

mindfulness

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1. mindful breathing (while studying)

I am very glad I took a moment to pause while studying and focus on mindful breathing. The expression “*sometimes you have to take one step back to take two steps forward*” rang very true for me during my mindfulness study break. Between studying for tests, completing projects, and finish reading, I was definitely pressed for time. And yet, as I noticed how late it was getting, I became aware that the stress was beginning to get in the way of my ability to think clearly. It may seem counterintuitive to take a break when you feel as if you have a million and one things to get done. But, as my experience today proved, by taking a moment to breathe, I was enabling my mind to almost “reset” in a way. After my practice, I found that I was able to think that much more lucidly -- it was as if I had convinced my mind to temporarily place any worries or concerns on hold so that I could focus solely on the task in front of me.

2. mindful yoga

Coincidentally, tonight I took a dance class with a teacher who is also a yoga instructor. At the end of the lesson, I asked her if she'd be willing to lead us through a short "shavasana" or relaxation. She very gladly agreed! She talked us through a full body relaxation and meditation series. We were all encouraged to lie down on the floor, close our eyes, and envision any thoughts that come to mind as "*mere cars passing along the street*". After the 10 minute shavasana session was over, it was as if I felt completely refreshed -- and several of the other girls in my class said they felt the same way. Just like going to bed at night almost feels like an opportunity to "reset", the short meditation seemed to accomplish something similar. Afterwards, I felt so much more at ease, and that feeling of calm definitely helped me through my long night of homework.

3. the practice I preferred

I definitely enjoyed, and saw the value, both in the mindful yoga and the mindful breathing. I appreciate how quickly and easily-accessible the practice of mindful breathing is. The technique can be applied to almost any situation anywhere, and I like the fact that it requires no preparation, equipment, designated space, or anything else beyond a mental commitment to follow through with the practice. On the other hand, I also appreciated how the mindful yoga practice required slightly more planning/preparation. I know, for myself at least, that it is challenging, especially when schedules get busy, to carve out the time for a mindfulness practice, so I appreciate how the mindful yoga was almost a required, “built-in” part of my everyday routine of going to dance class -- something I couldn’t say no to.

4. barriers

Mindfulness is the type of thing that is all too easy to overlook, especially when things get particularly busy. Sometimes it's hard to remember the "one step back, two steps forward" mentality. But I think that it is important to remember that mindfulness is not only curative but also preventative. Many of the excuses I might make (not enough time, not enough energy etc.) for not following through with a mindfulness practice don't hold much ground, given that a mindful practice could actually allow me to be that much more efficient or have that much more energy. This challenge has inspired me to make a concerted effort to work more mindfulness into my everyday routine.