

25 Ways to Practice Mindfulness to Lower Anxiety and Increase Self-Care



Cedar Tree
Counseling
Ltd.

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What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a thought process and/or meditation where you focus on the present moment. You take your focus away from things or situations you can't control and focus on what you can.



It's something that can be practiced, but it's not really about techniques. There are tools that can be developed to help in [becoming more mindful](#), but in the end, mindfulness is about a way of being, not doing.

Why is mindfulness important?

Mindfulness is crucial to maintaining your overall mental health. It rests in the anchored knowledge that "I am okay, and because I'm okay, I can be right here, right now." Mindfulness grows in a state of gratitude in the midst of the pain in the present.



How to use this guide:

- Read through the full list of mindfulness exercises.
- Pick the item that resonates with you the most or is the easiest to implement into your current lifestyle.
- Each week, choose a new technique to include in your mindfulness routine and increase the overall mental health of you and your family.

1. Be Kind to Yourself

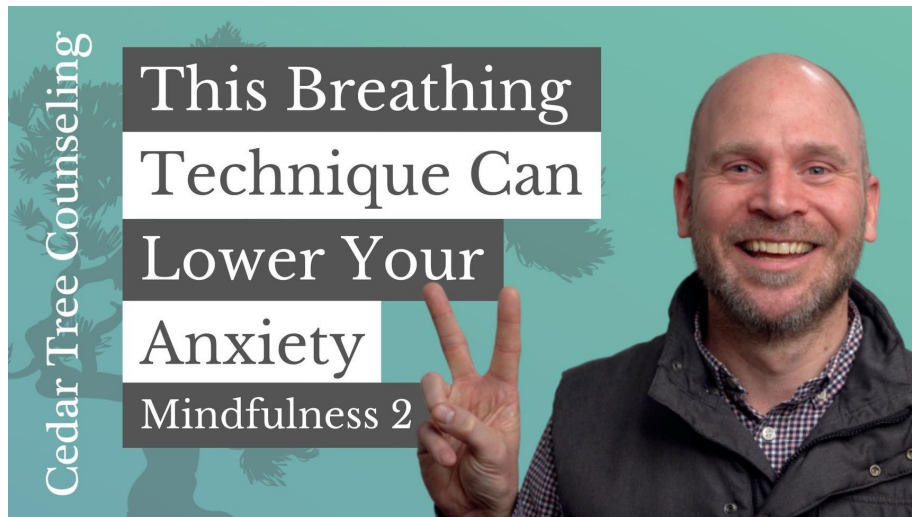


Each day, try to take a moment for yourself to practice presence. Agree with yourself that these are difficult days, but you're okay, and you get to be present this day, in this moment.

Listen to your next breath and allow yourself to slow its pace.



2. Use the "Square Breathing" Technique



All you're going to do is breathe in for a count of 4, hold for a count of 4, breathe out for a count of 4, and hold for a count of 4. The counting will help your mind stay focused on the activity.

Breathe in...2...3...4, hold...2...3...4, breathe out...2...3...4, hold...2...3...4.

Try to take a few minutes each day to get really present to yourself. See this as a way of slowing your thoughts, especially if you struggle to contain them.

Watch Matthew Hanlon demonstrate the square breathing technique in [this video](#).



3. Name Your Fears

Dan Siegel calls it “name it to tame it”.

Panic is fueled by fear; we feel out of control, and we quickly find ourselves swimming in deep, dark, swirling waters that make it hard for us to find our bearings.

In that scary place, you’re going to tell yourself, “this is panic and it will pass soon”

Panic gets short-circuited when we name it, and to the best of our abilities, define its space. “This is panic, and it will pass” unplugs the fear and will help you regain your equilibrium.

Find more info on “name it to tame it” [here!](#)



4. Tune into Your Senses

Here's a brief exercise that can provide relaxation and promote greater mental health.



