

A No-Pressure Guide to Getting Started with Mindfulness Meditation

Many people want to start meditating, but don't know how to begin.

Below are my recommendations for how you can get started and some of the best teachers that might be able to help you along the way, since they were so helpful to me.

Jeremy G. Schneider, LMSW, MFT

Build On Your Strengths - www.BuildOnYourStrengths.com

What Is Mindfulness, Really?

Mindfulness isn't about emptying your mind, sitting on a cushion for an hour, or reaching enlightenment on a mountaintop. That's the stereotype. The myth.

Mindfulness is simply about noticing. Noticing where you are. What you're thinking. What you're feeling. What you're doing. And realizing: *you have a choice.*

When we're on autopilot, we don't even realize we're reacting; we just do it.

Mindfulness slows us down enough to ask: *Is this how I want to respond?*



"Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom."

-Viktor Frankl

Mindfulness helps us find that space. And even more than that, it helps us expand it.

Mindfulness Is Self-Awareness

1 — **Self-Awareness First**

Everything I teach starts here: self-awareness.

Before we can practice real self-care, we need to understand what we're actually dealing with. That's where self-awareness comes in. You can't meet your needs if you don't know what they are.

2 — **Uncovering Buried Needs**

And for many of us, especially those carrying trauma, chronic stress, or decades of people-pleasing, our needs have been buried under layers of coping.

Self-awareness helps you slow down enough to *hear yourself*. The more honest you are with yourself, the more likely you are to care for yourself in the way you need.

3 — **Building the Awareness Muscle**

That's why mindfulness meditation matters. It's not about being a perfect meditator. It's about practicing that awareness muscle. Every time you get distracted and bring yourself back?

That's self-awareness in action.

You Can't Meditate Wrong

Here's something most people don't hear enough: There is no "right" way to meditate. You cannot mess this up.

If your mind wanders a thousand times and you bring it back a thousand times, congratulations, you just practiced meditation. That's literally the point.

The goal isn't to clear your mind. It's to notice what's happening *in* your mind. When we notice with compassion, not judgment, we open the door to real change.



They call it meditation practice for a reason.

Can Meditating Actually Make Me Feel Better?

It can. Mindfulness meditation has been shown to help with:

Reducing stress and anxiety

Regular practice can lower cortisol levels and help manage anxiety symptoms.

Easing chronic pain

Mindfulness can change how we relate to physical sensations.

Improving sleep

Calming the mind before bed can lead to better sleep quality.

Supporting emotional regulation

Learning to observe emotions without immediately reacting to them.

Cultivating self-compassion

Developing a kinder relationship with yourself.

Slowing down your nervous system

Activating the parasympathetic "rest and digest" response.

But even beyond the research, mindfulness creates a little breathing room in your life. It helps you pause before you spiral, check in with yourself instead of checking out, and respond with intention instead of reaction.

And that? That's a form of emotional freedom.

Curious How to Begin?

There are many ways to start.

Video Introduction

If you want a quick video talking about why mindfulness is beneficial, start with [Andy Putticombe speaking at a TedTalk](#) (and juggling).

Books for Beginners

- If you think meditation might help but are uncomfortable with the spiritual or Buddhist aspects, start with either one of Dan Harris' books:
 - [10% Happier: How I Tamed the Voice in My Head, Reduced Stress Without Losing My Edge, and Found Self-Help That Actually Works--A True Story](#)
 - [Meditation for Fidgety Skeptics](#)
- If you are into the idea of meditation and self-awareness and want to start being able to do it regularly, Cory Muscara's book, [Stop Missing Your Life](#), is awesome. I've read it three times and like it more each time I read it.
- If you want a four-week program to get you started, Sharon Salzberg wrote [Real Happiness: The Power of Meditation](#) which walks you through what meditation is and gives you things to focus on while you build up your practice over four weeks. (One caveat: she says to start with 20 minutes of meditation, but feel free to start with whatever works for you and build up a little each week.)

