

Have you ever arrived at a destination without being able to think back about the path you took to get there, or what you encountered along the way? Many of us get caught up in the hustle and bustle of daily life, and thus, are mindless to what's going on around us. Often, what we miss are elements that can bring joy, satisfaction, and peace to our lives.

This exercise is about retaining a state of awareness as we move about. It is meant to help us use our senses to keep our minds from running on auto-pilot, and, instead, centered on present moments as we experience them. It can be done anytime, anywhere, as long as the senses can be harnessed.

Start by grounding yourself, bringing your full attention to where you are and what you are experiencing right now. Acknowledge what you see, or don't see, before you; what you hear, or cannot hear, in the space surrounding you. Recognize any smells in the air, the taste on your lips, the sensation of your body inside your clothes, or the movement of air across your skin.

As you move, let curiosity be your guide. Scan your environment with openness, fully taking in what you encounter through your senses. Feel your body's weight shifting—the rhythm of your forward motion. Explore the feeling of increasing and decreasing your pace. If walking, take several steps focusing completely on your feet or legs.

When you become distracted, and you will become distracted, accept it and refocus on your movement.

Notice your environment as you move. Is there a breeze or clouds in the sky? Birds chirping? Is there dew on the grass or a fragrance in the air? Stop and "smell those roses." Allow yourself the time for a closer examination, to investigate what you've often overlooked. Acknowledge anything pleasurable, or even unsatisfying, about what you are now being more mindful of.

When driving, riding a bike, or on public transportation, try connecting with your surroundings in front of, under, and around you. Look to experience sensations only accessible with more focus. Notice your body posture. Feel the texture of the seat or floor. What are your senses telling you? Do vibrations or rhythms change as the surfaces you travel over shift? What can be found in the people around you or those you pass? Are they being mindful or running on auto pilot?

However, or wherever, you move you can always pay attention to your breathing as a way to center yourself. You might notice your chest going in and out. Or shoulders gently rising and falling. It's easy to get sidetracked. Our brains are thinking machines and the world is full of stimulation. Becoming more mindful is like any other exercise; it takes intention and practice.

During your next walk, or commute across town, try using your senses to attune more closely to what is happening around you, in that moment. You might find it frustrating at first, but may eventually benefit from what you've often been missing.