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100 Days of Mindfulness:
PRESENCE

A daily journal to soothe anxiety,
stress, and emotional distress
through mindful living.

Tracey Moore Lukkarila



100 Days of Mindfulness:

PRESENCE

A JOURNAL

Tracey Moore Lukkarila

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*Yesterday is already gone.
Tomorrow is not yet here.
Today is the only day available to us.
It is the most important day of our lives.*

--Thich Nhat Hanh, "Moments of Mindfulness"

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Preface



On my journey of dealing with clinical depression, I've tried many things. One thing that's remained a constant is journaling. I find journaling keeps me on point and accountable to whatever therapeutic treatment I'm undertaking at the time. Sometimes I journal a lot of words, but most of time it's a simple daily check-in.

For the past two years, my journal has been focused on mindfulness. I have collected dozens of mindfulness activities from my readings and trainings, modifying many of them to be more meaningful to me. These activities have had a profound impact on my depression and have been literally lifesaving.

I started to realize I had the foundation of a journal I could share with others. The format of this journal mirrors my own handwritten journal. Each day I record what I'm grateful for, what I did successfully that day, and what's on my mind, such as my experience with whatever mindfulness technique(s) I did that day.

I hope you find this journal as helpful as I have.

--Tracey Moore Lukkarila, June 2016





Introduction

What exactly is mindfulness? Simply stated, it's the practice of living in the moment. Sounds easy enough, but it's actually really hard. Our brains are wired to think, think, think all the time. Whether we're thinking about something that happened a year ago or an hour ago, our thoughts take us away from focusing on right here, right now.

This constant mental chatter can be annoying and tiring. But it can also have serious consequences in our lives. In my case, this habit of constantly thinking and ruminating fed my clinical depression and turned it into obsessive-compulsive disorder. The inability to quiet my mind literally drove me crazy, leading to 13 days in a mental health facility.



When we spend so much time in our heads, we take ourselves out of the only time we really have, which is now. Our runaway minds rob us of our very lives.

Staying healthy and helping others is my passion. I've had thousands of hours of professional therapy, read numerous self-help books, taken dozens of workshops, and even became a yoga instructor. Through all of this, mindfulness is the tool I use every day. It calms my mind, helping me to be more at peace with my depression. Best of all, mindfulness has shortened my depressive episodes so I get past them and back into my life sooner.

I think the beauty of this journal is that it's actually my journal. I am not a therapist. I am simply a patient sharing something that personally works for me.

Some of the exercises in the journal will seem simplistic. If you're like me, you will wonder what purpose they serve. I totally get it. If I hadn't taken a chance and tried these exercises myself, I would have missed out on something that really helps. When you feel like quitting, remember that you are working a new muscle in your brain, and just like physical exercise, training the mind takes time. I encourage you to



hang in there and see what happens. Expect to spend 15-20 minutes a day.



Mindfulness exercises are designed to shift your focus to something happening right now, providing a short-circuit to negative thinking. Don't be fooled by their simplicity though. They really work! Practicing them over time has made it possible for me to shift my obsessive thinking and anxiety to calm presence whenever I want. Other things have improved in my life as well:

- ☞ **My experience of life is better.** My runaway thoughts would get in the way of everything. Now I catch myself a lot sooner and have simple tools to bring myself out of my head.
- ☞ **I love my husband more.** Isn't that crazy? But it's true! Mindfulness has improved my ability to focus on what he's saying and not get caught up in my thoughts. When I'm with him, I'm able to really experience being with him. I feel a lot more connected to him.
- ☞ **My relationships are richer.** I feel more connected with family and friends too.
- ☞ **I can focus in business meetings.** I used to have a terrible time staying tuned in when people talked. Now I use mindfulness to calm my thoughts and maintain my focus.
- ☞ **I'm much more grateful.** I have more appreciation for the people in my life and the abundance I have. I am more aware of things I used to overlook.
- ☞ **I'm a safer driver.** Because I've learned how to stay focused, I am less distracted.



I used to think the goal of mindfulness is to control our thoughts. But our practice is to shift our focus and let our thoughts fade into the background. Let them decrease in volume so they stop stealing the show.

My sincere hope is this journal will help you on your path to living more fully in the present. It's time to get out of your head and into your life!





Day 1: _____

Reframe One Negative Thought You Had Today

Reframing negative thoughts trains your brain to consider more positive, reasonable alternatives. Because negative thoughts take us out of the present moment and into our heads, practicing reframing helps you to move past the thoughts quicker so you can return to the present.

Give it a try! Reword a negative thought into a positive/rational one.

Negative Thought

Example:

I never do anything right.

Positive/Rational Alternative

Example:

Perfection is an unrealistic goal.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



Easy does it. Don't worry about doing any of this "right." If you can't fill in all the blanks, who cares? This is your journey. You're just getting started. Take it slow.





Gratitude List

It's natural for our brains to be overrun with judgment, negativity, worries. Developing a gratitude attitude trains your brain to focus less on the negative and more on the positive. It trains you to consider things you overlook and take for granted. Focusing on little things is where the magic of mindfulness lives.

Don't know where to start? Here are some things to be grateful for: clean running water, roof over your head, air conditioning, clean air to breathe.

Try it! List 5 things you are grateful for.

 _____
 _____
 _____
 _____
 _____

Successes

Patting yourself on the back for the things you do each day, big and small, brings greater awareness to yourself and your impact in the world.

Try it! List 3 things you did well today.

 _____
 _____
 _____

Don't discount the power of small successes. Sometimes just getting out of bed is an achievement! Celebrate your little successes too!





Day 2: _____

Reframe One Negative Thought You Had Today

Reword a negative thought into a positive or rational one.

Negative Thought

Example:

I am a failure.