Starter Meditations:

If you want to meditate for the first time:

- Try [Jeff Warren and ten breaths](#), a very short meditation you can do anywhere.
- Or try Cory Muscara's [Just Take 5](#). This is a simple meditation using our hands to take five simple breaths, and can easily be done anywhere.

If you want to start with an app:

- [Healthy Minds](#) is a free app from a non-profit called Healthy Minds Innovations that is associated with the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

What's great about it is it gives you a learning path to follow so you don't have to choose which meditation to try. It provides you with a lesson and then a practice follows. It also lets you choose the person who voices the guided meditation and the length of the meditation.

When Your Mind Wanders (because it will)

Here are three good reminders why it's acceptable and important that your mind wanders.

Because the goal of meditation is in part to increase our self-awareness of what's happening inside our minds, noticing you get distracted is progress and success!

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Joseph Goldstein - Simply Begin Again

Delight in the moment of awareness of when your mind gets distracted. And then simply begin again.

[Simply Begin Again | Joseph Goldstein](#)

”

“

Jeff Warren

If your mind wanders, as it will, bring it back to home base, which is usually your breathing.

[Present-Minded Somewhere Else](#)

”

“

Dan Harris

Why it's good you get distracted when meditating!

[Just Say Great!](#)

”

Want to Keep Going?

Here are some people worth exploring when you're ready to go deeper:



Joseph Goldstein

Legendary teacher with decades of insight

Tara Brach

Known for compassion-centered mindfulness (RAIN technique)

Cory Muscara

Accessible and grounded, with a great sense of humor

Jeff Warren

Informal, real, and great for fidgety minds

Sharon Salzberg

A kind, wise guide into mindfulness, compassion and lovingkindness

Andy Puddicomb

He helped start Headspace, the meditation app.

Emma Seppala

Writes about self-awareness, meditation and breathing.

Kristen Neff

A leading expert and one of the original researchers on self-compassion

Next Steps on Your Self-Care Journey...with Jeremy

1

Join my newsletter, Awareness, Then Change.

Awareness, Then Change Newsletter

buildonyourstrengths.com/awareness-then-change

2

Check out my schedule of upcoming workshops or see recordings of past workshops.

Free Workshops

buildonyourstrengths.com/workshops

Schedule Your Free 30-Minute Clarity Call

You don't have to figure it out alone.

If this guide brought up questions, stirred something in you, or left you wanting more space to sort things out, we can spend 30 minutes together in a free Clarity Call.

It's a mini-session where we can:

1

Talk it Through

Explore what's really coming up for you right now.

2

Get Answers

Ask me anything about my work, my approach, or how coaching might help.

3

Feel it Out

See what it's like to work together with no pressure or commitment.

After the call, I'll send you a short follow-up email with my coaching agreement and a link to my schedule.

You decide whether to continue. If you're not ready, or it's not the right fit, that's okay. I'll still be here if you change your mind.

Book your Clarity Call: buildonyourstrengths.com/contact

You were always good enough.

Let me help you remember that.



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Website: <https://buildonyourstrengths.com/>

Jeremy G. Schneider

Jeremy is a licensed master's social worker, family therapist, and trauma-informed coach who helps people recognize when their past is running their present—and build new ways to respond when it shows up.

With Master's degrees in Social Work and Family Therapy plus 30+ years of personal healing work, Jeremy brings both professional expertise and lived experience to his coaching practice. As a Psychology Today contributor and creator of The Integration Path™ framework, he specializes in forward-focused approaches that help people reclaim who they've always been underneath the weight of what happened to them.

Through **Build On Your Strengths**, Jeremy offers 1-on-1 coaching, practical guides, and workshops that focus on real self-care for real life, building sustainable practices using the time you already have, not adding more to your overwhelming schedule.

www.BuildOnYourStrengths.com

Jeremy@buildonyourstrengths.com

