

REAL LIFE MINDFULNESS PRACTICE

(Anna DeLong, LCSW, Mindfulness Teacher, UVA Faculty and Employee Assistance Program)

Pausing to interrupt habitual patterns of thinking to train your brain: Have you ever been in the shower, but your mind is somewhere else and you can't remember whether you added conditioner? *If you've experienced this, you are in good company. The good news is your daily activities are wonderful opportunities to practice mindfulness. You can strengthen your ability to focus by practicing in these regular, real life moments. It's about having your mind and your brain and your body in the same place at the same time doing the same thing. Notice what you are doing in any given moment perhaps one sense at a time. Even if you try this for just a few minutes it can begin to make a difference. Below are examples of ways to practice 'Real Life Mindfulness'. I suggest you select one example, or make up one of your own, and begin your experiment with real life mindfulness.*



Pause for gratitude that you have food to eat. See it, smell it, feel it, hear it, taste it, notice how you chew and swallow.



smell your favorite shampoo

Hear the sound of the water
Feel the lather on your body
See a drop of water slide down
Pause for gratitude that you have warm running water



Pause for gratitude that you have hands that work that you can wash. Recall your most important intention as you wash your hands



Try brushing your teeth with your non-dominant hand. Feel the brush in your hand. Become aware of how the bristles feel inside your mouth. Taste the flavor of the tooth paste. Hear the sound of the running water.



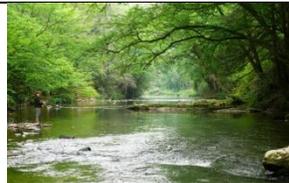
Listen as if "every cell in your body has ears", (G. Cox). Listen to bear witness to another's journey, without judgement. Listen with kindness and openness.



When you hug someone you love, pause to truly connect with this experience fully. Feel gratitude for them and this gift of your life together. Have your mind and your brain and all of your senses experience this hug. Everything else can wait for these few moment.



Pause for a moment of gratitude that you have the ability to walk. Walking anywhere is an opportunity to practice noticing the sensations of walking. Feeling your toes inside your socks inside your shoes. Noticing where your feet connect with something solid and how your balance shifts from foot to foot.



Pausing for time to notice anything in nature is rich with opportunity for practice. Can you notice the warmth of the sun on your skin, hear the sound of the wind in the leaves, or the birds, the smell of the flowers, or the spring mud, the feel of grass between your toes....etc.?



Practice unconditional kindness and gentleness in response to your own experience, whatever it is. For example, can you see yourself through the eyes of someone who truly loves and appreciates you? (Or can you see yourself through the unconditional loving eyes of an adoring dog?)



It's possible to transform the experience of 'chores' by bringing awareness to the process. Beginning, for example, when making your bed in the morning with a *moment of gratitude* I have a roof over my head and a place to sleep. Then noticing how the sheets feel between my fingers...etc.