This is how it works:

- Sit comfortably, with no crossed legs, or arms, preferably in a straight back chair.
- Begin by closing your eyes and making a mental list of all the sounds you can hear around you.
- Next, tune into the sensations your body is feeling (the floor pushing against the bottom of your feet, your socks around your ankles.)
- Lastly, can you smell anything in the environment, perhaps from a recently made meal?

When we tune into our senses, we give our minds an opportunity to rest from worry and regret.

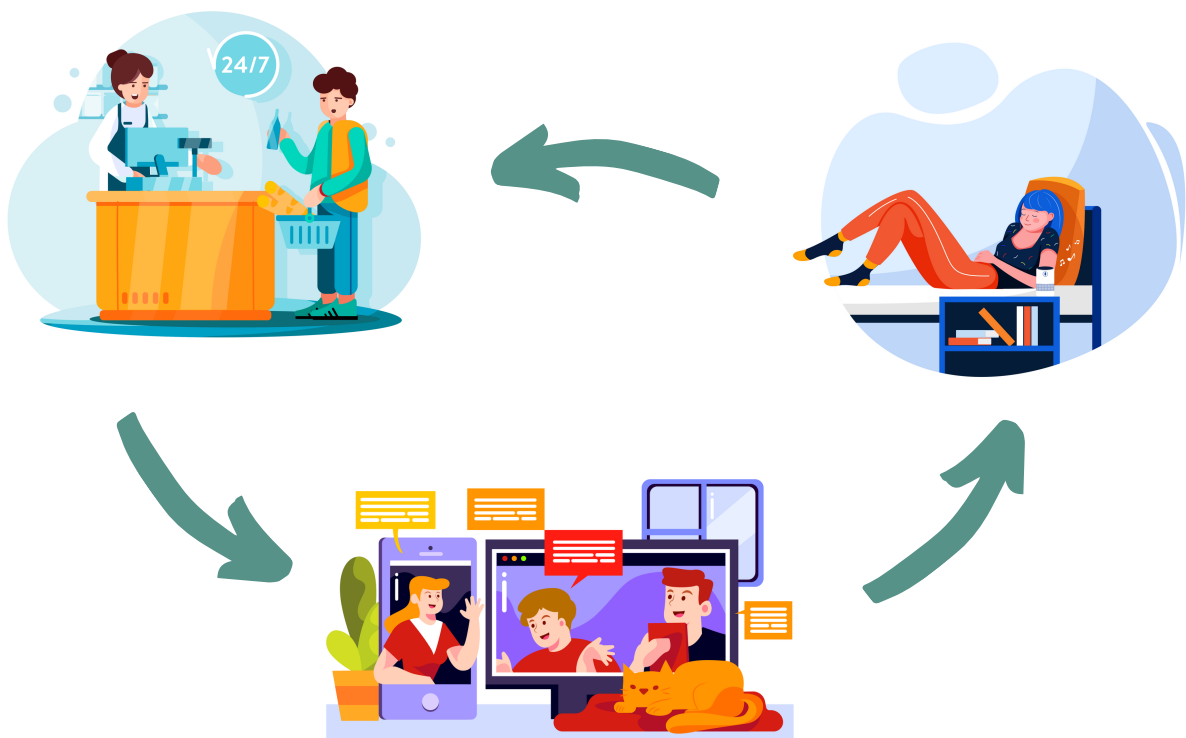


5. Look for Ways to Care & Be Cared For

What can you do today to engage, to join in, to become a part of; that would bolster for you a deeper sense of meaning?

Try picking up groceries for a neighbor or take a long walk with your family. Living in the space of the unknown is exhausting and this gives your mind something solid to hold onto.

