

## LESSON 30

# Using Mindfulness to Relieve Stress



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### IN THIS LESSON YOU WILL LEARN

- How Distraction Causes Stress
- How Mindfulness Reduces Stress
- Why We Need to Practice Mindfulness

THE WHY — We are distracted. Possibly more than ever before. This distraction causes stress. Sometimes we're pulled from the present moment by very real things, yet often we're pulled from the present moment by stories we make up in our heads. Through mindfulness, we begin to learn what's real and what's not, and we learn to stop worrying about the things we're making up.

BOTTOM LINE — We're distracted. Distraction causes us stress and makes us unhappy. We can train the mind to steer clear of distraction and remain present instead, but we need to practice.



**A** 2010 STUDY BY HARVARD UNIVERSITY tells us that we spend close to 50% of our lives daydreaming — our minds wandering, stuck in our heads versus present with the reality at hand. While some daydreams are pleasant, the study also concluded that **mind-wandering is a staggeringly accurate predictor of unhappiness.**

Why is this so? By ignoring the present moment and following distraction instead, we are living a mistaken notion as to how

the world works. By thinking there's something better than where we are right here, right now, we mis-understand the influence that our own minds and our perception have on our reality.

We become trapped in a cycle of chasing shiny objects. If we're lucky enough to reach those shiny objects, we quickly become dissatisfied, reaching for another, different shiny object instead. The idea that our happiness, contentment, and a stress-free life exists in the future is an illusion.

***The only place in which we can experience contentment (or anything) is right here and right now.***

Through mindfulness, we begin to get to know ourselves and our own minds better, and we see how in fact, ***we create our own reality through what we think and feel.*** By learning to be aware in the present moment, we also learn that the present moment is beautiful just as it is.

Throughout our lives, we've had plenty of practice **NOT** being mindful. To create a new habit in which mindfulness is automatic, we need to intentionally practice.

As we saw in our mindfulness lesson, practice can take the form of simply noticing when we're distracted, slowing down and paying attention, or no longer multitasking, but focusing on one thing at a time.

**HINT** Mindfulness can take the form of simply being aware of your actions. Pretend you are not inside your head but let your consciousness reside on your right shoulder as an observer of your actions. For a day or so, observe your actions from that perspective. Be aware of how your actions will determine your feelings. Just notice. We'll address how to respond later. For now, just notice.

Mindfulness practice can also be more formal. For example, getting to know our minds in seated meditation, which we'll cover later.

**Today's # 1 Task •••••**

Review [Lesson 22, Lizard Brain](#), on how mindfulness reduces stress.

**Today's # 1 Task •••••**

Review [Lesson 24, Stress Makes us Stupid](#), for a reminder on how stress affects our minds.



**Try this Mindfulness Meditation**

<https://youtu.be/8HYLyuJZKno>