

Mindful Activities

Living mindfully is a strategy that supports achieving a healthy weight. It simply means paying attention to the events, activities and thoughts that make up your daily life instead of operating on “autopilot”. It is taking time to think about the choices you make and doing things on purpose. Below are examples of common “autopilot” activities and suggestions for how you can incorporate mindfulness into these every day activities.

Mindful Activity 1

Mindful Tooth Brushing

Often when brushing our teeth we are preparing for something else—going to work, visiting family and friends or simply running errands. While brushing our teeth we might stare blankly in the mirror while the brush furiously moves through our mouth. We may be thinking of what comes next: what shoes will we put on, where are the car keys, where is the shirt I want to wear, etc. Suddenly we spit out the tooth paste, rinse our mouth and move on to the next task without ever giving much thought to our actions. Try brushing mindfully.

- As you put toothpaste on the brush notice the color, smell and size. Notice how it sits on top of the brush bristles or seeps in between them.
- Look in the mirror at your lips. Are they moist or dry? Notice the color and then open your lips to reveal your teeth. Notice their shape, various shades of color and any space between them.
- Place the toothbrush on your teeth and slowly begin brushing. Take time to notice how the bristles feel against your teeth, your gums and tongue. Notice any sensations in your wrist and arm as they guide the brush around your mouth.
- How does the paste feel and taste? Is it gritty, smooth, bubbly or something else? Is it minty, tangy, sweet or something else?
- Look in the mirror and watch the movement of your body while you brush— pay attention to your lips, tongue, wrist and arm. Watch the brush move across each tooth and over your tongue. What does it feel like? What sounds do you hear?
- As you finish and rinse take time to notice the sensations in your mouth. What temperature is the water? Is it frigid, cool or slightly warm? Notice the sounds of the water as you move it around your mouth. How does your mouth feel? Is it cool, fresh, invigorated or something else?
- Look into the mirror once more. Allow your tongue to slowly glide over your teeth, around your mouth and across your lips.



Mindful Activity 2

Mindful Walking

Walking is a seemingly simple activity. We may do it a few steps at a time, or many. But we do it over and over again throughout the day and rarely take the time to notice how our body moves and feels. Try walking mindfully:

- Move yourself to a standing position and pause. Before taking a step be mindful of how you carry your body and connect with the ground.
- Take notice of your posture and any sensations from your head to your toes.
- Notice how you distribute your weight upon your feet. Do you carry your weight on your heels, on your toes, evenly across, or maybe on one foot more than the other?
- Slowly shift your weight from side to side and observe how the sensations in your lower legs and feet change. What, if anything, feels different to you?
- Begin walking slowly. Become more aware of your feet as they carry your body forward. With each step forward take note of the sensations you experience as your foot strikes the ground. Notice which parts of your foot touch the ground as you move from step to step. What part strikes the ground first? What part leaves the ground last? Do the sensations you feel change between the beginning and ending of each step?
- Observe how your ankles and lower legs are an integral part of walking. Notice any sensations in your ankles and lower legs.
- Without making any changes to your gait compare the movement and sensations of your right and left feet. Are they the same or different?
- Begin to notice the other parts of your body that are in motion. Do you sense any movement in your hips? Are your arms swinging? If so, how are they swinging— fast, slow, close to your body, or something else?
- Think about how fast you are walking. Take notice of any sensations you feel from head to toe. Now change your walking speed and again take notice of any sensation you feel from head to toe. Do the sensations feel different than before? If so, in what ways?
- Observe any other sensations or changes in your body as you walk. How are you breathing— can you hear yourself breathing? Notice your body temperature— do you feel comfortable or are you starting to perspire? Do you feel your heart beating?

