

Mindfulness

Cultivating Presence, Awareness & Connection



With Nicole Lee

What is Mindfulness?



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The ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment - through a friendly and non-judgemental lens.

There are many different tools and methods that can help us to be more mindful... some consist of simple present moment awareness activities that you can incorporate into your daily life and others are more formal meditative practices. Often people associate the word mindfulness with meditation but they are not mutually exclusive and there are many ways to practice the essence of mindfulness.

Mindfulness can be practice within your moment-to-moment activities as well as through deliberate practice. We practice mindfulness through deliberate practice for the same reason that we'd practice anything that we want to become better at. Deliberate practice can involve stillness and movement, sound, taste, touch and our awareness of these senses. Meditation and mindfulness is not limited to seated stillness practices.

Understanding mindfulness as meditation...

Just sitting

Begin by sitting in a chair or on a cushion. Contrary to popular imagery you don't need to be cross-legged, or be holding your hands in any particular way however do sit comfortably, in a fairly upright position.

Take a few deeper breaths, using your diaphragm and breathing towards your belly. Allow the breath to release through your mouth, with a small sigh. Do this several times.



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For this activity you're just sitting, I'd recommend 5 minutes, you might like to use a timer. While sitting see if you can simply notice yourself, notice everything that's happening around you, how you're feeling, what thoughts come into your mind, sounds, sensations, all of it. You don't need to do anything else, just sitting and observing for 5 minutes. Afterwards you might want to write down some of your observations, what was present for you? Was your mind busy - jumping from thought to thought? Was it difficult to focus? Did it feel easy or challenging? There's no right answers or right experience - everything is valid!

Aspects of the mind

There are dual aspects to our mind, these are Active and Passive in nature.

1. Active - this is the thinking mind. In this aspect we're naming, there could be a commentary, words or pictures. It's an aspect characterised by doing, it might feel like the presence of an *inner flatmate* or *monkey mind*.

2. Passive - this is awareness. In this aspect we're still, silent, observing. It's often the space in between the thinking, it's a feeling of being and simple presence.

Modes of Being

The aspects of the mind described above are often directly related to our modes of being. We are typically moving on a spectrum between the modes of Protection and Growth. The activation of either the sympathetic or parasympathetic nervous system.

Protection Mode: perceived threat/challenge/task

- Low grade chronic stress
- Fight/flight reaction
- Sympathetic nervous system
- More blood to limbs and hindbrain
- Increased muscular tensions
- Increased cortisol and noradrenalin
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Decreased digestive enzymes
- Suppressed immune system
- Decreased digestion/absorption/waste elimination
- Excessive thinking, problem saturation
- Judgement/over-reaction
- Defensiveness/reactivity

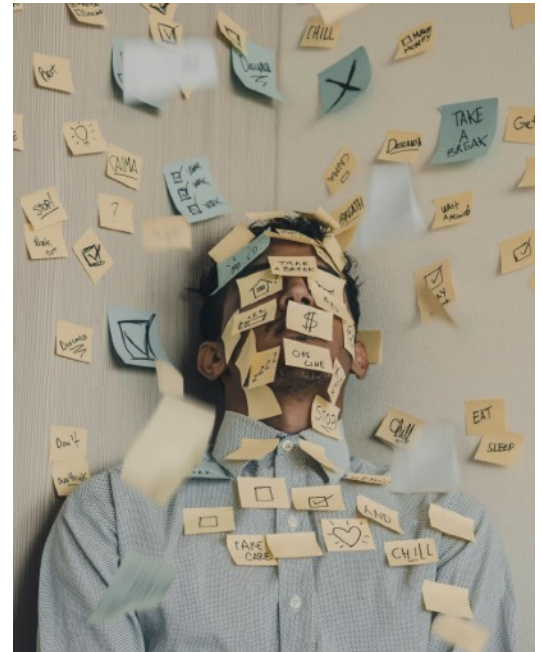


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Growth Mode: perceived safety/rest

- Relaxation response
- Parasympathetic nervous system
- More blood to digestive system & organs
- Decreased muscular tension
- Decreased heart rate
- Increased serotonin and melatonin production
- Increased diaphragmatic breathing
- Improved immune function
- Increased tissue/cell repair/healing
- Increased digestion/absorption
- Increased alkalinity and oxygenation
- Sense of empathy/compassion
- Sense of openness and curiosity
- Improved attention and memory



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Mindfulness practice...

The felt sense

Hold your right hand up and begin by looking at the back of it. What do you see? You might notice the skin colour, the veins, and whether there are any wrinkles or scars.

Now turn it over and look at your palm. You might notice its shape or the length of your fingers. Alternate between looking at the front and the back of your hand. You might observe the length of the various finger bones in relation to each other or the size of your knuckles. You might notice the pattern that the lines make in the palm of the hand. Just witness these things.



