



Manhattan Marriage & Family Therapy

Earth Love Month

Day 24: Practice Mindfulness and Clear Mental Clutter

Tasks, appointments, shopping list, unfinished projects, unpaid bills, the spring cleaning, overdue paperwork, unopened mail, and a million 'pings' from e-mail, social media, texts, and voicemail — just the tip of the iceberg of what takes up daily space in our heads.

“The more we hold something in our mind, the heavier it becomes.”

What is Mindfulness? “Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we’re doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what’s going on around us.” <http://www.mindful.org>

While mindfulness is something we all naturally possess, it’s more readily available to us when we practice on a daily basis. Try these 1 Minute Mindfulness exercises:

- 1. Yawn and stretch for 10 seconds every hour.**
Do a fake yawn if you have to. That will trigger real ones. Say “ahh” as you exhale. Notice how a yawn interrupts your thoughts and feelings. This brings you into the present. Then stretch really, really slowly for at least 10 seconds. Notice any tightness and say “ease” or just say hello to that place (being mindful — noticing without judgment). Take another 20 seconds to notice and then get back to what you were doing.
- 2. Three hugs, three big breaths exercise.**
Hug someone tight and take 3 big breaths together. Even if they don’t breathe with you, your breathing will ground them
- 3. Stroke your hands.**
Lower or close your eyes. Take the index finger of your right hand and slowly move it up and down on the outside of your fingers. Once you have mindfully stroked your left hand, swap and let your left hand stroke the

fingers of your right hand. Find 6 more here [1 minute mindfulness exercises](#)

Clear the Clutter: Clutter, including mental clutter, triggers the part of the brain that registers pain. It is no wonder, that it has been linked to depression, anxiety and a host of health problems. Here are a few proven strategies for clearing mental clutter:

The Quick Fix:

1. Do a brain "dump". Grab a pad of paper and write out every single thing that's weighting on your mind. Every. Single. Thing.
2. Next: those things that jumped out at you while you were writing them...are your actual priorities! At least for today. Yes, it really is that simple!
3. Tackle some quick and easy items from that list if you can right away — it'll give you an awesome feeling of getting unstuck. Those items that you can't tackle right away: assign them a "home" either on your Master Task List or in your Calendar.

What about the rest? Trust that you'll be able to tackle them in due time.

The Permanent Solution:

1. Do a miniature version of The Quick Fix daily, preferably in the morning before you face your day. Empty your head and start your day fresh, without the weight of the world on your shoulders.
2. Keep a Master Task List and a Calendar to give things a temporary "home" that's not in your head.
3. Keep an eye on INCOMPLETE CYCLES — tasks and projects that you started but didn't finish. Too often we let a million incomplete things hang over our heads, weighing us down and polluting our minds. Make it a habit to see things through OR put the next step on the calendar. Also, don't open e-mails unless you are prepared to take action — an email that has been opened, but not answered becomes an incomplete cycle.