In [this video](#), Matthew Hanlon shares why it's so important for us to connect in his Mindfulness Series: **Why We Need to Connect and Care.**



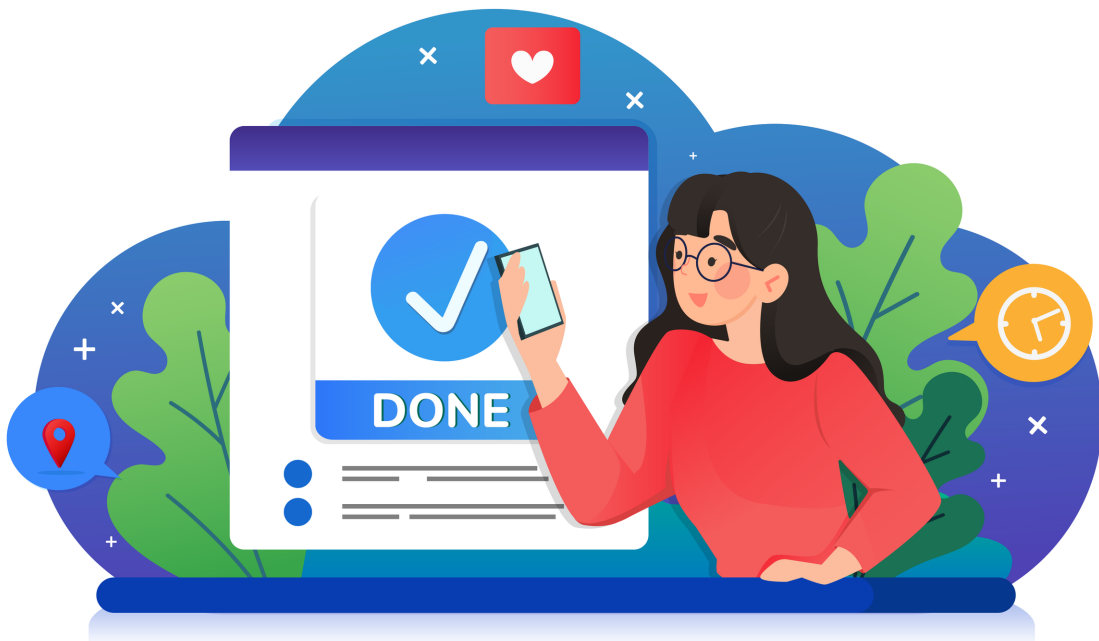
6. 1-minute Mantra

While sitting or laying down, for one minute repeat a positive mantra such as:

- I am happy. I am healthy.
- I am strong. I am safe.
- I love my life.

Or pick a favorite quote that empowers you.

Need an inspirational quote? [Here are a few suggestions.](#)



7. Window Gazing

Take a seat at your window and notice the nature around you. Don't try to make sense or name anything. Just notice the colors and textures of the leaves, hear the chirp of the birds, and the sounds of nature.



Do this for five minutes or so, and if you notice your mind wandering, try to bring it back to the present and focus on what's right outside your window.

Did you know?

A wandering mind correlates with higher degrees of what is referred to as working memory. Cognitive scientists define this type of memory as the brain's ability to retain and recall information in the face of distractions. ¹