Positive/Rational Alternative

Example:

I am a hard-working person striving to learn from my mistakes

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Gratitude List

List 5 things you are grateful for.

More ideas: having a wide variety of foods available, amazing movies/TV shows to watch, car or transportation.

 _____
 _____
 _____
 _____
 _____

Successes

Pat yourself on the back for 3 things you did well today.

Being able to focus and really enjoy a meal is a success. So is taking care of your teeth.

 _____
 _____
 _____



Day 3: _____



Reframe One Negative Thought You Had Today

Reword a negative thought into a positive or rational one.

Negative Thought

Example:

I can't stop feeling scared.

Positive/Rational Alternative

Example:

I am a courageous person working on facing my fears.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Gratitude List

List 5 things you are grateful for.

(Name a person you love, or someone who inspired you or helped you.)

🌀 _____

🌀 _____

🌀 _____

🌀 _____

🌀 _____

Successes

Pat yourself on the back for 3 things you did well today.

(Being in the moment and feeling fun and joy is a success. Recount fun things you did.)

🌀 _____

🌀 _____

🌀 _____





Great Job!

Now that you've practiced the foundation of the journal, we'll add a mindfulness exercise every few days.

Below is the first one.

Approach these mindfulness exercises with as much ease as possible. Do not struggle with them. There is no perfect way to do them. Let yourself be messy.

Enjoy the journey.

First Mindfulness Assignment: Sense of Smell

At least once a day, take five minutes to tune into your sense of smell. Set your timer so you ensure you use the full five minutes. Take deep breaths and concentrate on fragrances around you. If your mind starts to wander, gently bring your attention back to your sense of smell. If your mind wanders again, just calmly return to smell. It's okay if you have to do this several times. That's just part of the practice.



Day 5: _____



Reframe One Negative Thought You Had Today

Reword a negative thought into a positive or rational one.

Negative Thought

Positive/Rational Alternative

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Gratitude List

List 5 things you are grateful for.

 _____

 _____

 _____

 _____

 _____

Having a home to live in, bed to sleep in, kitchen to cook in – all things to be grateful for.

Successes

Pat yourself on the back for 3 things you did well today.

 _____

 _____

 _____

Having the ability to truly enjoy yourself is a success.





Appendix





Growing Your Mindfulness Practice

So where do you go from here? Here are some options to consider.

Books and workbooks –Below are some authors I have enjoyed and been influenced by on my mindfulness journey:

- Brene Brown, PhD
- Thich Nhat Hanh
- Martin Seligman
- Russ Harris
- Baron Baptiste
- Elisha Goldstein, PhD, and Bob Stahl, PhD
- Kamini Desai
- Therese Borchard

Yoga – Thousands of years ago, the practice of yoga was created as a way to prepare the mind for meditation. It's sometimes referred to as a "moving meditation." Yoga is amazing, and I have personally experienced a life transformation from the practice. I can't recommend yoga highly enough as a way to get out of your head and into your body. Below are some common venues where yoga classes can be found:

- Colleges often have beginner yoga classes available to the community for low cost
- Most gyms have yoga classes on their schedules
- Yoga studios usually have classes every day
- Hospitals often have community wellness programs
- The free website Meetup (www.meetup.com) will help you find yoga classes in your area

Meditation – There is a wide variety of meditation styles out there to try. If you're unfamiliar with meditation, I suggest guided meditation where a voice leads you. The availability of guided meditation is tremendous:

- Smartphone apps such as Headspace, Calm, Buddhify, Omvana and the Mindfulness App.
- YouTube videos
- iTunes and Amazon Music
- CDs and tapes for purchase on Amazon
- The free website Meetup (www.meetup.com) will help you find meditation sessions in your area
- Yoga studios often have meditation classes too
- Unity Church (www.unity.org) and Unitarian Universalist Church (www.uua.org)
- Buddhist Centers (some meditation sessions can last 1-2 hours, so inquire with them about their schedule before you go.)



More Gratitude Ideas

Recalling activities or events from the day can be a source of gratitude. It's just a matter of wording them in a grateful way.



For example, you went to a concert you really enjoyed. You could write, "I am grateful I have the financial means to attend concerts" or "I am grateful for music; it lifts my spirits."

I use my gratitude section to express my gratitude for the things I get to experience, which also serves as a historical record of my life.

Other ideas:

- Family and friends who support you. List each person individually and what specifically you're grateful for. It could be something they did today.
- Sunny day, warm day, rainy day
- Ability to breathe
- Pets, children, and loved ones showing you they love you. Again, list them individually and what specifically you love about them.
- Etc.

More Successes

Anytime you think of something you did today as not special or too mundane to be a success, shift your thinking. Little accomplishments are still accomplishments.

- Going to work when you don't feel well
- Making dinner
- Eating healthy
- Etc.





About the Author

Tracey Moore Lukkarila has worked in the health insurance industry for nearly two decades in a variety of Information Technology and Public Policy roles. She holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the University of North Florida and a masters-level certificate in Public Health from the University of Florida. She is a registered yoga teacher (RYT-200).

Tracey strives to live out her personal values of compassion, generosity, connectedness, and education. She serves as the chair of her employer's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) group, advocating for LGBT rights in the workplace and statewide. Tracey is very passionate about animals and volunteers for the animal shelter community. She loves yoga and teaches the Baptiste Power Yoga methodology in her community. As a lifelong sufferer of anxiety and depression, she aims to bring her professional and personal experiences together to advocate for mental health and to help others who struggle.

Tracey also enjoys arts and crafts, music, film, traveling, hiking, camping, and spending time with friends. She lives with her husband Troy and their six cats and dog in Florida.

Visit her blog at www.traceylukkarila.com.