

THE POWER OF ENHANCED AWARENESS: MITRE Mindfulness Training and Practice

Week Eight Daily Practice

The eighth week is the rest of your life: a continual invitation to investigate and explore your lived experience. You will be supported by the qualities that you've been cultivating in class: curiosity, a willingness to look at things in new ways, being available for the nuances of the present moment, interest in your own habits and patterns, the capacity to pause and acknowledge choice, and showing up – for your practice and your life – however it is.

Keep up the practice and make it your own. Use the recordings, continue your formal and informal practice, review from time to time the weekly materials from this course, explore community options and the written and audio resources, consider taking another mindfulness course and listen to your own deep wisdom about what is called for as you move forward.

Consider taking another mindfulness course on your own, either in person or online, including Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT - designed to prevent depression relapse and rumination spirals), Mindful Self-Compassion, and more.

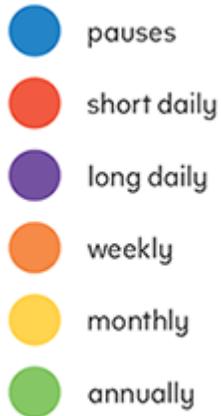
"...once you are cultivating mindfulness systematically in your life, it is virtually impossible to stop... Over time, the practice tends to teach you what you need to know next." - Jon Kabat-Zinn

"Awareness practice is like any other skill-building activity. It is not meant to be casual, or occasional, or reserved for only when convenient." – Les Kaye

Take what you've learned to create a plan that will be supportive and doable as you move forward. Likely, you've learned something about your own patterns—what you resist and when, how to nudge yourself toward what is beneficial (if not always pleasant!), and staying close to this question, *"What's called for now?"* as you adjust practice to fit your life. You may have a sense of the type and length of practice that is supportive for you over the next few months or you may want to intentionally explore that question over the next month. Remember, as our jobs, roles, family demands, and interest shift—we may need to adjust our plan. Sometimes at the most stressful points in our lives, we need *more* formal practice—not less!

Here are some examples from an article in *Mindful Magazine* ("How to Have A Balanced Mindful Life," Aug 17, 2014). It might be helpful to make this kind of a graph for yourself: First as a plan to try out, and then as a check to see if you're able to actually implement it. It's important to create a plan that works. So keep checking your actions against it, making the plan flexible while also holding yourself accountable.

Here are some examples how to fit mindfulness into your life:



The Key

There are a variety of ways to practice mindfulness. Short daily meditations, mindful pauses, long daily meditation sessions, weekly sits, monthly meditation group meet-ups, annual retreats. There's no right way to mix it up, only the right way for you.

Pauses: Moments of transition. Actively using the countless number of “between” moments (30 seconds to 3 minutes) in the day to bring attention fully to what is happening. This may not entail stopping any action—or only stopping briefly, to ground yourself in attentiveness.

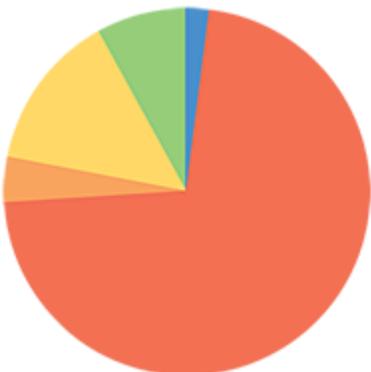
Short Daily: A 5-10 minute practice that may be planned or unplanned. In this time frame, you can close your office door, deliberately slow down (if you're choosing to do a sitting or “stillness” practice) and maybe even using a timer.

Long Daily: A formal time of 30 minutes or more. Specific time set aside and planned or used spontaneously if the space opens up. This commitment—even several times a week—makes the informal shorter practices even more powerful.

Monthly: This might be a longer half-day or full-day retreat, or even a half-day self-guided day of silence. It may be group engagement if you have a group to practice with.

Annually: As you deepen your practice, you might consider a day or multi-day silent retreat. There are many weekend options, 3-day and 5-7 day possibilities. This increase should be as you feel ready... there's no need to push or rush.

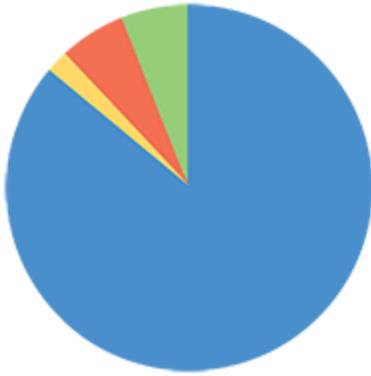
Below are some examples of how mindfulness practices can infuse a variety of lifestyles and family/work/role demands:



STAY-AT-HOME DAD

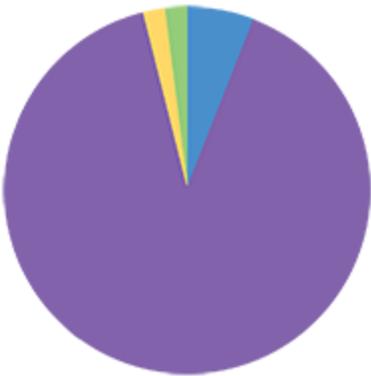
Eric takes care of two young kids while his wife Jean starts her career. He emphasizes short sessions twice daily, a monthly visit to a meditation group, and retreat one weekend a year.

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CAREER MOM

Jean helps raise the kids while building her counseling practice. She takes short pauses between clients, ten minutes at the end of the day in her office, and a two-day mindfulness training yearly.



GRANDMOTHER

Kimiko volunteers part-time at a hospital. She's long had a daily practice, and now she sits for 45 minutes every morning and 30 in the evening—sometimes her granddaughter joins her.



RECENT COLLEGE GRAD

Jose is devoting two years to recharging and charting his course. He sits 90 minutes most days, a whole day with a group some weekends, and is planning to do a 10-day retreat in the spring and in the fall.