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Beginner's Mind

Begin doing what you want to do now.

We are not living in eternity. We have only this moment, sparkling like a star in our hand, and melting like a snowflake.

FRANCIS BACON

Finding flow

Think of the times you've been so absorbed in what you were doing that time passed without you realizing: it could've been a book, a film or a piece of music that engrossed you. Or perhaps it was a jigsaw puzzle, a game, a musical instrument or a sport you were playing. Maybe it was singing in a choir or dancing to music. Whatever it was, as you did it, no other thoughts entered your mind because you were completely **focused** and **engaged** in what you were doing; you didn't even notice the time that was passing.

When you're doing something that keeps you effortlessly **focused** and **engaged**, you are experiencing something known as 'flow'. When you're in a state of flow, it is as though a water current is carrying you along. Your awareness merges with what you're doing and you are completely 'in the moment'. Your thoughts are positive and in tune with what you're doing.

The level of **engagement** absorbs you deeply and holds your attention. Your mind doesn't wander, it is fully occupied, nothing can distract you.

What do you like doing? Which activities can you **engage** with for ten minutes or immerse yourself in for an hour or more? Identify the things you enjoy doing: hobbies, sports, interests. Know that when you need to bring together your mind, body and environment for a period of time that keeps you present, these are the activities with which you can easily experience flow.






Five senses meditation



Whenever things feel off balance and out of your control, the five senses meditation can connect you immediately with the present moment, allowing you to feel grounded, no matter what's going on around you.

1. Look – really look – around you and notice what you can see. Search for something that you don't normally notice, like something tiny or something up high. Notice colours shapes and patterns.

2. Be aware of something that you can feel. Notice the texture – how rough or smooth, hard or soft, or warm or cold something is.

- Put your hands under running water.
 - Take a hot or cool shower.
 - Pop some bubble wrap.
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3. Breathe in a smell.

- Scented flowers – roses, jasmine and lavender.
- Herbs and spices.
- A scented candle.
- The smoke from an extinguished match.

4. Taste something.

- Bite into a lemon or lime.
- Eat some cornflakes, crackers or crisps; something that has a distinct texture and makes a lot of noise.

5. Listen.

- Listen to music.
- Read something out loud; a poem a song or something from a book.
- Listen to someone else talk – on the radio or podcast.

Accepting change

We may not know how or when changes will happen in our lives, but one thing is for sure – change *will* happen. Changes are not, however, always welcome. Unwelcome change can mean facing an uncertain future, not knowing what to expect and assuming the worst.

There are some things, like the changes in the weather, that we **accept** are out of our control. But too often we resist change, we cling to the past and fear the future. We try to hold on to people, places and things and we struggle to **let go**.

And yet, even though you might not be able to control a particular change or stop it from happening, you *can* control how you respond to change. Make yourself aware of the positive things, such as new opportunities, that change brings. **Acknowledge** and do what you can to prepare for the difficult aspects



of a change. Then look for and **focus** on the positive aspects.

You can embrace change by seeking change. Deliberately making changes is an effective tactic for coping with the inevitable changes that will occur in your life. For example, you could, if you are able, change how you travel: walk instead of cycle, cycle instead of drive, or take public transport; take the stairs instead of the lift.

Move the clock or bin to a different place in the room. Or move the teabags or plates to a different cupboard in the kitchen. Yes, you will automatically look for these items in the place they used to be, at least to begin with, but not only will you adapt to the changes, having to think about these things each time you go to use them will also make you more aware.

All things come and go

Let everything happen to you. Beauty and
terror. Just keep going. No feeling is final.

RAINER MARIA RILKE

Everything that comes into this world also leaves it. Just as the seasons come and go, so does night and day, sun and rain, health and wealth, war and peace. Nothing is permanent and all eventually passes. Mindfulness can help you to understand this; to appreciate the good, the enjoyable and happy times, to make the most of now, knowing it will not last.

The chocolate meditation is a good way to experience the passing of pleasure. Simply place a piece of chocolate or a toffee into your mouth and as it slowly melts away, be aware of, appreciate and enjoy its texture and flavour.



Just as pleasure doesn't last, neither do difficulties and problems. One way or another, they will pass. Think back to a difficult time, a time when you had a setback, a challenge or a problem to deal with. However long it lasted, it wasn't permanent. One way or another it passed. Things may not have worked out the way you wanted them to, but they didn't remain the same. Like clouds passing in the sky or leaves floating down a stream, things moved on. Remind yourself of this when you are in the middle of a difficult, challenging experience. Remind yourself that, 'This too shall pass'.