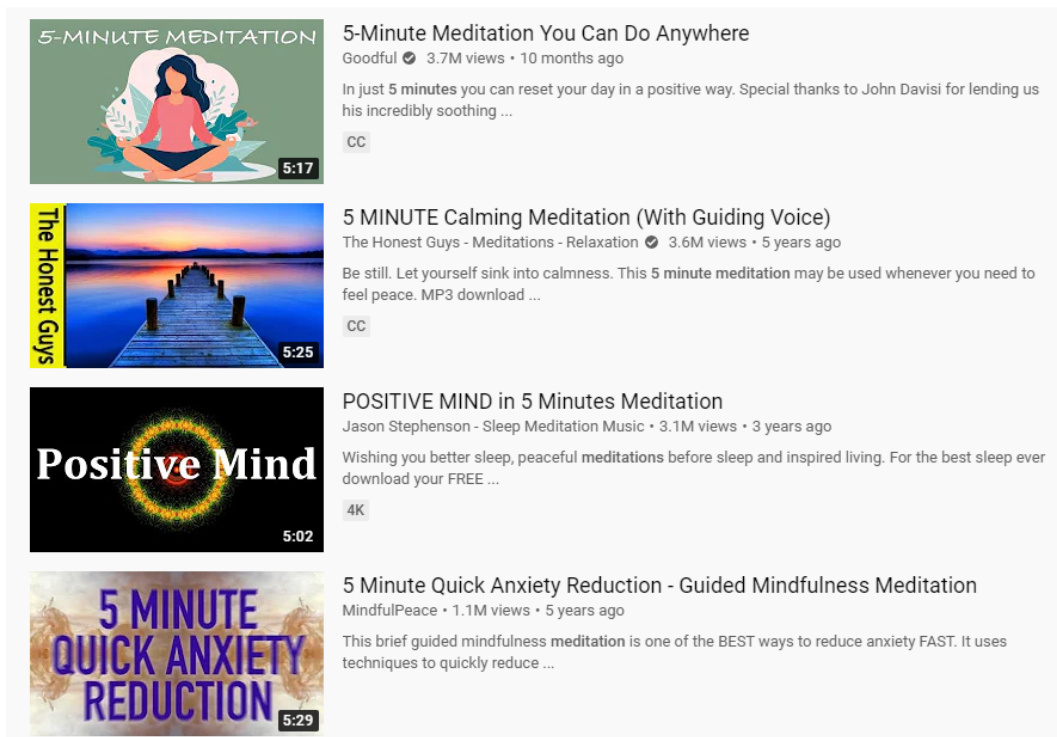


8. Guided Meditation

You can find guided meditation videos on YouTube to fit any lifestyle. If you only have five minutes to spare in the morning, search for “5 minute morning meditation”.

Or if you have trouble sleeping, you can find bedtime guided meditations that help you relax and let your body and mind get some much needed rest.

[Click here](#) for a sampling of 5-minute meditations to get you started!



The image shows a screenshot of YouTube search results for 5-minute meditations. It features four video thumbnails with their respective titles, view counts, and descriptions.

- 5-MINUTE MEDITATION**
5-Minute Meditation You Can Do Anywhere
Goodful • 3.7M views • 10 months ago
In just 5 minutes you can reset your day in a positive way. Special thanks to John Davisi for lending us his incredibly soothing ...
CC
- The Honest Guys**
5 MINUTE Calming Meditation (With Guiding Voice)
The Honest Guys - Meditations - Relaxation • 3.6M views • 5 years ago
Be still. Let yourself sink into calmness. This 5 minute meditation may be used whenever you need to feel peace. MP3 download ...
CC
- Positive Mind**
POSITIVE MIND in 5 Minutes Meditation
Jason Stephenson - Sleep Meditation Music • 3.1M views • 3 years ago
Wishing you better sleep, peaceful meditations before sleep and inspired living. For the best sleep ever download your FREE ...
4K
- 5 MINUTE QUICK ANXIETY REDUCTION**
5 Minute Quick Anxiety Reduction - Guided Mindfulness Meditation
MindfulPeace • 1.1M views • 5 years ago
This brief guided mindfulness meditation is one of the BEST ways to reduce anxiety FAST. It uses techniques to quickly reduce ...



9. Say Goodbye to Your Anger

We all experience anger and for some of us, it can be overwhelming. Practice saying goodbye to your anger with these steps:



1. Sit in a comfortable chair and take some deep breaths.
2. Notice the feeling of your feet on the ground.
3. Think back to a time when you experienced a bout of anger, putting aside any feelings of regret or shame.
4. Scan your body for any feelings of tightness or warmth as you recall the anger.
5. Be mindful of your feelings and accept that anger is a normal human emotion.
6. Say goodbye to your anger, releasing it like a balloon in your mind.
7. Then slowly bring your awareness back to the present.
8. Scan your body again to see how you feel physically and emotionally.



