

Off the Mat: Living Yoga in Daily Life

Week Two: Mindfulness Practices in Daily Life

Practice one of these daily. You can do the same one each day, or something different.

1. Cook a mindful meal. As you prepare the food, have gratitude for all the people who worked to bring it to your table. Infuse the meal with the intention that it provides nourishment and energy to those who eat it.
2. Go on a quiet walk by yourself. Pay attention to the colors you see, how the air feels on your skin, the feeling of your breath. If you are walking past houses, you can mentally send healing energy, prayers, or loving-kindness to the people in their homes.
3. Practice mindful eating. Set the table nicely with a candle and a cloth napkin. Sit comfortably and upright. Eat slowly, paying attention to how each bit of food tastes. Notice when you have eaten “just enough,” and stop eating when you have.
4. Really listen to a loved one speaking, without attending to another task, or waiting for your turn to talk. Use the Chinese character for listening as your model: at the top are the signs for ear and eye; the sign for undivided attention sits in the middle; and it’s all held at the bottom by the symbol for heart.
5. Simply create more quiet space in your daily routines. Turn off the TV, or the radio, or your Podcasts occasionally. For example, if you normally listen to media on your commute, try driving or biking in quiet one morning per week. If you always listen to NPR while you prepare dinner, turn it off for 15 minutes.
6. Rest! This is not the same as sleeping, or turning off the mind by watching TV. Take time before bed to deeply relax. Get very comfortable in a chair, couch or in a Restorative yoga pose (not in your bed). Slow down your breathing. You could listen to a guided relaxation, soothing sounds, or just your peaceful breathing.
7. Practice savoring something pleasurable! A glass of good wine, a hot bath, a massage, music you love, an art exhibit, a cashmere sweater, gourmet food - anything special to you. Take time to notice how it looks, feels, tastes, smells and how it makes you feel.
8. Choose a household chore that you don’t especially enjoy, such as folding laundry, washing dishes, or sweeping the floors. Next time you do it, bring your full attention to it. Appreciate how this simple task is part of maintaining a clean and healthy home, a necessary foundation for the rest of your endeavors.
9. Spend a weekend decluttering your home so that it is easier to keep tidy, and the things you own are useful and beautiful to you. For more on this, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up* by Marie Kondo.
10. Be a little less busy. Make fewer commitments. Protect some unscheduled time each week. If possible, keep one whole day uncommitted. If not possible, try for a half-day, or even just a few hours.