

So what is mindfulness? Three simple ways to think of a mindfulness practice. Choose an object, keep it in mind, and do that skillfully.

So what do we mean by an object?

An object is any sensation that you can become aware of. So for example a tangible physical sensation that you might feel right now at your foot.

Where your foot is touching the ground, you can feel that it's tangible. That sensation is an object that you are aware of.

You might also feel your knee bent.

You might feel where you're touching your chair.

You might feel your hand. Other sensations you could be aware of, along with tangible sensations, could be something that you hear, like a sound.

If somebody's talking and there's a sound in the room, you can hear that. That's also an object that you can be aware of. If your eyes are open and you're looking outside, you might see, you know, the landscape, the room, whatever is in front of you. That's also an object, something you can be aware of.

A classic object in mindfulness is the breath.

You can feel your breath coming in, going out. Wherever it's most prominent for you, choose an object and then try to keep that object in mind without losing track of it. Don't try so hard that it becomes stressful, but you have to try hard enough, especially at the beginning. You've got to make a bit of an effort so that you don't lose track of that object.

The way that might look, let's say I choose my breath.

I can feel my breath and I'm going to try and keep that feeling of my breath in mind, but I can also feel other things. Maybe my seat sitting on the chair. I can also be aware of that sound. Somebody's talking in the room or I can hear the hum of a machine. If my eyes are open, definitely I'm going to be aware of shapes, colors, and there might be other physical sensations, pokes, aches, pains, things like that I could be aware of, but I'm going to try and keep my attention here on my breath like that.

Now naturally what's going to happen is I'm going to forget about my breath and all of a sudden I'm going to be thinking about that painful sensation maybe that I have, that ache that's there, and all of that. Now the practice, that's okay, that's normal, but the practice is to become aware of that.

My attention is now somewhere else. I'm now in this painful feeling and I'm supposed to be over here in the breath and skillfully, gently, I'm going to bring my attention back to my breath.

Each thought moment with my chosen object, just like that, and again the attention will go somewhere else and again I bring it back.

So that's in a nutshell your mindfulness practice. Choose an object. For this to really work the key to success is to choose an object that you're happy with, that you enjoy attending to, that's kind of easy for you to be with. Avoid anything that's going to stress you out or make you anxious. For example, if focusing on your breath makes you anxious, then maybe focus on the feeling of your foot touching the ground or something that you're holding in your hand. It should be

something that's fairly calming for you and easy to do and I would keep it fairly brief at first, maybe 30 seconds, if you can do that, then one minute, two minutes, three minutes, on and on, and just see what you notice. What was your experience? And when your mind wanders and you notice that it's wandered and you notice that you're not with your primary object, do you think that's a sign of mindfulness or a sign of being unmindful? So these are the kind of questions you can ask yourself after your practice which will help you develop your practice. Thank you.