10. Stop, Drop, & Practice Gratitude

Take breaks throughout the day to stop and practice gratitude for your life and your surroundings. Living life in the moment and showing gratitude is known to increase mood and lower feelings of anxiety.

You can do this:

- In the car while driving to work.
- In line at the grocery store.
- Right before you sit down to dinner with the family.
- During your morning/evening shower.
- After putting the kids to bed.



Looking for more ideas? [Click here](#) for **40 Simple Ways to Practice Gratitude!**



11. Schedule Time for Yourself & Your Family



Nothing stresses us out more than being crunched for time!

Everyone loses their cool when schedules are full to the brim and there is no extra time to look for a rogue shoe or turn the car around for a forgotten instrument. The most crucial times to add margin are during transitions: morning, after school and bedtime.

No way to lighten the weekday load? Then make sure to plan for some time to decompress on the weekends. Build in breaks, naps or quiet times into a Saturday or Sunday afternoon.

Need more ways to promote mindfulness in your household?

[Click here](#) for **5 Ways to Promote Emotional Balance & Regulation in Your Family.**



13. Get Moving

Movement is so helpful in keeping your mind and body functioning at its best.

It can be as simple as taking a five minute walk around the neighborhood or scheduling time on the weekends to go on a hike with the family.

Other mental and emotional benefits of exercise

Sharper memory and thinking. The same endorphins that make you feel better also help you concentrate and feel mentally sharp for tasks at hand. Exercise also stimulates the growth of new brain cells and helps prevent age-related decline.

Higher self-esteem. Regular activity is an investment in your mind, body, and soul. When it becomes habit, it can foster your sense of self-worth and make you feel strong and powerful. You'll feel better about your appearance and, by meeting even small exercise goals, you'll feel a sense of achievement.

Better sleep. Even short bursts of exercise in the morning or afternoon can help regulate your sleep patterns. If you prefer to exercise at night, relaxing exercises such as yoga or gentle stretching can help promote sleep.

More energy. Increasing your heart rate several times a week will give you more get-up-and-go. Start off with just a few minutes of exercise per day, and increase your workout as you feel more energized.

Stronger resilience. When faced with mental or emotional challenges in life, exercise can help you cope in a healthy way, instead of resorting to alcohol, drugs, or other negative behaviors that ultimately only make your symptoms worse. Regular exercise can also help boost your immune system and reduce the impact of stress.

Here are some ideas for you to try:

- Throw a dance party in your living room.
- Go on a walk or ride bikes with the family.
- Set up an obstacle course in the backyard.
- Go for a run or a hike.
- Do some light stretching before bed/first thing in the morning.



14. Write It Down

Journaling not only helps you to relieve stress, it allows you to self reflect on your day, your feelings, and your interactions with others.

Some ways to practice journaling:

- Take five minutes a day to write a one sentence summary of your day.
- Free write. Write whatever comes to mind, not caring about structure, spelling, handwriting, etc.
- Spend some time in the morning writing down your intentions for the day and what you hope to accomplish.



Need some help getting started? [Here](#) are **30 Journaling Prompts for Self-Reflection & Self-Discovery**.



15. Name Your Colors

When you're feeling anxious, depressed, or overwhelmed, one way to gain control is to name your colors.

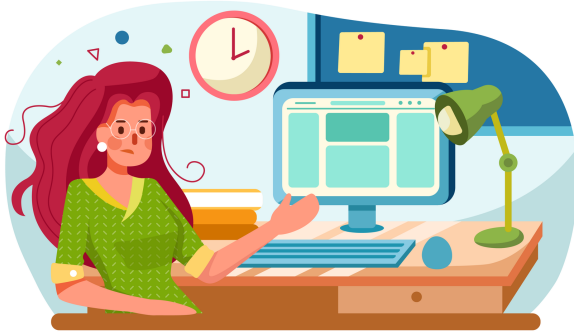
Notice your surroundings and what you're wearing. Name all of the colors you see, even going beyond the basic "blue, red, yellow" and using "chartreuse, magenta, or violet".

