Sneaking Mindfulness into the Messiness of Real Life
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Physical exercises strengthen the body. Mindfulness exercises develop the ability to focus, recharge, and regulate ourselves. We can use what we already know about physical fitness to help navigate the challenges of developing attentional fitness.

What is mindfulness?

“Mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, nonjudgmentally.”

~ Jon Kabat-Zinn

Breaking mindfulness down…

<table>
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<tr>
<th>CAPACITY</th>
<th>EXERCISE</th>
<th>ATTENTIONAL SKILL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To be aware of</td>
<td>To notice</td>
<td>concentration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the present</td>
<td>sensations*</td>
<td>sensory clarity</td>
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<tr>
<td>with acceptance.</td>
<td>with openness.</td>
<td>equanimity</td>
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Three trainable, attentional skills:

- **Concentration** is the ability to focus on what you consider to be relevant while letting other things play out in the background.

- **Sensory clarity** is the ability to keep track of what you’re experiencing in real-time.

- **Equanimity** is the ability to allow sensory experience to come and go without push and pull.

“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.” ~ Viktor Frankl

Basic attentional fitness practice formats:

- Relaxation practice – notice restful sensations
- Task practice – track sensations during tasks usually done on autopilot
- Trigger practice – track real-time emotional reactions
- Timed-practice – notice any category of sensation for a set duration

Basic attentional fitness practice guidelines:

- Practice for more than zero seconds/minutes most days.
- Prioritize mindfulness practice over reading or thinking about it.
- Keep it to yourself.
- Don’t police other’s lack of mindfulness.

Mindfulness apps

- Insight Timer (free, subscription) InsightTimer.com
- Brightmind (subscription) bit.ly/BrightmindDaron
- 10% Happier (subscription) 10percenthappier.com
- Calm (subscription) calm.com
- Headspace (subscription) headspace.com
- Craving to Quit, Eat Right Now, and Unwinding Anxiety (habit change programs) judsonbrewer.com

Books about sneaking mindfulness into modern life

- 10% Happier by Dan Harris
- Meditation for Fidgety Skeptics by Dan Harris and Jeff Warren
- The Mindful Day by Laurie Cameron
- Mind Your Life by Meg Salter
- Modern Mindfulness by Rohan Gunatillake

Talks and books about establishing habits

- Forget Big Change, Start with a Tiny Habit by B.J. Fogg (TED Talk)
- A Simple Way to Break a Bad Habit by Judson Brewer (TED Talk)
- Atomic Habits by James Clear