



## PRACTICING MINDFULNESS:

# Embrace the Daily Delights of Meditation and Mindful Practices



Between work, family, and hobbies, you can be constantly on the move, tackling one task after another. While staying busy can be energizing, it's important to remember to pause and appreciate the moments in between. Taking a breather isn't just refreshing – it's essential for maintaining your well-being. So, amidst the hustle and bustle, don't forget to hit the pause button, recharge, and take care of yourself! Starting a routine of daily meditation and mindful practices might be just what you need.

**Practicing meditation and/or mindfulness has numerous benefits, for both your mind and body. UC Davis Health shared ten ways meditation promotes physical and mental well-being:**

1. Decreases feelings of depression
2. Decreases anxiety
3. Improves memory
4. Reduces stress
5. Improves sleep quality
6. Lowers blood pressure
7. Improves discipline
8. Increases attention span
9. Decreases pain
10. Enhances compassion

Taking advantage of these benefits by implementing a meditation practice can be as simple as dedicating a few minutes each day to mindfulness—it doesn't have to be fancy or a dramatic departure from your daily schedule. Here are several practices you can use to add meditation and mindfulness to your daily routine.

### MEDITATION AND DEEP BREATHING

Choose any number from three to ten. Inhale deeply while counting, then exhale while counting again. As you breathe, focus your thoughts on your breath while blocking out everything else. If your mind begins to wander, refocus on your breathing. You can repeat these deep breathing cycles as often as you'd like.



#### FOLLOW THE MOUSE:

We've hyperlinked resources you may want to access. Just hover and click!

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**Tip:** You might find it easier to focus on breathing if you sit in a relaxed position and close your eyes while doing your deep breathing exercises!

### TAKING A TIME-OUT

Taking the time to reflect is another meditation practice many people enjoy. You can choose to read an inspirational text and reflect on what it means. This also works with meaningful music, group discussions, or conversations with people who you look up to. Your reflection can be silent, via a group discussion, or you can write your thoughts in a journal so you can revisit them later.

**Tip:** Try reflecting on your day just before bedtime and reflect on the things that went well and those that didn't. You can take it a step further by reflecting on what you would do differently if anything.

### SCAN YOUR BODY

A body scan is a great way to be mindful, especially in a moment when you're feeling stressed or overwhelmed. While using this technique, focus your mindfulness on each

part of your body and take note of what sensations you are feeling. That might include tense or sore muscles, feelings of relaxation, warmth – the goal is to simply be aware.

**Tip:** You can combine a body scan exercise with deep breathing to add a twist to this mindfulness technique.

### GET OUTSIDE

Getting outdoors is great for your mental and physical well-being. The fresh air and time in nature is unmatched. Add meditation to your walk by taking a slower pace and being mindful of the way your body moves as you walk. You can also focus on the things you feel, see, and hear on your walk.

**Tip:** Make it a family affair by inviting loved ones with you on your mindful walk. You can make your reflections a fun discussion about the things you see, hear, and smell!



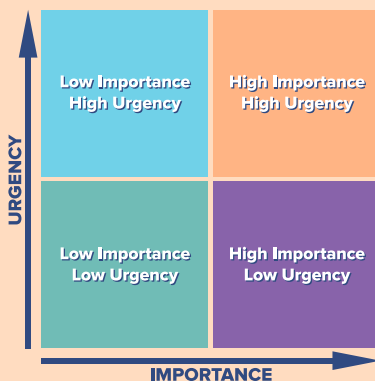
If you're trying to add meditation and mindfulness to your routine but you're unsure where to begin, talk to a therapist. Visit [ComPsych EAP](#) and enter

**Web ID: BCBSILEAP** to find a therapist that works for you!

## STRESS REDUCING STRATEGIES

Pressure from work, family, and life in general – can cause stress that wears on your overall health. Instead of buckling under the pressure, consider exploring strategies to help effectively manage stress. First, try and identify the root cause of your stress and develop a strategy that addresses that particular concern. Juggling time, managing schedules, and a constantly growing to-do list are common stressors. Here are some strategies you can implement to help reduce stress:

- 1. Use the Pomodoro Technique.** Rather than work continuously throughout your day, use the [Pomodoro Technique](#). Set a timer for 25 minutes. After the timer goes off, take a short break. This can help you work deeply and efficiently as you work toward your break. During your break, give yourself a small reward like a tasty snack or a few minutes to read your favorite book. After four cycles of working and taking a break, give yourself a longer break to get some fresh air, enjoy a meal, or some other reward that keeps you motivated.
- 2. Simplify your routine.** It's easy to overwhelm your schedule with things you think you need. Reflect on the things that are necessary each day and add in a few things you enjoy. Eliminate anything that doesn't fit those two categories to simplify your routine and make time for the things that really matter.



- 3. Prioritize your to-do list using the Eisenhower Matrix.** The [Eisenhower Matrix](#) categorizes everything on your to-do list based on whether they're important or urgent. Using the matrix, everything lands into one of four categories: urgent and important, urgent and unimportant, important but not urgent, and neither important nor urgent. Once you've categorized your to-do list using the matrix, you can assess whether you're spending the appropriate amount of time in each category. Most of your time should be spent on urgent and important things, while the least amount of your time should be spent on neither important or urgent things. If that's not the case, you can reassess how you should spend your time.

These strategies can help you reduce stress in your daily life. Also check out the Blue Cross Blue Shield Community Connect blog post on managing stress, ['Build Resilience to Manage Stress and Change'](#).



**SOURCES:** [Health.UCDavis.edu](#), [MayoClinic.org](#), [Forbes.com](#) (Pomodoro Technique), [Forbes.com](#) (Eisenhower Matrix)





## **The 2024 Cook County Employee Health Fairs: myHealth Total Wellness kicks-off in six days! Looking forward to seeing you there.**

Take charge of your health for a healthier, happier total you!  
The 2024 Health Fairs offer resources and support for  
your mental, physical, and financial empowerment –  
plus exciting giveaways and more.

### **On-site Health Fairs**

#### **TUESDAY, JUNE 4: 10 A.M. - 3 P.M.**

JUVENILE TEMPORARY DETENTION CENTER  
AUDITORIUM  
1100 S. HAMILTON AVE.

#### **THURSDAY, JUNE 11: 10 A.M. - 3 P.M.**

COOK COUNTY BUILDING  
7TH FLOOR  
118 N. CLARK ST

#### **THURSDAY, JUNE 6: 10 A.M. - 3 P.M.**

STROGER HOSPITAL  
LOWER-LEVEL CAFETERIA  
1969 W. OGDEN AVE.

#### **TUESDAY, JUNE 13: 10 A.M. - 3 P.M.**

CRIMINAL COURTHOUSE  
2ND FLOOR CAFETERIA  
2650 S. CALIFORNIA AVE.

### **Virtual Health Fairs**

#### **WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5:**

11 A.M.-11:45 A.M.  
2 P.M.-2:45 P.M.

#### **WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12**

11 A.M.-11:45 A.M.  
2 P.M.-2:45 P.M.