

Better Daily Mindfulness Habits: Simple Changes with Lifelong Impact

By Kristen Manieri

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BONUS CHAPTER

How to Use Mindfulness for Creativity

Creativity matters. Look around and you'll find countless examples of the miraculous human capacity to create, innovate, and problem solve. From novels that grip our attention for hours to electric cars, we are surrounded by the results of the ability to tune out the noise and create. When it comes to beauty, innovation, and imagination, we have creativity to thank. This chapter is all about how you can make space for creativity and how you can relate to your passions, interests, and imaginative pursuits with awareness and curiosity.

There's a reason why Fortune 500 companies, such as Google, Apple, and Nike, offer mindfulness programs. As you've learned in previous chapters, mindfulness helps with managing stress, cultivating better relationships, and being more productive. But the ability to work with more awareness and focus also helps you be more creative. You use your creativity all the time, even if you don't identify as an artist or work in a creative profession. will not only enjoy what you do more but also begin to seek out more of what you enjoy.

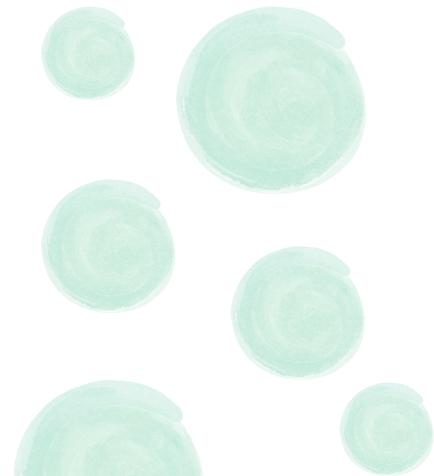
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You use it when we're cooking, arranging your home, deciding what to wear, planning a party, organizing a vacation, or getting your kids to help out around the house. You solve problems and maneuver around challenges all the time using your creative mind.

Tapping into your creative self with distraction-free focus is where you do your deep work, a concept coined by Cal author Newport. When you create the space to dive deeper into an idea, project, or challenge, you do your best work. But this type of attention and mental expansiveness doesn't happen by accident. In fact, without a concerted effort to deliberately practice doing deep work, it likely won't happen at all.

I've filled this chapter with habits that will allow you to become creative with intention. Mindfulness habits aren't simply about calming yourself. You can also use them to open the mind and focus your attention so you become better at the things that are important to you—in all areas of your life. As a result, you

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Block Out Creative Time

My friend Stephanie is an excellent photographer. In a perfect world, she would spend her days traveling to beautiful destinations and taking beautiful photographs. While globetrotting isn't always in the cards, Stephanie has learned that life just feels better when she regularly spends time nurturing her creative side. So, following the advice in Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way*, she takes herself on an artist date each week. This solo sojourn isn't necessarily about creating anything; it's about cultivating the conditions for the mind to experience wonder, inspiration, and awe. It's meant to be playful, fun, and whimsical.

Fresh ideas and new perspectives live in the white spaces of our lives. When you make space for space, and learn to "mine the gaps," as Rebekah Younger calls it in her book, *Be, Awake, Create*, you may find a wellspring of inspiration lurking below the surfaces of your life. Even if you're not an artist, the "artist date" is a chance to take break from the practical, doing-driven aspects of life to simply delight in living.

Find a few minutes each day or a few hours each week for creative space. Go somewhere beautiful, even if it's simply your own backyard. Take a walk. Sit in a park and journal about things that make you feel more alive.

Be a Flaneur

I'd never heard the word "flaneur" until I interviewed Erika Owen on my podcast. Erika was so smitten with the French concept of meaningfully and mindfully meandering through a city that she wrote the book *The Art of Flaneuring: How to Wander with Intention and Discover a Better Life*.

Wandering is in direct contrast to the highly purpose-driven way of living. In a purpose-driven life, whether you're at a grocery store or walking through your neighborhood, you know exactly what you mean to do and where you mean to go. But in that single-mindedness and narrowed determination, you will very likely miss out on what's lying at the edges of your attention.

The antidote to this linear thinking and living is what Andrew Dietz describes as purposeful purposelessness in his book *Follow the Meander: An Indirect Route to a More Creative Life*. When you wander with intention, you cultivate mindfulness and tap into new insights. You also increase gratitude and fall more deeply in love with where you are. Meandering allows you to loosen your preoccupation with what is in order to create space for what could be.

Spend some time each day or each week being aimless. Set aside 10 or 15 minutes to wander, even if it's in or around your own home. Resist the urge to do something productive or accomplish anything. Notice any discomfort you feel, and use it as an opportunity to be more present.

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