



CREATING A MINDFULNESS HABIT

Habit is a cable; we weave a thread each day, and at last we cannot break it.
– Horace Mann

It isn't necessary to be mindful in all your waking hours, but unless you make a concerted effort to be mindful on a daily basis, it's easy to get distracted by a myriad of things that divert your attention through the day.

Occasional attempts at 'being in the moment' or to 'notice the little things more' and 'live in the now' are well-meaning but unhelpful habits; distractions and preoccupations take over and resolutions to be more mindful fall by the wayside.

What to do? You need to make mindfulness a habit; make mindfulness something that you do on a regular basis until it becomes your normal, everyday practice.

Your mind *is* able to do this!

Establishing new ways of thinking and doing is not difficult provided the new ways are constantly repeated. How come? When you think or do something in a new way, you create new connections or 'neural pathways' in your brain. Then, every time you repeat that thought or action, every time you continue using these new pathways, they become stronger and more established.

It's like walking through a field of long grass – each step helps to create a new path and every time you walk that new path you establish a clear route which becomes easier to use each time. It becomes a habit to use that route.

Since your distracted and preoccupied mind isn't going to remind you to be mindful, you need something else to remind you.

The hard must become habit. The habit must become easy. The easy must become beautiful. – Doug Henning

Set a timer on your phone (with a soothing tone) to remind you to be mindful at random times of your day. A 'Mindfulness Bell' app is useful here. It rings periodically during the day to give you the opportunity to pause for a moment and consider where you are and what you are doing and what you are thinking.

Write notes saying: 'Be mindful!' Write them on self-sticking notes and place them on the wall above your desk or on the fridge to remind you to do things differently.

Decide to do things differently to experience different results. Make a mindfulness date with yourself; a time in your day when you do something specifically devoted to mindfulness. It could be taking a short walk, eating a quiet meal, drinking a cup of tea, and so on.

Commit to being mindful every time you open a door. When you open a door, drop what's in your mind (you can pick it up again shortly) and instead, watch your hand push the door or grasp the doorknob. Open the door with purpose and patience. Feel its weight and whether it opens easily. Take in the new scene that's revealed. Smell the air and notice any change in temperature of the outside space or room you are entering. Listen to the sound of the space you've just left, give way to the room or space you've just entered.

It's a small commitment; maybe five seconds at a time, a handful of times a day.

Just be sure that when you open a door, you *open the door*. You're going to do it anyway. Make it an opportunity to be present.