will try focusing on one of these three areas of mindful living for seven days at a time. This is a simplified introduction to making mindfulness a habitual way of life.

What to do

1. Doing less is more. Multitasking is the antithesis of mindfulness. We cannot possibly think about two things at once. Our minds jump back and forth so rapidly that we think we're doing two things at once, but we are actually focusing and performing at only a fraction of our potential. Bottom line: Multitasking = stress to our mind, body and well-being, raises anxiety levels, and decreases our efficiency in the long run.

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Task: Complete only one thing at a time. Only cooking, folding laundry, talking on the phone, answering emails, etc. Notice the sensations in your body while you are doing certain tasks. Do certain tasks seem to drain rather than energize? Does multitasking seem to take energy away from you? Are you more efficient completing one task at a time? Again, just notice any changes you may experience, thus being mindful.

2. Be cognizant of what you are doing. This is similar to our lesson on mindful eating—such as only take only one bite of food at a time, and not until you're done with the first bite. For example, do you ever find yourself rehearsing an answer before the other person even finishes saying what they're saying? Are you even listening? Just like with your food, stop and digest

what you just heard before jumping in and responding. If we are constantly in our heads, rehearsing what to say or do next, onto the next thing, jumping to the future, often we are jumping to conclusions, too. We are missing out on a lot right here in front of us—in the present!

Task: When you are having a conversation with someone, focus on what they are saying right up until there comes a pause or a silence, and then offer your response. This is giving your mind a fair shot at saying what you really mean, and eliminating most "foot in the mouth" embarrassing blunders.

3. Notice when you are eating and why you are eating. Hunger? Boredom? Anxiety? Anger? Companionship?

Task: All that's required here is that you hit the PAUSE button, and take a quick Q&A with yourself. If you answered with anything but hunger, then it may be necessary to hit re-start. If we notice why we do what we do, why we say what we say, and why we think what we think, we become more aware of who we really are. Doing so helps us better fulfill our lives and fill our days with what we really need and want, bringing us a life filled with joy, health and more ease.

Laura Madden is a holistic lifestyle coach, personal trainer, certified yoga instructor, writer and model. For more information about being mindful and living a balanced life, visit www.laura-madden.com.

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