



Mindfulness as art of living



for more serenity & friendliness

1) Definition: Mindfulness means being kindly aware of what is going on without judging.

- The opposite is the "**autopilot**" in which we spend most of the day.
- This friendly, relaxed **attitude of acceptance** can be helpful, especially in cases of anxiety, depression, physical pain, restlessness, tiredness or lack of concentration.
- So your attention is like a spotlight that illuminates everything with a warm light.
- You can always feel this attitude in your face as a friendly look with a light smile: "**You only see well with your heart**".
- It is an art that needs daily practice: "Mindfulness is very simple, but not easy".
- A light inner smile of **self-compassion** helps. You can practise, but never fail: "Failure" is an unnecessary evaluation that can be recognised with mindfulness and refuted with a smile.
- In essence, the following 2 aspects are always at issue: **Let thoughts go, allow feelings**:

2) Do not believe everything you think: Serenity exercise in dealing with thoughts

- Thoughts usually come automatically and are often not helpful. This is normal.
- Practice consciously directing my attention: Where is it right now and where do I want it?
- More interesting than worries & brooding is the question, which feelings are behind the thoughts?

3) Emotions are not dangerous: kindness exercise in dealing with feelings

- Allow unpleasant experiences: Although sometimes it really doesn't feel that way, feelings are not enemies that I have to fight or avoid, but more like children for whom I have full responsibility as an adult: **Can I learn to deal with feelings the way a mother/father deals with a fearful/sad/crying child?** Because feelings are like waves and do not last forever.
- The more friendly I take care of my feelings, the more grown-up & competent I feel - and the more self-evidently self-confidence and self-acceptance arise from this.

4) Friendly Serenity is learnable: Example of a daily mindfulness exercise

- Feel and enjoy how the breath flows in and out. Your attention will naturally drift off again and again. The flow of thoughts should not be stopped by a dam. It is only a matter of getting out of the stream again and again and watching it from the shore.
- 'Just' get the feelings behind the brooding/worrying, feel, breathe, allow, hold.
- So the exercise is not to force yourself to hold your breath and get angry if it doesn't work - but to be happy that you (sometimes) notice that your thoughts are wandering around, and then to get your attention back to your breath **as patiently and kindly as possible, with a light smile**, again and again. That is mindfulness.
- And when feelings come up, practice welcoming them without feeling threatened because there is nothing to do with them except to feel them and to breathe.

Klärung häufiger Missverständnisse: Worum geht es bei Achtsamkeit?

Which is <u>not</u> the point: only want certain experiences & rate: "has (not) worked".	What it is all about: getting all the experience, wanting nothing & practice friendliness without evaluation
1. Freedom of thoughts want to "just switch off"	⇒ Getting & <u>practicing</u> not to hold on to thoughts and getting entangled in a story
1. Freedom of feelings no longer want to have feelings	⇒ Become more and more competent in allowing feelings and more often make peace with feelings & oneself ⇒
1. Unpleasant "just breathe away"	⇒ Learning to accept some unpleasant things as part of life, to fight less ⇒
1. Undistracted, deep concentration without external disturbances 2.	⇒ Welcome disturbances & lack of concentration as an exercise in friendly serenity
1. Pleasant relaxation	⇒ Finding peace with unpleasant experiences relaxed even more lasting than a relaxation exercise ⇒
1. Indifference to unpleasant things (e. g. pain, worries, fears, ...)	⇒ Adults dealing with their own experience (responsible, attentive, friendly, serene)
1. Try to do everything right in order to have positive experiences (and get angry if it doesn't work).	⇒ Friendly noticing when a non-adult, inner part takes over the helm again & tries by effort to want a different experience than the present one.

The motto of serenity

May I have the *strength* to change the things I can change,
the serenity to accept the things I cannot change
and the *wisdom* to distinguish one from the other.

Examples of friendly serenity in everyday life

A "formal" daily mindfulness practice helps to think more often about a friendly serenity in everyday life. For example with the:

1. **Falling asleep:** Instead of "worrying about tomorrow", think about what was nice today & be grateful. Enjoying that you have mastered the day and that there is now nothing more to do. Relax into your body, smile friendly. Maybe even relief that you now have time for feelings?
2. **Brushing your teeth:** To start the day and finish with "catching playing with thoughts", smiling in the mirror and realising that you are lovable despite all your problems.
3. **Waiting:** Enjoy the breath and enjoy that there is nothing to do right now.
4. **Eating:** Consciously taste the 1st bite of a meal and be happy that you always have enough to eat & take good care of yourself by eating regularly and healthily (= self-love in action).
5. **Automatic thoughts** "I must ...": Recognising when "must" triggers compulsion and pressure, although the thought is not necessary at all, because there are always alternatives. To be happy when you catch yourself doing so. Feeling freer & more self-determined and less like a victim of circumstances.

Further tips

- **Mobile apps with guided meditations:** *Insight Timer*: under "Meditations" you can enter a topic or name in the search above. Other good apps are *Headspace* & *Zmind*. At BarmerGEK 7mind is free of charge for 1 year. The TK has a free mindfulness online course.
- **CD with guided exercises with booklet:** Jack Kornfield. *Meditation for beginners*.