

Suggestions for Daily Practice

1. A good place to start cultivating mindfulness is in the body.
2. Befriending your breath is a good idea, since you can't leave home without it – and it is so related to our states of mind.
3. See if from time to time you can just feel the breath moving in and out of your body.
4. Locate where the breath sensations are most vivid, and "surf " with full awareness on those breath waves, moment by moment – in the belly, at the nostrils, or wherever.
5. Try lying in bed for a few moments after you wake up, and just ride on the waves of your own breathing moment by moment and breath by breath.
6. Experiment with expanding your awareness around your breath until it includes a sense of the body as a whole lying in bed breathing.
7. As best you can, be aware of the various sensations fluxing in the body, including the breath sensations.
8. Just rest in the awareness of lying here breathing, outside of time, even if it is only for a minute or two by the clock.
9. When you notice that the mind has a life of its own and wanders here and there, keep in mind that this is just what minds do, so there is no need to judge it.
10. Just note what is on your mind if you are no longer in touch with the breath or with the sensations of the body lying in the bed, and without judgment or criticism, just let that be part of your awareness in the moment, and feature once again the breath and the body center-stage in the field of your awareness.
11. Repeat step 10 a few million times.
12. It is very easy to fall into the thought stream and get caught up in the future (worrying, planning) and the past (remembering, blaming, pining) and in reactive and often painful emotions.
13. No need to try to stop any of this from happening when you can just bring a big embrace of openhearted, spacious, accepting awareness to it and, lo and behold, you are once again sitting on the bank of the thought stream, listening to the gurgling but not so caught up in the torrent for the moment.
14. You can cultivate mindfulness in this way lying in bed for a few moments in the morning, or in the evening before going to sleep.
15. You can also cultivate mindfulness sitting, standing, walking, and eating – in fact, in any position or situation, including brushing your teeth, taking a shower, talking on the phone, running, working out at the gym, cooking, picking up the kids, making love, whatever is unfolding in your life in the present moment.
16. It helps to be present for it and for yourself.
17. Remember – the real meditation is your life, and how you inhabit it moment by moment.

*For more from Jon Kabat-Zinn, visit www.mindfulnesscds.com/
source: www.oprah.com/index.html*

Deepening a Personal Meditation Practice

1. The real meditation is how you live your life.
2. In order to live life fully, you have to be present for it.
3. To be present, it helps to purposefully bring awareness to your moments – otherwise you may miss many of them.
4. You do that by paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to whatever is arising inwardly and outwardly.
5. This requires a great deal of kindness toward yourself, which you deserve.
6. It helps to keep in mind that good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, the present moment is the only time any of us are alive. Therefore, it's the only time to learn, grow, see what is really going on, find some degree of balance, feel and express emotions such as love and appreciation, and do what we need to do to take care of ourselves – in other words, embody our intrinsic strength and beauty and wisdom – even in the face of pain and suffering.
7. So a gentle love affair with the present moment is important.
8. We do that through learning to rest in awareness of what is happening inwardly and outwardly moment by moment by moment – it is more a “being” than a “doing.”
9. Formal and informal meditation practices are specific ways in which you can ground, deepen, and accelerate this process, so it is useful to carve out some time for formal practice on a regular daily basis – maybe waking up fifteen or twenty minutes earlier than you ordinarily would to catch some time for ourselves.
10. We bring awareness to our moments only as best we can.
11. We are not trying to create a special feeling or experience – simply to realize that this moment is already very special – because you are alive and awake in it.
12. This is hard, but well worth it
13. It takes a lot of practice.
14. Lots of practice
15. But you have a lot of moments – and we can treat each one as a new beginning.
16. So there are always new moments to open up to if we miss some.
17. We do all this with a huge amount of self-compassion.
18. And remember, you are not your thoughts or opinions, your likes or dislikes. They are more like weather patterns in your mind that you can be aware of – like clouds moving across the sky, – and so don't have to be imprisoned by.
19. Befriending yourself in this way is the adventure of a lifetime, and hugely empowering.
20. Try it for a few weeks – it grows on you.

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In the Service of Life

by Rachel Naomi Remen

In recent years the question how can I help? has become meaningful to many people. But perhaps there is a deeper question we might consider. Perhaps the real question is not how can I help? but how can I serve?

Serving is different from helping. Helping is based on inequality; it is not a relationship between equals. When you help you use your own strength to help those of lesser strength. If I'm attentive to what's going on inside of me when I'm helping, I find that I'm always helping someone who's not as strong as I am, who is needier than I am. People feel this inequality. When we help we may inadvertently take away from people more than we could ever give them; we may diminish their self-esteem, their sense of worth, integrity and wholeness. When I help I am very aware of my own strength. But we don't serve with our strength, we serve with ourselves. We draw from all of our experiences. Our limitations serve, our wounds serve, even our darkness can serve. The wholeness in us serves the wholeness in others and the wholeness in life. The wholeness in you is the same as the wholeness in me. Service is a relationship between equals.

Helping incurs debt. When you help someone they owe you one. But serving, like healing, is mutual. There is no debt. I am as served as the person I am serving. When I help I have a feeling of satisfaction. When I serve I have a feeling of gratitude. These are very different things.

Serving is also different from fixing. When I fix a person I perceive them as broken, and their brokenness requires me to act. When I fix I do not see the wholeness in the other person or trust the integrity of the life in them. When I serve I see and trust that wholeness. It is what I am responding to and collaborating with.

There is distance between ourselves and whatever or whomever we are fixing. Fixing is a form of judgment. All judgment creates distance, a disconnection, an experience of difference. In fixing there is an inequality of expertise that can easily become a moral distance. We cannot serve at a distance. We can only serve that to which we are profoundly connected, that which we are willing to touch. This is Mother Teresa's basic message. We serve life not because it is broken but because it is holy.

If helping is an experience of strength, fixing is an experience of mastery and expertise. Service, on the other hand, is an experience of mystery, surrender and awe. A fixer has the illusion of being causal. A server knows that he or she is being used and has a willingness to be used in the service of something greater, something essentially unknown. Fixing and helping are very personal; they are very particular, concrete and specific. We fix and help many different things in our lifetimes, but when we serve we are always serving the same thing. Everyone who has ever served through the history of time serves the same thing. We are servers of the wholeness and mystery in life.

The bottom line, of course, is that we can fix without serving. And we can help without serving. And we can serve without fixing or helping. I think I would go so far as to say that fixing and helping may often be the work of the ego, and service the work of the soul. They may look similar if you're watching from the outside, but the inner experience is different. The outcome is often different, too.

Our service serves us as well as others. That which uses us strengthens us. Over time, fixing and helping are draining, depleting. Over time we burn out. Service is renewing. When we serve, our work itself will sustain us.

Service rests on the basic premise that the nature of life is sacred, that life is a holy mystery which has an unknown purpose. When we serve, we know that we belong to life and to that

purpose. Fundamentally, helping, fixing and service are ways of seeing life. When you help you see life as weak, when you fix, you see life as broken. When you serve, you see life as whole. From the perspective of service, we are all connected: All suffering is like my suffering and all joy is like my joy. The impulse to serve emerges naturally and inevitably from this way of seeing.

Lastly, fixing and helping are the basis of curing, but not of healing. In 40 years of chronic illness I have been helped by many people and fixed by a great many others who did not recognize my wholeness. All that fixing and helping left me wounded in some important and fundamental ways. Only service heals.

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