This will help you calm those strong feelings and emotions and give you a good sense of self-control.

Can you name all of the colors in the photo below?



16. Allow Yourself to Say No



Are you overextending yourself and adding item after item to your to-do list? You might discover that there are demands you make of yourself by expecting perfection when good enough will do.

You can learn to say no more often in order to give yourself some breathing room. You can take time to prioritize so that all of the demands on you don't feel like equal burdens.

Have trouble saying no to the people in your life? Watch [this video](#) for 4 ways to set boundaries effectively.



17. Practice Mindful Eating

The foods we eat very much affect how we feel and think on a daily basis. Obviously, a change in diet is not going to make your mental health problems disappear, but it is important to consider how your diet might be negatively impacting your everyday mental health.

Some ways to practice mindful eating:

- Eat slowly and chew your food thoroughly.
- Focus on your emotions while eating.
- Avoid distractions like watching tv or playing on your phone.
- Practice gratitude for your food.



18. Wake Up With Intention

We're all guilty of this. As soon as the alarm goes off, we pick up our phone and check our messages, email, or we scroll through social media. Before you even get out of bed, you're already feeling anxious and flustered.

Instead of grabbing your phone first thing, take a minute or two to scan your body while laying in bed.

What are you feeling?

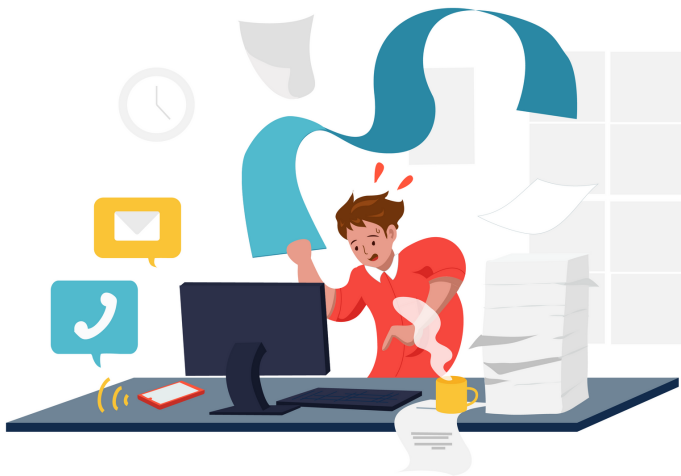
This is also the time to set your intention for the day. How do you want your interactions to go while at work? How do you want to interact with your spouse or children?



Setting your intention for the day allows you to raise your emotional energy and set a positive tone for the day.



19. Digital Detox



If you're someone who constantly has their head down, looking at your phone, it may be time for a digital detox.

Too much screen time is known to increase feelings of anxiety and stress, and for teens, it can cause increased feelings of depression.

Consider how much you and your kids need their phones and tablets for work and school and then pick a time to detox. Spend an hour or two on the weekends cooking a meal together or drawing. Or if you have younger kids, try finger painting.

Check in regularly with the family and increase the detox session as needed.

[Click here](#) for a 30-day digital detox challenge!



20. Teach Mindfulness to Your Kids

The best way to hold yourself accountable is to teach what you've learned to others. Young children and teens benefit from mindfulness just as much as adults. Stress from school, friends, and after school activities can leave your kid feeling overwhelmed.



- Teach them the breathing techniques that have helped you.
- Download a meditation app to their phone.
- Buy them a journal so they have a free space to write down their thoughts.
- Spend time each day with younger children, getting down to their level and playing with dolls, blocks, puzzles, etc.

For more ideas on how to make meaningful connections with your kids in five minutes or less, [click here](#) for a FREE 5-day parenting challenge!



21. Use Essential Oils

Essential oils are a great way to engage your senses while practicing mindful breathing.

