Leading Well Strategies

Mindfulness Meditation: A Practical Starting Guide

Mindfulness meditation is one of the oldest and most well-researched practices for reducing stress, sharpening focus, and improving overall well-being. Mindfulness is when your mind and actions meet; mindfulness meditation trains this by repeatedly bringing your focus back to the present moment through a process of noticing a distraction, acknowledging it, choosing to let it go, and returning your attention to your point of focus, often your breath.

Two outcomes stand out from building this practice:

- Letting go of what does not serve you in the moment, whether that is fear, anger, recurring worry, or the habit of carrying stress from one part of your life into another.
- Bringing intentional presence into daily life, including focused work, real engagement in conversation, and genuine connection with the people who matter to you.

These two videos explain how mindfulness meditation trains the brain toward presence:

- Learning to be Present through Meditation (10 minutes)
- Meditation Presence (2 minutes)

Getting Started

Mindfulness meditation is guided by three cueing styles: fully guided, semi-guided, and unguided. One is not better than the others - it's personal preference. Try a few and notice what helps you settle, rather than what distracts you. Also pay attention to the guide's voice and any background sounds, since options range from silence to rain, ocean waves, wind chimes, and birdsong.

This short overview covers posture, location, time of day, and what to expect: Mindfulness Meditation Basics

Two audio scripts to try first: 5-minute Meditation and 10-minute Meditation

For additional free content, Insight Timer is an good starting point. Most streaming fitness platforms include meditation, many apps offer free trials, and Headspace has excellent free 10-minute sessions on YouTube.

A Note on Nighttime Meditation

If you meditate before sleep, choose something specifically designed for sleep. Before you commit to a YouTube video, skip to the end and check what happens when it finishes. You want the screen to go dark and stay silent, not transition into an advertisement. Here is an option: Short Sleep Meditation.

What to Expect

The first several sessions will likely feel busy and frustrating. That is normal, and it means you are learning, not failing. Ten minutes a day is sufficient, and five minutes is a fine place to begin if ten feels like too much.

For your first two weeks, focus on finding a meditation, a time, and a location that are simply good enough to continue with. Once those feel settled, stay with that same practice for another two weeks while the skill develops. After that, you are ready to explore the full range of what mindfulness meditation offers.

Reach out anytime with questions: sarah@leadingwellstrategies.com