Photo by Claire Brear on Unsplash

That's a kind of mindfulness, right? However, because you are a removed observer, it is not the same as the felt experience. You are not directly experiencing the essence of "hand."

Now rest your hand for a moment. Do the next part of the activity with your eyes closed so read ahead a little here.

Raise your hand again, start to move your hand in space. Let the wrist move with the hand. You might curl the fingers in toward your palm, then extend them out a little. With your attention, "feel" the thumb, the forefinger, the middle finger, the ring finger, the little finger, the palm, and the back of the hand. Lower your hand and open your eyes.

This activity gives us some contrast between being the active observer and being in awareness of the experience of observing. The awareness of observing is the felt sense; it's non conceptual and lies within the experience itself.

Contemplate for a moment how this relates to the aspects of the mind and the modes of being.

Meditation Methods

Styles of Meditation

There are three methods that are generally utilised in the formal practice of meditation, these are:

- Attention - mindfulness, presence, awareness - these can be both passive and active - stillness or movement based. Ultimately we are intending to embody a passive state of mind and being in each.
- Intention - affirmation, imagery, prayer - these methods are typically stillness based.
- Inquiry - contemplative. I.e: Who am I? Asking a question.

Approach - Direct & Gradual

- Direct - no method - let go and be still
- Gradual - preparation, relaxation, mindfulness, stillness

Mindfulness practice...

Mindfulness of Body

We'll now practice a Mindfulness Meditation that is focused on body awareness. You'll be able to find many examples of this type of meditation online or in the multitude of apps available, sometimes they're referred to as body scans.

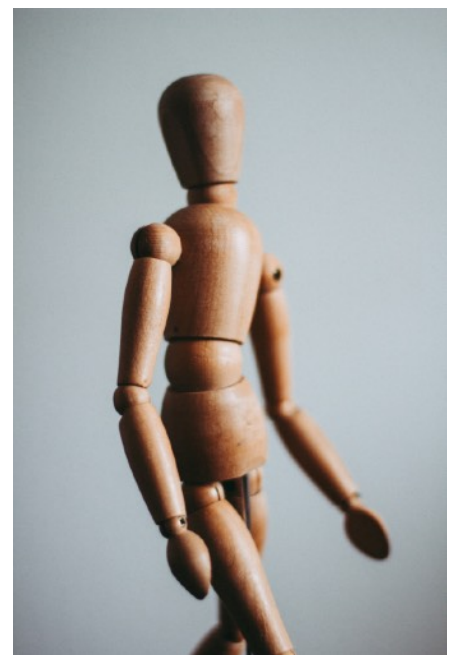


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Mindful Suggestions

- ◆ Moving meditation - Qigong / Tai Chi
- ◆ Stillness meditation
 - Mindfulness of Body
 - Mindfulness of Breath
 - Choice-less awareness
- ◆ Mindful eating / scent
- ◆ Sound meditation
- ◆ Felt experience/activities

Questions / Notes

About me...

Nicole Lee

I am internationally certified in Qigong, trained in both Modern and Classical styles, I'm also trained in meditation and mindfulness and hold a Bachelors Degree in Complementary Medicine. I have taught hundreds of classes and delivered many workshops, teacher training programs and corporate events.

I have worked 1:1 with people to help them with various lifestyle related challenges such as anxiety, sleep disorders, recovery from serious illness and fatigue related dis-ease. I know that Qigong can enhance quality of life and help you to live a life filled with more inspiration, ease and joy.

I began my journey into healing, conscious living and Qigong in 2013 and have completed the following accreditations:

- Qigong Level 1 & 2 Certification - Lee Holden (Holden Qigong)
- Qigong Training - Wang Zhi Peng Tai Chi School China
- Qigong Teacher Training - Practitioner - Simon Blow Qigong
- Qigong Instructor - Tai Chi Fitness Australia
- Yi Jin Jing - Chinese Health Qigong Association
- Daoyin Yangshen Gong 12 - Chinese Health Qigong Association
- Wellness Coaching Level 1 & 2 - Wellness Coaching Australia
- Mindfulness-based Stillness Meditation - The Gawler Foundation
- Certificate III Fitness - Australian Fitness Academy
- Bachelor in Complementary Medicine - Endeavour College

I am a professional member of the Wushu Tai Chi Qigong (WTCQ) Australia, the Meditation Association of Australia and the International Institute of Complementary Therapists (IICT). I deliver my services in alignment ethical principles and the National Code of Conduct for Health Care Workers and I'm dedicated to purposeful work and ongoing personal and professional development.

We all need more spaciousness and clarity in our lives. Feeling aligned, inspired and joyful on a day to day basis is what I aspire to, I believe Qigong is an amazing tool that can help us to transform our energy and channel our personal power.

Much love + Qi

Nicole Lee ✨