Add a few drops of lavender to your wrist, a cotton ball or a soft piece of fabric and take a few slow, deep breaths. Concentrate on the scent as you breathe in and out. Close your eyes and relax your shoulders, releasing the tension in your body.



New to essential oils? [This article](#) on **18 Essential Oils for Anxiety** will help you to learn more about the essential oils you can use to relieve your symptoms of anxiety.



22. Create a Mindful Jar/Bottle with Your Child

It can be difficult for children to tackle tough emotions. One way to help them practice mindfulness is to create a mindful jar or bottle.

Use any clear jar with a secure lid (stick to a plastic bottle for younger kids). Put a few big spoonfuls of glitter in the bottom of the jar and fill the rest of the way with water.

When your child is feeling stressed or anxious, have them shake up the jar to watch the glitter swirl, taking deep breaths as the glitter slowly falls back down to the bottom.

You can find a quick recipe [here](#):



23. Create a Daily Routine for You and Your Kids

Don't wait until you or your child is on the verge of an [anxiety attack](#) or tantrum. Find ways to practice mindfulness everyday and add it to both of your daily routines.

A few examples:

- When you're in the car, have them count how many green cars they see (and count with them.)
- Before bed, take five minutes to do some stretching or light yoga.
- After school, spend time with them doing their favorite activity.



24. Read Books on Mindfulness

For adults:

- [The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness In a Changing World](#) by Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu
- [Practicing Mindfulness: 75 Essential Meditations to Reduce Stress, Improve Mental Health, and Find Peace in the Everyday](#) by Matthew Sockolov
- [Mindfulness: An 8 Week Plan for Finding Peace in a Frantic World](#) by Mark Williams and Danny Penman

For teens:

- [Mindfulness for Teens in 10 Minutes a Day](#) by Jennie Marie Battistin, MA, LMFT
- [Anxiety Relief for Teens: Essential CBT Skills and Mindfulness Practices to Overcome Anxiety and Stress](#) by Regine Galanti, PhD
- [5 Minutes Mindfulness Meditations for Teens](#) by Nicole Libin, PhD

For kids:

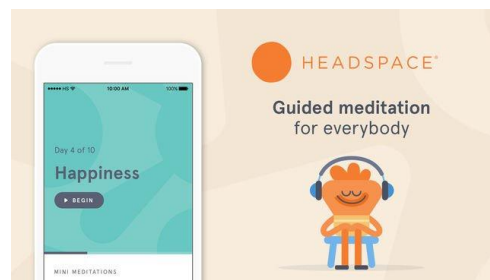
- [Breath Like a Bear: 30 Mindful Moments for Kids to Feel Calm and Focused Anytime, Anywhere](#) by Kira Willey
- [I Am Peace: A Book of Mindfulness](#) by Susan Verde
- [The 3 Minute Gratitude Journal for Kids](#) by Modern Kid Press



25. Download a Meditation App

If you struggle with meditation or don't know how to get started, meditation apps can help! Choose from guided meditations, calming music to help you fall asleep, or targeted meditations for anxiety and stress relief.

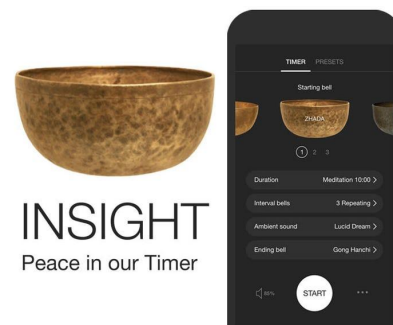
A few to try:



- Headspace - Get access to guided meditations, sleep sounds, as well as meditations for kids and teens.



- Calm - This is a great choice for those short on time. Get a quick 3 minute meditation, with access to longer 25-30 minute sessions when you have more time to spare.



- Insight Timer - If you want to target a specific subject (such as anxiety or stress), this app has guided sessions to target what's ailing you, as well as charts to track your progress.



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